Chapter 3
Globalization and Deep Culture Learning

Abstract This chapter explores how emerging insights into cognition and mind can inform our understanding of cultural learning objectives. It focuses on contrasting visions of intercultural awareness articulated by Edward Hall and Marshall McLuhan: (1) a transcendent view, and (2) a deep culture view. The former emphasizes the development of high-level cognitive processes, such as critical cultural awareness, while the latter emphasizes a process of inner change and development that is largely intuitive. This chapter will argue that our increased understanding of unconscious cognition is providing us with new paradigms for understanding cultural learning. These are said to be consistent with the view of Edward Hall, who saw culture as deep patterns of mind that influences us in ways we are unaware of, that can be uncovered by experiencing cultural difference, and that are difficult to change.

3.1 Culture Learning Objectives

It's obvious that some people are more internationally minded than others. Travelers learn about the countries they visit; the food they've tried; the landmarks they've seen. Expatriates and migrants gain local knowledge of their foreign home—they learn local customs, the local language, and develop a knack for getting along and getting things done. All of this is sometimes referred to as *culture-specific* knowledge—it relates to knowing about particular cultural communities. In addition to this, however, some people seem more tolerant of cultural difference, more aware of cultural issues generally, or better able to navigate the complexities of intercultural situations. A variety of terms are used to describe this more *culture general* understanding: intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural competence, intercultural intelligence. It's typically assumed that such qualities are developed over time, as we learn to understand different cultural points of view, become aware of our own cultural programming, and find ways to produce successful intercultural outcomes.

This chapter will look at how a deep learning perspective can help us conceptualize cultural learning goals. Cultural learning goals are often defined in terms that are abstract (e.g., awareness), multidimensional (e.g., competence) or broad

(e.g., openness). Language learning goals, on the other hand, are typically talked about in terms of knowledge and skills. This chapter will argue that this dichotomy overlooks the importance of the intuitive mind. From the neurocognitive perspective, cultural understanding involves the ability to read patterns and interpret situations—it is primarily intuitive. This implies that cultural learning is grounded in pattern recognition, holistic experience and trial and error learning, rather than abstraction and intellectualized reflection. This view is supported by the observation that experienced interculturalists are often insightful about culture, even without learning about cultural concepts. Conversely, some people may study cultural concepts or theory, yet have only shallow intercultural insights.

This chapter will argue that cultural understanding can be relatively shallow (conceptual) or deep (intuitive), and that this distinction should inform pedagogy. This view draws on current research into cognition, but can be traced back more than 50 years to a pioneer of intercultural understanding—Edward Hall. His ideas developed at a time when the need for intercultural insight was just beginning to be discussed, at the dawn of our current global age. He was one of the first to see that developing intercultural understanding was of critical importance, both for individuals encountering cultural difference, and for the world at large.

3.2   Contrasting Views of Globalization

In the 1950s, the future was often pictured as a technological wonderland of space ships and sleek plastic furniture. We would live in glass-domed houses, go to work in flying cars, control the weather, and set off to explore distant star systems (Novak 2015). The heroes of the time were scientists and engineers, whose forward thinking would lead to a world of convenience and social progress. It was an exciting, if inaccurate, vision of the future. At the time, only a few predicted that the technological wave that would transform society was not bigger, faster machines—it was communications technology. When millions were dreaming of jet packs and space ships, only a few saw the global village to come and tried to chart a path forward.

Between 1965 and 1972, a remarkable exchange of letters took place between two such visionaries of global living—Marshall McLuhan and Edward Hall. McLuhan, a media theorist, is remembered today for coining the term *global village*, and for predicting the World Wide Web 30 years before it was invented (McLuhan 1964, 2011; McLuhan and Fiore 1968). Hall was an anthropologist and foundational thinker in the field of intercultural communication (Hall 1959, 1984, 1976, 1992). He is remembered for pioneering work in the area of unconscious culture, and concepts such as high and low context communication, and monochronic versus polychronic time (Hall 1976). Both men recognized early on that communication technology and globalized media were transforming society and the people in it. They were deeply interested in the psychological impact of increased intercultural contact and how people develop a more global mindset. In a series of 133 letters, they explored

the implications of what we now call globalization—sharing ideas, asking probing questions, and influencing each other's work (Rogers 2000).

Both McLuhan and Hall realized that globalized communication has profound, potentially transformational psychological and social consequences. They had, however, contrasting viewpoints about the psychological implications of increased intercultural contact (Rogers 2000). McLuhan had a universalistic bent and was something of a technological determinist. He felt that communication technology—such as writing systems, the printing press, and electronic media—has a profound effect on human cognitive processes, and thus on society. McLuhan believed that electronic media would lead to an evolution of the mind into a "noosphere"—a collective realm of human thought analogous to the earth's atmosphere. He saw a future world of increased unity and shared perception—albeit at the cost of decreased individualism and a danger of a Big Brother external control—as our mental worlds increasingly melded into a global shared reality (McLuhan 1964; McLuhan and Fiore 1968).

Hall, in contrast, was less deterministic about the potential for a more unified perceptual reality. He was interested in how culture shapes our thinking, communication, and values in unconscious ways. He challenged McLuhan to take cultural difference into account when contemplating the psychological impact of communication technology. Whereas McLuhan saw global consciousness largely as a by-product of technological change, Hall saw such a transformation as a highly individualized process—one that depended very much on the psychology of each person. Furthermore, he believed that humanity faces an enormous barrier to greater intercultural understanding—unconscious cultural conditioning (Hall 1959, 1976). In Hall's view, cross-cultural understanding can only happen through a difficult inner process of self-discovery, through which we gradually gain an awareness of the hidden programming of our own mind. He saw this as a profound transformation—one that required more than goodwill, a philosophy of tolerance, or superficial intercultural contact. From Hall's perspective, cultural learning is hard work.

3.2.1   A Global Mindset

McLuhan and Hall's contrasting ideas provide a useful starting point to discuss the nature of intercultural understanding. McLuhan thought of communication technology as an *extension* of human perceptual processes. He described a global mindset in terms of unified perception—of reaching beyond narrow local concerns and achieving a more expanded reality through communication with physically distant others. Hall also spoke of technology in terms of extensions (Hall 1976). His focus, however, was on the psychology of attachment—how our ego boundaries expand together with our technological reach. He described as *extension transference* the human tendency to identify with the technologies and systems that we create. For example, I experience my automobile as an extension of the self, and if someone dents my car I react as though I myself have been injured. Similarly, a threat to the ideas, systems, ceremonies, or ideologies that I hold dear is experienced as a threat to the self.

Hall felt that extended interaction with cultural others would bring us into contact with different patterns of attachment, which would challenge our own sense of centrality. When foreign patterns of behavior and communication are at odds with our sense of self, it is experienced as an imposition and a threat. Unfortunately, because this psychological dynamic happens largely at the level of the unconscious mind, it is highly resistant to change. This represents an important point of contrast between McLuhan and Hall. McLuhan conceptualized intercultural understanding as an extending of mind—an expansive process. Hall saw it largely as an inner struggle that required that we let go of self-centered thinking. This allows us to slowly free ourselves from the constraints of unconscious attachments. In Hall's view, intercultural contact contains within it the potential for a global mindset, but it also sets us up for psychic conflict with our own ethnocentrism.

Hall's and McLuhan's visions emphasize different elements of intercultural experience. McLuhan's view is more optimistic and inspiring. It assumes that as we have more opportunities to see and hear people and places that are foreign or far away, the more we expand our perceptual field and create shared understanding. Hall was less convinced of the human capacity for a perceptual change. He assumed that human psychology is parochial by nature, and largely blind to its own perceptual limitations. He felt that increased intercultural contact, even when coupled with goodwill and an intellectual commitment to diversity, is not enough to assure mutual understanding. In Hall's view, we don't so much transcend culture as unearth perceptual limitations and psychological barriers within ourselves.

3.2.2   Update on Hall and McLuhan

Nearly a half century after their exchange, the views of both of these visionary thinkers have proved prescient. Communication technology has, as McLuhan predicted, ushered in an era of borderless virtual communities and unprecedented interconnectedness. Globalization often is a unifying force, and we now live in a more "flat" world with an increasingly interconnected economy (Friedman 2005). This contributes to what social critic Jeremy Rifkin (2009) describes as an expanding circle of empathy, in which we concern ourselves with the well-being of an ever-wider portion of humanity. There is also evidence that increasingly complex social organization is contributing to a long-term trend of decreased violence worldwide (Pinker 2011). For increasing numbers of people, multiculturalism and greater acceptance of diversity are the norm.

At the same time, a more globalized community does not always create mutual understanding. The early years of the twenty-first century have been plagued by resurgent nativism, the politics of intolerance, terrorism and social instability. These trends hint that for hundreds of millions—perhaps billions—of people, increased intercultural understanding and collaboration is not the primary by-product of McLuhan's

global village. McLuhan saw the danger of parochial thinking found in a global village. It was Hall, however, who described in detail how our values, cultural identities, and worldview are deeply rooted in the unconscious mind.

The idea that globalization would provoke conflict rooted in unconscious forms of social identity has also been articulated by Samuel Huntington (1996), who argued that in the twenty-first century the primary axis of conflict in our globalized world would continue to be cultural, and involve a "clash of civilizations." Hall would likely be sympathetic to this view, and see current trends as evidence that the currents of cross-cultural misunderstanding run deep. As Hall (1976) put it, "culturally based paradigms put obstacles in the path to understanding because culture equips each of us with built-in blinders, hidden and unstated assumptions that control our thoughts and block the unraveling of cultural processes" (p. 220). Hall compared our cultural conditioning to the invisible currents of the jet stream—powerfully shaping our experience of the world. Such forces are subtle yet strong, important yet unnoticed—they are not easy to map, and even more difficult to change.

3.2.3 Echoes of McLuhan

Despite Hall's foundational influence, it has been, arguably, McLuhan's more optimistic view of intercultural understanding that has come to predominate the field of intercultural education. There is a long-running tendency to describe cultural learning objectives in terms of transcendent ideals—a higher form of perception or identity to strive for. Back in 1977, for example, Peter Adler (1977) described what he called the "multicultural man", saying that "we may now be on the threshold of a new kind of person, a person who is socially and psychologically a product of the interweaving of culture in the twentieth century" (p. 24). This would be a person whose view of the world "profoundly transcends" that of a local culture, who would seek the universal in diversity, and maintain "indefinite boundaries of the self" that are constantly in flux, and eventually reaching a "new kind of wholeness" and a "higher level of integration." Adler believed that this multicultural person has been enabled by a "transitional period of history" that demands a new form of "psychocultural self-process" leading to a more highly evolved multicultural self. Adler places the multicultural person on the vanguard of a shift to a more utopian global community.

In the years since Adler described his idealized vision, a variety of terms have been suggested to describe the desired outcomes of intercultural learning. These often echo the transcendence found in McLuhan's thinking. One term that has been influential is intercultural *awareness* (Gaston 1984; Hanvey 1979; Hofstede et al. 2010; Houghton et al. 2013; Ingulsrud et al. 2002; Paige 1993; Tomalin and Stempleski 1993; Tomlinson 2000; Valdes 1986). Increased awareness is described in terms of an advanced way of knowing or perceiving. Typical of this is Gaston (1984) definition of cultural awareness as "the recognition that culture affects perception and that culture influences values, attitudes and behavior." Gaston describes the process of gaining awareness as including a "growing consciousness of our own cultural group"

leading eventually to a state in which we "transcend our culture and see ourselves as a product of culture, but no longer a prisoner of culture" (p. 2–4). Such a characterization echoes McLuhan's sense of raised consciousness; one that emphasizes going beyond less enlightened ways of perceiving.

Intercultural learning goals are not always discussed in such transcendent terms. They do, however, often focus on mental states that are thought to represent higher order forms of knowing, perceiving, and identifying. Terms used include *intercultural awareness*, but also *intercultural sensitivity* (Bennett 1993, 1968; Olson and Kroeger 2001), *critical awareness* (Diaz 2013; Houghton et al. 2013; Ingulsrud et al. 2002)*, interculturality, multiculturality* and *transculturality* (Cots and Llurda 2010; Tsai 2010; Tsai and Houghton 2010; Welsch 1999)*, criticality* (Yamada 2010), and *becoming intercultural* (Kim 2001). Frequently, there is an emphasis on gaining an ability to relativize one's experiences, respect difference, and appreciate the validity of other cultural worldviews. Broadly speaking, this process is seen as representing a broader, or more inclusive view of the world—one that allows for a more globalized identity. Even terminology that is more outcome oriented such as *intercultural communicative competence* (Alptekin 2002; Byram 1997; Celce-Murcia et al. 1993; Byram et al. 2001, 2002) has this sort of higher order thinking at its core. Byram (1997), for example, describes a "perspective shift" as a key factor in making progress toward intercultural competence (p. 108). He sees an intercultural competent speaker as someone who acts from a position of *informed understanding*—one that is supported by attitudinal dimensions such as *openness*, *respect*, *curiosity,* and *tolerance*. These qualities represent high ideals indeed.

3.2.4   Hall and Deep Learning

Hall (1976) also believed that cultural awareness represented a higher order perceiving. But he felt that before we can develop a more expanded worldview, we have to go through a difficult process of change and adjustment in the realm of the unconscious mind—it's fundamentally an inner process. He described it as an error to think that one can transcend one's own culture, and believed that culture binds us in an unconscious form of identification that is difficult to gain awareness of. Breaking free of these hidden bonds—what he called the "greatest separation feat of all"— was, he believed, "the single most important task facing mankind today" (p. 222). He referred to this as a difficult journey in which "one manages to free oneself from the grip of unconscious culture" (p. 240). Hall was less interested in describing ideal outcomes of intercultural understanding, and more interested in the difficult process of self-discovery that leads to it.

Current scholarship does incorporate some ideas embodied by Hall's work. The idea that culture influences us at deep levels of the self is widely accepted. It's also understood that gaining intercultural awareness, or achieving a new cultural perspective, involves inner change and shifts in worldviews. Byram (1997), for example, refers to "deep learning" that is not easily measured (p. 108), and Bennett (1993)

describes stages of intercultural sensitivity in terms of shifting from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Despite this, intercultural learning pedagogy has relatively little to say about the unconscious mind. We know, for example, that culture has a significant impact on cognitive styles, forms of identity, and emotion regulation (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Han and Northoff 2008), yet talk relatively little about the psychological challenges of adjusting such deep elements of self. This is despite increased recognition within psychology of how demanding intercultural experiences can be (Matsumoto et al. 2006; Ward et al. 2001). It has only been recently that Hall's focus on the unconscious mind has been garnering more attention (Shaules 2014, 2007).

3.3 A Neurocognitive Perspective

We have a much better understanding of mental processes than was available when Hall was speculating about hidden cultural patterns. These recent insights indicate that Hall was largely correct in his view of culture and the unconscious mind, and the challenges of modifying these fundamental elements of self. While such a view is, perhaps, less inspirational than visions of higher levels of consciousness, it has the benefit of resting on a solid foundation of empirical understanding. Ultimately, what emerges from a neurocognitive perspective is respect for the difficulty of modifying our cultural programming. On the other hand, when it goes well, intercultural learning can have a deep, even transformative impact on our perceptions and our sense of self. We truly *become* intercultural.

Neurocognitive insights into intercultural understanding can be divided into three broad areas: (1) the roots of social cognition, (2) the cognitive architecture of judgment and bias, and (3) the challenges of embodied understanding. The first area relates to how human evolutionary biology has shaped our cognitive systems and our way of experiencing the world. The second area relates to our built-in biases—our cognitive systems don't simply report the facts, they make approximate guesses about the world around us. The third area relates to our ability to empathize with others and modify our worldview. Taken together, recent insights remind us that intercultural understanding and insight is not a single thing—it relates to complex cognitive processes that we can never go *beyond*, because they form the very architecture of our perception and self.

3.4 The Roots of Social Cognition

While it's appealing to imagine a future of global harmony, we can learn about the psychology of intercultural understanding by looking at our evolutionary past. For better or worse, our mind functions the way it does because of evolutionary pressures over a span of millions of years. Evolutionary biology teaches us that our body and mind have been shaped by the random yet constrained process of evolution, and

has succeeded in ensuring human survival. This cannot empirically be described as either good or bad. We may find tendencies that seem heartwarming—such as the human capacity for empathy and altruism. Others will seem destructive—such as violence, ethnocentrism, and bias. In the end, however, it is the sum total of all of these attributes that have ensured our survival up to now. A neurocognitive perspective sees seemingly negative elements as part of human nature. The fact that such traits are natural doesn't mean, of course, that they are desirable. A neurocognitive approach seeks to understand human nature as it is, to better harness elements of self that lead to the outcomes we seek.

A primary insight that has emerged from this evolutionary perspective is that humans are cultural by nature. Normal human development involves a complex inter- action between genes and the environment, both at the micro-level of the individual and the macro-level of populations (Chiao 2009). Culture shapes our human genome by selecting genetic variation that provides a survival advantage. Examples include selected traits that encourage successful in-group collaboration, or cultural commu- nities that herd cattle evolving the ability to better digest cow's milk (Barkow et al. 1992; Richerson and Boyd 2005). Cultural patterns are also an indispensable part of individual human development. When we are young, cognitive systems are sensitive to sociocultural patterns in the same way that they are sensitive to linguistic patterns. Just as our native language becomes an integral part of our ability to communicate, the cultural patterns of our environment shape our cognitive processes including cog- nitive styles, sense of identity and self, and our experience of emotion (Ansari 2012; Han and Northoff 2008; Han et al. 2011; Kim and Sasaki 2014). And while the idea that social interaction affects cognitive development is not new (Vygotsky 1978), we are now better able to understand the culturally specific and complex nature of that influence (Han and Northoff 2008).

3.5   The Architecture of Judgment (Bias)

One area of cognitive function of concern to intercultural educators is varying forms of bias such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and negative attitudes such as prejudice. The good news is that research in this area is providing us with important insights for our work. There have been any number of popular books which discuss the structural biases to be found in our cognitive architecture. Perhaps the best known is *Thinking Fast and Slow*, by Nobel Prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman (2011), but there are many others as well (Ariely 2009; Banaji and Greenwald 2013; Haidt 2012; Iyengar 2010; Mlodinow 2012; Wilson 2002). This body of work, how- ever, creates a challenge for educators. While intercultural educators may have a few particular biases that we are interested in—ethnocentrism and stereotyping, for example—we are discovering biases everywhere we look. One review found no fewer than 21 biases related to decision making alone (Caputo 2013). One crowd-sourced list identified 180 cognitive biases, which can be divided into 20 major categories (Wikipedia). Those categories relate to four different challenges of perception and

cognition—(1) a limited ability to remember, (2) a need to filter information and identify what's important, (3) the need to make judgments or interpretations based on limited information, (4) and the need to act quickly in the face of so much uncertainty.

As this list makes apparent, what we are calling "biases" are, in fact, more simply the cognitive architecture of survival. Our cognitive processes evolved to make effective judgments about our environment in the face of novelty and information overload, uncertainty about how to interpret our experiences, the need for quick responses in the face of possible danger, and having to rely on imperfect recall of past experiences. Using the word bias implies that there is something faulty about our cognitive processes, because they are not providing accurate results. We call stereotyping a bias because it gives an oversimplified interpretation to a complex phenomenon—saying that "Americans are rich" may be true in some respects, but it is a not a very subtle representation of reality. From the perspective of evolutionary biology, however, stereotyping is very useful. It allows us to make quick judgments about how to proceed, without having to go through a cumbersome analytic process. That patch of yellow in the grass might be a lion, and our ancestors that acted quickly on that guess are the ones who survived.

3.6 Embodied Understanding

A neurocognitive perspective reminds us of the deeply embodied nature of intercultural understanding. When we define cultural learning goals in terms of higher, or more transcendent forms of cognition, this gets downplayed. For example, Milton Bennett describes the process of intercultural awareness in terms of perception and empathy—the ability to look at a situation from the point of view of another. Bennett talks about this in terms of *intercultural sensitivity*, which he defines as the ability to construct a reality that is capable of accommodating cultural difference (Bennett 1993). Yet Bennett treats the ability to empathize largely as a phenomenon of interpretation and meta-awareness, and does not, by and large, root his ideas in an embodied view of neurocognitive processes. Sparrow (2000) has criticized this conceptualization of intercultural sensitivity as a "Cartesian concept of a mind, detached from experience" (p. 177). The current work seeks to enrich such conceptualizations with a more embodied view of cognitive processes.

Recently, however, cognitive psychologists have been exploring the nature of empathy in new ways. We are learning that while empathy—the sharing and understanding of states of others—is a universal element of human psychology, it is not automatic (Zaki 2014). Empathy is a complex phenomenon that relies on multiple cognitive systems, and can be short-circuited by discomfort or feelings of threat. Our empathy response is "motivated"—it is something that can be developed intentionally, but it can also be inhibited. Empathy is inhibited if it makes us uncomfortable (we avoid interacting with someone who is disabled), results in a loss of efficiency (it gets in the way of getting things done), or results in a lack of affiliation (we don't feel

a sense of solidarity) with the other. This view of empathy is highly embodied—it recognizes that affective experience is critical to empathy. The ability to understand cultural others is as much in our guts as in our head.

Positive feelings are not, however, a guarantee that we will be able to empathize. Indeed, Zaki argues that developing empathy depends importantly on contextual factors, including whether we value empathy. In addition, empathizing requires that we frame an experience from an alternative point of view, which can be difficult in cross-cultural settings. Zaki (2014) contrasts *experience sharing*, which he describes as the ability to take on the affective and sensory states of others, with *mentalizing*, which he characterizes as the ability to draw inferences about the intentions, beliefs, and emotions of others. The former, presumably, is more automatic and visceral, while the latter requires the ability to intuit (draw implicit inferences) about what the other is thinking, feeling, or intending. Cross-cultural settings provide ample opportunities for both forms of empathy. Even when we share little in terms of cultural background, we still are moved when we see someone grieving the loss of a loved one, or the joyful play of children. Our visceral sympathetic response can be powerful and deeply moving. It can break down barriers of mistrust and ignorance, and unite us in shared concern for others—as when helping in a war zone or attempting to bring aid to disaster victims.

As a deep culture perspective reminds us, however, and as Zaki's model explicates, our "instinctive" ability to share in the experience of others is neither automatic nor guaranteed. Indeed, there can be powerful barriers that *prevent* us from doing so. Zaki describes one critical precursor of empathic processes as *mind perception*, the ability to detect the internal mental states of another. This is sometimes referred to more broadly as *theory of mind*, an ability that develops as children learn to distinguish their mental world from that of others (Shahaeian et al. 2014). Mind perception hinges on our defining others as people or non-people. We don't expect rocks or clouds to have minds, but we expect a bank teller or barista to (Epley and Waytz 2010). When we dehumanize others—as in wartime, or the committing of cruel acts—mind perception is minimized. We fail to recognize that the other has internal states like our own, and thus don't extend empathy to them. This is precisely what is difficult in cross-cultural settings. In line with this, neuroimaging evidence supports the idea that racial bias can influence empathy towards others' pain states, and that this can have real-world effects (Han 2015).

Even in the best of circumstances, cross-cultural empathy involves a form of mentalizing that requires a great deal of intercultural experience. In order to intuit the intentions of cultural others, we must gain the ability to shift perceptual frames of reference. This ability, which is at the center of Bennett's view of intercultural sensitivity, involves a perceptual entering into of another cultural worldview. This is increasingly studied in terms of the complex cognitive processes involved (Young 2011), including the ability of bicultural individuals to activate different bodies of cultural knowledge, and the tendency of bilingual biculturals to unconsciously shift frames of reference when changing languages (Luna et al. 2008). Of note to language educators, such research shows that bilinguals who learned a foreign language in the classroom do not shift cultural frames of reference in the same way as those who

grew up biculturally. This is consistent with the idea that deep forms of empathy and intercultural understanding require lived experience and an embodied understanding of complex cultural patterns. This is more demanding than a philosophical commitment to diversity, or an intellectual understanding of intercultural concepts.

3.7 A Deep Culture Approach

This chapter has argued that Edward Hall's foundational insights about intercultural understanding were ahead of his time. This work builds on Hall's vision, and proposes a *deep culture* approach to understanding cultural learning objectives. In this view, intercultural understanding is not a single cognitive ability, or higher level of perceiving, but rather a complex phenomenon that involves deeply embodied elements of mind and self. That is to say, we can never fully go *beyond* our cultural programming because it is built into the perceptual architecture of our mind. We can, however, seek to understand how our mind works, and how culture influences our perceptions, emotions, and identity. We can learn about our built-in biases, and how they can trip us up. We can explore the complexity of intercultural empathy based on an empirical, not ideological, understanding of the mind.

A deep culture approach has important pedagogical implications. It assumes that intercultural understanding is fundamentally difficult—the cultural elements of self are not easy to modify. In addition, things that are commonly thought of as undesirable from the intercultural perspective—ethnocentrism, bias, stereotypes, negative judgments—are natural. That is to say, they are a normal part of mental function and a result of our evolutionary history. That doesn't mean they are desirable, of course. A deep culture approach assumes that by understanding our own minds, we will be better able to achieve the intercultural outcomes we seek.

A deep culture perspective also suggests that an understanding of unconscious elements of self is important for intercultural pedagogy. The next chapter will focus on dual-processing models of cognition—which contrasts largely unconscious, intuitive forms of mental processing, with more conscious, conceptual forms. It will argue that from the neurocognitive perspective, cultural learning is largely intuitive, rather than conceptual. That is to say, it resembles Hall's notion of deep inner change, more than McLuhan's more transcendent thinking. Chapter 5 will then explore the deeper learning processes by which our unconscious mind develops intuitive mastery and knowledge.

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