FIGURE 1.5 A Bioecological Model of Human Development

Based on concepts from Bronfenbrenner (1989).

1-8 > Ecological Systems and Socialization

The social context of individual interactions and experiences determines the degree to which individuals can develop their abilities and realize their potentials, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989, 1995, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). His conceptual model (see Figure 1.5) for studying humans in their various social environments—the bioecology of human development—allows for a systematic study of interactions and serves as a guide for future research on the very complicated process of socialization.

According to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, there are four basic structures—(1) the *microsystem*, (2) the *mesosystem*, (3) the *exosystem*, and (4) the *macrosystem*—in which relationships and interactions take place to form patterns that affect human development. Such a conceptual framework enables us to study the child and his or her family, school, and community as dynamic, evolving systems that are influenced by broader social change (the *chronosystem*), as in economics, politics, and technology.
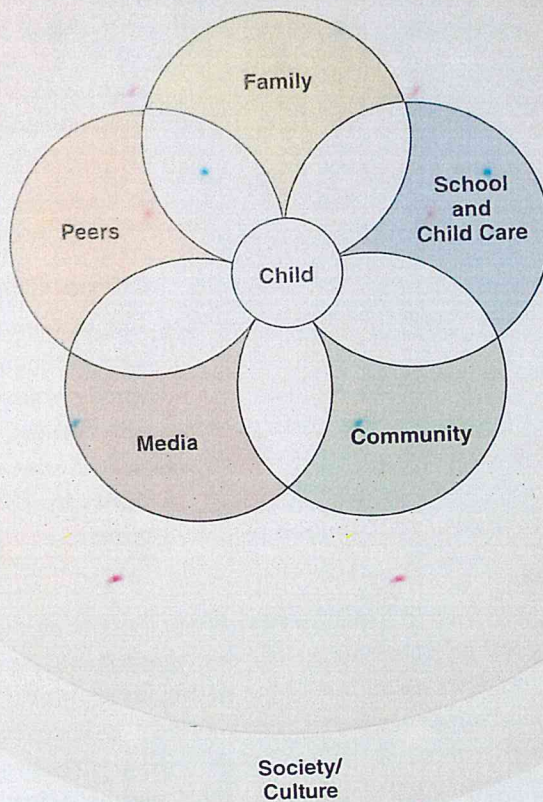
Family

School and Child Care

Peers

Child

Media

Community

Society/Culture

FIGURE 1.6 The Microsystem

1-8a Microsystems

The first basic structure, the microsystem (*micro* meaning small) refers to the activities and relationships with significant others experienced by a developing person in a particular small setting such as family, school, peer group, or community (see Figure 1.6).

Family

The *family* is the setting that provides nurturance, affection, and a variety of opportunities. It is the primary socializer of the child in that it has the most significant impact on the child's development (Grusec & Davidov, 2007). According to James Garbarino (1992), the child who is not adequately nurtured or loved, such as one who grows up in an abusive or dysfunctional family, may have developmental problems. Also, children who do not have sufficient opportunities to manipulate objects, to model desirable behaviors, to initiate activity, or to be exposed to a language-rich environment will be at a disadvantage when they reach school. This early disadvantage will persist and even worsen as the child progresses through school unless intervention, such as that provided by some quality child-care programs, can modify the opportunities at home and in school.

What are the most significant contexts in which a child interacts?

microsystem activities and relationships with significant others experienced by a developing person in a particula small setting such as family, school, peer group, or commun

 se children are participating in
ommunity event, learning about
competition.

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School

The *school* is the setting in which children formally learn about their society. The school teaches reading, writing, arithmetic, history, science, and so on. Teachers encourage the development of various skills and behaviors by being role models and by providing motivation for children to succeed in learning.

Peer Group

The *peer group* is the setting in which children are generally unsupervised by adults, thereby gaining experience in independence. In the peer group, children get a sense of who they are and what they can do by comparison with others. Peers provide companionship and support as well as learning experiences in cooperation and role taking.

Community

The *community*, or neighborhood on a smaller scale, is the main setting in which children learn by doing. The facilities available to children determine what real experiences they will have. Is there a library? Are stores and workplaces nearby where children can observe people at work? Are the people with whom children interact in the community similar or diverse? Are the people in the community advocates for children? These questions relate to the significance of the community as a socializer.

Media

The *media*—television, movies, videos, DVDs, books, magazines, music, computers, consoles, and cellular phones—are not regarded as a microsystem by Bronfenbrenner because they are not a small, interactive setting for reciprocal interaction. However, I consider the media as significant a socializer as those just described because the media present a setting in which a child can view the whole world—past, present, future, as well as places, things, roles, relationships, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Other social/behavioral scientists, such as Dubow, Huessman, and Greenwood (2007) would agree. Much of today's media technology is interactive, providing opportunities to relate socially in that they are multifaceted, such as cell phones, social networking sites, and computer games.

Interactions within Microsystems

The child's development is affected in each of the aforementioned settings not only by the child's relationships with others in the family, school, peer group, or community, but also by interactions among members of the particular microsystem. For example, the father's relationship with the mother affects her treatment of the child. If the father is emotionally supportive of the mother, she is likely to be more involved and to have more positive interactions with the child (Cox, Owen, Henderson, & Margand, 1992). For another example, a child's classroom performance varies as a function of whether or not the teacher has taught the child's older sibling and how well that sibling performed (Jussim & Eccles, 1995; Seaver, 1973). A teacher who has taught a high-achieving older sibling tends to have high expectations for the younger sibling. The younger sibling, in turn, is more likely to perform as expected.

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ionships between two or
person's microsystems
ple, home and school,
d community)

How are the child's
significant contexts of
development linked to
one another?

1-8b Mesosystems

The second basic structure, the **mesosystem** (*meso-* meaning intermediate), consists of linkages and interrelationships between two or more of a developing person's microsystems, such as the family and the school, or the family and the peer group (see Figure 1.7). The concept of linkages is exemplified in the social networking website LinkedIn. The site was launched in 2003 and is available in many languages worldwide. The purpose of

Diagram labels: Family, School and Child Care, Peers, Child, Competences, Having a Friend at One's Home, Friends Going to the Movies, Guest Speakers, Censorship, Media, Community, Society/Culture
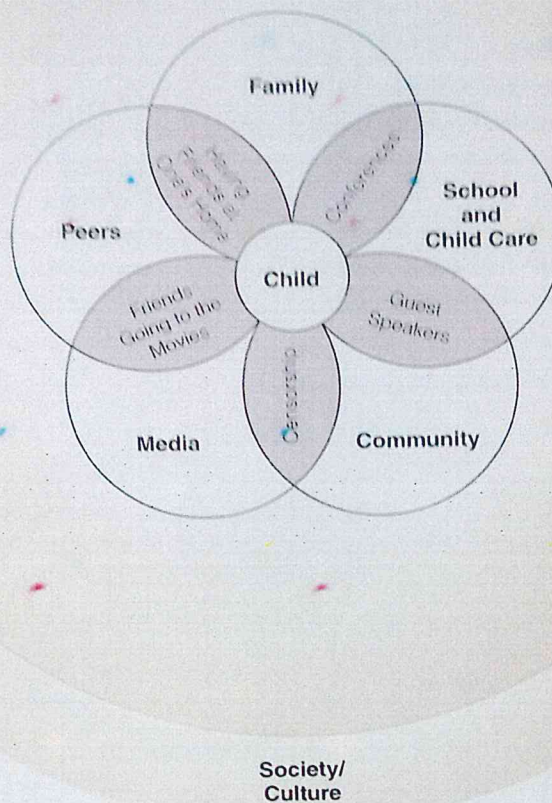
FIGURE 1.7 Mesosystems

the site is to connect people with whom a relationship already exists, as well as to those people's connections with whom an introduction is desired.

The impact of mesosystems on the child depends on the number and quality of interrelationships. Bronfenbrenner (1979) uses the example of the child who goes to school alone on the first day. This means that there is only a single link between home and school—the child. Where there is little linkage between home and school "in terms of values, experiences, objects, and behavioral style," there also tends to be little academic achievement for the child. In contrast, where all these links are strong, there is likely to be academic competence. To illustrate, many studies have found a consistent relationship between the joint effects of family and school over time and academic performance (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). When the style of family interaction was similar to the school's, in that both settings encouraged child participation, academic performance was enhanced (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Thus, the more numerous the qualitative links or interrelationships between the child's microsystems, the more impact they have on socialization. Mesosystems, then, provide support for activities going on in microsystems. For example, when parents invite a child's friends to their home, or when parents encourage their child to join a certain club, team, or youth group, the socialization impact of the peers is enhanced through parental approval.

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Another example of mesosystem impact occurs when businesses in the community form partnerships to support schools (Target stores do this), sponsor local events, or give rewards.

1-8c Exosystems

The third basic structure, the **exosystem** (*exo* meaning outside), refers to settings in which children are not active participants, but that affect them in one of their microsystems—for example, parents' jobs, the city council, or parental social support networks (see Figure 1.8). The effects of exosystems on the child are indirect via the microsystems. To illustrate, when parents work in settings that demand conformity rather than self-direction, they reflect this orientation in their parenting styles, tending to be more controlling than democratic. This orientation, in turn, affects the child's socialization. When the city planning commission approves a freeway through a neighborhood or an air traffic pattern over a school, children's socialization is affected because the noise interferes with learning. Studies show that parental employment, income, and setting affect child development outcomes. For example, low-income parents involved in work-based antipoverty programs (ones that provide sufficient family income, child care, health insurance, and support services) have been shown to enhance the school performance and social behavior of their children (Huston et al., 2001).
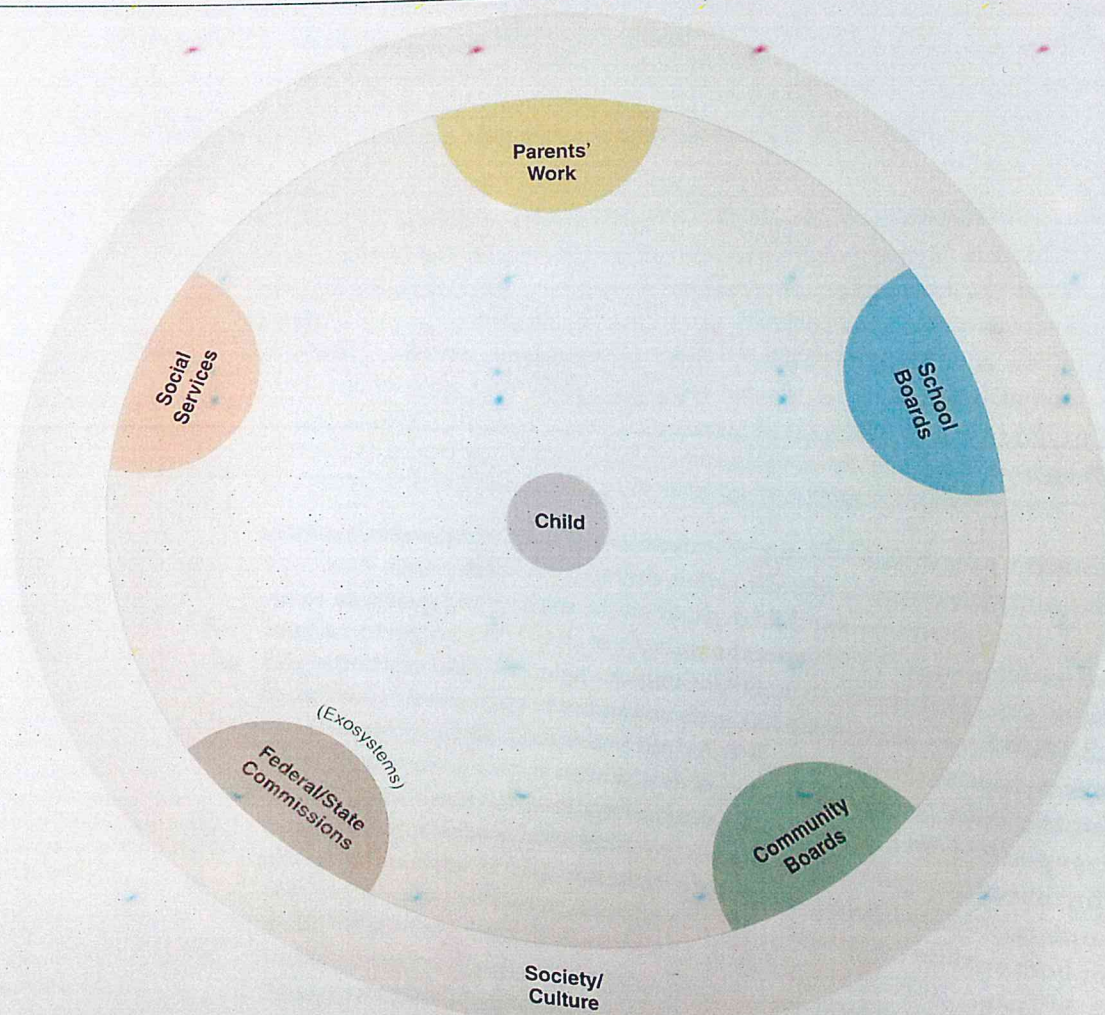
Child

Parents' Work

School Boards

Social Services

(Exosystems)

Federal/State Commissions

Community Boards

Society/ Culture

pg 25

On the other hand, high-income parents living in upwardly mobile suburban communities have been shown to have children who exhibit a relatively high rate of lower-than-expected school performance and negative social behavior (anxiety, depression, and substance abuse) as a reaction to achievement pressure (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005).

1-8d Macrosystems

The fourth basic structure, the **macrosystem** (*macro* meaning large), consists of the **society** (a community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests) and subculture to which the developing person belongs, with particular reference to the belief systems, lifestyles, patterns of social interaction, and life changes (see Figure 1.9). Examples of macrosystems include the United States, the middle or lower class, Latino or Asian ancestry, Catholicism or Judaism, and urban or rural areas. Macrosystems are viewed as patterns, or sets of instructions, for exosystems, mesosystems, and microsystems. Democracy is the basic belief system of the United States and so is considered a macrosystem. Democratic ideology affects the world of work, an exosystem—for example, employers cannot discriminate in hiring. Democratic ideology also affects school-family interaction, a mesosystem—for example, schools must inform parents of policies, and parents have the right to question those policies. Finally, democratic

How do characteristics of the larger society influence the child's development?

macrosystem the socie and subculture to which t developing person belong particular reference to the systems, lifestyles, patter social interaction, and life

society a community, na broad grouping of people common traditions, instit collective activities and i
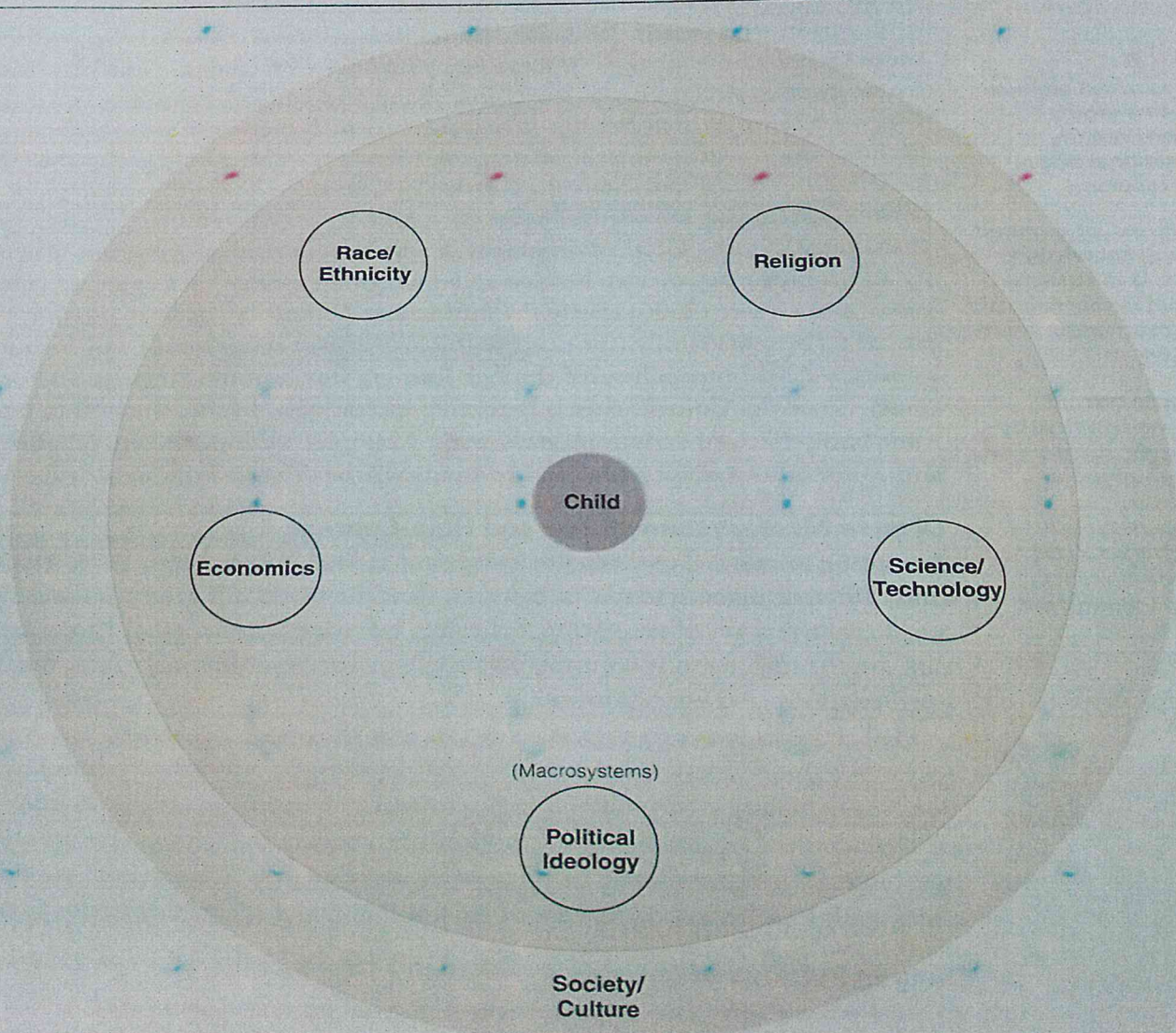

FIGURE 1.9 Macrosystems

Low- versus high-context cultural methods of cultivating the land.

Jupiterimages

Keith Levit Photography/Index Stock Imagery/Getty Images

ideology affects what is taught in schools, a microsystem—for example, children must learn the principles upon which the United States was founded.

A person who lives in the United States, subscribes to its basic belief system of democracy, and consequently is influenced by that macrosystem, may also be part of other macrosystems, such as his or her ethnic group and culture. **Ethnicity** refers to an *ascribed* attribute of membership in a group in which members identify themselves by national origin, culture, race, or religion. Members of an ethnic group share biologically and/or socially inherited characteristics. **Culture** refers to the *acquired*, or learned behavior, including knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and traditions, that is characteristic of the social environment in which an individual grows up. While ethnicity and culture often overlap because an ethnic group usually has a common culture, Bugental and Grusec (2006) clarify the distinction: "Ethnicity" refers to *ascribed* attributes passed on by one's family (for example, biology and/or social status) and "culture" refers to *acquired* attributes cultivated through learning (for example, language and/or celebrations). Since the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, we need to understand some basic effects of various macrosystems. Examples of how children, families, schools, and communities adapt to cultural contrasts will be discussed throughout the book.

Diverse Macrosystems: Low- and High-Context

According to cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1964, 1966, 1976, 1983), people from different macrosystems, or cultures, view the world differently, unaware that there are alternative ways of perceiving, believing, behaving, and judging. Particularly significant are the unconscious assumptions people make about personal space, time, interpersonal relations, and ways of knowing.

Hall classifies macrosystems as being low or high context. Generally, **low-context macrosystems** (individualistic-oriented) are characterized by rationality, practicality, competition, individuality, and progress; **high-context macrosystems** (collectivistic - oriented) are characterized by intuitiveness, emotionality, cooperation, group identity, and tradition (see Table 1.4). These diverse characteristics translate into differences in communication, relationships to the natural and social environment, and adaptive behavior to survive.
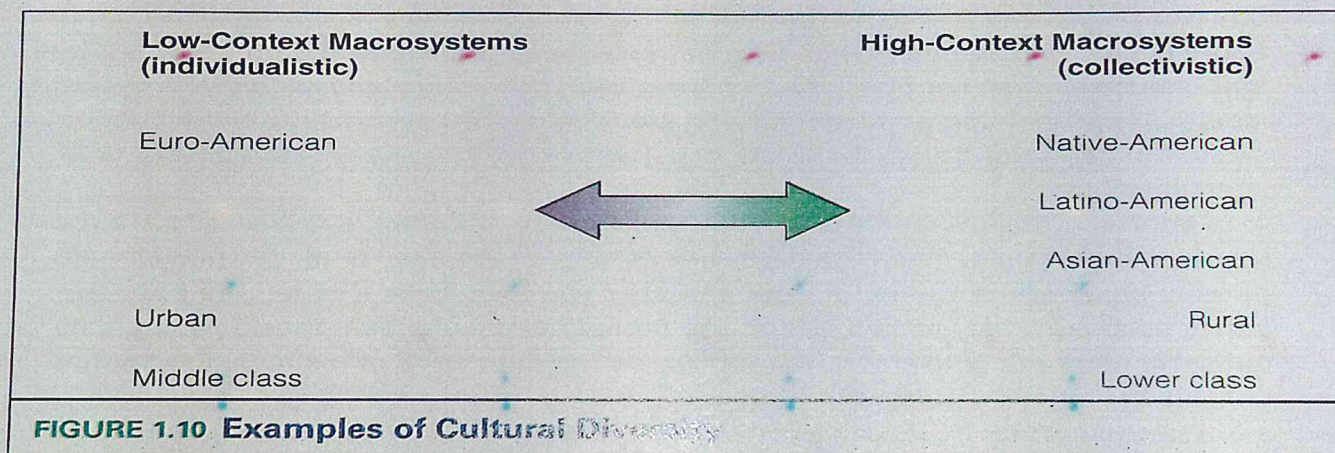
Diverse Patterns of Behavior

The following low- and high-context behavior patterns, presented here as extremes (either/or), occur more often in reality by degrees. Examples of low- and high-context cultures are represented as a continuum in Figure 1.10. Some... behavior patterns follow.

Some parameters of these

ethnicity an ascribed attribute of membership in a group in which members identify themselves by national origin, culture, race, or religion

culture the learned, or acquired, behavior, including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and traditions, that is characteristic of the social environment in which an individual grows up

low-context macrosystem culture generally characterized by rationality, practicality, competition, individuality, and progress

high-context macrosystem culture generally characterized by intuitiveness, emotionality, cooperation, group identity, and tradition

DIVERSITY

	Low-Context Macrosystems	High-Context Macrosystems
General Characteristics	Rationality	Intuitiveness
	Practicality	Emotionality
	Competition	Cooperation
	Individuality	Group identity
	Progress	Tradition
Significant Values	Emphasis on concrete evidence and facts	Emphasis on feelings
	Efficient use of time	Build solid relationships through human interaction
	Achievement	Character
	Personal freedom	Group welfare
	Humans can control nature and influence the future	Nature and the future are governed by a power higher than human
	Change is good	Stability is good

- What if these views represented two individuals wanting to marry?
- What if one view represented a teacher's and the other a student's?
- What if one view represented an employer's and the other an employee's?

Low-Context Macrosystems (individualistic)	High-Context Macrosystems (collectivistic)
Euro-American	Native-American
	Latino-American
	Asian-American
Urban	Rural
Middle class	Lower class

FIGURE 1.10 Examples of Cultural Diversity

- **Communication.** In a *low-context* macrosystem, meaning from a communication is gleaned from the verbal message—a spoken explanation, a written letter, or a computer printout. *What* is said is generally more important than *who* said it. Many employees in government, business, or education routinely communicate by phone or memorandum without ever meeting the other individuals involved. On the other hand, in a *high-context* macrosystem, meaning from a communication is gleaned from the setting in which the communication takes place. In some languages, one can communicate familiarity by whether one uses the formal or informal word for "you." Body language, such as eye-lowering or bowing, can be used to communicate degree of respect.

- **Relationship to Natural and Social Environment.** In a *low-context* macrosystem, people tend to try to control nature (such as irrigating desert areas) and to have more fragmented social relations—that is, they may behave one way toward friends, another way toward business colleagues, and yet another way toward neighbors. In