**CHAPTER 12**

**How Can We Become Ethical Intercultural Communicators?**

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**Chapter 12: Learning Objectives**

As a result of reading Chapter 12 and participating in related class discussions and activities, you should be able to

1. Discuss three specific cultural clash issues that create struggles due to different ethical expectations.

2. Name and describe four ethical positions along with their pros and cons: ethical absolutism, ethical relativism, ethical universalism, and meta-ethics contextualism.

3. Describe the qualities of an ethical mindset when approaching intercultural ethical issues and apply several intercultural peace-building skills when doing so.

4. Use a set of personal ethical principles for developing your own adaptive flexibility across cultures.

5. Go forth on your intercultural communication journey with more dynamic flexibility, an ethically-nuanced mindset, and looking forward to the adventure of “otherness” ahead!

**Chapter 12: Brief Outline**

1. **Intercultural Communication Ethics: Cultural Clash Issues**

Introduction:

**Ethics**: set of principles of conduct (NOTE: This is a brief description; see the textbook for full definitions.)

* 1. Global Collision and Local Justice Expectation: 5 phase ethical decision-making
     1. Problem recognition – from both lenses
     2. Information search – gather info from different sectors
     3. Construction of alternatives – creative, culturally inclusive alternatives
     4. Decision making choice – review choices via committee of diverse members
     5. Implementation – planning emphasized
     6. Also:
        1. *Moral conflict*: clash based on deeply held assumptions about being, knowledge, the world.
        2. *Moral reality*: involves traditions and value orientations
        3. *Conflict reality*: how different groups view the conflict meaning, story, and how to manage conflict
        4. *Justice reality*: criteria developed for a just solution to all parties
  2. Corporate Responsibility and Local Customary Practice
     1. Second contemporary set of ethical issues
     2. Self-probing questions to use for cross-cultural ethical dilemmas (child labor, bribery, deception, etc.)
  3. Value Clash and Universal-Particularistic Ethical Decisions
     1. “Impartial” or universalistic” value orientation: individualistic, small power distance worldview; rules should apply to all
     2. “Particularistic” value orientation: collectivistic, large power distance worldview; relationship or situation guides decision

1. **Multiple Ethical Positions: Assessing Pros and Cons:** 4 ethical positions
   1. Ethical Absolutism Position
      1. **Ethical absolutism**: universally fixed standards regardless of culture
      2. **Absolutism***:* one set of standards guides behavior on a global level
      3. **Colonial ethnocentrism**: the rights and privileges of dominant groups, imposing their standards on nondominant groups
      4. Negative aspect: dominant group defines ethical standards, nondonminants are marginalized
   2. Ethical Relativism Position
      1. **Ethical relativism**: understand cultural context in judging conduct
      2. Understand and evaluate behavior in accord with traditions, beliefs, and values of the particular culture
      3. Ethical and unethical practices understood from cultural insider lens
      4. Limitation: too much cultural leniency, ignores humanistic principles
   3. Derived Ethical Universalism Position
      1. **Derived** **Ethical-universalism**: ethical judgments with consideration given to both cultural and universal standards
      2. Requires knowledge about deep similarities across cultures and unique features
      3. Ideal goal to strive for, but most current usage as “imposed ethics” relies heavily on Eurocentric moral philosophies
   4. Meta-Ethics Contextualism Position
      1. **Meta-ethics**: cultivation of ethical way of thinking that transcends any ideology
      2. Five systematic layers: Macro (culture), exo (institutions), meso (media, workplace), micro (messages), chrono (history)
      3. Problem: time-consuming, requires imagination, commitment
      4. Strengths: emphasizes importance of layered interpretations, culture, context, persons.
2. **Becoming Ethical Intercultural Communicators**

Introduction:

**Meta-ethical decision**:

Discovery process – into our values, inconsistencies

Consider two questions in meta-ethical decision making:

1. Can you think of creative solutions other than the proposed ones?
2. How can you prevent future similar dilemmas arising in this culture?
   1. Cultivating an Ethical Mindset and Questions to Consider: these 10 questions include asking which group perpetuates this practice and which group resists this practice, what our role is, and how to implement the solution. Also, practice **parallel thinking**:
      1. Substitute global or local event with people in your ingroup and cross-check whether you would still arrive at same attribution, reaction
      2. Practice “perspective thinking:” step into mindset and heartset of other cultural person viewing same event.
   2. Promoting Global Social Justice and a Moral Inclusions Stance
      1. Social justice action: goal is to create more inclusive, equitable world
      2. *Moral inclusion*: a stance that promotes social justice and others’ well-being. Fairness applies to all groups, willing to sacrifice for other’s wellbeing, view conflicts as opportunities for learning.
      3. *Moral exclusion*: individuals or groups are perceived as outside fairness considerations.
   3. Nurturing Intercultural-Intergroup Peace-Building Practices
      1. O-D-I-S is helpful, to suspend ethnocentric and evaluative judgements
      2. Mindful listening: a face-validation and face-honoring skill
      3. Mindful reframing: a face-honoring skill, redefining the stressful encounter
      4. Cultural empathy: two layers
         1. *Cultural empathetic understanding*: learned ability to understand self and other’s experiences
         2. *Cultural empathic responsiveness* technique: includes not pretending you understand, asking for clarification
3. **Fostering Adaptive Flexibility: Final Passport Doables**
   1. Ting-Toomey’s keynote speech: 3 personal principles that guided her (QuikClip 12.3):
      1. Plunge into unfamiliar territory.
      2. Take detours and enjoy the scenery
      3. Hold on to the precious people who help you reach summit
   2. 10 passport guidelines: Ethical intercultural communicator characteristics: adaptive, experimental, creative, tries again, other-centered but knowing thyself, intentional mindfulness, making difficult ethical choices, lifelong learning journey.
4. **In Conclusion…**
   1. Dynamic flexibility is adaptive and creative, risk-taking ability in reaching out to communicate respectfully and ethically with culturally unique others
   2. An intercultural life is a creative life that demands both playfulness and mindfulness in transforming one’s intercultural journey into a discovery process
   3. May you have the courage to experiment and to explore new terrain!

**Chapter 12: Chapter Checkup**

**Check out the following self-assessment questions:**

**QuikChoice 12.1**: Use [**QuikChoice 12.1**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-quickchoice-12-1?previousFilter=tag_chapter-12) to learn about two ethical positions. To take the full assessment, check out QuikChoice12.1 in the text.

**Chapter 12: Critical Incident Analysis**

**Check out the following intercultural scenario:**

(NOTE: See “Chapter 12 Exercise Handouts” for a printable version.)

**A Zodiac Story: The Giraffe and the Elephant**\*

In an up-and-coming multicultural community in the Zodiac city, a **Giraffe** had a new home built to her family’s specifications. It was a wonderful house for giraffes, with soaring ceilings and tall doorways. High windows ensured maximum light and good views while protecting the family’s privacy. Narrow hallways saved valuable space without compromising convenience. The house was so well done that it won the National Giraffe Home of the Year Award. The home owners were understandably proud.

One day the Giraffe looked out the window while working in her wood shop in the basement. Coming down the street was an Elephant. “I know him,” she thought. “We worked together on a Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) committee. In fact, we need to talk about an upcoming fund raising event for the school. The Elephant is an excellent woodworker. I think I’ll ask him to see my new woodshop and maybe we can plan the school’s fund raising event together.” So the Giraffe reached her head out the window and invited the Elephant in.

The **Elephant** was excited; he had enjoyed working with the Giraffe in previous school committee meetings. He looked forward to swapping ideas with the Giraffe and also chatting about how to improve their children’s under-equipped playground. Besides, he had heard of the state-of-the-art woodshop and wanted to see it firsthand. So he walked up to the basement door and knocked.

“Come in, come in!” said the Giraffe. But immediately they encountered a problem. While the elephant could get his head in the door, he could not go farther. “It’s a good thing we made this door expandable to accommodate my woodshop equipment,” the Giraffe said. “Give me a minute while I take care of our problem.” She removed some bolts and panels to allow the Elephant in.

The two acquaintances were happily exchanging woodworking stories in the basement when the Giraffe’s husband leaned his head down the basement and called to his wife: “Telephone, honey, it’s your boss.” “I’d better take the phone upstairs,” the Giraffe told the Elephant. “Please make yourself at home; this may take a while.”

The Elephant looked around, saw a half-finished children’s wood project in the far corner of the shop and decided to explore it further. As he moved though the narrow doorway that led to the corner area of the wood shop he heard a loud scrunching noise. He backed out, scratching his head. “Maybe I will join the Giraffe upstairs,” he thought. But as the Elephant started up the stairs, he heard the stairs begin to crack from his weight. He tumbled and fell back against the wall. The wall too began to crumble. As he sat there disheveled and dismayed, the Giraffe hurried back down the stairs.

“What on earth is going on?” the Giraffe asked in amazement. “I was just trying to make myself at home,” the Elephant replied. The Giraffe looked around. “Okay, I can see the problem. It’s easy to fix. The doorway is too narrow for you. You just need to get into better shape. There is an aerobics studio nearby. If you’d take some classes, we could get you down a few sizes.” “Maybe...,” the Elephant replied, looking quite unconvinced.

“And the stairs are too weak to carry your weight,” the Giraffe continued. “If you go to ballet class at night and cut down on your carbs, I’m positive you’d be light on your feet. I really hope you’ll do it, and do it fast. For the sake of our children and the community, we need to start working on the school’s fund-raising project together.”

“Perhaps,” said the Elephant. “But to tell you the truth, I’m not sure that a house designed for a Giraffe will ever really work for an Elephant unless there are some major changes.”

\*Source: Adapted from: R.Roosevelt Thomas, Jr. (1999). *Building a House for Diversity.* New York: AMACO-American Management Association.

**Interactive Probes**

(Ask yourself and probe your classmates’ reactions)

(NOTE: See “Chapter 12 Class Handouts” for a printable form containing these questions.)

1. To what extent can you relate to the Giraffe? Why?

2. To what extent can you relate to the Elephant? Why?

3. Can the Giraffe and the Elephant work constructively together? How? Offer some metaphorical or concrete suggestions.

4. Can culturally diverse groups in the United States live and work constructively together on an even playing field? Can you offer some imaginative solutions?

**Chapter 12: Glossary-Matching Quizzes**

Click here for[**Matching Quiz 12.1**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-glossary-matching-quiz-12-1?previousFilter=tag_chapter-12)**.**

Click here for[**Matching Quiz 12.2.**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-glossary-matching-quiz-12-2?previousFilter=tag_chapter-12)

**Chapter 12: Practice Quiz**

Complete the [**Chapter 12 Review Practice Quiz.**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-chapter-12-review-prep-quiz?previousFilter=tag_chapter-12)

**Chapter 12: Exercise Handouts**

**Note: Your instructor may ask you to** [**download,**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/ting-toomey3e-student-resources#tag_chapter-12) **print out, and/or e-mail the following class handouts for this chapter:**

**A Zodiac Story: The Giraffe and the Elephant**

**Interactive Probes for “A Zodiac Story”**

**Intercultural Communication Course Assessment (2 pages)**