

process. Such behavior is often disconcerting to members of more individualistic cultures, who expect to be dealing directly with their counterparts and who are not averse to disagreement and may even revel in it.

Polychronic and Monochronic Time

In addition to the dichotomy between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, researchers have also suggested a distinction among cultures based on how they regard time. According to Hall (1983), cultures organize time in two major ways: *polychronic time* (P-time) and *monochronic time* (M-time). In P-time cultures, scheduling of time is of little importance, and many events occur simultaneously. Members of P-time cultures often engage in several unrelated activities simultaneously; doctors in China may treat patients while holding conversations with visiting relatives about separate and often unrelated medical topics, and in Latin America, businesspeople may be interrupted during meetings to conduct personal matters.

The emphasis in P-time cultures is on personal involvement and the culmination of transactions over that of rigid adherence to timetables. Spending time with others is more valued than are strict schedules or punctuality. Meal breaks in P-time cultures are often long and encourage social interactions; conducting any sort of business while eating is often frowned on and regarded as rude. In P-time cultures, a person would avoid cutting a conversation short to be on time for an appointment. Appointments are viewed as approximate, flexible meeting times; people show up late or cancel at the last minute, even when the appointment is important. Such behavior occurs not because members of P-time cultures have no concept of time or punctuality but because these terms have different connotations than they do for members of M-time cultures.

In P-time cultures, the future is often viewed as unknown and unforeseeable; therefore, planning for the future is minimal and rarely cast in stone. Future plans may include caveats such as “God be willing” or “it be God’s will,” alluding to the belief that the future does not necessarily turn out as one has intended or projected. There is a high tolerance of ambiguity; members of P-time cultures tend to “go with the flow,” are flexible with respect to agendas and timetables, and are willing to change course with little advance notice. Navajo Native Americans, a P-time cul-

ture, regard time as flowing (rather than as a linear process) and believe that people should live with a focus on the here and now. Planning for the future and carefully scheduling activities are regarded by them as evidence of a person's dissatisfaction and discontentment. Time is not, for them, a commodity to be scrupulously apportioned (Gilliland, 1995).

M-time cultures, in contrast, place a high value on carefully scheduled time, or on the compartmentalizing of one's day. Time is regarded as something dictated by the clock and the hours of the day. Day planners, date books, agendas, and PDAs dominate social and business life in an M-time culture. Time determines and coordinates everything people do, their relationships with others, and their attitudes about the world. There is little tolerance of ambiguity; time is highly structured and organized; planning is sequential, very step-by-step, and concrete. An appointment is something that is either kept or canceled in advance. Members of M-time cultures prefer to focus on one thing or one task at a time, and they separate their time between task-oriented activities and personal or social activities. A business meeting should focus solely on the business at hand, with no interruptions for personal matters; doctor care should focus directly on the immediate medical needs of the patient.

When members of M-time cultures and P-time cultures interact, there is often a culture clash. Germans, Swiss, and North Americans are particularly time conscious. To a North American, "soon" means in the next few minutes, hours, or days, while to a member of an Asian or Arab culture, it may mean three months, six months, nine months, a year, or when people are ready. For an important business meeting scheduled by an American parent company in Chile, the Americans would likely show up just before the hour that the meeting is scheduled to begin. The Chileans, however, would probably arrive from a half hour to an hour later. Suppose the German government were hosting an event for a group of officials from Italy, who they expected to arrive at 7:00 P.M. By 7:30 P.M., the Germans would probably still be the only ones present at the event. Nigerians think nothing of being late for an appointment; rather than regarding punctuality as an individual's responsibility, they see time as a force or entity in itself. Being late is not an individual's fault but, rather, the result of time defeating that person's endeavor to meet an obligation (Enahoro, 1998). In P-time cultures, a person is generally obligated to wait for the other person to show up for a scheduled meeting or appointment, no mat-

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-