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Words as Bridges:
Information- versus Relations-based Rhetorical Strategies in the War on Terror

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More than 2000 years ago, Aristotle presented a systematic study of persuasion which he called rhetoric. According to Aristotle, the artistic means of persuasion were based on logical appeals (*logos*), emotional appeals (*pathos*) and a source's credibility (*ethos*). Aristotle's notions of persuasion laid the foundations of rhetorical theory that still prevail today. Today's panel is but one example.

While Aristotle's work, "The Rhetoric," may be the most important historical theory of persuasion in the Western world, this model is not shared by other parts of the world. In fact, some cultures with a long, vibrant tradition of persuasion such as China do not have a word for rhetoric. [1] George A. Kennedy, a leading scholar in the field of rhetoric recently commented in his comparative study, "So far as I can discover, the word 'rhetoric' does not exactly correspond to any term in non-Western languages."[2] He even questioned the validity of using traditional Western rhetorical concepts when describing non-Western rhetoric. [3]

The notion of "words as weapons" and its corresponding link to Aristotelian rhetorical theory is noteworthy. The Latinate *Trivium*, the three disciplines of 'logic, grammar and rhetoric, were the foundation of classical education curriculum for clergy, lawyers, physicians, diplomats and other public servants who required a "persuasive, or

subtle combative mode of speaking and writing."[4] Walter Ong speaks to the Western

perspective of rhetoric as a tool in combat: "The development of the vast rhetorical

tradition was distinctive of the west and was related…to the tendency among the Greeks

… to maximize options in the mental as well as in the extra-mental worlds."[5]

In contrast to a prevailing Western assumption that tends to view "words as

weapons," some cultures may assume a view of "words as bridges." For example, Xing

Lu, in her study of persuasion and argumentation in ancient China, observed an Eastern

preference that favored integrated, holistic and implicit modes of speech and

argumentation.[6] Kennedy found a "higher tolerance of contention, personal invective, and

flattery" in Western rhetorical practices compared to a "greater pressure for consensus,

politeness, and restraint" in non-Western rhetoric.[7] This rhetorical practice corresponds

with an Eastern perspective of the role of the diplomat. In contrast to communicating an

image of power, an Asian diplomat described his goal of representing to his interlocutor

and public of the other country an image of his country's "stability, tranquility, and

harmony."[8]

These differing views of rhetoric are fertile ground for cross-cultural

misunderstanding. This paper seeks to add to the cross-fertilization of international

relations and the use of rhetoric by exploring intercultural communication scholarship.

This paper also exposes some of the unshared assumptions that underlie the different

perspectives of persuasion that can undermine a nation's effectiveness in the international

political arena. First, the paper turns to the recent comparative study of rhetoric by

George A. Kennedy.[9] Not only does Kennedy highlight areas of cross-cultural

differences, but also buried in his analysis are Western cultural assumptions associated

with communication. The second section examines three dominant cultural divides and relates them to Kennedy's observations. These cultural divides are synthesized into information-centered and relations-centered perspective of communication. The paper specifically draws upon examples from U.S. public diplomacy in the Arab and Islamic world. The final section returns to Aristotle's three persuasive premises and looks at how culture may alter their appearance.

KENNEDY'S *COMPARATIVE RHETORIC*

Kennedy embarks on his journey of comparative rhetoric by introducing the notion of "rhetorical energy." In many ways, his discussion of "rhetorical energy" appears to validate or give explanation to Joseph Nye's concept of soft power. Nye defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments."[10] Effective communication, and particularly persuasion, is at the heart of soft power. For Nye, soft power is a choice or option that one opts for over hard power or force. For Kennedy, rhetoric, and specifically "rhetorical energy," is a basic aspect of humans and other social animals. Kennedy explains "rhetorical energy:"

> When an individual encounters a situation that threatens of seems to offer an opportunity for advancing self-interest, an emotional reaction takes place; it may be fear, anger, hunger, lust, indignation, pity, curiosity, love, or some other emotion. This emotion, often unconsciously, prompts response that expends energy in utterance or physical action directed toward fulfilling the need.[11]

In its simplest form, rhetoric energy is conveyed through volume, pitch, or repetition. In its more complex forms, rhetoric energy includes logical reasons, pathetic narratives, metaphors and other components of what might considered features found in rhetoric and formal speech.

Kennedy ties rhetorical energy and the origins of rhetoric to the natural instinct

for self-preservation and preservation of the individual's social group. Whereas the

expenditure of rhetorical energy may be costly, it is less costly than the use of force. In

this he appears to endorse Nye's notion of soft power. However, whereas Nye attributes

the rise of soft power to the decreasing tolerance for force or hard power, Kennedy

suggests that soft power is inherently the preferred power in nature. As Kennedy

explains:

> Nature has favored the use of communication by utterance or body
> language over the use of force; although sometimes costly in energy, it is
> less dangerous the individual than physical conflict.[12]

Kennedy gives an example of rhetorical energy and nature's preference for

communication to physical force in his preliminary discussion of rhetoric in animal

communication. Social animals, like humans, rely on rhetorical energy to preserve the

genetic line. Kennedy draws on two red deer stags competing for mating rights by staging

loud vocal encounters: "…each stag tries to out-roar the other...and the one who roars the

loudest and longest often wins." As Kennedy points out, though the rhetorical energy cost

is great, in that that roaring can go on for hours, it is less costly and less dangerous than

an actual fight."[13] I purposely mention this example because it relates directly to

Professor Karen Guttieri's observation about U.S. public diplomacy of "simply shouting

the message louder and with more frequency." In some respects, nation-states use of

rhetorical energy parallels the red stag roaring contest.

Kennedy says that "all communication carries some rhetorical energy."[14] He

argues that without rhetorical energy, there would be no communication. In this, I have to

clarify a point of departure from Kennedy's view of the relationship between rhetoric and

communication, and the view presented in this paper. Kennedy distinguishes rhetoric from communication, but he appears to view rhetoric as the master frame for analysis, with communication as a subset. It is the rhetoric that precipitates communication. He also defines communication as "a general term for the transmission of a message."[15]

In this paper, I treat communication as the overarching framework, with rhetoric subsumed under communication. While cross-cultural or comparative rhetorical analysis may be new with the appearance of Kennedy's book, intercultural communication has long studied the cross-cultural implications that communication imposes on rhetoric.[16] The tendency for Western rhetorical studies to focus on text, for example, correlates with the communication preference intercultural scholars have noted. The overwhelming majority of works in English on rhetoric are filled with verbatim transcripts and analyses of spoken or written text. Kennedy echoes this Western cultural assumption that focuses on text in a comment he makes on analyzing pathos: "In composing or analyzing text pathos has to be judged from what is contained in the text, not from how a speaker delivers it or how an audience receives it."[17] As will be discussed, this focus on text or message and minimizing the relevance of the message context is distinct Western cultures. Additionally, Kennedy's definition of communication as transmitting messages is also characteristic of Western communication, specifically the U.S., which will be discussed shortly.

A final implicit assumption in rhetorical study is its association with persuasion. Kennedy's distinction between rhetoric as persuasion and non-persuasion, correspond to the instrumental or purposeful value in Western communication studies. While Kennedy says that rhetoric was "primarily taught of as an art of persuasive speaking or writing,"

rhetorical techniques were also used in "imaginative compositions not explicitly intended to persuade an audience to some action or belief" but was intended to provide enjoyment for the audience or demonstrate the speaker's skill. In this Kennedy said rhetoric could be viewed as the "art of persuasion," as well as the "art of effective expression." Whereas most U.S. texts would tend to focus on the instrumental view of rhetoric as the art of persuasion, other cultures would lean toward the non-instrument view of rhetoric as the art of effective expression.

These three assumptions (communication as transmission; communication as focusing on text; and communication as instrumental) are buried in Kennedy's discussion of rhetoric. They reflect a distinct Western/U.S. view of communication that may not be shared by other cultures. In his study, Kennedy does raise explicit differences he found in rhetoric in Western and non-Western traditional societies.

First, he raises the difference between what could be described as the confrontational versus harmonizing perspectives of rhetoric exemplified by Western and non-Western rhetoric, respectively. As he and so many others have noted, the development of rhetoric was tied to the emergence of constitutional democracy and the practice of majority rule in ancient Greece. Male citizens were expected to speak and argue their position in public assemblies and courts. As Kennedy notes, "The systematic teaching of rhetoric in Greece thus originated in the need to instruct a person in how to give a speech in a court of law."[18] The modern day association of rhetoric with law, including today's panel that touches on international law, reflects the Western rhetorical tradition of ancient Greece. Yet, as Kennedy notes, not all societies, including many of those today, subscribe to or engage in democratic practices. The notion of an individual

arguing one's case in a free market place of ideas along with the concept of majority rule is not part of their political, and by extension it would seem, their rhetorical tradition.

While Kennedy noted that deliberative rhetoric is "a universal genre," its function differs. In contrast to the convention of majority rule, other societies tend to rule by consensus. Whereas majority rule is often valued for its expediency in Western cultures, intercultural scholars note that consensus is valued by cultures that put a premium on social harmony and cohesion. Kennedy's observation on deliberative rhetoric relates to the value of social harmony:

> "The function of deliberation in traditional societies is the achievement of consensus; not the acceptance of the view of the majority but explicit or tacit unanimity … Lack of unanimity is a threat not only to leaders but to the maintenance of society. Non-Western societies that have accepted Western democracy often continue to try to impose uniformity of public opinion in a way disquieting to Westerners."[19]

The cultural difference in deliberative function is also reflected in style. As Kennedy notes of traditional societies, "a speaker may offer a suggestion and indicate willingness to withdraw it or compromise."[20] The value of social cohesion and harmony, especially in public, contrasts sharply with the Greek and Western rhetorical tradition. Kennedy's discussion of sophistry is illustrative. "A sophist aim is to win, and sophistry is thus by definition contentious."[21] Whereas sophistry is "unknown" in traditional, non-literate societies, Kennedy says, "Sophistry flourishes in the Western tradition of tolerance of controversy, individual ambition, and freedom of speech."[22]

In several instances, Kennedy struggles to bridge concepts from Western to non-Western rhetoric. Kennedy observed "a large body of oral and written discourse in non-Western cultures that is not easily classifiable as judicial or deliberative." This discourse includes "performances of traditional myths, legends, and songs as well as speeches" and

they "are often connected with some festival or ceremony," and they are "almost always universally concerned with transmitting and enhancing traditional values."[23] Kennedy struggled with a description of this non-Western category.

Finally, there are two instances of style that deserve mention. In contrast to the "systematic" parts of rhetoric found in Greek rhetorical tradition, Kennedy found that other cultures with long traditions view "composition as organic, not a series of separate steps."[24] Related to this are differences he found in the organizational structure. Kennedy found "some sense of beginning, middle, and end" in many speeches in traditional societies. However, "an elaborate epilogue … is more characteristic of the West than of other cultures."[25]

To explore, and possibly explain some of these observations Kennedy found in his study of comparative rhetoric, I turn now to overarching views of communication. Embedded in these views are assumptions about persuasion and rhetoric.

CULTURAL DIVIDES & COMMUNICATION

All cultures view communication as important, yet how they view communication differs in fundamental ways. Similarly, how they communicate, specifically their distinctive patterns, also ultimately differs. This section highlights three prominent cultural divides identified in intercultural and communication scholarship. These cultural divides help illuminate some of Kennedy's observations about Western and non-Western rhetoric.[26]

Individualism/Independent & Collectivism/Interdependent

First is the individualism/collectivism cultural continuum.[27] Some scholars have suggested "independent" and "interdependent," as parallel self-concepts for

individualistic and collectivist cultures, respectively.[28] Harry Triandis called

"individualism-collectivism" the single most important dimension of cultural differences

in social behavior.[29] He estimated that 70 percent of the world's population holds a

collectivist cultural perspective.[30] Individualism is largely confined to Western Europe

and the United States.

Indeed, individualism has been the most frequently cited feature of U.S. culture.

Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term while writing about his visit to America in the

1830s.[31] Robert N. Bellah in his study of American society, *Habits of the Heart,*

asserted that "Individualism lies at the very core of American culture"[32] Individualism is

a central feature of U.S. political culture, associated with a corresponding emphasis upon

individual rights, self-reliance and independence. Charles Elder and Roger Cobb, who

studied political symbolism in the United States and other countries, found that

"individualism undergirds basic [U.S.] political values."[33]

Individualism also plays a dominant role in shaping U.S. perceptions of

communication.[34] Edward Stewart, in one of the most comprehensive analysis of

dominant U.S. cultural, described the U.S. value of the autonomous individual as a

"concrete point of reference." As he stated, "the American is not expected to bow to the

wishes of authority, be it vested in family, tradition or some organizations."[35] Similarly,

John Condon and Fathi Yousef in their extensive profile of U.S. culture and

communication, observed that the "fusion of individualism and equality is so valued and

so basic that many Americans find it most difficult to relate to contrasting values of other

cultures" that stress "interdependence, complementary relationships."[36]

Scholars have highlighted important distinctions between individualism and collectivism. Individualism tends to stress the interests of the individual over the group; collectivism tends to stress the interests of the group over the individual. In individualist cultures, personal accomplishments are important and individuals will take advantage of opportunities for advancement even if it means sacrificing personal relations. Group cohesion, without expressed consent, is often negatively interpreted as group pressure that impinges on the individual freedom. In contrast, collectivist cultures put a premium on group harmony, cohesion and stability. [37] Individuals pay primary attention to the needs of their group and will sacrifice personal opportunities. Tending to relationships is more important than individual accomplishments.

The structure of relationships also differs. Whereas individualist cultures tend to prefer horizontal (peer) relationships, collectivist cultures tend to be more comfortable with power differences and vertical relationships. In individualist cultures, relationships tend to be utilitarian, short-term or transitory, and often explicitly defined via public statements or written contracts. In collectivist cultures, relationships tend to be long-term, based on trust or historical context, and are often implicitly acknowledged by both parties. Whereas individualists will readily join a group for personal benefit, in collectivist cultures there is a strong distinction between in-groups (family, tribe, corporation) and out-groups. Because the in-group protects the individual, the in-group receives the individual's loyalty while out-groups tend to be held with suspicion. While collectivists strongly encourage cooperation within the in-group, they tend to be poor joiners of new groups.

The broad cultural distinctions between individualism and collectivism impact communication in several ways. For example, in individualistic cultures communication messages, including persuasive messages, are geared toward the individual. The use of the pronoun "you" is directed solely toward a single individual in a personalized way. Messages also play to the desirability of choice, a hallmark of individualism. Promotional visuals may feature only one person as representative of the larger target audience. In collectivist cultures, persuasive messages cast appeals within the larger social group.

With regard to Kennedy's discussion of rhetoric, individualism and collectivism is reflected in phenomenon of sophistry. The stress for the collectivist culture would be on maintaining social harmony and cohesion, not public confrontation. This emphasis follows with the rhetorical strategies of compromise versus argumentation. As for the democratic tradition, the idea of an individual espousing her views in public and apart from the collective would be alien in collectivist cultures. Instead a designated spokesperson would speak on behalf of the collective. Rather than majority rule, consensus would be more advantageous to preserving social cohesion than individual votes.

Transmission & Ritual View of Communication

Another major cultural divide is the transmission and ritual view of communication. These differing perspectives stem from the work of Canadian scholar Harold Adams Innis,[38] who suggested the two communication perspectives, and James Carey, who labeled and explained the contrasting perspectives, in his seminal essay, "A Cultural Approach to Communication."[39]

According to Carey, central to the transmission view "is the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control … It is defined by terms such as 'imparting,' 'sending,' 'transmitting,' or 'giving information to others.'"[40] In contrast to the transmission view of "imparting information," the ritual view focuses on "the representation of shared beliefs."[41] The ritual view, as its name implies, is rooted in the metaphor of religious rituals, the "sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality." Rituals, as communication activities, connect and solidify social relations. As Carey noted, "nothing new is learned, but a particular view of the world is portrayed."[42]

The difference between transmission and ritual can perhaps most vividly be demonstrated by looking at the corresponding roles of language. In Western cultures, the written word is for transmitting information across time and space. In the Arab culture, Arabic is associated with poetry, the Holy Quran, and Arab nationalism – all of which help weave together the social fabric of the community.[43]

While the ritual view may be the dominant perspective in many parts of the globe and especially collectivist cultures, the transmission view is more dominant in U.S. culture. In reference to American Culture, Carey remarked that in the "deepest roots of our thinking…we picture the act of communication as the transmittal of information across space."[44] The transmission view is so fundamental to U.S. communication study that it is often hard to envision or even speak of communication that is not about sending or receiving messages. All major definitions of communication describe a process of sending or transmitting something (i.e., ideas, information, and feelings), hence the communication short-hand: sender-message-receiver.[45] Most textbooks begin with the

early communication model developed by Claude Shannon and Wilbur Weaver, two

engineers at Bell Telephone.[46] Inherent in the transmission view of communication is not

only the notion of sending something, but expecting a specific outcome such as behavior

or attitude change. Communication is purposeful and instrumental. Norbert Wiener,

another influential scholar in U.S. communication studies, classed communication and

control together in his influential work on cybernetics, *The Human Use of Human

Beings*.[47] The success of communication depends on how the receiver obtains the

message and produces the desired response.

Perhaps, as Carey argues, Americans are more familiar with the transmission

view because they may tend to overlook or undervalue the ritual view of communication

activities. However, as communication scholar Denis McQuail pointed out, ritual plays

an important role in unifying and mobilizing sentiment and action. Ritual communication

activities can be equally as persuasive as transmission communication. U.S. politicians

engage in ritual communication when they exploit the use of potent symbols and latent

appeals to cultural values, togetherness, myths or tradition.[48] Jay Rosen of New York

University on his weblog *PressThink* urged (U.S.) journalists, who tend to see the

transmission of new information as real and important, to pay more attention to the ritual

communication in their coverage of the 2004 Democratic National Convention. As he

cautioned, "if you try to understand a political ritual with a transmission view in your

head, you will miss much of what's going on."[49] He also advised U.S. journalists to look

behind the messages and pay attention to the symbolism of the political rituals at the

convention as communication.

Returning to Kennedy, the distinction between transmission and ritual is very much evident in his analysis. First was his definition of communication as transmitting messages. This mirrors the U.S. view of communication as transmission. Second is his search to explain the large body of text that was not judicial or deliberative. He describes this discourse as "performances of traditional myths, legends, and songs as well as speeches" and they "are often connected with some festival or ceremony," and they are "almost always universally concerned with transmitting and enhancing traditional values."[50] His description corresponds very closely to the ritual view of communication. As Kennedy experienced, it is difficult to describe ritual communication using a transmission view of communication. Much is missed in the process.

Low-context & High-Context View

The distinction between ritual and transmission view of communication relates closely to an early cultural divide identified by Edward T. Hall found. Hall differentiated between high-context and low-context cultures to explain how much meaning people place in the message itself versus the context of the message. He said low-context cultures such as the U.S. culture tend to place very little meaning in the context or setting and tend to focus on the message alone. The communicator is responsible for the full meaning of their messages and any misunderstandings that may result. U.S. communication analyses, in turn, tend to focus primarily on message content, to assuage the significance or persuasiveness of the communication. Kennedy's and other rhetorical scholar's focus on text is in keeping with the low-context priority given to the message.

In contrast to the U.S. low-context culture, much of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Arab world are populated by high-context cultures. Communication in high-

context cultures is rooted more in the context than the message. As Hall cautioned, "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message."[51] In other words, one cannot rely on message content alone to understand what actually was communicated. A message is hollow without examining the contextual cues such as the communicator's status, credibility, timing, delivery style, selected format, or multiple audiences. As Hall observed, high-context speakers often will talk around the point, in effect "putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one."[52] Audiences in high-context cultures draw upon well-honed skills of using such contextual cues to decipher the true meaning of the message as well as the speaker's intent.
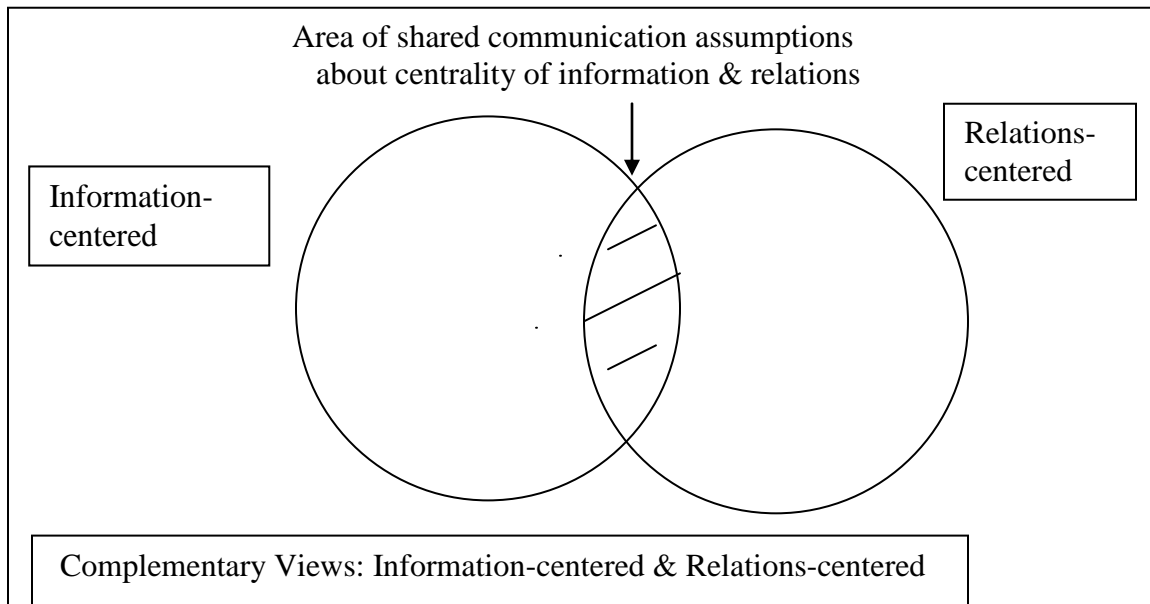
Kennedy echoes this Western cultural assumption that focuses on text in rhetorical analysis. His comment on analyzing pathos reflects the low-context perspective that puts the communication weight on the message content as opposed to message context: "In composing or analyzing text pathos has to be judged from what is contained in the text, not from how a speaker delivers it or how an audience receives it."[53] This focus on text or message and minimizing the relevance of the message context is distinct of low-context cultures. For high-context cultures, the weights between message content and message context are reversed.

INFORMATION-CENTERED & RELATIONS-CENTERED APPROACH

These cultural divides provide the tools for constructing two complementary perspectives of communication: one is information-centered; the other is relations-centered. The information-centered approach contains dominant features from the

individualist, independent, transmission and low-context patterns. I have adopted the term information-centered because information is at the heart of the information-centered approach. The relations-centered approach contains dominant features from the collectivist, interdependent, ritual and high-context patterns. This term was adopted because relations (connections) are central to the relations-centered approach. Whereas the information-centered perspective focuses on strategic communication in terms of information design and delivery, the relations-centered perspective focuses strategic alliances as a dynamic communication process of building and maintaining relations among people.

The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, as all communication activities are inherently about information and relations. Conveying information is critical to the task function of communication, while maintaining positive relations is fundamental to the social function of communication. The distinction between the two perspectives is in terms of emphasis. Whichever is the dominant perspective will tend to shape the underlying assumptions. The information-centered approach assumes that conveying information is important; while the relations-centered approach assumes that cultivating relations is the priority. Seeing the distinctions between the two approaches is relatively easy. Intercultural misunderstandings occur because the underlying assumptions behind the approaches are not as readily observable. The figure below illustrates the overlapping nature of the information- and relations-centered views of communication.

Area of shared communication assumptions
about centrality of information & relations

Information-
centered

Relations-
centered

Complementary Views: Information-centered & Relations-centered

The information-centered perspective emphasizes communication *content* –
information, knowledge, facts and messages. The approach focuses on the strategic
design and delivery of information to achieve political objectives with international
publics. Communication is seen primarily as information transfer from one individual
entity (communicator) to another individual entity (audience). Both individual entities are
separate and distinct, each with their own particular communication attributes. The
communication challenge is how to design and deliver information that can connect the
two disparate individual entities. Communicators conduct research on the other's
attributes and design information and communication strategies accordingly.
Communication is instrumental in that it is purposeful and goal-oriented.

From the information-centered perspective, communication problems are seen
primarily as information problems. Communication is not effectual if there is insufficient,
incomplete or inaccurate information. It is up to the communicator to either supply more

information or correct the misinformation. A perception that the audience lacks

information tends to prompt the communicator to increase the amount or supply of

information. A perception that the audience does not understand the information or has

misinformation, prompts the communicator to supply greater volumes of information,

counter the perceived inaccuracies, or try different message design and delivery

strategies. The importance of message design and delivery in the information-centered

perspective correlates to the importance of rhetoric found in Western, and specifically

U.S. culture.

Because messages (information content) carry the communication weight, great

emphasis is placed on selecting, structuring and presenting the information to achieve the

desired effect. Messages are information capsules containing the ideas, knowledge of

emotions of one entity that needs to be transferred to the other entity. Given the need to

avoid distortions in the transfer of information, message design stresses directness, clarity

and explicitly linear organizational structures. In cases in which the audience may be

resistant to the messages, information is strategically manipulated to make them more

persuasive and increase the likelihood of the audience accepting the message. However,

the underlying message design is still linear and direct.

The relations-centered perspective focuses on the communication *context* –

relationships, linguistic and social cues and social setting. The approach focuses on

cultivating relationships with international publics as the means to achieve political

objectives. The emphasis is on expanding communication channels and creating bonds

with the goal of achieving strategic alliances. Whereas the information-centered approach

begins by asking "What is our message? And how can we get that message out?" the

relations-center approach asks, "What relations are important? And, how can we establish or build those relations?"

From a relations-centered perspective, messages (information content) are relatively meaningless in and of themselves. The significance and meaning of any information is derived from the nature of the relationship between the parties. The relationship determines what information merits attention or is ignored as well as how it is interpreted and reciprocated.

From the relations-centered perspective, messaging strategies are not as important as relationship building and maintenance strategies. While it may be possible to study rhetorical strategies from the information-centered perspective, such strategies are abstract if divorced from their social context. The importance of formal greetings, salutations and forms of address adds significance because they can supply important cues about the nature and strength of the relationship. Face saving tactics can entail an extensive array of elaborate maneuvers that help the parties navigate relationship difficulties without either party explicitly acknowledging that such difficulties even exist.[54] Because communication presupposes a relationship, messaging strategies tend to be indirect or implicit. The nature of the relationship provides context and meaning. This corresponds to Kennedy's observation of the holistic view of discourse he found in non-Western traditional societies.

The distinctions between the information-centered and relations-centered approaches are readily apparent in U.S. public diplomacy efforts to communicate with foreign publics. Karen Guttieri's observation of the U.S. tactic of "simply shouting the message louder and with more frequency" is telling. That this communication giant is

aggressively designing and delivering messages to no avail is ironic, but also

symptomatic of an information-centered approach that is proving ineffective with foreign

publics that have relations-centered preference.

The centrality of transmitting information and conveying messages is the

underlying assumption that undergirds U.S. public diplomacy's communication with

foreign publics. Transmission is central to the definition of U.S. public diplomacy.

According to the U.S. State Department, "Public diplomacy seeks to promote the national

interest of the United States through *understanding, informing, and influencing* foreign

audiences."[55] The emphasis on transmitting information – getting the U.S. message out –

has been a paramount concern for post 9/11 U.S. public diplomacy. President Bush lead

the information charge when he said, "We need to do a better job of making our case."

"Getting the U.S. message out," was the first element in Ambassador Karen Hughes'

strategic framework when she assumed her position as the head of U.S. public diplomacy

in August 2006.[56]

The emphasis on transmitting information in U.S. public diplomacy is also

reflected in the attention it devotes to designing messages. The need for a clear and

persuasive message has been a recurring and pivotal concern of post 9/11 U.S. public

diplomacy. Although the many high-level reports repeatedly stressed the need for

"listening," "dialogue" and "two-way communication" to "engage foreign publics," the

message themes were primarily uni-directional and self-promotional. The 9/11

Commission, for example, called on the U.S. government to "define the message" and

offered its suggestion for themes.[57] Ironically, as Washington struggled to find the right

message and themes, the underlying assumption about the importance of needing to

transmit messages in the first place was never questioned. However strategically designed U.S. messages may be, they tend to carry little communication weight with the relations-centered publics. From a relations-centered perspective, focusing on messages misses the point of what communication is and what is being communicated.

INFORMATION-CENTERED & RELATIONS-CENTERED RHETORIC

The assumptions underlying the information-centered and relations-centered perspectives suggest corollary implications for public rhetoric. It is possible to highlight some of these implications by returning to Aristotle's notions of logos, pathos, and ethos.

Logos

Logos, the Greek word for logic, appeals to the intellectual reason. Logic, in the Western sense, is often associated with 'rational.' The explanation of *logos* in a popular U.S. college text on persuasion echoes descriptions in most rhetorical studies: "It (*logos)* relies on the audience ability to process information (such as statistical data, examples, or testimony) in logical ways to arrive at some conclusion."[58] This description is replete with features of the information-centered perspective of persuasion. First, information is a central and pivotal component—without information *logos* cannot be constructed. Second, equating information with statistical data, examples or testimony suggests an inherent or objective truth. While facts are important tools in information-centered communication, facts do not carry the same persuasive weight in relations-centered arguments. Rather than arming one's argument with facts, one would use metaphors, analogies, historical references or even rhetorical questions that imply connections instead of absolutes. Finally, arranging the information "in logical ways to arrive at some

conclusion" is in essence, a linear, sequential presentation of unitary themes to reach an

end point. The relations-centered perspective, which tends to be holistic and inter-

connected, may combine multiple themes in a non-sequential pattern. In contrast to the

clear organizational structure of messages composed using the linear thought pattern, the

non-linear message may appear to have no organizational structure.[59] Nonlinear cultures,

typical of the relations-centered perspective, are characterized by the "simultaneous

bombardment and processing of a variety of stimuli" so that people think in images, not

just words.[60]

The notion of "truth," because of its importance to logos, warrants further cross-

cultural elaboration. Truth is viewed differently from the information-centered

(independent) and relations-centered (interdependent) perspectives. In independent

cultures truth is thought of as an absolute state, equal and applicable to all. In contrast,

interdependent cultures see truth as rooted in the social context, which suggests what is

appropriate, valid and accurate.[61] These differing views of truth are readily apparent in

U.S. public diplomacy efforts in the Arab and Islamic world, and the public's response.

U.S. public diplomacy, particularly in its information broadcasts, has taken pains to stress

truth, accuracy and objectivity in its communication. The U.S. assumption of truth is not

only that it would be self-evident, but also valued. Much to the chagrin of U.S. officials,

U.S. public diplomacy's vigorous efforts 'to get the truth out' have had, seemingly little

if any impact. A glaring example is the first post 9/11 initiative: the fact book linking the

9/11 attacks to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Despite massive distribution of the

booklet in multiple languages, bin Laden was viewed as more credible than the U.S.

president in opinion polls by the targeted audience.[62]

Pathos

Pathos refers to emotional appeals. Aristotle spoke of emotional appeals as deep-seated values or 'virtues' such as justice (respect for the law), prudence (good judgment), generosity (unselfish attitude), courage (doing what one thought was right in the face of opposition), temperance (self-restraint and moderation), magnanimity (willingness to forgive and forget), gentleness (empathic), magnificence (recognizing and fostering better qualities in oneself and others), and wisdom.[63] Today most people think of emotional appeals as fear, belonging or anger. What is interesting about *pathos*, particularly in the West, is that while emotional appeals are widely recognized to be the most powerful element of human persuasion, their legitimacy as a persuasive tool is often held suspect and can prompt ethical questions. Perhaps because information is more central to the information-centered perspective, the intellectual appeals of logos is more often labeled as "the higher" or more noble than the emotional appeals of pathos. From the relations-centered perspective, emotions are a central feature in connecting and bonding with others. As such, it is not surprising to find that relations-centered communication tends to be more heavily laden with powerful emotional appeals.

The divergent use of pathos is reflected also in the direct style associated with the information-centered and the indirect style associated with the relations-centered approach. David Levine spoke of the American cultural preference for direct communication.[64] The direct verbal communication style strives for emotional neutrality or objectivity. "Direct communication works to strip language of its expressive overtones and suggestive allusions," Levine said, "It aims for the precise representation of fact, technique, or expectation."[65] In contrast, indirect or what Levine termed "ambiguous

communication" deliberately uses language to evoke an emotional response. As Levine

pointed out, "By alluding to shared experiences and sentiments verbal associations

[indirect communication] can express and evoke a wealth of affective responses."[66] From

the relations-centered perspective, more important than clarity of details or technical

information is the emotional resonance a message achieves.

Additionally, whereas the direct style stresses openness and clarity, the indirect

style would be more likely to conceal or bury the meaning within the message. In cultures

where "saving face" is important, a person's skill is not in how directly she can state

criticism, but rather in how cleverly she can disguise the truth. Robert B. Kaplan, in his

study of rhetorical styles, described the indirectness as "the turning and turning of gyres:"

> The circles or gyres turn around the subject and show it from a variety of
> tangential views, but the subject is never looked at directly. Things are
> developed in terms of what they are not, rather than in terms of what they
> are.[67]

Compared to such indirectness, directness can be seen as highly negative. It is not

surprising that while many American lauded U.S. President Bush's "penchant for

speaking straight," other publics found his style of speech jarring.

Ethos

Ethos was the first element in Aristotle's theory of persuasion. I have put it last

because from a cross-cultural communication perspective it is the most encompassing

and most complex element. *Ethos*, as summed up in this panel's initial proposal, refers to

"the personal qualities, characteristics, and skill of the speaker." Ethos captures the

impression or image that a persuader conveys to his audience through his verbal and

nonverbal presentation. Today, *ethos* is commonly associated with "credibility" and

"charisma." As Kennedy noted, all traditional cultures have words for orators and value eloquent speakers.

However, from a cross-cultural perspective, different cultures can have vastly different assessments of what constitutes credibility or charisma. The divergent assessments are reflected in underlying preferences of the information-centered and relations-centered perspectives. The U.S. president's verbal and nonverbal style is an illustrative case in point of the cross-cultural dimension of charisma and perhaps, power.

In 2004, a Pew study of global public opinion conducted shortly before the U.S. presidential elections found that "large majorities in every country surveyed – except for the U.S. – held unfavorable opinions of Bush."[68] Ironically, many of the very same attributes that American supporters for Bush found most appealing were the very same ones that his international detractors found the most offensive. For example, what many Americans positively perceived as Bush's "projection of strength," non-Americans negatively perceived as "an over-reliance on strong arm solutions." What American supporters saw as "strong and decisive," others viewed as an "arrogant, single-minded and insensitive deployment of power."[69] What many Americans lauded as "resolute," others perceived as simply "stubborn."

The divergent views of the U.S. president's ethos are mirrored in the differing information-centered and relations-centered perspectives of 'standing out' and 'blending in.' "Words as weapons" stand out. "Words as bridges" seek to blend. This distinction is explained more fully by the independent and interdependent cultural views that stress the value of individual initiatives versus maintaining social harmony, respectively. People in independent cultures tend to act according to their own attitudes and beliefs, whereas

people in interdependent cultures are more accustomed to acting according to social demands.[70] Researchers found that while the term "unique has positive connotations of freedom and independence" for independent cultures, the term "conformity has positive connotations of connectedness and harmony" for interdependent cultures.[71] Given the negative connotation of conformity in independent cultures, the corresponding counter drive is to stand out from the crowd. Communication that stands out is valued because it gets noticed. The individual who stands out is often seen as the leader, unafraid to take the lonely high road. Bellah referred to the U.S. icon of the "lone cowboy" in his treatise on U.S. individualism. The cowboy "gains value to society only because he is a completely autonomous individual who stands outside it… It is as if the myth says you can be a truly good person, worthy of admiration and love, only if you resist fully joining the group."[72] Whereas standing out alone may be valued in independent cultures, interdependent cultures tend to view it as a "sign of immaturity" in that the person is unable to control his individual impulses, or as "selfish and disloyal" in that the person disrupts social harmony.[73] Given these widely discrepant views of standing out versus maintaining harmony, U.S. public rhetoric stresses that its bold individual initiatives can be perceived quite negatively by interdependent publics which value social harmony.

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to explore and expose some of the unshared assumptions that underlie the different perspectives of persuasion that can undermine a nation's effectiveness in the international political arena. The comparative study of rhetoric by one of today's most prominent scholars in the field, George A. Kennedy highlighted

areas of cross-cultural differences as well as cultural assumptions associated with

Western and non-Western rhetoric. Many of these observable differences and buried

assumptions are explained by the fundamental ways that cultures view communication.

Communication is central to all cultures, but all cultures tend to view communication in

fundamentally different ways. The paper looked at several cultural continuums

(individualism/collectivism, transmission/ritual, and low-context/high-context) to explain

the cultural roots of different rhetorical features observed by Kennedy. The paper then

synthesized these cultural continuums into an information-centered and relations-centered

perspective of communication. Whereas U.S. public diplomacy tends to speak from the

information-centered perspective, much of the world's public communicates from a

relations-centered perspective. For a nation to be effective in communicating with

publics in the international arena, it is critically important for a nation to be able to

recognize its own dominant cultural political and communication patterns as well as how

those patterns differ from other cultures.

ENDNOTES

[1] Xing Lu. *Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century BCE: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric* (University of South Carolina Press, 1998), xi.

[2] George A. Kennedy. *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 218.

[3] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric,,*5-6.

[4] Steve Mackey. "Rhetorical Theory of Public Relations: Opening the Door to Semiotic and Pragmatism Approaches," The Annual Meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association, Christchurch, New Zealand (July 4-7, 2005): 4.

[5] Walter J. Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word* (London: Methuen, 2005) pp. 111-112, quoted by Makey, 4.

[6] Xing Lu. *Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century BCE: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), xi.

[7] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 217.

[8] Tran Van Dinh, Communication and Diplomacy in a Changing World (Norwood, NJ: Ablex , 1987), 7.

[9] George A. Kennedy. *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[10] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft* Power, (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), x.

[11] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 215.

[12] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 216

[13] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 13-14.

[14] *Kennedy, Comparative Rhetoric, 215*.

[15] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 5.

[16] See, for example, Edward C. Stewart. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Chicago, IL: Intercultural Press, 1972); John C. Condon and Fathi S. Yousef. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975).

[17] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 224.

[18] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 219.

[19] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 220-221.

[20] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 221.

[21] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 226.

[22] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 226.

[23] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 222.

[24] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 220.

[25] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 227.

[26] I should also remind my reader that in speaking of cultural frameworks, I am referring by necessity to cultural generalities or cultural tendencies. It is not uncommon for an individual's unique idiosyncrasies, personality or experience to override any number of cultural generalities. Further, with regard to the "American" culture, America is quickly becoming a multicultural society of many cultural groupings, each with its own communication style. However, in the discussion that follows "American culture" refers to characteristics documented by intercultural scholars. Many of these characteristic are still prevalent in the American mass media and public communication campaigns in the U.S. Similarly with regard to non-Western cultures, cultural patterns can vary. It is important to remember that most of the communication features, like culture, are interwoven.

[27] "Individualism and collectivism" was one of five cultural dimensions documented by Geertz Hofstede in his ground breaking study *Culture's Consequences: International differences in work-related values* (Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1980). Cross-cultural psychologist Harry Triandis has been the most prominent and prolific scholar to explore the cultural continuum. See for example, H.C. Triandis, "Collectivism vs. Individualism: A reconceptualization of a basic concept in cross-cultural psychology" in Gajendra K. Verma and Christopher Bagley (Eds.) *Cross-cultural studies of personality, attitudes and cognition* (London: Macmillam, 1988) or his book, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995).

[28] Psychologists Hazel Rose Markus and Shinobu Kitayama have suggested "independent" and "interdependent," as parallel self-concepts for individualistic and collectivist cultures, respectively. See, for

example, Hazel Rose Markus and Shinobu "Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion and motivation" *Psychological Review* 98 (1991): 224-253.

[29] Harry C. Triandis. "Collectivism vs. Individualism: A reconceptualization of a basic concept in cross-cultural psychology" in Gajendra K. Verma and Christopher Bagley (Eds.) *Cross-cultural studies of personality, attitudes and cognition* (London: Macmillam, 1988). Harry Triandis called "individualism-collectivism" the single most important dimension of cultural differences in social behavior (1988).

[30] Harry Triandis estimated that 70 percent of the world's population held a collectivist view (1989).

[31] Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*, translated by George Lawrence (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1969).

[32] Robert N. Bellah. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 124.

[33] Charles D. Elder and Roger W. Cobb. *The Political Uses of Symbols* (New York, NY: Longman, 1983), 89.

[34] Edward C. Stewart. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Chicago, IL: Intercultural Press, 1972) provides an in-depth exploration of the American world view; while Condon and Yousef provide a more general discussion of intercultural communication which incorporates many features of the American perspective, John C. Condon and Fathi S. Yousef. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975).

[35] Edward C. Stewart. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Chicago, IL: Intercultural Press, 1972), 70.

[36] Condon and Yousef, 64.

[37] Harry Triandis, Richard Brislin, and C. Hui. "Cross-cultural training across the individualism-collectivism divide" *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 12 (1988): 273.

[38] Harold Innis, a political economist by training, was interested in the dual concerns civilizations face: duration over time (continuity) and extension in space (territory). His exploration led him to reflect upon the differing roles of communication technology in society. Innis contended that the stability of a culture was based on is ability to balance between two types of communication technologies: "space-biased" or "time-biased."[38] Space-biased media, such as paper, were light and portable and enabled a society to expand over space. However, while space-biased media were easily transportable, and thus were associated with territorial expansion and control, the media had a relatively short lifespan. Time-biased media, in contrast, were more durable and heavy and thus, were not easily transported over space but did provide continuity over time. Innis surveyed a range of modern and ancient civilizations, illustrating how a civilization's bias toward time or space media paralleled its rise – and eventual collapse when it was unable to adapt to new communication technology that accentuated a new communication bias. See, Harold A. Innis. *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) (originally published 1951).

[39] James W. Carey. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992) originally published in 1989.

[40] Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 15.

[41] Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 18.

[42] Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 20

[43] R. S. Zaharna. "Understanding Cultural Preferences of Arab Communication Patterns" *Public Relations Review* 21 (1995): 241-255.

[44] James W. Carey. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York,NY: Routledge, 1992) (originally published in 1989): 18.

[45] Wilbur Schramm. "In the United States, communication research is concerned with all the ways in which information and ideas are exchanged and shared," p. 6 and "In its simplest form, the communication process consists of a sender, a message, and a receiver," p. 7. Wilbur Schramm. *The Science of Human Communication: New Directions and New Findings in Communication Research* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1963).

[46] As John Fiske noted, "the Shannon and Weaver model is widely accepted as one of the main seeds out of which Communication studies has grown," John Fiske. *Introduction to Communication* (London: Routledge, 1982), 6. For the model, see C.E. Shannon and W. Weaver. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

[47] Norbert Wiener. *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1967), 24.

[48] Denis McQuail. *McQuail Mass Communication Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 71.

[49] Jay Rosen. "Democratic National Ritual 2004" weblog *Press Think*, http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/ (accessed July 26, 2004).

[50] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 222.

[51] Edward T. Hall. "Context and meaning" in *Intercultural communication: A reader,* ed. Larry Samovar and Richard E. Porter (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1982), 18.

[52] Edward T. Hall. *Beyond Culture* (New York, NY: Anchor, 1976), 98.

[53] Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, 224.

[54] See, Stella Ting-Toomey's work on "face work" and "face negotiations" in high-context cultures. Stella Ting-Toomey. "Intercultural Conflict Styles: A Face-Negotiation Theory" in Young Yun Kim and William B. Gudykunst (Eds.) *Theories in Intercultural Communication* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1988) and Stella Ting-Toomey and Mark Cole. "Intergroup Diplomatic Communication: A Face-Negotiation Perspective," in Felipe Korzenny & Stella Ting-Toomey (Eds.) *Communicating for Peace: Diplomacy and Negotiation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1990).

[55] (Planning Group for Integration of USIA into the Dept. of State, June 20, 1997)

[56] Karen Hughes. "Town Hall Meeting" U.S. State Department, August 2006.

[57] The 9/11 Commission Report (2004), 18.

[58] Charles U. Larson. *Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992), 58.

[59] Dorothy Lee. "A lineal and nonlineal codification of reality," in P. Kollock and J. O'Brien (Eds.) *The Production of Reality* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine-Forge Press, 1977): 101-111 (Reprint from Psychosomatic Medicine, 12 (1950), 89-97.

[60] Carley Dodd. *Dynamics of intercultural communication* (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown, 1982), 162.

[61] P.B. Smith and M. H. Bond. Social psychology across interdependent cultures (London: Prentice Hall Europe, 1998), cited by Min-Sunkim. *Non-Western Perspectives on Human Communication* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2002), 111.

[62] U.S. State Department, Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, *Cultural Diplomacy: The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy*, September 2005.

[63] Larson, *Persuasion*, 57-58.

[64] David Levine. *The Flight from Ambiguity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[65] Levine, *The Flight from Ambiguity,* 32.

[66] Levine, *The Flight from Ambiguity* ,32.

[67] Robert B. Kaplan, *The Anatomy of Rhetoric: Prolegomena to a Functional Theory of Rhetoric,* (Philadelphia, PA: Center for Curriculum Development, 1972), 46.

[68] Pew Research Center, "A Year After Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe Even Higher, Muslim Anger Persists," (released March 16, 2004).

[69] Barry Zorthian. "Public Diplomay is Not the Answer," A *PublicDiplomacy.Org* Essay, n.d. http://www.publicdiplomacy.org/29.htm (accessed on November 2, 2004).

[70] Min-Sunkim, *Non-Western Perspectives on Human Communication*, 72.

[71] H. J. Kim and H. R. Markus. "Deviance or uniqueness, harmony or conformity? A cultural analysis." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77 (1999: 785-800. Cited by Min-Sunkim, *Non-Western Perspectives on Human Communication*, 91.

[72] Bellah, *Habits of the Heart,* 145.

[73] A.P. Fiske, S. Kitayama, H. R. Markus, and R. E. Nisbett. "The cultural matrix of social psychology" in D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, and G. Lindzey (Eds.) *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (vol. 2) (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 915-981. Cited by Min-Sunkim. *Non-Western Perspectives on Human Communication* 81.