ter how late that person may be. Not to wait is considered rude and shows impatience. In M-time cultures, the opposite would be true. The late person is considered to be rude and/or inconsiderate for keeping the other person waiting. Punctuality is the responsibility of each individual, and legitimate excuses must be offered to avoid exacerbating the offense when arriving late. **(See Activity A—Cross-Cultural Trivia Quiz)**

Face

In many Asian cultures, the concept of *face* is central. Face is a difficult concept for Westerners to grasp, as there is nothing quite like it in Western cultures. Although the notion of face has been compared to such concepts as pride, dignity, honor, and self-esteem, face is much more complex. It is the embodiment of two central tenets of Confucianism, namely, the essential integration of individuals into groups and the importance of maintaining social harmony. Confucianism emphasizes that individuals exist in interactive relationships with others. Face is related to the social status, influence, and prestige an individual has, and it is realized and sustained through each person's interaction with other members of that culture. Although most relationships are unequal in nature, each individual still has a reciprocal obligation to other individuals. According to Ting-Toomey (1988), face is a person's sense of positive social self-image in a relational and network context. The notion of face is closely related to collectivism; more collectivistic cultures are generally more concerned with the maintenance of face, in that face is closely identified with beliefs regarding group membership and social harmony. Loss of face, therefore, not only entails personal embarrassment or humiliation but also threatens disruption of the larger social harmony.

In all social situations, each person puts forward a certain "face." As long as each person accepts every other person's face, these social situations continue relatively smoothly. The focus of social situations is not each person's face but, rather, the wants and concerns of everyone present. Reciprocal acceptance of face does not imply automatic agreement or positive acceptance of one another; however, it does allow for the development of personal relationships and the transaction of business within a mutually acceptable social framework. In many cultures, the key to maintaining social harmony in social relationships is to accept and re-

spect the need of individuals to maintain face. One's public image must be maintained at all costs, because one represents not just oneself but also one's group, with its complex network of relationships and interdependencies. To lose face is a serious matter that brings shame not only to the individual but also to the family and/or social group. Face reflects people's status and role within and between their groups. It reflects the realities of a culture's social hierarchies, social roles, and power resources and is closely tied to shame, honor, and obligation among its members.

The notion of face is closely related to "Politeness Theory" developed by Brown and Levinson (1978), who propose that speakers in a communicative interaction will choose a politeness strategy based on their perceptions of the threat to their face. The term *facework* has been coined to describe the particular communication behaviors that speakers use to save their own or their listeners' face (Goffman, 1959, 1972; Ting-Toomey, 1985, 1999). In conversational interactions, speakers will choose different communicative patterns in order to maintain their self-image and respect and/or gain the approval or approbation of their hearers. Although the concepts of face and facework exist across all cultures, exactly what is embodied in the notion of face and the particular types of facework behaviors in which speakers engage varies from culture to culture. Both face and facework are dependent on the cultural context in which they occur and can only be interpreted within the framework of that particular culture, as the underlying values governing face and the meanings given to various aspects of facework behavior patterns differ across cultures.

In cultures where face is an essential tenet, elaborate facework is the norm, as maintaining and saving face requires careful balancing among speakers. Saving face, both one's own and that of others, dictates avoiding direct confrontations and favoring indirect communication patterns. Often, what is not said, how something is said, and even the intricate rituals and settings enveloping the communicative exchange are more important than the actual spoken words. In Korea, communicative exchanges are governed by the crucial principle of *nunch'i,* or the ability to decipher and interpret the insinuated or implied nuances of social interactions. Speakers are expected to understand what is not said and to act accordingly. The avoidance of direct communicative behavior allows each participant to avoid situations that could threaten one's face. In Vietnamese, questions are often phrased in a negative form (e.g., "Are you not

eating?") so that an affirmative answer may be given (Ellis, 1995). Actually saying "no" is regarded negatively and avoided whenever possible in Vietnamese and other languages where saving face is essential.

In cultures concerned with face, "white lies" are often told to ensure that no one becomes upset, and problematic subjects are alluded to indirectly or avoided altogether. In Vietnam, for instance, if a woman tells another person her husband is dead, it is inappropriate to ask how or when, because she may not necessarily mean physically so. She may mean that her husband has left her and so is dead to her. Saying he is dead allows her to save face (Ellis, 1995). Similarly, Koreans with limited English skills may refrain from letting on how much or how little they understand an English speaker, in order to avoid embarrassment and maintain face (Hur and Hur, 1994).

Most of the research into face and facework can be traced to Goffman's pioneering work on social interaction (e.g., 1959, 1972). Face is highly valued in many collectivistic cultures, given the emphasis on the group and innumerable interlocking social relationships. Wenzhong and Grove (1999:126–127) provide the following anecdote about face in China.

> An American teacher in China has filled out an official form of some kind and has submitted it to the authorities at his University. A Chinese clerk loses the form. Time goes by. The American, being efficiency-minded, becomes impatient. He asks the authorities who are dealing with the matter when action will be taken. He is told that the matter has been referred to a higher bureau for a decision, or perhaps that the matter is under review, or whatever. He is not told that the form has been lost. Why? Because losing a form is a type of incompetence, the exposure of which would cause the authorities to lose face by contradicting their implicit claim to be people who can properly handle forms. The American eventually suspects that the explanation being offered is not accurate. If he discovers that the form has actually been lost, he will feel angry because "After all, if I had only been told it was lost, I could have filled out another form and eliminated this interminable delay." *But the authorities were more concerned about preserving face than about the efficient processing of forms or directness in communication.* (Italics added)

In an individualistic culture such as the United States, face as conceived of by the Chinese, with their thousands of years of history under the influence of the tenets of Confucianism, does not exist. The actions of the Chinese in this anecdote are almost incomprehensible for Americans, who, in contrast, are constantly bombarded by messages urging efficiency, honesty, directness, and personal responsibility for one's actions. The Chinese actions were based on the need to preserve everyone's face; the American's expectations, however, were based on achievement or completion of the desired outcome. Chapter 6 will look more closely at face and communication strategies.

Societal Roles

Human behavior occurs in widely different social and cultural contexts. Numerous variables, such as social position, social roles, norms, social control, and social structure, influence human behavior. Although these variables exist across all cultures, the relative importance, classifications, types, interpretations, and responsibilities assigned to different variables vary cross-culturally. *Position* identifies an individual's place in social space. A woman can occupy the position of daughter, mother, or sister in kinship space, of faculty member, committee member, or departmental chairperson in occupational space. It is possible for one individual to occupy all of these positions in a lifetime, often simultaneously. Every member of society occupies various different positions. When individuals occupy a given position, their *role* is comprised of the designated or expected behavior that accompanies that position. Whether a person's role is that of a child, parent, employer, teacher, or senator, that individual's behavior is guided by the role expectations held by others within that same culture.

Through the enculturation process, members of a cultural group acquire requisite socially acceptable behavior. *Social control,* the enforcement of the shared standard of conduct governing the behavior of group members, ensures individuals' adherence to this behavior. Societies vary in how they are structured and in how strict they are in terms of social control. Societal roles have important consequences for the behavior of individuals. Who an individual is, how this individual is related to other members of society, and the status ascribed to or achieved by this individual are important culturally determined roles. Cultures will assign dif-