

Chapter 2

Universal Systems

Questions

1. **Universal cultural systems** are formed out of common problems of all cultures. Systems that are universal to all cultures include economic, political, education, marriage and family, and social hierarchies and interaction.
2. A culture develops an economic system in order to meet the physiological needs of its people. These needs are met by establishing a system for producing or procuring goods and a procedure for distributing them.
3. Japan's economy is the strongest in the world; it is a capitalistic/free market based on manufacturing, fishing, and exporting. Canada's economy is strong worldwide; it is capitalistic with socialistic controls in the areas of health care and the retirement system. The economy is driven by industrial plants, mining, fishing, and agriculture. Japan has few natural resources, and Canada has many natural resources.
4. England is ruled by a constitutional monarchy with a parliament. The House of Lords are noblemen who are life appointees and Church of England bishops and is the highest court; the House of Commons is elected by citizens age 18 and over. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons and appoints a cabinet that runs the government. Mexico has a federal government with the president elected by the people 18 years of age and above (voting is compulsory). The states of Mexico are heavily controlled by the federal government in the areas of education and certain industries.
5. Educational systems may be formal, informal, or a combination of the two. Education is free and compulsory for certain age groups in the U.S., Japan, France, England, Canada, and Mexico. Germany's educational system is a bit different. People must choose between technical training and college at age 13; education is free from kindergarten through the university. In Iran religious instruction receives more support than secular education; only recently has their educational system included females. In Saudi Arabia, males and females attend separate schools after age six, including universities.
6. The family system in the U.S. includes the nuclear family (father, mother, and children) and the extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins). In other cultures the family may include second-, third-, and fourth-generation relationships. The Arabs may have over a hundred close relatives. In Mexico godparent relationships are considered family. People in the U.S. have monogamous or serial monogamous marriages. Dating begins at 13 to 15 years of age. Premarital sex is common, and many couples live together prior to marriage. In Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, marriages are arranged although some people are being allowed to choose their mates. Because of the separation of genders, there is no dating. Although Islamic law allows a man to have four wives with the wife's permission, most Saudi

men have only one wife. In Japan most marriages were arranged in the past; however, now most people choose their mates.

7. Social reciprocity is important in Mexico, Japan, and Saudi Arabia. Mexicans are good hosts and place great importance on being a good employer, employee, and friend. The Japanese are also concerned with social reciprocity that can be seen in the importance they place on gift giving. The Saudi Arabians are also friendly and hospitable, but their personal privacy is important.
8. **Intermediaries** are people who act as go betweens with other people. Cultures that use intermediaries generally dislike confrontations and are group oriented. Although intermediaries are not used in the U.S., they are used in Japan, especially in negative situations.
9. Property can be viewed as private, utilitarian, or community. In the U.S. people think of property as an extension of the self and are very possessive of it, while Mexicans think of property ownership in relation to feelings and need. Property is important to the Japanese, perhaps because it is very expensive because so many people live in such small geographic areas.
10. The term **equality** in the U.S. refers to equality of opportunity, not to equality in terms of wealth, position, or mental ability. In some cultures, people are born into a certain social class (monarchies); equality in that culture would imply the person is equal in terms of social class.

#### Case 1

1. The role of U.S. universities will continue to be important. Anyone can get into college in the U. S. since some postsecondary schools have low admissions standards, in contrast to other nations where applicants would not have access to their colleges. The attitude toward higher education in the U. S. is that all persons who are academically qualified should have access to higher education. Even those who criticize the U. S. school system have to concede that something must be right about the system since people of the U. S. were able to put men on the moon.
2. The fact that 25 percent of the U. S. population does not graduate from high school is important in light of what is happening in other countries of the world. Perhaps U. S. secondary schools should provide a stronger foundation in the basics (reading, writing, and calculating) so that U. S. students would be on a more equal footing with such cultures as Japan, where 99 percent complete high school.
3. The presence of so many foreign students in U. S. colleges is probably seen primarily as positive. The guiding ideal of the U. S. educational system is based on the principle that as many people as possible should have access to as much education as possible. The U. S. system is geared to accommodate students of various academic aspirations as well as the physically impaired, and those for who English is a second language. Foreign countries will be able to develop educational systems similar to the U.S. in the future not requiring as many of their students to study abroad.

#### Case 2

Children of other nationalities who have been adopted by U.S. Americans often do return to their native country to learn about their own ethnic heritage. Cultural problems would include typical types of cultural shock, including customs and beliefs, food and diet, housing, lack of modern conveniences, and standards of cleanliness.

#### Case 3

The people will have to learn to accept risk. Formerly communist states gave everyone necessities and jobs. Now individuals will have to learn how to compete and be part of the new economic and political systems.

#### Case 4

The feasibility of developing one monetary system to do away with exchange rates is questionable, because of widely fluctuating economies in various countries, differences in GDPs, differences in costs of living, and differences in political structures.

#### Case 5

1. If you chose to take one of the positions, what would you want to know? The answer should include information on the universal systems such as political situation, economic situation, education situation, family situations, and social hierarchies and interaction. A predeparture training program on these issues should be a requirement.
2. How would you prepare for the welcoming and/or the hatred you would experience? Through predeparture training, a person should be prepared for the Iraqis who welcome us and the ones who do not. Part of the preparation should be arguments to use with those who do not want us there.
3. What characteristics that you possess would be a strength or a weakness? This will be individual in response, but should include such items as languages, physical, and psychological dimensions; the fact that culture is learned and the willingness to learn a new culture; not being stereotypical; understanding enculturation, acculturation ethnocentrism, and mindsets; and a willingness to be open and learn new ideas and ways of life.
4. Do you feel that everyone who is in Iraq as a foreign worker should train an Iraqi to replace him/her? The answer to this question will vary but should include arguments for the U.S.'s not staying longer than necessary in Iraq (or any country staying in another country); the reasons why it is difficult for a people to be occupied (freedom, outsiders, cultural differences, social hierarchy and interaction differences); the fact that the Iraq people need to have incomes and be part of the process of rebuilding their own nation; the fact that only the Iraqi people can form a new political and economic structure for Iraq. Current event articles can also be brought in for this part of the question.

5. What are the intercultural relationship problems in this current situation? Different religion, different family structure, different education, political, and economic structure than what the U.S. people consider normal. The language problem is very large. The fact that the U.S. is one of the strongest nations in the world and fear by the Iraqis that we want their oil and our reason for being there may not be altruistic.

#### Activities

1. The local international student organization may be a good contact for finding names of Asian or Latin American students to interview.
2. Instructors may wish to provide a list of countries from which students could choose to assure a variety, and so that two students do not select the same country.
3. Providing a list of countries would again be recommended to avoid possible duplication of countries on which reports are made.
4. The *CultureGrams* series would be an excellent source for locating this information on patriarchal and matriarchal family systems.
5. Possible references to suggest include the *CultureGrams* series or the encyclopedia.
6. Instructors may wish to divide the class into teams to conduct research on how property is viewed - private, utilitarian, or community - in selected countries and have students make oral reports to the class. Issues students may identify include use of such property as clothing, food, books, and other school supplies.

