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1 DEFINING CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 Explain the regulators of human behavior and identity.

1.2 Describe the meanings and connotations of the terms *culture, subculture, co-culture, subgroup, counterculture,* and *microculture.*

1.3 Describe how communication is defined by different cultures and reflects culture.

1.4 Identify cultural influences on communication media.

Have you ever considered why there are many human cultures and not just one? After all, genetic and linguistic evidence suggests that the 8 billion of us alive today share ancestry from one group in Africa. Biologists Rebecca L. Cann, Mark Stoneking, and Allan C. Wilson (1987) studied genetic material from women around the world and contend that all humans alive today share genetic material from one woman who lived some 200,000 years ago in sub-Saharan Africa.

Their African "Eve" conclusion is supported by linguistic observations. Cavalli-Sforza, Piazza, Menozzi, and Mountain (1988) have shown that considerable similarity exists between Cann et al.'s tree of genetic relationships and the tree of language groups, which hypothesizes that all the world's languages can be traced to Africa. The languages that vary the most from other languages today can be found in Africa. Africa's Khoisan languages, for instance, such as that of the !Kung San, use a clicking sound that is denoted in writing with an exclamation point. This suggests that these languages are older.

Yet even with this common origin among all of us, there are diverse ways of understanding the world, languages, beliefs, and ways of defining our identities. In this chapter, first you'll read about such regulators of human behavior and identity. Then you'll read about the related concepts of culture, subculture, co-culture, subgroup, and microculture. You'll then explore the concept of communication as something that is itself a product of culture, meaning that how communication as a concept is defined and how communication is performed are very much part of each cultural group—so much so that it has been said that culture and communication can only be understood together. Finally, you'll read about the media of intercultural communication, including the global impact of the Internet and social media.

SOURCES OF IDENTITY

How did today's many distinct human identities develop? Climate changes and other pressures led to migrations out of Africa. The first wave may have been along the coastline of southern Asia through southern India into Australia. The second wave may have traveled to the Middle East, and from there, one branch went to India and a second to China. Those who left the Middle East for Europe may have actually traveled first through central Asia and then throughout the world to other parts of Asia, Russia, the Americas, and Europe (Wells, 2002). Neuroscientist

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Antonio Damasio (2010) contends that our world, our environment, is so complex and so varied across the planet that diverse social networks developed to regulate life so that we could survive.

Centuries of geographical separation led to the development of diverse social network regulators of human life among and across different groups of people. It is important to remember that we define ourselves to some extent by those with whom we are grouped. These social network regulators of human life over the history of humanity have been the basis for ways of understanding the world, for beliefs, and for shared individual identities that, at times, resulted in confrontations and conflicts between groups. Understanding these identities and the resulting confrontations explains our past, provides insights about the present, and predicts our future. Sir David Cannadine (2013) posits six forms of regulators of human life and identity: religion, nation, class, gender, race, and civilization.

Religion and Identity

Cannadine (2013) argues that religion is the oldest source of human identity. Religion and religious identity can clearly be regulators of how we live our lives. For example, Hindus write from left to right, pray to the rising sun, and keep mustaches. Muslims, meanwhile, write from right to left, face the setting sun when praying, and always shave the upper lip (Jacoby, 2011).

Religion and religious identity are also sources of conflicts. Religious wars are those clearly caused or justified by differences in religious beliefs, exclusive of other issues. Even with that restrictive definition, these wars have resulted in tens of millions of deaths. The Crusades of the 11th through 13th centuries against the Muslims were blessed as a *helium sacrum* ("holy war") by Pope Urban II. In the 16th century, there was a succession of wars between Roman Catholics and Protestants known as the French Wars of Religion. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) pitted Islam against Christianity, as did violence in the Central African Republic. In the early 1990s, Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks in the former Yugoslavia were divided along Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim lines. In terms of number of people and severity of treatment, some argue that persecution of Christians today is worse than any time in history (Pontifex, Newton, & Creegan, 2017). While Sunni and Shiite Muslims share faith in the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad and have lived together peacefully, in modern times, fundamentalists in both branches and growing nationalism have led to violence in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. Arab-Israeli conflict in modern times began shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel and continues today. Hamas in Gaza is a Sunni group that calls for the annihilation of Israel. Hezbollah is a Shia resistance movement focused on expelling Western powers from the Middle East and rejecting Israel's right to exist. Both are funded by Iran.

A 2020 Pew Research Center publication documented that government restrictions on religious beliefs and practices have reached an all-time high since Pew began assessing such restrictions in 2007. At least 56 countries had high or very high levels of government restriction on religion. China has held at least 800,000 or more Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims in Xinjiang province in detention facilities "designed to erase religious and ethnic identities." Thousands of mosques and shrines have been demolished (U.S. State Department, 2018).

India has become a focus of identity and religion. Today, India's population is 79.8% Hindu, 14.2% Muslim, 2.3% Christian, and 1.7% Sikh. India was founded as a secular,

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pluralist republic. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Hindu nationalist groups hoping to turn India into a pure Hindu nation have restricted religious conversions and passed a new citizenship law that Indian Muslim critics say makes religion the basis for granting citizenship. Several states passed anti-conversion laws. Anti-Christian protesters have stormed churches and burned literature. One Indian state passed a law banning Muslim men from marrying Hindu women for the purpose of converting them to Islam (U.S. Department of State, 2022). In 2023, Rahul Gandhi, heir to a once-dominant political dynasty and leader of the India's Congress party, led a march across the length of India to challenge Modi's policies, which he contended are dividing India along religious lines.

In Chapter 8, you'll read more about religion and identity, but first, let's look in more detail into Cannadine's remaining five sources of human identity and conflict.

Hanukkah dinner being served. Generational transmission of important cultural rituals provides cultural continuity through the ages.

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National Identity

The nation-state may be the most significant political creation of modern times. For much of humanity from the 18th century on, national identity has superseded religious identity as a primary identity in many parts of the world. It has become common practice today to equate nation-state identity with cultural identity. In most cases, this is largely true. Ladegaard (2007), for example, demonstrated that in a large global corporation employing some 8,500 people in nearly 40 countries, employees perceive their nation-states as the frame of reference for their identity, while any conceptualization of a global identity is perceived as a hypothetical construction. An individual born and raised in Spain who has worked for years for the Swedish technology company Ericsson at its service center in India most likely self-identifies as Spanish.

National identity is not descriptive when arbitrarily drawn political boundaries do not reflect peoples' identities. For example, in Europe there are several examples of popular support for secessionist states. In the United Kingdom, a vote for independence for Scotland was held in 2014. In a hotly contested election, nearly 45% voted for independence. While the referendum

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failed, British prime minister David Cameron pledged reforms granting Scotland greater autonomy. Catalonia is a region of about 7.5 million people in northeastern Spain with its own culture and language (see Figure 1.1). In 2017, 90% of the 2.26 million Catalonians voted in favor of independence. Against objections from the government of Spain, the region's parliament has begun the process of separating from Spain. The Spanish government suspended local government and jailed leaders of the independence movement. In Belgium, Dutch-speaking Flemings in the north have pressed for separation from the French- and German-speaking Walloon population in the south.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Catalonia, a Semi-Autonomous Region With a Distinct History and Language

Pre-colonial Africa was divided into kingdoms, empires, and smaller political entities. Today's African nation-states are a product of colonialism. By the 1880s, the European colonial powers had divided up the continent. Only Ethiopia and Liberia were independent. The boundaries of the continent's nation-states as determined by the colonial powers do not recognize the realities of ethnic and religious communities.

Just as religious identity has been the basis for conflict, obviously national identity has been the pretext for millions and millions of deaths from conflicts. Cultures provide diverse ways of interpreting the environment and the world as well as relating to other peoples. To recognize that other peoples can see the world differently is one thing. To view their interpretations as less perfect than ours is another.

How differences can lead to conflict can be seen in the evolution of the connotative meaning of the word *barbarian* from its initial use in the Greek of Herodotus to its meaning in contemporary English (Cole, 1996). To better understand the origins of hostilities between the Greeks and the Persians, Herodotus visited neighboring non-Greek societies to learn their belief systems, arts, and everyday practices. He called these non-Greek societies *barbarian,* a word in Greek in his time that meant people whose language, religion, ways of life, and customs differed from those of the Greeks. Initially, *barbarian* meant different from what was Greek.

Later, the Greeks began to use the word *barbarian* to mean "outlandish, rude, or brutal." When the word was incorporated into Latin, it came to mean "uncivilized" or "uncultured."

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South Sudan (majority Christian with English as the official language) gained independence from Sudan (majority Muslim with Arabic and English as official languages) in 2011, becoming the world's newest country. Lucia Morris of South Sudan competed in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Christian Petersen/Getty Images Sport/via Getty Images

The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the contemporary definition as "a rude, wild, uncivilized person" but acknowledges the original meaning was "one whose language and customs differ from the speaker's." Conflict between nations often begins with the judgment that how others live their lives is in some ways less perfect than how we live our own. In Chapters 6 and 7, you'll read about the values that come with national identity.

Class and Identity

Marx and Engels (1850) claimed that identities were created not by religions or countries but by one's relationship to the means of production—that is, the capitalists who own the means of production and the proletariat, or "working class," who must sell their own labor. The opening sentence of *The Communist Manifesto* is "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle" (Marx & Engels, 1850). In this understanding of class, conflict is inevitable. The collapse of Communism, though, has demonstrated that this understanding of class is not pervasive or an all-encompassing source of identity (Cannadine, 2013). Max Weber believed that **social class** was determined by wealth, status, and power rather than by one's relationship to the means of production (Appiah, 2018). Following this, *class* refers to one's economic position in a society. Basically, this is the basis of today's use of the terms *upper, middle*, and *lower class.*

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) explained how the ruling and intellectual classes preserve their social privilege across generations and that equality of opportunity and social mobility through formal education is a myth. His studies demonstrated that despite free choice, people's artistic preferences, such as music, correlate to social position, and aspects of language, such as accent, grammar, spelling, and style, are major factors in social and economic mobility.

Others identify the Indian Hindu caste system as one of the oldest and most rigid. Based on heredity, castes ranked from the Brahmin (priests and teachers) to the Kshatriya (warriors and rulers), to the Vaishya caste of artisans, farmers, and merchants, to the lower castes of Shudra and Atishudra laborers. Outside the caste system were the Dalits (formerly known as Untouchables). Particularly in rural communities, upper and lower castes were segregated. India's 1950 constitution outlawed caste-based discrimination and quotas for government jobs and educational institutions were put in place. In 2018, the government urged using the designation *scheduled classes and scheduled tribes* in place of the term *Dalit*. Still, today many surnames signify caste, as Brahmin surnames are names of gods while Dalit surnames refer to humble or dirty work. A Pew survey of nearly 30,000 Indians in 2019 and 2020 found that most do not see widespread

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caste-based discrimination, yet 70% said that most or all of their close friends were of the same caste, and a majority said it is important to stop marriages across castes (Sahgal et al., 2021). In an essay, Singh (2014) comments that upper and lower castes practice selective communication on selected issues. Mehta (2014) describes the social and economic inequality in India: "The one thing my sons are always amazed by when they visit India is the condescension displayed toward entire groups of people. They hate the way people speak to their maids, their drivers, their waiters—anybody Indians consider socially inferior" (p. 37).

In France, the States-General established in 1302 provided a legislative assembly ranking members by hereditary class. The First Estate were the highborn sons of families who had devoted themselves to religion. The Second Estate were the highborn sons devoted to war. The Third Estate were the richest members of the bourgeoisie. The rigidity of the French hereditary system was one cause of the French Revolution.

When asked to identify an example of social classes, some think of British television drama series such as *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Downton Abbey,* two of the most widely watched television dramas in the world, which depict the lives of servants and masters. The Great British Class Survey in 2011 clearly showed that class remains a source of identity. The top 6% had much higher income, education at elite universities, and a network of social connections to one another. The lowest 15% had the lowest income, irregular or unstable employment, little in savings, and few social connections to the classes above them (Savage et al., 2013).

A study in Germany (Aydin et al., 2018) showed that those who self-identified as members of a lower social class felt that warm and cooperative interaction with other people in their social class was more important than did individuals of the higher class. Those who self-identified as members of a higher social class set a greater value on being assertive and demonstrating competence with other people in their social class than did members of the lower class.

In Chapter 7, you'll read more about social class in the United States.

Gender and Identity

According to feminists like Germaine Greer, gender identity is more significant than religion, nation, or class. In *The Whole Woman,* Greer (1999) wrote, "Before you are of any race, nationality, religion, party or family, you are a woman" (p. 11). Cannadine (2013), however, contends it is difficult to substantiate that there is a unifying identity solidarity among all women.

For at least the past half-century, various scholars have attempted to demonstrate fundamental differences among the genders. Rather than review that research and argue for separate gender identities, Chapter 9 in this text is devoted to how nations treat genders differently. Chapter 9 also considers nonbinary gender identities worldwide. How a nation deals with gender and gender identities reveals much about that nation's values.

Additionally, in Chapter 12, you'll read about sexual orientation as a source of identity

Skin Color, Race, Ethnicity, and Identity

While class and gender may not have the same strength of regulation of human life and identity creation as national identity does, some argue that skin color and race do. While skin color, race, and ethnicity are frequently grouped together as a source of identity, they are each different concepts.

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Skin Color

Several factors account for variation in human skin color, including biological parents' genetics and their geographical history. People whose ancestors originated in areas that receive more ultraviolet radiation closer to the equator have darker skin than those whose ancestors can be traced to areas closer to the poles, with less ultraviolent radiation. Jablonski and Chaplin (2000) took global ultraviolet measurements from NASA's Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer and compared them with published data on skin color in Indigenous populations from more than 50 countries. There was an unmistakable correlation: The weaker the ultraviolet light, the fairer the skin. Skin color, rather than geographical location, became the basis for classification.

In 1735, Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist, physician, and taxonomist, divided people into four groups based on skin color: *Americanus* with red, *Europaeus* with white, *Asiaticus* with yellow, and *Afer* with black. Beliefs based on skin color continued for centuries (Jablonski, 2012). For example, in the years following Spanish colonialism, Latin American societies have expressed preferences for white skin. Studies show that Mexicans express a preference for lighter skin color. Words for darker skin colors are pejorative and insulting, while words for lighter skin colors are more positive (*güera*, for instance, means both "light-skinned" and "pretty"). Studies have shown that people with lighter skin in Mexico had 1.4 additional years of schooling and earned 53% more when compared to those with darker skin (Campos-Vazquez & Medina-Cortina, 2019). Brazil has a history of intermarriage among Indigenous peoples, descendants of enslaved Africans, and immigrants from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, but no history of explicit segregation policies. So in Brazil, which has the world's largest Black population after Nigeria and where half of the population is Black, there are hundreds of words for skin colors (Robinson, 1999), including a census category— *pardo*—for mixed ancestry.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have argued that White people in countries such as the United States and South Africa are observed by other groups to be distinct, superior, and unapproachable, whereas White people themselves are relatively unaware of their racial identity compared to people of color.

Race

Worldwide, skin color alone does not define **race**. Other factors have often been considered in creating racial categories. New categories were formed and others transformed. People born in India with dark skin have been classified as Caucasian, for instance, and people with moderately dark skin in Egypt are identified as White. There have long been two primary ways of justifying or determining racial categories: biological and sociohistorical.

The origin of the term *Aryan* illustrates how race, even when imagined to be a biological category, is socially determined. In 1783, British scholar William James was appointed as a judge to the Supreme Court of Bengal when India was under British colonial control. He became fascinated with India and pioneered the science of comparative linguistics by publishing his observations that the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit had similarities to Greek, Latin, Persian, German, French, and English. He was the first to identity what later became known as the Indo-European family of languages. Scholars became interested then in determining the single ancient language from which all these languages developed. They determined that the

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earliest Sanskrit speakers had invaded India from Central Asia and called themselves *Arya* or *Aryan*. Applying Darwin's theory of natural selection to this linguistic theory, British, French, and German scholars posited that Aryan was not only a linguistic group but also a biological race, a "master race" of tall, light-haired, blue-eyed, hard-working, and superrational humans. According to this belief, the Aryans in India and Persia intermarried with locals and their civilization declined; however, the Aryans in Europe preserved their racial purity, thus providing justification for Europe conquering the world (Harari, 2015).

In the same century as Linnaeus, the German professor of medicine, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, studied human skulls in an attempt to classify humans through their biology. The skull he considered the most beautiful came from the Caucasus Mountains of Russia. He then classified Europeans as *Caucasian*. Race came to be seen as biologically natural and based on visible physical characteristics, such as skin color and other facial and bodily features. In the 19th century, the "racial sciences" rank-ordered distinct races from the most advanced to the most primitive. Such "science" became the basis for hospitals segregating blood supplies, Hitler's genocidal Germany, and South Africa's apartheid state.

These historical understandings of *race*, while discredited today, continue to underpin contemporary conversations. From a biological perspective, race refers to a large body of people characterized by similarity of descent (Campbell. 1976). From this definition, your race is the result of the mating behavior of your ancestors.

Although most scientists today have abandoned biological race as a meaningful scientific concept (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, & Piazza, 1994; Owens & King, 1999; Paabo, 2001), the notion continues to be culturally powerful. Consider questions about DNA and race, for instance. Does your DNA reveal your race or culture? While some physical traits and genes do occur more frequently in certain human populations than in others, such as some skull and dental features, differences in the processing of alcohol, and inherited diseases such as sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis, 20th-century scientists studying genetics found no single race-defining gene. Popular indicators of race, such as skin color and hair texture, were caused by relatively recent adaptations to climate and diet.

Sandy Banks, senior fellow at the University of Southern California Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy, who self-identifies as a Black American, discovered that her DNA was 54% European and 24% Nigerian. She reported "excitement, wonder, pain, and pride" on learning of her Nigerian ancestry. But later she reported a "comedown" feeling when a reevaluation of her non-European DNA identified her ancestry as originating from Benin/Togo, Cameroon, Congo and South Bantu, Mali, and Ivory Coast/Ghana. She concluded that "identity is more than ancestry" (Banks, 2019). Communication professor Anita Foeman conducts the DNA Discussion Project, which records stories people tell about their family history and then their reactions when presented with their DNA results (Foeman, Lawton, & Rieger, 2015). A 2014 study (Phelan, Link, & Zelner, 2014) revealed that when people read an article about genetic-ancestry tests, their beliefs in racial differences increased.

Yuval Noah Harari of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem argues that while the biological definition of race used to justify Western colonialism is no longer accepted, a new form of racism has replaced it today as elites justify superiority in terms of differences between cultures. "It's in their blood" has been replaced with "It's in their culture" (Harari 2015).

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A second way of defining race—as a sociohistorical concept—explains how racial categories have varied over time and between cultures. Whereas a biological definition establishes race as something fixed, the sociohistorical definition sees race as unstable and socially determined through constant debate (Omi & Winant, 1986). Michael Omi, an ethnic studies expert at the University of California, Berkeley, described the resulting confusion: "You can be born one race and die another" (quoted in Hotz, 1995, p. A14). One study of U.S. census data showed that 9.8 million people changed their race or ethnic identity response from the 2000 census to the 2010 census (Lieblier, Rastogi, Fernandez, Noon, & Ennis, 2014).

Information on race has been collected in every U.S. census, beginning with the first in 1790, but what the U.S. Census Bureau considers to be racial categories has changed in almost every census. For example, according to Gibson and Jung (2002), from 1790 to 1850, the only categories used were "White and Black (Negro), with Black designated as free and slave." In 1890, categories included *mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, Chinese*, and *Japanese*. The 2010 survey raised some concerns in that it included the term *Negro* in addition to *Black* and *African-American.*

During decades of high immigration, Irish, Italians, and many central European ethnic groups were considered distinct races; for instance, "Armenians were classified as white in some decades, but not in others" (Hotz, 1995, p. A14). In the 1930 census, there was a separate race category for *Mexican*; people of Mexican ancestry were classified later as *White*, and today they are considered ethnically *Hispanic* but may be of any race. Immigrants from India have gone from *Hindu*, a religious designation used as a racial category, to *Caucasian*, to *non-White*, to *White*, to *Asian Indian*.

Currently, the United States government asks census respondents two separate questions—one for "race" (White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and "other") and one for "ethnicity" (Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino).

Ethnicity

While race is associated with physical appearance, when people speak of **ethnicity**, they generally refer to shared heritage, family names, geography, customs, and language passed on through generations (Zenner, 1996). Ethnic groups can exhibit such distinguishing features as language or accent, physical features, family names, customs, and religion. **Ethnic identity** refers to identification with and perceived acceptance into a group with a shared heritage and culture (Collier & Thomas, 1988). For some, *tribe* would be a more understood term. In Afghanistan, for example, people identify by tribes—Tajiks and Pashtuns. According to some estimates, there are 5,000 ethnic groups in the world (Stavenhagen, 1986). However, just as with race, ethnicity is a social construct used to categorize even distinct people.

That ethnic identity can be the basis of a cultural identity and affect communication with others outside that group has been demonstrated by Taylor, Dubé, and Bellerose (1986). In one study of English and French speakers in Quebec, they found that though interactions between ethnically dissimilar people were perceived to be as agreeable as those between similar people, those same encounters were judged less important and less intimate. The researchers concluded

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that to ensure that interethnic contacts were harmonious, the communicators in their study limited the interactions to relatively superficial encounters.

In Chapter 2, you'll read more about race and ethnic groups.

FOCUS ON SKILLS 1.1: ETHNIC IDENTITY AND FOOD

Throughout this book, take note of special boxes marked Focus on Skills that identify intercultural communication skills appropriate to the content of that chapter.

Many intercultural communication instructors host an international potluck meal encouraging students to bring a dish which has a cultural meaning for them to share. It's important to share not only the food but also the cultural meaning. For example, Lee Isaac Chung, the director of the film *Minari*, grew up in Arkansas. In an interview, he shared that he remembered that when his sister went to school, their mother made a lunch of *gimbap* for her. He remembered that the other kids made fun of her food, so she started to throw the food away, not telling their mother. He relates now looking back at that with sorrow. Today, he only eats Korean food. "I don't know how it's tied to identity. But when I eat it, I do feel as though this is the food that has nourished my ancestors and made this body" (Chow, 2021, p. 116).

Food is part of one's cultural heritage.

1. What food do you associate with your family?
2. What foods do you associate with holidays and celebrations you observe?
3. The phrase "breaking bread" suggests that food can bring people together. Can you think of an example?
4. As the example suggests, food can be associated with emotions and identity. Can you think of an example of a food having an emotional meaning for you? Is there one that brings back memories?

Korean gimbap is composed of short-grain rice, fillings, and a seaweed wrapper seasoned with sesame oil. Gimbap doesn't contain raw fish or sushi vinegar.

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Civilization and Identity

Cannadine's (2013) final form of identity is civilization. Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee believed civilizations to be the most significant determinant of identity but also believed that civilizations were largely self-sufficient and sealed off from one another.

In the 19th century, the term *culture* was commonly used as a synonym for Western civilization. The British anthropologist Sir Edward B. Tylor (1871) popularized the idea that all societies pass through developmental stages, beginning with "savagery," progressing to "barbarism," and culminating in Western "civilization." It's easy to see that such a definition assumes that Western nations were considered superior. Both Western nations, beginning with ancient Greece, and Eastern nations, most notably imperial China, believed that their own way of life was superior.

In his 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel P. Huntington continued the position that civilizations were the most important form of human identity. In general, Huntington identified the world's civilizations as Western, Latin American, sub-Saharan African, Eastern Orthodox (including the former Soviet Union), Islamic, Confucian, Hindu, and Japanese.

Huntington predicted that future conflicts will be among civilizations, especially between Western and Islamic civilizations. There are many critics of Huntington's thesis, including Paul Berman (2003), who argues that distinct civilization boundaries do not exist today—that is, that national identities have become more important than any civilization identities.

Now, after reviewing six forms of regulators of human life, we'll move on to the many ways of defining culture.

CULTURE

Traditionally, the term **culture** was used to refer to the following:

- A community or population sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining—that is, large enough to produce new generations of members without relying on outside people.
- The totality of that group's thought, experiences, and patterns of behavior and its concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and how those evolve with contact with other cultures. Hofstede (1994) classified these elements of culture into four categories: symbols, rituals, values, and heroes. **Symbols** refer to verbal and nonverbal language. **Rituals** are the socially essential collective activities within a culture. **Values** are the feelings that are not open for discussion within a culture about what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, and normal or abnormal; they are shared among a majority of the members of a culture—or at least in those who occupy pivotal positions. **Heroes** are the real or imaginary people who serve as behavior models within a culture. A culture's heroes are expressed in the culture's **myths**, which can be the subject of novels and other forms of literature (Rushing & Frentz, 1978). Janice Hocker

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Rushing (1983) has argued, for example, that an enduring myth in U.S. culture is the rugged individualist cowboy of the American West.

- The process of social transmission of these thoughts and behaviors from birth in the family and schools over the course of generations.
- Members who consciously identify themselves with that group. Collier and Thomas (1988) describe this as **cultural identity**, or the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as norms for conduct. What does knowing an individual's cultural identity tell you about that individual? If you assume that the individual is like everyone else in that culture, you have stereotyped all the many, various people in that culture into one mold. You know that you are different from others in your culture. Other cultures are as diverse. The diversity within cultures probably exceeds the differences between cultures. So just knowing one person's cultural identity doesn't provide complete or reliable information about that person. Knowing another's cultural identity does, however, help you understand the opportunities and challenges that each individual in that culture has had to deal with.

We can have no direct knowledge of a culture other than our own. Our experience with and knowledge of other cultures is limited by the perceptual bias of our own culture. An adult Canadian will never fully understand the experience of growing up as an Australian. To begin to understand a culture, you need to understand all the experiences that guide its individual members through life. That includes language and gestures; personal appearance and social relationships; religion, philosophy, and values; courtship, marriage, and family customs; food and recreation; work and government; education and communication systems; health, transportation, and government systems; and economic systems. Think of culture as everything you would need to know and do so as not to stand out as a "stranger" in a foreign land. Culture is not a genetic trait. All these cultural elements are learned through interaction with others in the culture.

This understanding of the concept of culture is common in popular literature and media in reference to national sources of identity. Thus, people commonly think of national citizenship as one's culture. Yet clearly within nations, there are small groups that have continuity and that function as cultures in the sense that they regulate human behavior and provide important parts of identity. The terms *subculture, co-culture, subgroup, counterculture, microculture*, and *community* have been used to identify these groups. Each group has critical implications for its members' identities.

Subcultures and Co-cultures

Complex societies are made up of a large number of groups with which people identify and from which individuals derive distinctive values and rules for behavior. These groups have been labeled *subcultures.* Perhaps 100 years ago, the term was applied to human groups with shared cultural features that distinguish the group from the wider society. A **subculture** resembles a culture in that it usually encompasses a relatively large number of people and represents the

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FOCUS ON SKILLS 1.2: APPLYING CULTURAL CONCEPTS

Members of a culture share symbols and behavior norms and identify as members of the culture. While families are not cultures, we can use that setting to explore the concept of culture.

Assume you have a sister, brother, or very close childhood friend. Think back to your relationship with that sibling or friend as a child. Probably, you remember how natural and spontaneous your relationship was. Your worlds of experience were so similar; you shared problems and pleasures; you disagreed and even fought, but that didn't mean you couldn't put that behind you because you both knew in some way that you belonged together.

Now imagine that your sibling or friend had to leave you for an extended period. Perhaps your brother studied abroad for a year or your sister entered the military and served overseas. For some time, you were separated.

1. Identify some of the experiences your friend or sibling had that may have changed your relationship in some way. For example, during the time your brother studied abroad, he likely acquired new vocabulary, new tastes, and new ideas about values. He uses a foreign-sounding word in casual conversation; he enjoys fast food or hates packaged food; he has strong feelings about politics.
2. Identify the ways that that separation changed how the two of you now communicate.

accumulation of generations of human striving. However, subcultures have some important differences. They exist within dominant cultures and are often based on geographic region, ethnicity, or economic or social class.

The term *subculture* was often used to refer to immigrant groups. There has been considerable controversy surrounding whether terms such as *Italian-American* should be spelled open or hyphenated. It has been argued that immigrants to the United States and their descendants have been called "hyphenated Americans," suggesting that their allegiance is divided. Style manuals such as the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th edition, suggest omitting the hyphen. In this text, the term *African American* is used for Black persons of African descent in the United States, while *Black* is used for peoples of any national identification. However, when reporting published studies, we adhere to the identifications reported by researchers.

Whereas some define *subculture* as meaning "a part of the whole," in the same sense that a subdivision is part of—but no less important than—the whole city, other scholars reject the use of the prefix *sub-* as applied to the term *culture* because it seems to imply being under or beneath and being inferior or secondary. As an alternative, the word **co-culture** is suggested to convey the idea that no one culture is inherently superior to other coexisting cultures (Orbe, 1998).

However, mutuality may not be easily established. Take the case of a homogeneous culture. One of the many elements of a culture is its system of laws. The system of laws in our hypothetical homogeneous culture, then, was derived from and reflects the values of that culture. Now,

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POINT/COUNTERPOINT 1.1: CULTURAL ICONS

In each chapter, you will find Point/Counterpoint features. Each will present a controversial topic in intercultural communication with counterpositions. These can serve as a stimulus for independent thinking or for class discussions.

Monuments and statues symbolize a culture's concepts and values. To reinforce national identity, Ukraine has passed laws banning Russian place names. Beginning with the fall of the Soviet Union and continuing through Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, streets have been renamed and statues of Russian figures such as author Leo Tolstoy, writer Anton Chekhov, and Empress Catherine II have come down. Ukrainians contend this is not an attack on the accomplishments of these Russian figures but a way to assert Ukrainian identity. Academics have supported the laws, saying they addressed the "imperialistic presence of Russia." It is alleged that Russian forces in occupied Ukraine renamed streets after Russian figures and dismantled a monument dedicated to Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko (Gidulianova, 2023; Mick, 2023).

Is there a parallel to efforts in the United States to remove and rename similar public monuments to the Confederacy and other figures of southern Civil War history?

Arguments to remove Confederate statutes include that they glorify people who perpetuated slavery and seceded from the United States. The statutes are a reminder of racism in the United States.

Arguments to retain the statues include that they represent the country's history. Some say that taking them down is censorship, while leaving them is an opportunity to put them into historical context. Removing them could also lead to removing monuments of any person for only one part of their life, ignoring their positive contributions.

A Soviet-era monument to the friendship between Ukraine and Russia is removed in 2022.

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assume immigration of another cultural group into the hypothetical culture. New immigrants may have different understandings of legal theory and the rights and responsibilities that individuals should have in a legal system. In the case of a true co-culture, both understandings of the law would be recognized.

The term co-culture has been most typically used to refer to Indigenous groups such as Indigenous peoples in the United States and the Māori in New Zealand.

American Indians

The popular story is that Italian explorer Christopher Columbus "discovered" the continent of North America, resulting in European empires colonizing primitive peoples whom they were "destined" to rule. But as historian Pekka Hämäläinen (2022) documents, at the time of Columbus's arrival, the continent was controlled by hundreds of Native nations with sophisticated diplomacy and leadership structures. You'll study European othering of the continent's peoples later in the book.

How should these Indigenous populations be addressed? Columbus thought he was going to India, and the land he "found" was named for another Italian navigator (*Amerigo* Vespucci). Hence, the label "American Indian" was applied to the continent's Indigenous people by outsiders. The U.S. Census Bureau uses the term *American Indian.* During the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the term *Native American* came into common use, as it was considered a more accurate representation of historical facts ("native" predated European colonization). Yet that term as well is a label applied by outsiders, and for some, it has the pejorative meaning from the colonial era of "primitive."

If we were to use labels that people apply to themselves, they would be *Cherokee, Seminole*, and *Navajo*, for example. However, in many cases, these labels are actually derived from names created by the groups' neighbors or enemies. *Mohawk* is a Narragansett name meaning "flesh eaters." *Sioux* is a French corruption of an Anishinaabe word for "enemy." *Navajo* is from the Spanish version of a Tewa word. A survey reported in 1997 that 96% of high school and college youth with American Indian or Native American heritage identified themselves with the nation name (e.g., *Cherokee, Seminole*).

In Canada, the term *Indian* is generally considered offensive, and the term *First Nations* is preferred. At the United Nations, the term *indigenous peoples* was first used in documents in 2002. Objections to this term include that it puts all peoples under one label.

In a 1977 resolution, the National Congress of American Indians and the National Tribal Chairmen's Association stated that in the absence of a specific tribal designation, the preferred term is *American Indian* and/or *Alaska Native*. In a 1995 survey, 50% preferred the term *American Indian*, compared with 37% for *Native American*. Some activists, such as Russell Means, publicly said they prefer *American Indian* to *Native American* ("People Labels," 1995, p. 28). The Biden Interior Department, led by Secretary Deb Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe, used the term *Tribal* (with a capital "T") people. In the belief that people should be referred to by the term they prefer, this text uses the label of specific nations or, when referring to all nations within the United States, the term *American Indian*.

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Can one nation have two legal systems? Can two legal systems coexist equally? Some 575 distinct nations exist by treaty within the territorial limits of the United States. One is the U.S. federal government, headquartered in Washington, DC. The remaining 574 are American Indian nations recognized by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs; they enjoy some areas of complete sovereignty and some areas of limited sovereignty. By treaty, the American Indian nations have their own territory, governmental structure, and laws; collect their own taxes; and are protected by U.S. federal law in the practice of their culture and religion (Dudley & Agard, 1993). The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 proclaimed it would "protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right to believe, express and exercise the traditional religions."

Tribal sovereignty refers to the ability of tribes to govern themselves (Pevar, 2012). The U.S. Constitution gives Congress, rather than the states, exclusive authority over American Indian affairs. The 1832 Supreme Court decision in *Worcester v. Georgia* ruled that the state could not impose its laws on a Cherokee Indian reservation. In modern times, it is the issue of gaming that has further defined the relationship between tribes and the state and federal governments. A 1987 Supreme Court decision in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* ruled that the state has no authority to regulate tribal gaming if the state otherwise allows any form of gaming. The following year, Congress adopted the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, which requires states to negotiate gaming compacts with tribes who wish to establish gaming operations. The states and tribes are to negotiate as distinct sovereigns, thus acknowledging shared sovereignty while retaining the authority to legislate all matters for the tribes, including the form of government (*United States* v. *Wheeler*, 1978).

The Māori of New Zealand

The original inhabitants of what is today known as New Zealand (see Figure 1.2) were Polynesians who arrived in a series of migrations more than 1,000 years ago. The original inhabitants' societies revolved around the *iwi* (tribe) or *hapū* (subtribe), which served to differentiate the many tribes of peoples. In 1769, Captain James Cook claimed the entire land for the British Crown. It was only after the arrival of the Europeans that the term *Māori* was used to describe all the tribes on the land. Those labeled Māori do not necessarily regard themselves as a single people.

The history of the Māori parallels the decline of other Indigenous peoples in colonized lands, except for the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 by more than 500 chiefs. The treaty was recorded in Māori and in English. The Māori and the English may have had different understandings of the terms *governance* and *sovereignty*. In exchange for granting sovereignty to Great Britain, the Māori were promised full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands, forests, fisheries, and other properties and the same rights and privileges enjoyed by British subjects. The terms of the treaty were largely ignored, as Māori land was appropriated when settlers arrived.

Activism in the late 1960s brought a renaissance of Māori languages, literature, arts, and culture and prompted calls to address Māori land claims as the Treaty of Waitangi became the focus of grievances.

New Zealand's population by descent is approximately 16.5% Māori and 64% Pākehā (European). New Zealand is governed under a parliamentary democracy system with two

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FIGURE 1.2 ■ New Zealand

separate electoral rolls: one for the election of general members of parliament and one for the election of a small number of Māori members of parliament. Pākehā can enroll on the general roll only; people who consider themselves Māori must choose which one of the two rolls they wish to be on. Thus, "The definition of Māori for voting purposes . . . is entirely one of self-definition. Nigel Roberts, head of Victoria University's School of Political Science and International Relations, says such self-identification is appropriate: 'I think that ethnicity is very largely, in the late 20th century, a matter of identification—it is a cultural matter. The world has moved on from classifying people by blood, which was a meaningless definition'" (Milne, 1999, p. 9).

Māori people celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, on a public holiday every February 6.

Hannah Peters/Getty Images News/via Getty Images

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When nations adopt one system of laws, that system reflects the cultural values of one culture. But when one is surrounded by a more powerful culture or exists within the culture of the other, the less powerful culture must accept the laws and legal system of the other, thus subordinating any other understanding of legal systems. At least in this one way, the groups are not mutually powerful. The cases of American Indians and the Māori in New Zealand support the argument that the term *co-culture* does not accurately reflect reality. Just as the term *subculture* has undesired consequences, so too does *co-culture.* In an attempt to avoid misunderstandings, this text avoids using either word.

Subgroup and Counterculture

In the past, some used the term *subculture* to refer to groups that in some way deviate from the dominant societal standard (Hebdige, 1979). While members of subcultures present themselves differently than the larger culture, they still function and abide by its rules. The term **counterculture** was more typically used to refer to groups that actively go against mainstream culture. To avoid confusing groups based on geographic region, ethnicity, and economic or social class with groups based on occupations and interests, the term **subgroup** was sometimes used to refer to these groups.

Psychologists have long recognized that subgroups, or membership groups, have an important influence on the values and attitudes people hold. Like cultures, subgroups provide members with relatively complete sets of values and patterns of behavior, and in many ways, they pose similar communication problems as cultures. Subgroups exist within a dominant culture and are dependent on that culture. One important subgroup category is occupation. Think of large organizations and of occupations in which most people dress alike, share a common vocabulary and similar values, and are in frequent communication, as through magazines and social media platforms. These subgroups include nurses and doctors, police officers, and employees of large organizations such as Microsoft. Subgroups usually do not involve the same large number of people as cultures and are not necessarily thought of as accumulating values and patterns of behavior over generations in the same way cultures do.

The term *subgroup* has, at times, been negatively linked to the word *deviant*. Actually, *deviant* simply means differing from the cultural norm, such as vegetarians in a meat-eating society. Unfortunately, in normal discourse, most people associate deviance with undesirable activities. To understand what is meant by subgroups, you must recognize that vegetarians are as deviant as people who engage in sex work—both groups deviate from the norm, and both are considered subgroups.

Membership in some subgroups is temporary; that is, members may participate for a time and later become inactive or separate from it altogether. For example, there are organizations devoted to Ford cars and trucks. Some people are preoccupied with that for a while and then lose interest and relinquish membership in the group. Membership in other subgroups may be longer lasting. One person may be a firefighter for life, for instance.

However, it is a mistake to think of membership in a culture or subgroup as being so exclusive that it precludes participation in other groups. All of us are and have been members of a variety of subgroups. Think of times in your life when you were preoccupied with the concerns of a certain group. At those times, you were a subgroup member. Examples range from Girl Scouts to Alcoholics Anonymous to youth gangs to religious cults to the military.

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Recognize, too, that individuals can adhere to values and attitudes and behaviors of groups of which they are not members. The term **reference group** refers to any group in which one aspires to attain membership (Sherif & Sherif, 1953). This behavior is identified in contemporary slang as the *wannabe*, an individual who imitates the behavior of a group they desire to belong to. Some people dress like and talk like gang members but are not themselves members of any gang, for instance.

Just as each of us has a cultural identity and one or more subcultural identities, we may also have a subgroup identity. While that group membership may be short-lived, it can, for a while, provide some symbols, rituals, values, and myths that we acknowledge and share with others.

Microculture and Community

We've seen that some believe the term *subculture* implies "less important." Others point out that *co-culture* doesn't seem to be a realistic term, as history suggests that one culture will be dominant over the other. The term *subgroup* seems also to imply "not important." Others now advocate using the term *microculture*, which in biology refers to a small culture of microorganisms. Applied to human behavior, **microculture** refers to any identifiable smaller group bound together by a shared symbol system, behaviors, and values. *Microculture,* then, clearly communicates a smaller size, but national cultures can be large while others are so small that they may be smaller than some microcultures.

Popular media today more commonly use the term *community* for what was defined earlier as a subculture, subgroup, or counterculture. While the term *community* may not be commonly used in academic literature, it has an important advantage. The effects on identity of labels matter. The terms *subculture, subgroup*, and *counterculture* all carry negative connotations. Therefore, this text recommends and only uses the terms *culture* and *community*.

Let's now begin to address the statement from the beginning of this chapter that "culture and communication can only be understood together."

CULTURAL DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATION

From the perspective of the study of cultures, **communication** has two critical functions:

- Communication is the means by which individuals learn appropriate behaviors and the means by which those behaviors are regulated.
- Communication is the means by which individuals having one group identity interact with individuals with other group identities and—on a more general level—the means by which the groups interact with one another as formal groups.

As we saw earlier, the history of human interactions between groups has been fraught with suffering and death. Can there be a more critical time to study intercultural communication?

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to developing an understanding of communication. Our purpose is not to highlight any one definition or model of communication. Rather, the purpose here is to develop an understanding of how communication is defined and performed differently by diverse cultures.

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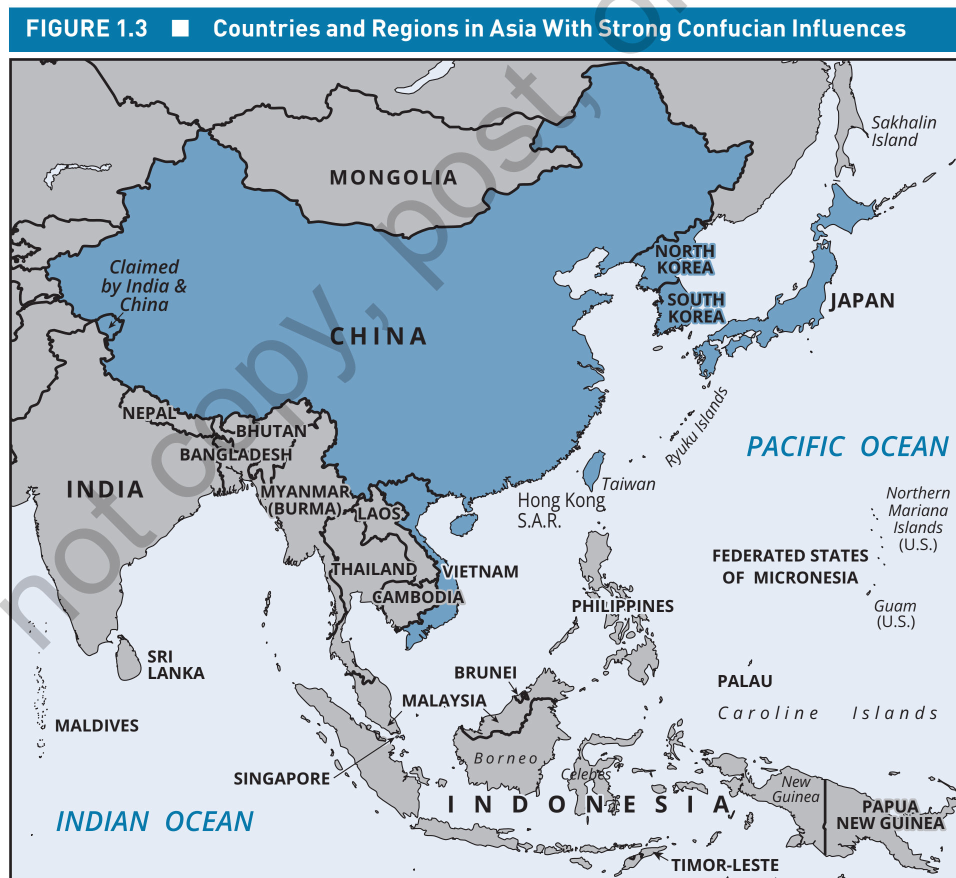
It has often been said that communication and culture are inseparable. As Alfred G. Smith (1966) wrote in his preface to *Communication and Culture*, culture is a code we learn and share, and learning and sharing require communication. Communication requires coding and symbols that must be learned and shared. Godwin C. Chu (1977) observed that every cultural pattern and every single act of social behavior involves communication. To be understood, the two must be studied together. Culture cannot be known without a study of communication, and communication can only be understood with an understanding of the culture it supports.

Confucian Perspectives on Communication

That cultures define communication in diverse ways demonstrates that communication is an element of culture (Krippendorff, 1993). Definitions of communication from many Asian countries stress harmony (Chen & Starosta, 1996). This is most notable in cultures with a strong Confucian tradition. Societies heavily influenced today by Confucian history or tradition are China, North and South Korea, Singapore, and many East Asian countries with large Chinese communities (see Figure 1.3).

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Countries and Regions in Asia With Strong Confucian Influences



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The Chinese scholar K'ung-fu-tzu, a title the Jesuits later Latinized as Confucius (550–478 BCE), lived in a time when the feudal system in China was collapsing. Confucius proposed a government based less on heredity than on morality and merit.

Confucius set up an ethical-moral system intended ideally to govern all relationships in the family, community, and state. Confucius taught that society was made up of five relationships: those between ruler and subjects (the relation of righteousness), husband and wife (chaste conduct), father and son (love), elder brother and younger brother (order), and friend and friend (faithfulness). Three of these five bases of relations occur within the family. The regulating factors in family relationships are extended to the whole community and state. The chief virtue is filial piety, a combination of loyalty and reverence, which demands that the son honor and respect his father and fulfill the demands of his elders.

Confucianism emphasizes virtue, selflessness, duty, patriotism, hard work, and respect for hierarchy, both familial and societal. Just as George Washington and the story of the cherry tree is used in the United States to teach the value of honesty, Confucianism reinforces its lessons with stories about people who represent particular virtues. For example, Chinese children learn about such heroes as Mulan, a woman of the sixth century who disguised herself as a man and served 12 years as a soldier so that her ill father would not be disgraced or punished because he could not report for military duty. Mulan teaches courage and filial devotion.

Confucianism guides social relationships: It can be said that one should seek to live in harmony with the universe and with one's fellow man through proper behavior. Confucianism considers balance and harmony in human relationships to be the basis of society. June Yum (1988) describes five effects that Confucianism has on interpersonal communication:

1. *Particularism.* There is no universal pattern of rules governing relationships: No rules govern interaction with someone whose status is unknown. Instead of applying the same rule to everyone, such factors as status, intimacy, and context create different communication rules for diverse people. In fact, there are several patterns guiding interaction with others whose status is known. In the Confucian countries of North and South Korea, it's quite common for strangers to find out each other's age in the first few minutes of conversation and adjust their language to show respect. Koreans are friends (*chingu*) only with those whose age is within a few years of their own. If a male acquaintance is older than this "friendship age range," he must be addressed as *adjussi*, or if it is a female acquaintance, as *adjumoni*—terms that equate roughly to "uncle" and "aunt," respectively.

2. *Role of intermediaries.* Rituals should be followed in establishing relationships. In China, it's not unusual to use a third party to negotiate with future in-laws about wedding plans and, in general, to use a third party to avoid direct confrontations and resolve disputes (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998).

3. *Reciprocity.* Complementary obligations are the basis of relationships. Gratitude and indebtedness are important parts of Chinese culture. For example, a person feels uneasy being indebted to someone, and payback is necessary to achieve balance in

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the relationship. Reciprocity is the basic rule of interpersonal relationships (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). Obligations in relationships are contrary to Western ideas of individualism.

4. *In-group/out-group distinction.* Scollon and Scollon (1991) argue that the distinction between inside and outside influences every aspect of Chinese culture. In-group members engage in freer and deeper talk and may find it difficult to develop personal relationships with out-group members (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). There can even be different language codes for in-group members.

5. *Overlap of personal and public relationships.* Business and pleasure are mixed. Frequent contacts lead to common experiences. This contrasts with Western patterns of keeping public and private lives separate. There are several Chinese terms for the English word *communication*, including *jiao liu* (to exchange), *chuan bo* (to disseminate), and *gou long* (to connect among people). The Chinese term *be* denotes harmony, peace, unity, and kindness. Seeking harmony with family and others is the goal of communication in Chinese culture (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998).

As a consequence of the value placed on balance and social harmony, Chang and Holt (1991) explain how Chinese people have developed many verbal strategies, such as compliments, greeting rituals, and so on, to maintain good interpersonal relations. Fong (2000), for example, has described the "luck talk" (speech acts related to luck) during the celebration of the Chinese New Year.

Korea adopted Confucianism as a state religion for six centuries. Yum (1987) explains how the Korean language easily accommodates the Confucian rules of relationships. For example, a grammatical form of direct address, called an **honorific**, shows respect. English speakers might vary in how they ask a child, a friend, or a grandparent "to sit" by using a sentence, whereas Korean speakers would use different forms of the root *ahnta*, meaning "to sit or to take a seat":

- To a child, younger person, or person of lower rank: *ahnjo* or *ahnjara* (informal)
- To a friend or person of equal rank: *ahnjuseyo* (polite)
- To an elder, a person of higher rank, or an honored person: *ahnjushipshio* (more polite)

Korean has special vocabularies for each biological sex, for different degrees of social status and degrees of intimacy, and for formal occasions. When two people are introduced, they first engage in small talk to determine each other's social position so they know who should use common language and who should use honorific language. And ironically, because Confucianism does not consider relationships with strangers, Koreans are said to ignore—often to the point that some in other cultures would consider rude—anyone to whom they have not been introduced.

In modern Korea, a generation gap exists: Junior business associates may address seniors with familiar rather than honorific language. The collectivist values of Confucianism mandate a style of communication in which respecting the relationship through communication

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is more important than the information exchanged. Group harmony, avoidance of loss of face to others and oneself, and a modest presentation of oneself are means of respecting the relationship. One does not say what one actually thinks when it might hurt others in the group.

In some sense, the same ethic can be found in business dealings. Much of commercial life in China is lubricated by *guanxi*, a concept best translated as "connections" or "personal relationships." *Guanxi* is an alternative to the legal trappings of Western capitalism in that business is cemented by informal relationships of trust and mutual obligation. Sometimes viewed as bribery, *guanxi* is less like using professional lobbyists than relying on mutual friends among whom trust can be maintained.

A Confucian perspective on communication would define it as an infinite interpretive process in which all parties are searching to develop and maintain a social relationship. Carey (1989) describes this as a ritual model of communication that "is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs" (p. 18).

Western Perspectives on Communication

The study of communication in Western culture has a recorded history of some 2,500 years and is said to have begun in Greece with Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, which describe the process of communication as involving a speaker, the speech act, an audience, and a purpose. Since that time, additional terms have been used to refer to components of the communication process. The terms most commonly used are source, encoding, message, channel, noise, receiver, decoding, receiver response, feedback, and context.

- *Source.* The **source** is the person with an idea they desire to communicate. Examples are CBS, the White House, your instructor, and your mother.
- *Encoding.* Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), humans cannot share thoughts directly. Your communication is in the form of a symbol representing the idea you desire to communicate. **Encoding** is the process of putting an idea into a symbol. The symbols into which you encode your thoughts vary. You can encode thoughts into words, and you also can encode thoughts into unspoken symbols. Tobin and Dobard (1999), for example, have shown how messages were encoded in quilts made by enslaved people.
- *Message.* The term **message** identifies the encoded thought. Encoding is the process, the verb; the message is the resulting object.
- *Channel.* The term **channel** is used technically to refer to the means by which the encoded message is transmitted. Today, you might feel more comfortable using the word *media*. The channel or medium, then, may be print, electronic, or the light and sound waves of face-to-face communication.
- *Noise.* The term **noise** technically refers to anything that distorts the message the source encodes. Noise can take many forms. *External noise* can be the sights, sounds,

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FOCUS ON SKILLS 1.3: CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF GIFT-GIVING PRACTICES

Assume you work as an intake interviewer at a taxpayer-funded U.S. social service agency that helps low-income residents achieve self-sufficiency. Your agency provides employment services, English as a second-language instruction, a clearinghouse for support services in the community, and immigration services. As a county employee, you received a copy of the county ethics policy that prohibits "soliciting or accepting gifts of any value from persons or firms doing business with the county that could reasonably tend to influence you in the performance of your duties or give the appearance of influence."

At an interview with a Chinese couple and their children in early October, the mother offers you a wrapped gift. You say you cannot accept a gift. She insists, saying it is a mooncake. You bring the interview to a close and escort the family out of your office, putting the gift back in her hand on the way out. That night you look up *mooncake* online and learn that in a Chinese family, mooncakes are shared as a symbol of unity. But some also give them as part of the *guanxi* custom.

1. Should you violate laws to accommodate another's cultural behavior?
2. Should you have handled the situation differently?
3. The couple is coming in for another interview. Do you say or do anything about the gift?

The Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan is the celebration of the bond between sister and brother. Sisters tie a Rakhi around their brothers' wrists, and brothers often give gifts of appreciation to their sisters.

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and other stimuli that draw your attention away from the message. *Internal noise* refers to your thoughts and feelings that can interfere with the message. *Semantic noise* refers to how alternative meanings of the source's message symbols can be distracting.

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- *Receiver.* The **receiver** is the person who attends to the message. Receivers may be intentional—that is, they may be the people the source desired to communicate with—or they may be any person who comes upon and attends to the message.
- *Decoding.* **Decoding** is the opposite of encoding and just as much an active process. The receiver is actively involved in the communication process by assigning meaning to the symbols received.
- *Receiver response.* **Receiver response** refers to anything the receiver does after having attended to and decoded the message. That response can range from doing nothing to taking some action or actions that may or may not be the action desired by the source.
- *Feedback.* **Feedback** refers to that portion of the receiver response of which the source has knowledge and to which the source attends and assigns meaning. You as a reader of this text may have many responses, but only when you respond to a survey or send an e-mail to the author does feedback occur. Feedback makes communication a two-way or interactive process.
- *Context.* The final component of communication is **context**. Generally, context can be defined as the environment in which the communication takes place, and it helps define the communication. If you know the physical context, you can predict with a high degree of accuracy much of the communication. For example, you have certain knowledge and expectations of the communication that occurs within synagogues, mosques, and churches. At times, you intentionally plan a certain physical environment for your communication: You may want to locate your romantic communications in a quiet, dimly lit restaurant or on a secluded beach. The choice of the environment—the context—helps assign the desired meaning to the communicated words.

Culture is also context. Every culture has its own worldview—its own way of thinking of activity, time, and human nature; its own way of perceiving self; and its own system of social organization. Knowing each of these helps you assign meaning to the symbols.

Models of Communication

Scholars have used terms such as these to develop models of the communication process. To demonstrate how a communication theory reflects Western culture, let's review one early theory made popular by David Berlo's (1960) *The Process of Communication.*

Berlo was interested in using communication to solve problems, such as finding more effective ways of communicating new agricultural technologies to farmers and communicating health information to the peoples of developing countries. He drew from engineering to conceptualize communication as a linear process of transmitting ideas to influence others to achieve the communicator's goals. Overall, his conceptualization of communication can be described as machinelike or mechanistic. Communication was conceptualized as one-way, top-down, and suited for the transmission media of print, telephones, radio, and television.

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Not everyone agreed with linear models. For example, semanticist S.I. Hayakawa (1978) noted that decoding—or listening—in linear models seems to give the receiver a subordinate role to the source. When someone speaks, others stop what they are doing to listen. Therefore, it would seem that the source is viewed as more active and as more important in the process. Hayakawa's observation makes it clear that cultural beliefs affect how the process of communication is defined.

Linear models can lead you to think of communication as consisting of an active source and a passive receiver. Speaking may be considered a more noble activity and may demand that others cease other activities to listen. Indeed, in many cultures, listening does place one in a subordinate role to that of the source. In other cultures, where the group's history and knowledge are told and retold verbally, the role of the listener who accurately remembers is critical. The story is told that the Puritans, believing themselves to have been called to save "heathens," preached to the American Indians. The Indians affirmed conversions to Christianity to the delight of the early settlers. Then, the Indians told the Puritans the Indian story of creation and asked the settlers to affirm it. The Indian communication style was not to disagree but to listen and affirm. The Puritans were disappointed that communication, in their Western understanding, had failed. In the American Indian understanding, it had not.

The more contemporary model views communication as a transactional process in which each person serves as both speaker and listener, sending and receiving messages simultaneously. The transactional model also emphasizes that the components of communication are interdependent or that each component exists in relation to other components. A change in one produces change in the others (DeVito, 2023).

In social relationships, the relationship between the source and receiver may help define much of the meaning of the communication. Again, if you know the context, you can predict with a high degree of accuracy much of the communication. For example, knowing that a person is giving testimony in a trial is enough to predict much of the person's communication. Certain things are likely to be said and done; other things are very unlikely.

THE MEDIA OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

One component of the communication process is the channel, or medium, by which the encoded message is transmitted. In past centuries, written letters carried by human couriers were the dominant media. In the Roman Empire of the first century BCE, letters and books were copied and distributed among friends that could reach Britain in five weeks and Syria in seven weeks (Standage, 2013). In the 20th century, electronic mass media became dominant. Through today's social media, communicators create online communities to instantly share messages and images. The focus in this text is not on the form of media use but rather on how culture is reflected in media use.

Human Couriers and Intermediaries

One early form of intercultural communication still in widespread use today is human couriers. Another person can be used as a medium. You can easily imagine messages being entrusted to a courier to deliver to a faraway village.

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In some cultures, intermediaries are used instead of face-to-face confrontation to reduce the risk of losing face or the value or standing one has in the eyes of others. Ting-Toomey (1985) has proposed that cultures like the United States, which have a greater concern for privacy and autonomy, tend to use direct-face negotiation and express more self-face maintenance, whereas cultures such as China, which have a greater concern for interdependence and inclusion, tend to use indirect-face negotiation and express more mutual-face and other-face maintenance. In a study conducted in central China, Ringo Ma (1992) confirmed that a friend or respected elder intervenes in interpersonal conflict situations, serving as a message carrier.

Telephone

It is estimated that as of 2023 there were 901 million landline telephones—a reduction from over 1 billion in earlier years. Alexander Graham Bell expected the telephone to be more of a broadcasting medium, more like what radio would become. Well into the 20th century, telephone executives believed the telephone was primarily a medium for business and actually discouraged "socializing" by telephone.

When using the telephone in intercultural interactions, the lack of contextual cues other than those related to voice may prove to be a barrier. For this reason, it may be the conversation openings that are significant in establishing the first impression from which the relationship develops. An opening sequence that violates a cultural expectation may lead the parties to develop negative views and attitudes toward each other (Pavlidou, 2006). Later language misunderstandings, such as the meanings of certain words, idioms, and humor, can exacerbate the problem.

What is commonly called a cell phone in the United States is called a mobile in the United Kingdom, cellular in Latin America, *keitai* (portable) in Japan, *shou-ji* (hand machine) in China, *nalle* (teddy bear) in Sweden, *Pelephone* (wonder phone) in Israel, and *handy* in Germany. Smartphones with Internet access and apps are common worldwide. By whatever name, the estimated number of mobile phones in 2023 was 8.1 billion—more than the world's population (see Figure 1.4). Many emerging and developing countries simply skipped developing landline capacity. Because the United States relied heavily on land lines, mobile phone adoption was slower in the United States than in other countries. In African and Asian countries where landlines were not as common and in European countries where mobile phone service is less expensive than landlines, mobile phone adoption was faster (Ling, 2005). In 2005, for example, 95% of European teenagers had mobile phones while 45% of U.S. teenagers did (Ling & Baron, 2007).

Text messaging is the more commonly used term in North America, the United Kingdom, and the Philippines for what other countries are more likely to refer to as short message service (SMS). Shuter and Chattopadhyay (2010) compared texting in the United States and India and found a definite relationship to each culture's norms. For example, consider where texting is done. Consistently, people in the United States are more likely to send and read messages in public social settings like restaurants, shops, and movie theaters. Perhaps because of the area where texting is done, people in the United States text when they are with strangers and acquaintances or friends but much less with family members. Indians text when they are with family members or boyfriends or girlfriends. People in the United States are more likely to

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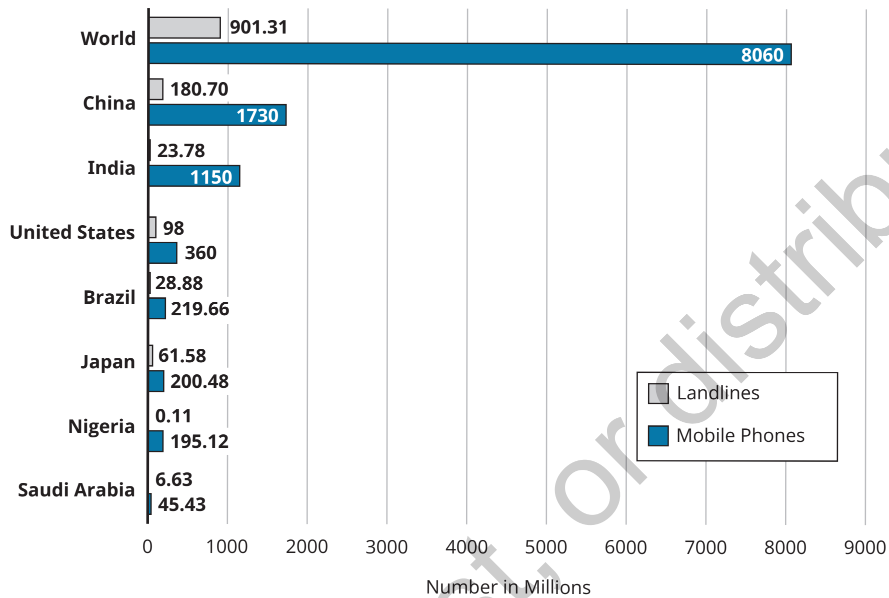
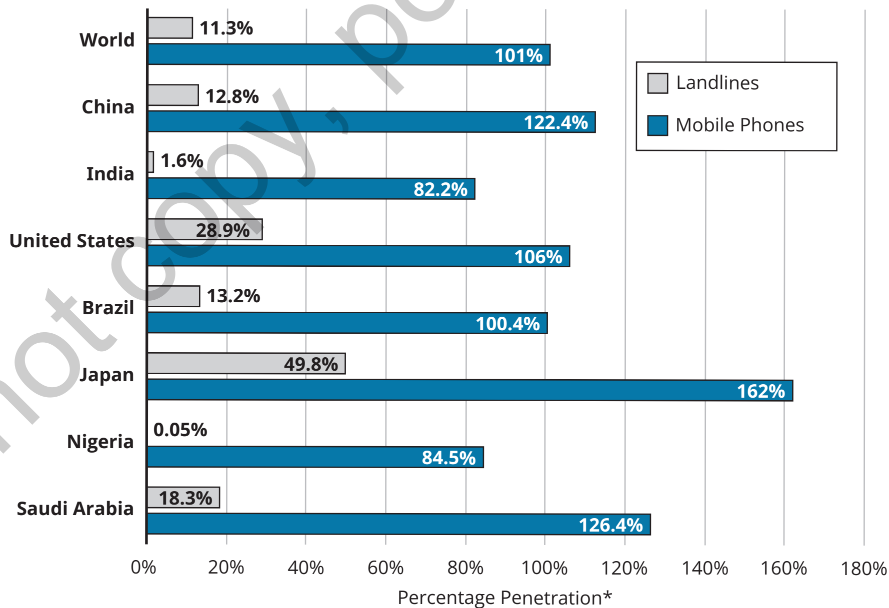
FIGURE 1.4 ■ Land Line and Mobile Phones in Use, 2023





*Penetration is the percentage of the total population.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (2023). *The world factbook*. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook

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consider it impolite to text in a classroom, in a movie theater, at dinner, and while conversing with others, especially with loud text alerts. Indians are more likely to find swearing in texts as impolite. Shuter and Chattopadhyay concluded that the social use of texting is guided by forces deeply embedded in each culture.

Yoojung Kim, Dongyoung Sohn, and Sejung Choi (2011) compared U.S. and Korean college student SMS use and found clear cultural connections. In both countries, the reasons for using SMS were the same: seeking friends, social support, information, entertainment, and convenience. The difference was that, for students in the United States, socially close others (e.g., family members, close friends) were only a minor part of their online social networks, while families and close friends were 70% of the Koreans' networks. The researchers concluded that students in the United States tend to focus more on entertaining themselves by making new friends through SMS, while Korean students tend to focus more on existing relationships with socially close others from whom they can acquire useful information and social support. Abeele and Roe (2011) found a similar pattern comparing Flemish and U.S. new college students. Flemish students were more likely to text and instant message precollege friends, while U.S. students were more likely to text and instant message new friends.

Internet

Since the mid-1990s, the Internet has grown to serve about 70% of the world's population and has forever changed how we communicate. Smartphones have made the Internet more accessible to more people. Figure 1.5 shows the 10 countries with the most Internet users. Countries in Africa have significantly less Internet use than those in Europe and North America. Less than 1% of the population of North Korea has Internet access.

Language Use

The Internet originated in the English-speaking world. Computers are English-oriented. Early computer systems were limited to the characters in the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII), making, for example, texts transmitted unaltered from francophone keyboards appear illegible on English-favoring keyboards. Netscape and Java are in English. Search engines were developed in and for English. At its origin, the language of the Internet was English. But as Figure 1.5 shows, the Internet is now truly worldwide. That suggests two questions:

- Will the Internet encourage the worldwide dominance of English? Will the Internet, then, become a major force blending the world's population together?
- Will Internet users favor native languages, and over time, will the dominance of English diminish? Will the divisions of language groups force the Internet to use other languages, perpetuating divisions based on existing language use lines?

We can't fully answer these questions by examining the language abilities of Internet users. There are more Internet users worldwide who can speak and read English than there are Internet users in predominantly English-speaking countries. While these multilingual users might be

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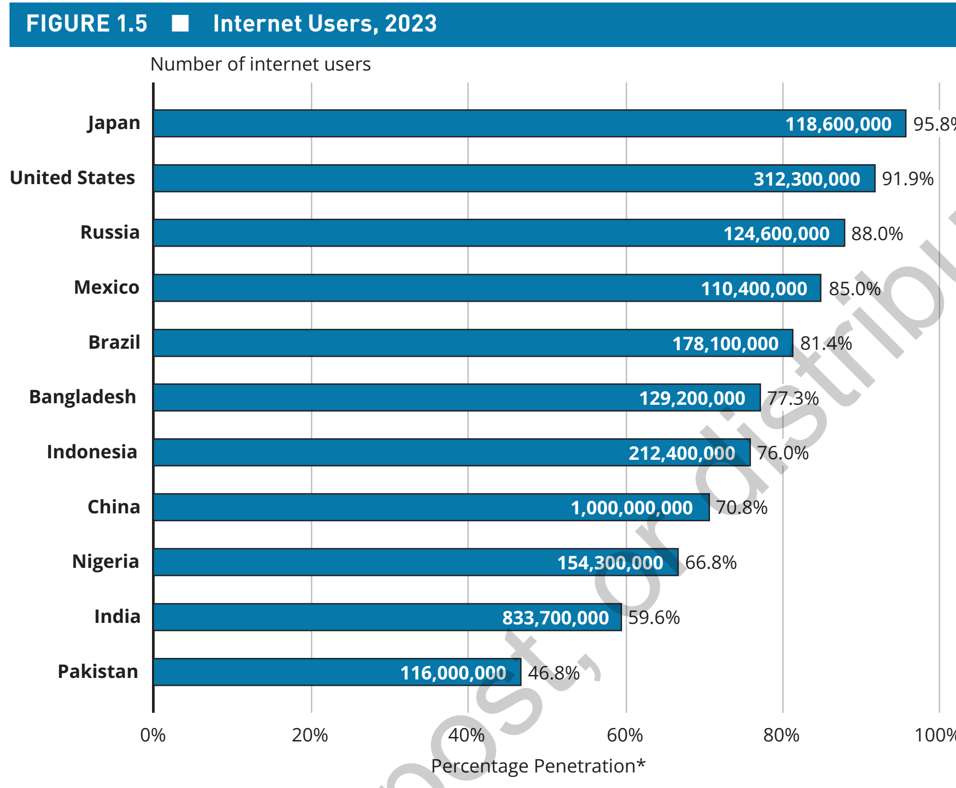

FIGURE 1.5 ■ Internet Users, 2023

*Penetration is the percentage of the total population.

Note: The finance minister of Bangladesh places the number of users at 129.2 million. Other sources place the number at half that.

Sources: Central Intelligence Agency. (2023). *The world factbook*. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook; World Population Review. (2023). *Internet users by country 2023*. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/internet-users-by-country

able to use English, they might also prefer to use their first language. Figure 1.6 shows the percentages of websites using various content languages as of 2023.

Perhaps the answer to the questions above is, "Yes, at least in the immediate future." English may continue to be the dominant language on the Internet, but at the same time, technology is supporting the use of local languages worldwide. Additionally, translation technology will make it possible for everyone to use any preferred language and be understood by anyone. Google Translate provides text translations for over 130 languages, including Chinese characters. Translations also are built into the Chrome web browser.

Design Elements

As you can see in the models of communication discussed earlier, communication symbols can be verbal and nonverbal. While translation technology may deal to some extent with the verbal symbols, there remain the nonverbal. Research has demonstrated that culture is reflected in the

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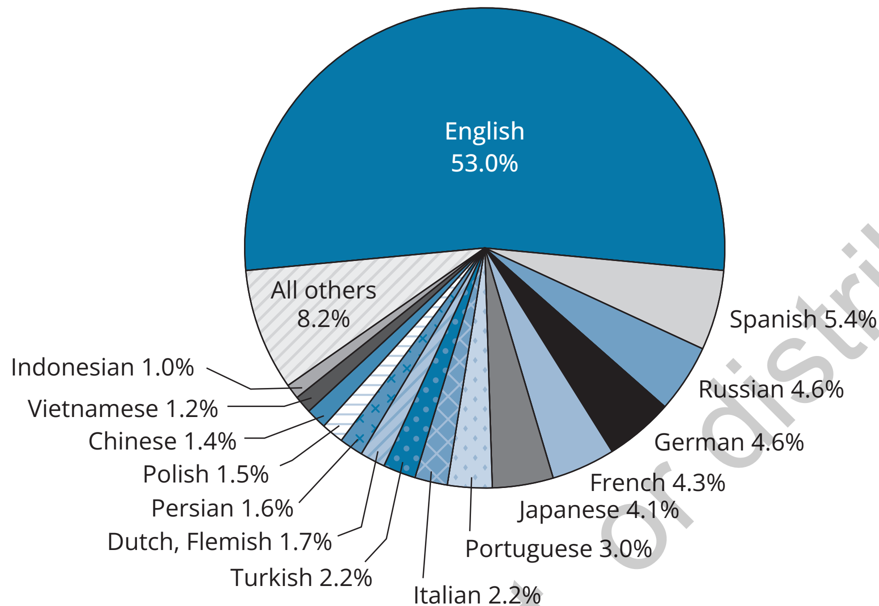
FIGURE 1.6 ■ Language of Internet Content, 2023



Note: All others less than 1%.

Source: Q-Success. (2023). *Usage statistics of content languages for websites.* https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_language

nonverbal aspects of the Internet. Singh, Zhao, and Hu (2003) assert that "the web is not a culturally neutral medium" because websites contain unique design elements that give "country-specific websites a look and feel unique to the local culture" (p. 63). Design elements include different icons, colors, and site structures (Barber & Badre, 1998). Schmid-Isler (2000) compared Western and Chinese Internet news sites and found that their layout is different. She contended that this difference is related to culturally influenced perceptions of information storage and display. For example, Google has clean lines and uncluttered "negative space." Chinese web users are accustomed to pop-ups and floating banner ads. Chinese webpages are "packed with information and multimedia graphics, requir[ing] many scroll-downs to see the whole page" (Clark, 2016, p. 166). In contrast, Google seems static and dull to Chinese web users.

Social Media

The term *social media* is used to describe a variety of Internet-based platforms, applications, and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online. Social media sites reach 5 billion users. While Facebook has almost 3 billion users, it is not alone (see Figure 1.7 for leading social networks).

There are several changes in Figure 1.7 from previous years. Telegram is new to the list. Brothers Nikolai and Pavel Durov founded the Russian social network VK (which they sold, saying it had been taken over by the government) before founding Telegram. Telegram is

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FIGURE 1.7 ■ Leading Social Networks Worldwide, 2024

Source: Statista. (2024). *Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2024, ranked by number of monthly active users*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/

registered as an LLC in Dubai but does not disclose its office locations. It is most popular in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Telegram provides virtually no content moderation and has been criticized for its use by Islamic State supporters and far-right groups and its facilitation of criminal activity.

Instagram has grown fast and is now said to be the preferred social media platform for users aged 16–34. TikTok has grown as well, but not without criticism. TikTok and Douyin are both owned by ByteDance. Douyin was launched before TikTok in China and is the foundation for TikTok. More than half of ByteDance is now owned by global institutional investors. Many fear that TikTok shares information with the Chinese government. India banned it in 2020. Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the U.S. military have banned it from official devices.

Culture's influence has been demonstrated in social media use. Several studies have shown differences in social media use between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (see Chapter 6). One by Cho (2010) compared Korean and U.S. online profiles on Facebook (U.S.) and Cyworld (Korea). Cyworld users refrained from posting personal information. Facebook users posted more first-person self-references. Cyworld users tended to upload

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fake or anonymous photos; Facebook users mainly uploaded photos featuring themselves. Sheldon et al. (2017) compared students' use of Instagram in Croatia, a highly collectivistic culture, and the United States, an individualistic culture. U.S. students' use of Instagram reflected individualistic needs, particularly self-promotion. Croatian student use reflected collectivist needs, particularly social interaction. The researchers concluded that Croatian students' Instagram use was more *we*-focused compared to U.S. students' *me*-focused use, suggesting that Croatian students tend to perceive "followers more as friends with whom to socialize" whereas U.S. students were more likely to consider followers as "'fans' or an audience to which they might self-promote."

Cell phone use on a train in Wuhan, China, in 2022.

iStock.com/Wirestock

Earlier you read that culture cannot be known without a study of communication, and communication can only be understood with an understanding of the culture it supports. Today's Internet and social media use demonstrates the continuing truth of that statement. You'll see this idea developed more in future chapters.

SUMMARY

Our culture guides our individual identities and provides regulators for life. Six forms of regulators of human life and identity are religion; nation; class; gender; skin color, race, and ethnicity; and civilization. Today, national identity has become synonymous with cultural identity.

Twentieth-century scientists have found no single race-defining gene. The sociohistorical concept of defining race explains that racial categories have varied over time and between cultures. Worldwide, skin color alone does not define race.

The term *culture* refers to the totality of a large group's thoughts, behaviors, and values that are socially transmitted as well as to members who consciously identify with the group. The

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term *subculture* refers to a group that exists within a culture, usually based on social class, ethnicity, or geographic region. As the prefix *sub-* can mean "less than," some scholars prefer the term *co-culture* to indicate that no one culture is inherently superior to other coexisting cultures. Finally, the term *subgroup* refers to a group that provides members with a relatively complete set of values and patterns of behavior and in many ways poses similar communication problems as cultures. To avoid negative connotations with these words, the terms *microculture* and *community* are becoming more commonly used. Recognizing the effect labeling can have on individuals' identities, this text recommends and uses only the terms *culture* and *community.*

A Confucian perspective on communication would define it as an infinite interpretive process in which all parties are searching to develop and maintain a social relationship. A Western perspective would define it as a process involving a speaker, the speech act, an audience, and a purpose. Components of communication can include source, encoding, message, channel, noise, receiver, decoding, receiver response, feedback, and context.

One component of the communication process is the channel or media by which the encoded message is transmitted. Today's new media use reflects significant aspects of culture. For example, people in the United States are more likely to send and read text messages in public social settings like restaurants, shops, and movie theaters; Indians text when they are with family members or boyfriends and girlfriends. And Western and Chinese Internet news sites have different layouts that are related to culturally influenced perceptions of information storage and display.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Damasio's thesis is that culture is a regulator of human life and identity. Give examples of what culture provides to its members. What is not a product of culture?
2. Cannadine posits six forms of regulators of human life and identity. Which have been major sources of conflict? How can that conflict be explained?
3. Why do you believe social class differences, ethnic identity, and skin color are uncomfortable for many people in the United States to discuss?
4. One study found that interactions between ethnically dissimilar people were judged to be relatively superficial encounters. The researchers concluded that communicators were trying to ensure that the interaction was harmonious. What do you believe could explain this?
5. Will the Internet encourage the worldwide dominance of English, or will native-language use on the Internet weaken the dominance of English?
6. What could justify a nation censoring the Internet and social media?

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KEY TERMS

Channel
Co-culture
Communication
Confucianism
Context
Counterculture
Cultural identity
Culture
Decoding
Encoding
Ethnic identity
Ethnicity
Feedback
Hero
Honorific
Message
Microculture
Myth
Noise
Race
Receiver
Receiver response
Reference group
Ritual
Social class
Source
Subculture
Subgroup
Symbol
Tribal sovereignty
Value

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2 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

2.1 Give examples of barriers to intercultural communication resulting from the perception of others.

2.2 Give examples of barriers to intercultural communication that are learned from others.

2.3 Discuss how interpersonal and media communication can spread stereotypes and prejudice.

2.4 Give examples of intercultural communication competence skills appropriate to more than one culture.

2.5 Describe how multicultural and postethnic identities can facilitate intercultural communication.

2.6 Develop your own ethical guidelines for intercultural communication.

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This chapter addresses intercultural communication competence, or the skill of communicating appropriately and effectively in varied cultural contexts. Perhaps the most important factor in developing this skill is knowledge about our own and others' identities. In Chapter 1, you read that to some extent we define our and others' identities based on religion; nation; class; gender; skin color, race, and ethnicity; and civilization. In this chapter, then, you'll first read about the barriers of othering, anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, and ethnocentrism, which can be said to result from our perceptions. Then you'll read about stereotypes, prejudice, and racism, which can be said to result more from our learning. Then you'll read how interpersonal and media communication can spread stereotypes and prejudice.

Next, you'll consider how to overcome these barriers by developing intercultural communication competence—that is, the knowledge, motivation, and communication skill of interacting across cultures in ways that are both effective and appropriate (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

One might ask if having multiple cultural identities facilitates intercultural communication competence. To answer this, you'll read about third culture, multiculturalism, transculturalism, and postethnic cultures. This leads into a consideration of ethics in intercultural communication.

When discussing this chapter with your classmates, you may find that the topics raise vigorous discussion, particularly those questions covered in the Point/Counterpoint features. It's important to understand how to talk about issues of identity and diversity respectfully and productively. Law professors Kenji Yoshino and David Glasgow (2023) related a story of a law school event that considered how members of advantaged social groups could be allies of marginalized people. After the event, one student, a White man, asked them in private, "What if I say something and a woman says it was sexist, but I don't think it was. Am I allowed to

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disagree?" Inspired by this question, the two law professors attempted to provide guidelines about how to have productive conversations about issues of identity.

One tool Yoshino and Glasgow propose is a *controversy scale*. On one side are subjects where disagreement is expected and accepted, such as disagreements over personal tastes such as music. Moving to the center are disagreements over facts: who, what, when, and where. On the other side are issues over which one feels their humanity is being put into question. Not all of us perceive these issues the same way. For example, a parent of a White child might not perceive and discuss the school's antiracist curriculum in the same way as the parents of a Black child. The White parent might perceive the dispute as a factual debate over specific events in U.S. history or even what history should be taught at what grade level. The Black parent, however, might perceive the controversy as a debate over whether their child even belongs in the school. One perceives the controversy as abstract and impersonal; the other perceives it as immediate, personal, and emotionally charged. The first step is to recognize that people's identification with topics varies. Most importantly, Yoshino and Glasgow recommend being open-minded to learning others' perspectives.

PERCEPTUAL BARRIERS TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

One approach to intercultural communication competence is to identify common barriers to it. In this section, you'll read about othering as a barrier as well as three other barriers developed by LaRay M. Barna (1997): anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, and ethnocentrism. Stereotypes and prejudice, the fourth of Barna's barriers, are discussed in the next section on barriers that can be learned. Two other barriers identified by Barna, nonverbal misinterpretations and language, are discussed separately in following chapters. Barna's categories are used here when discussing problems that can arise in intercultural encounters. Taking these common barriers into account can help you improve your intercultural communication skills.

Othering

The concept of **othering** can be traced back to Plato, who used it to represent the relationship between an observer (the Self) and an observed (the Other; Riggins, 1997). The concept has been used to describe the descriptions and judgments of Indigenous peoples by post-Renaissance European colonialists. Jandt and Tanno (2001) characterize this as both perceptual imperialism and discursive imperialism. Perceptual imperialism refers to interpreting information about cultural Others based more on myth than reality. Discursive imperialism refers to language use marked by self-interest, favoritism, ethnocentrism, and domination.

Othering involves an asymmetry of power: A dominant group imposes an identity on the other and defines the other's identity in terms of what it is *not* based on the dominant group's perception of itself. Then, based on that imposed identity, the dominant group

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interacts accordingly with the other. For example, Europeans perceived groups like Indigenous Hawaiians and Aztecs as "uncivilized" and therefore to be made civilized or exterminated if they resisted the Europeans (Todorov, 1984; Obeyesekere, 1992).

The concept of othering applies to other forms of identity, such as gender. Women may be defined by men as not having desired male characteristics—that is, not strong, too emotional and so on. Othering also occurs in relation to sexual identity, such as queer individuals not having valued characteristics associated with heterosexuality, and to ethnicity, such as Jewish people in Nazi Germany being "not German" and therefore foreign and inferior (Jandt & Tanno, 2001). The obvious detrimental effects on intercultural communication are the asymmetric power relationship, the imposition of an identity by the dominant group, the suppression of the self-identity of the other, and the actions of the dominant group justified by their imposed identity on the other.

Othering may affect the language use of the other. This is reflected in muted group theory (MGT), a theory in communication studies developed as a feminist and intercultural theory. Cheris Kramarae (1981) contends that "the language of a particular culture does not serve all its speakers equally, for not all speakers contribute in an equal fashion to its formulation. Women (and members of other subordinate groups) are not as free or as able as men are to say what they wish, when and where they wish, because the words and the norms for their use have been formulated by the dominant group, men" (p. 1). Kramarae also contends that MGT exists on the Internet. Men dominated the technology fields that created the Internet and used masculine terms to describe it, which continue in use today. The bias is demonstrated in search engine algorithms largely developed by men. Search engines results for images of engineers and scientists adopt a male default (Guilbeault, Delecourt, Hull, Desikan, Chu, & Nadler, 2024).

Mark Orbe (1995, 1998) extended Kramarae's ideas to African Americans and other groups. Dominant White European culture created the illusion that all African Americans, regardless of gender, age, class, or sexual orientation, communicate in a similar manner. Instead, Orbe points out, muted groups may communicate in various ways, including downplaying differences or avoiding interaction with the dominant group.

Anxiety

A second barrier to intercultural communication—and the first identified by Barna—is high **anxiety**. When you are anxious due to not knowing what you are expected to do, it's only natural to focus on that feeling and not be totally present in the communication transaction.

For example, you may have experienced anxiety on your very first day on a new college campus or in a new job. You may have been so conscious of being new—and out of place—and focused so much of your attention on that feeling that you made common mistakes and appeared awkward to others. Sugawara (1993) surveyed 168 Japanese employees of Japanese companies working in the United States and 135 of their U.S. coworkers. Only 8% of the U.S. coworkers felt impatient with the Japanese coworkers' English. While 19% of the Japanese employees felt their spoken English was poor or very poor and 20% reported feeling

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nervous when speaking English with U.S. coworkers; 30% of the Japanese employees felt the U.S. coworkers were impatient with their accent. Almost 60% believed that language was the problem in communicating with the U.S. coworkers. For some, anxiety over speaking English properly contributed to avoiding interactions with the U.S. coworkers and limiting interactions both on and off the job.

The German sociologist Georg Simmel's (1858-1918) concepts of *the stranger* and *social distance* were precursors to C. R. Berger and Calabrese's (1975) anxiety/uncertainty reduction theory (Rogers, 1999). This theory assumes that during the initial phase of interaction with another person, your primary communication goal is to reduce your uncertainty about that person. Thus, you are attempting to discover information about the other person and to share information about yourself.

Gudykunst and his colleagues (see, e.g., Gudykunst, 1983, 1985) have applied this theory to intercultural communication by further developing the concept of the stranger. Strangers are people who are members of other groups who act in ways different from one's own culture. When encountering strangers, one experiences uncertainty and anxiety and is unsure how to behave. Uncertainty means not knowing what the reactions of strangers will be and not knowing how to explain the reactions of strangers. Anxiety arises when a person is apprehensive about initial interactions. When anxiety is high, we tend to avoid interactions, and when it is too low, we tend not to care what happens in the interaction.

Assuming Similarity Instead of Difference

The next barrier is assuming similarity instead of difference. A middle-class Angolan teenager may purchase a CD of music produced in the United States. Does that demonstrate that all teenagers around the world like the same music? There may be a cultural difference in how teenagers listen to that music: The Angolan teenager probably will play the music in communal fashion for several people to listen, dance, and sing along. Most probably in the United States, the teenager will listen to the music alone with earbuds. Four Spaniards may meet at a McDonald's in Madrid. They may order Big Macs®, French fries, and milkshakes. Does that demonstrate that we all like the same food? The cultural difference may be in the rituals of dining together in Spain. Most probably, the Spaniards will not rush their meal, and the person who invited the others will pay, as it is very unlikely each will pay for their individual portions. When you assume similarity between cultures, you can be caught unaware of important differences.

When you have no information about a new culture, it might make sense to assume no differences exist, to behave as you would in your home culture. But making that assumption could result in miscommunication. Consider, for example, this scenario: A Danish woman left her 14-month-old baby girl in a stroller outside a Manhattan restaurant while she was inside. Other diners at the restaurant became concerned and called the police. The woman was charged with endangering a child and was jailed for two nights. Her child was placed in foster care. The woman and the Danish consulate explained that leaving children unattended outside cafes is common in Denmark. Pictures were wired to the police showing numerous strollers

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parked outside cafes while parents were eating inside. The Danish woman had assumed that Copenhagen is similar to New York and that what is commonly done in Copenhagen is also commonly done in New York.

Groups such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations have accused U.S. school districts of assuming similarity, to the detriment of Muslim students. Muslims pray five times a day and require space to unfurl a prayer rug, face Mecca, and touch their head to the floor. Muslim parents have asked schools to recognize difference and become more accommodating to Muslim students.

Each culture *is* different and unique to some degree. Boucher (1974), for example, has shown how cultures differ in terms of to whom it is appropriate to display emotions. If you assume that display of emotions is similar to your culture, you might see people of different cultures in certain circumstances as lacking emotion and people in other circumstances as displaying emotions inappropriately.

The inverse can be a barrier as well. Assuming difference instead of similarity can lead to one not recognizing important things that cultures share in common. It's better to assume nothing. It's better to ask, "What are the customs?" than to assume they are the same—or different—everywhere.

Ethnocentrism

The word ethnocentrism is derived from two Greek words: *ethnos*, meaning nation, and *kentron*, meaning center. From that, you can understand that as a barrier to effective intercultural communication, **ethnocentrism** refers to negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standards of one's own culture. To be ethnocentric is to believe in the superiority of one's own culture. Everything in a culture is consistent to that culture and makes sense if you understand that culture. For example, assume that summers in the United States average 43°C (109°F). It would be logical to make adjustments: Rather than air-conditioning buildings all day, you might close schools and businesses in the afternoons to conserve energy. Such adjustments would make sense. Why then, do some people attribute sensible midday siestas in hot climates to laziness?

Benjamin Franklin provided an example of ethnocentrism before the term itself was coined. He described a 1744 meeting between government commissioners from Virginia and representatives of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy (the Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, Seneca, and Tuscarora) upon the signing of the Treaty of Lancaster. The Virginia commissioners offered to provide for the instruction of Six Nations' youth "in all the Learning of the White People."

To show respect by taking time to consider the offer, the Six Nations representatives deferred their response until the next day. They then responded,

> We thank you heartily. But you, who are wise, must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some Experience of it; Several of our young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of

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> the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an Enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing.

The Six Nations representatives then made a counter proposal: "If the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them" (Quoted in Mott & Jorgenson, 1936). After reading the comments by Benjamin Franklin, who do you think was being ethnocentric?

In contrast to ethnocentrism, **cultural relativism** refers to the view that an individual's beliefs and behaviors should be understood only in terms of that person's own culture. It does not mean that everything is equal. It does mean that we must try to understand other people's behavior in the context of their culture. It also means that we recognize the arbitrary nature of our own cultural behaviors and are willing to reexamine them by learning about behaviors in other cultures (M. N. Cohen, 1998).

Gwen Stefani has borrowed from other cultures for years and has often been accused of cultural appropriation. Her fragrance line Harajuku Lovers and her album *Love. Angel.Music.Baby.*, for instance, incorporate Japanese Harajuku fashion in a way that some consider appropriative. Stefani's response to criticism has been, "[It] should be okay to be inspired by other cultures because if we're not allowed then that's dividing people, right?" (Mendez, 2023, para. 2).

Tammie Arroyo/AFF/Alamy Stock Photo

A less extreme form of ethnocentrism can be labeled *cultural nearsightedness*, or taking one's own culture for granted and neglecting other cultures. For example, people in the United States often use the word *Americans* to refer to U.S. citizens, but actually, that word is the correct designation of all people in North and South America. Its careless use is a form of ethnocentrism.

Cultural nearsightedness often results in making assumptions that simple things are the same everywhere. Designing paperwork and forms that require people to provide information as straightforward as their name is not so simple if you recognize how widely naming practices vary. For example, in Mexico, people may have two surnames, with the first being their father's first surname and the second being their mother's surname. Often, only the first surname is used and the second abbreviated.

> When she marries, a woman commonly drops the surname of her mother and adds the first surname of her husband, preceded by the preposition "de." This indicates that she is the "wife of" that man.

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> Maria Gomez, when married to Juan Martinez Ramirez, would become Maria Gomez de Martinez and will be recorded as Gomez de Martinez, Maria.
>
> Note that the woman's first surname never changes, according to traditional Hispanic usage. After admission to the US, however, some women have adopted the American custom of using the husband's surname as their own. Maria Gomez de Martinez may begin to give her name as Martinez, Maria Gomez. (Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, n.d.)

Consider China, with 1.4 billion people and only about 4,000 surnames, with 85% of the population sharing 100 of them. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, nearly 107 million people share the name *Wang*—the most common surname in the world. Second most occurring is *Li*, shared by some 105 million Chinese people. The most prevalent surname in the United States, *Smith*, is shared by 2.4 million people.

Another example is Eurocentric ethnocentrism, or Eurocentrism. This would include, for example, recognizing only Western holidays in schools or basing curricula only on Western history, music, and art. The terms *the West* and *the East* themselves have been labeled Eurocentric. Asia is east of Europe, but to call Asia "the East" makes its identity dependent on Europe.

FOCUS ON SKILLS 2.1: CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

You are a student counselor in your campus ombuds office, which assists students, faculty, and staff in resolving conflicts on an informal basis. A complaint has been filed by a student group against the campus theater department. The theater group is selling Halloween costumes to raise money. Included in their costumes are sombreros. The complaint alleges not that sombreros are an offensive symbol but rather that their sale by the theater department is cultural appropriation.

You call the president of the theater department student group, who is shocked by your call. She says their intention wasn't to diminish any culture with the costume sale. She asks how the department's sale is any different from a local Mexican restaurant that advertises with a man in a sombrero, or from the Los Angeles Angels, who gave away thousands of sombreros at a Major League Baseball game. Then she asks, "Should the bakery on campus stop selling squaw bread?"

1. Is this an example of ethnic stereotyping or cultural insensitivity?
2. How might you help these two student groups resolve this conflict?
3. What about the squaw bread? Consider that the word *squaw* may be derived from an Algonquin language word meaning *woman* and has become disparaging of Indigenous women. In 2021, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, who is a member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe, declared the word derogatory and established a task force to find replacement names for places on public land. The Lake Tahoe ski resort Squaw Valley, for example, changed its name to Palisades Tahoe.

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Extreme ethnocentrism leads to a rejection of the richness and knowledge of other cultures. It impedes communication and blocks the exchange of ideas and skills among peoples. Because it excludes other points of view, an ethnocentric orientation is restrictive and limiting.

Another aspect of ethnocentrism is to fail to recognize the meaning of aspects of another's culture and misuse them, which shows a lack of respect for that culture. This has been identified as **cultural appropriation**, or using something from another's culture for your own benefit, especially without showing that you understand or respect the culture. In contrast, **cultural appreciation** is learning about another's culture in an effort to broaden one's perspective and connect with others across cultures.

LEARNED BARRIERS TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The barriers of stereotypes and prejudice can be said to be learned. These forces are a pernicious stumbling block to intercultural communication. **Stereotype** is the broader term and is commonly used to refer to negative or positive judgments made about individuals based on any observable or believed group membership. **Prejudice** refers to the irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, religion, or sexual orientation. The terms are related in that they both refer to making judgments about individuals based on group membership. It's generally agreed that **racism** is prejudice with the exercise of power on or over the group through institutional, historical, and structural means (Hoyt, 2012). We'll examine each in more depth in the following sections.

Stereotypes

The word *stereotyping* was first used by journalist Walter Lippmann in 1922 to describe judgments made about others on the basis of their ethnic group membership. Today, the term is more broadly used to refer to assumptions made on the basis of any group membership. Stereotyping becomes a barrier to intercultural communication when we don't verify the accuracy of the assumption and continue to believe an erroneous assumption. Who stereotypes? And who is the target of stereotyping? The answer to both questions is that anyone can stereotype, and anyone can be the target of stereotyping.

Psychologists have attempted to explain stereotyping as mistakes our brains make in the perception of other people that are similar to those mistakes our brains make in the perception of visual illusions (Nisbett, 1980). When information is ambiguous, the brain often reaches the wrong conclusion, but sometimes, the conclusion is correct. Some argue, then, that stereotypes can be useful in ambiguous situations because they can protect us from danger. Assume, for example, you live in an area where there has been a recent series of late-night carjackings at stop signs. When you are stopped, a car pulls up behind you, and two men jump out and rap on your window. There are a number of possible explanations for their behavior, from their wanting to tell you that your taillights are out, to a request for assistance, to a carjacking. You make a decision to engage in self-protective stereotyping and drive away. Your stereotyping may have prevented a carjacking, or it may have failed to provide help to people who needed assistance.

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Are American Indian logos and mascots stereotypes? Some say the stereotypes are positive; others find them demeaning. And surveys of attitudes toward mascots have been contradictory—some show opposition; some show support. In 2001, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights called for an end to the use of American Indian images and team names by non–American Indian schools. Beginning in 2006, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) prohibited 18 colleges and universities from displaying their nicknames, logos, or mascots based on American Indian imagery or references at postseason games. By 2008, the ban also applied to the uniforms of cheerleaders, dance teams, and band members at NCAA championship sites. Schools under this ban include the Florida State Seminoles, the Illinois Fighting Illini, and the Utah Utes. Five schools to which the ban applied—Central Michigan, Florida State, Midwestern State, Mississippi College, and the University of Utah—retained their eligibility by receiving support from their eponymous tribes.

The University of North Dakota (UND) was one of the original 18 schools with an American Indian mascot, the Fighting Sioux. UND sued the NCAA and reached a settlement permitting it to retain its mascot if both the Spirit Lake and Standing Rock Sioux reservations approved. One did; one did not. One said the name is a "source of pride"; the other said it "breeds prejudice." The state legislature passed a law prohibiting the university from changing its team name; the law was repealed. Supporters of the name sued the NCAA; the suit failed. Voters in a statewide referendum elected to remove the name, and the university has done so. The school's athletes now compete as the Fighting Hawks.

Similar controversy has surrounded the name of the National Football League's Washington Redskins. The National Congress of American Indians and other tribal organizations protested the name *Redskins* for perpetuating a demeaning stereotype, and a recent comprehensive study has demonstrated that tribal peoples opposed the Redskins team name and the use of mascots in general. The more highly identified tribal people expressed greater opposition. The researchers argued that the use of mascots increases stereotyping and discrimination (Fryberg et al., 2021).

In 2014, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office ruled that *Redskins* could not be registered as a trademark as it is derogatory; however, in 2017, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that not allowing disparaging names to be protected by trademark registration is an unconstitutional infringement of freedom of speech. Former team owner Jack Kent Cooke (a Canadian) said that the Redskins' name stood for bravery, courage, and a stalwart spirit. Former team owner Dan Snyder was adamant that he would never change the name, although FedEx, whose CEO was a minority team owner and which had the team's stadium naming rights, requested a name change. Snyder later announced a name change to the Washington Football Team until eventually settling on the Washington Commanders.

Criticisms were also raised against the Cleveland Indians Major League Baseball team. Following the 2018 season, the team removed the "Chief Wahoo" logo from its uniforms, and in 2022, they officially changed their name to the Cleveland Guardians.

Is the practice of profiling stereotyping? **Profiling** refers to a law enforcement practice of scrutinizing certain individuals based on characteristics thought to indicate a likelihood of criminal behavior. For example, it's believed that a person traveling alone is more likely to engage in

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terrorist activity. Profiling also refers to, for example, conducting traffic stops based on the vehicle occupant's perceived race, ethnicity, gender, or economic status. Profiling can happen in commercial establishments as well. The department store Macy's settled claims of profiling customers of color at its flagship store in Manhattan. The September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States created a climate that gave law enforcement agencies wider latitude to engage in more intensive airport security checks of people who appear to be of Middle Eastern descent. The federal government, in 2003, banned profiling on the basis of race or ethnicity and, in 2014, extended that to religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity. For the most part, the policy does not apply to screening at borders and airports or to local or state law enforcement.

According to National Congress of American Indians President Fawn Sharp, "In our discussions with the Atlanta Braves, we have repeatedly and unequivocally made our position clear—Native people are not mascots, and degrading rituals like the 'tomahawk chop' that dehumanize and harm us have no place in American society" (quoted in Ellis, 2021, para. 13).

American Photo Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Stereotypes are harmful because they impede communication in at least four ways:

1. They cause us to assume that a widely held belief is true when it may not be. Research conducted by Gordon Allport (1954) showed, for example, that the prevalent stereotype of Armenians as dishonest was proved false when a credit-reporting association gave the group credit ratings as good as those given others. Although you may think of stereotypes as being negative judgments, they can be positive as well. Some people hold positive stereotypes of other individuals based on their professional group membership. For example, some people assume that all doctors are intelligent and wise.

2. Continued use of the stereotype reinforces the belief. Stereotypes of women as ornaments, people of color as stupid or licentious, and gay men as promiscuous reinforce beliefs that place individual women, people of color, and gay men at risk. Popular television may reinforce those stereotypes. In a classic study, Shaheen (1984) cited four Western myths about Arab people as shown on television: that they are wealthy, barbaric, sex maniacs, and terrorist minded. Stereotypes linking Muslims with violence and terrorism continue to appear in cable news (Dison & Williams, 2015), newspapers (Powell, 2011), and video games (Šisler, 2008).

3. Stereotypes also impede communication when they cause us to assume that a widely held belief is true of any one individual. Hamilton and Harwood (1997) note that while cultural differences may be the most visible among people, they may not be the

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differences most likely to cause conflict. The authors warn against treating people as members of a cultural group without recognizing their individuality and other identities that might be important to them.

4. Stereotypes can become self-fulfilling prophecies for the people stereotyped. Research by psychologists Steele and Aronson (1995) has shown that a negative stereotype creates a threat that can distract the individual stereotyped. When a person is performing a task such as taking a test, the person must focus not only on the task but also on disconfirming the negative stereotype. This divided attention can lower their performance and so fulfill the stereotype.

Artificial Intelligence

Law professor Frank Pasquale (2015) contends that machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms are learning our stereotypes. Numerous examples support this claim. Google Photos (in 2015) algorithmically identified Black people as gorillas (Simonite, 2018). Snapchat (in 2016) provided a selfie-altering filter that showed users as an offensive Asian caricature. Software that coded gorillas as black in color may have resulted in machine algorithms that applied that label to people with black skin. One study demonstrated that ads for companies that locate criminal records are more likely to be displayed alongside the results of Google searches for names more common among African Americans (e.g., DeShawn, Darnell, or Jermaine) than alongside searches for names more commonly associated with White people (e.g., Geoffrey, Jill, or Emma; Sweeney, 2013). In 2018 and 2019, MIT researchers studied facial recognition platforms. They performed worst on darker-skinned female faces. Amazon facial detection technology labeled darker-skinned women as men 31% of the time (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018; Raji & Buolamwini, 2019). Another study demonstrated that facial recognition technology used by law enforcement may be up to 100 times more likely to misidentify Asian and Black people compared with White men (Grother, 2019).

Another example is text-to-image AI tool DALL-E, which has been shown to replicate gender stereotypes (Lamensch, 2023). Asking the tool to generate images based on the prompt "lawyer" disproportionately results in images of older White men in Western clothing. "Nurse" results in mostly images of women, and "flight attendant" generates images of Asian women. Other studies of massive amounts of text have demonstrated gender stereotypes associating "male" with "leader" and "female" with "helper," suggesting that AI tools trained on this text would perpetrate gender discrimination (Greenwald, 2017). In another application of AI, a university's price optimization algorithm might reduce your scholarship based on past data showing that students from your zip code are likely to enroll even with minimal financial aid, thus stereotyping you based on your zip code (MediaJustice, 2022).

Prejudice

Whereas stereotypes can be positive or negative, *prejudice* refers to the irrational dislike, suspicion, or hatred of a particular group, race, religion, or sexual orientation (Rothenberg, 1992). Persons within the group are viewed not in terms of their individual merit but according to the superficial characteristics that make them part of the group. Psychologists have identified the highly prejudiced individual as having an **authoritarian personality** (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson,

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& Sanford, 1950). Such persons tend to overgeneralize and think in bipolar terms; they are highly conventional, moralistic, and uncritical of higher authority. Highly prejudiced people are unlikely to change their attitudes even when presented with new and conflicting information.

Asian-Americans

Asian American groups in the United States experience stereotyping as a "model minority." They also experience prejudice, which was particularly pronounced at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some say Asian Americans are not accepted as people of color because they are seen as the model minority, while at the same time they are seen as foreign because they are not White.

The term *Asian American* was created by University of California, Los Angeles, historian Yuji Ichioka in the late 1960s to refer to all people of Asian descent in the belief that all Asians shared a common history and struggle in the United States. And until the 1970s, Asian Americans were largely born in the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abandoned the old policy of immigration quotas for each country and established a new system giving preference to relatives of U.S. residents. That change resulted in large numbers of people immigrating to the United States from Asian countries between 1981 and 1989. The continued use of the term *Asian American* contributes to a stereotype uniting the fastest-growing segment of the United States' population, including some 24 million people of Asian ancestry (about 7% of the population). About 80% of this community was born in or traces their ancestry to one of five countries: China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, or South Korea. The label *Asian American* thus groups cultures with vast differences in history, language, and customs into a single community.

The community is also diverse in education and economic status. Some 54% of Asian Americans ages 25 and older have a bachelor's degree, compared with 33% of the general population. However, that ranges from 75% among Indian Americans to 15% of Bhutanese Americans. Asian Americans have a median annual income of $85,800 (compared to $61,800 for all U.S. households). But again, that ranges from $44,000 for Burmese Americans to $119,000 for Indian Americans (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

During the civil rights era of the 1960s, Asian Americans became associated with the stereotype of the "model minority," who achieved success through hard work, perseverance, silent stoicism, strong family ties, and strong support for education. Researchers have shown how the model minority stereotype leads to prejudice. Prejudice arises when people feel a realistic threat from groups that are perceived as model minorities. Stereotypes of being ambitious, intelligent, and hardworking lead to a sense that the group poses a threat to other groups in terms of educational, economic, and political opportunities. The sense of threat leads to negative emotions and attitudes (Maddux et al., 2008).

Of all groups, Asian Americans are most often portrayed in the press as industrious and intelligent; enterprising and polite, with strong values; and successful in school and business, particularly in science and engineering. This stereotype seemed to continue the belief that any group can achieve the American Dream if its members "just work hard enough."

A recent study demonstrated that the model minority stereotype is very much accepted (Zhang, 2010). Cultivation theory links media content with the acquisition of stereotypes (Perse, 2001). Using cultivation theory as a theoretical framework, Zhang (2010) showed that

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in the United States, Asians are perceived as most likely to achieve academic success, are most likely to be perceived as nerds, are perceived as most likely to be left out, and are one of two groups people are least likely to initiate friendship with.

And Asian American high school students of all backgrounds complain that teachers often counsel them to go into math and sciences. Some teachers respond that this is done so that immigrants will not have to contend with language problems. Asian Americans argue that some teachers take this approach even with students who are fluent in English, and the reason why is that Asians are perceived as not being free thinking or extroverted.

Since the passage of a voter-approved measure in 1996, California public universities have not been allowed to use racial criteria in admissions. Eight states have since adopted similar measures. Berkeley's first-time undergraduate enrollment in 2023 was 50.5% "Asian." In 2021, Harvard's enrollment was 18.3% Asian American. Some allege that Ivy League universities limit the number of Asian Americans they admit. A controversial study of admissions data from 10 unnamed selective colleges concluded that Asian American applicants need 140 more SAT points than White applicants for admission, and Black applicants need 310 fewer points for admission (Espenshade & Radford, 2009). In 2014, Students for Fair Admissions filed suit against Harvard over its affirmative action admission policy on behalf of Asian Americans who had been rejected, alleging that Harvard discriminates by requiring higher standards for Asian American students and rates them poorly on personal characteristics. A federal judge ruled against the plaintiff in 2019, writing, "The use of race benefits certain racial and ethnic groups that would otherwise be underrepresented at Harvard and is therefore neither an illegitimate use of race or reflective of racial prejudice" (Gluckman, 2019, p. A18; see also Anderson, 2019). The Supreme Court ruled in 2023 that affirmative action in college admissions is unconstitutional. The ruling will not, however, prevent college and universities from pursuing diversity or giving consideration to students who have overcome hardships or discrimination.

POINT/COUNTERPOINT 2.1: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Affirmative action in college admissions remains a controversial subject.

Arguments in favor include the reparative argument—that is, that race-conscious admissions policies remedy past and ongoing racial inequalities in society. A second argument in favor is the "compelling interest in diversity" argument—that is, that diversity benefits both students and society and better prepares students for success in a diverse workforce. Additionally, proponents cite research that students in more diverse classrooms generate more novel and complex analyses and have greater civil engagement.

Arguments against these policies say that instead of ending discrimination, race-conscious admissions actually achieve the opposite. Others argue that affirmative action policies primarily benefit middle- and upper-class applicants of racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, limiting opportunities for financially disadvantaged students of all backgrounds. Opponents argue that some of the same people who advocate diversity also support segregated dormitories and segregated graduation ceremonies, which have made interracial interactions strained and superficial.

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Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld (2014) assume that some specific social habits communicated across group members and transmitted through generations may predispose those groups to success or failure. We might label these social habits as cultural traditions or traits. Chua and Rubenfeld contend in a controversial book that Asians, Cubans, Jews, Indians, Nigerians, Mormons, Iranians, and Lebanese are superior in succeeding in the United States because they share three cultural traits: a superiority complex, insecurity, and impulse control. Calcutta-born journalism professor Suketu Mehta (2014) charges that such claims of superiority for "model minorities" are simply a new form of racism. The implication is that other cultures are inferior and unable to succeed. Mehta also contends that such claims now based on culture follow a century of discredited claims of superiority based on race, class, IQ, and religion.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a dramatic rise in prejudice directed toward Asian Americans. A Pew Research Center survey conducted in April 2021 showed that 32% of adult Asian Americans feared that someone might threaten or physically attack them, and 81% said violence against Asian Americans was increasing (Ruiz, Edwards, & Lopez, 2021).

Croucher, Nguyen, and Rahmani (2020) surveyed 274 U.S.-born individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their analysis showed that the more a social media user believed their most-used daily social media platform was fair, accurate, and factual, the more likely they were to believe that Chinese people posed a realistic and symbolic threat to America. The researchers used integrated threat theory to explore the links between prejudice toward Asian Americans and social media use. Integrated threat theory (Stephan and Stephan, 2020) predicts that intergroup feelings of threat result in prejudice. These feelings of threat may be realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, or negative stereotypes (Croucher, 2013). Realistic threats are threats to the power and material well-being of the dominant group. Symbolic threats refer to feelings that the dominant group's way of life is being threatened. Intergroup anxiety occurs

In the 1990s, Abercrombie & Fitch developed a cultural brand of White, thin, all-American cool teens. Its illegal and discriminatory practices and racist T-shirts contributed to the brand's decline. After complaints about T-shirts showing Asian cartoon characters with ads for hypothetical businesses ("Rick Shaw's Hoagies and Grinders. Order by the foot. Good meat. Quick feet" and "Wong Brothers Laundry Service—Two Wongs Can Make It White."), a senior manager at A&F said the shirts "were designed with the sole purpose of adding humor and levity to our fashion line." These practices eventually led to lawsuits and A&F being named "America's most-hated retailer." Under new leadership, the company adapted to embrace inclusivity and diversity. Stores were redesigned to be light and airy with quiet music to become a more inclusive brand that welcomes all shapes, sizes, and backgrounds (Wilkinson, 2022).

Asian American Resource Workshop; Kumar Sriskandan/Alamy Stock Photo

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when people feel personally threatened during intergroup interactions. Negative stereotypes refer to the dominant group's negative assumptions that determine their interactions with other group members. According to integrated threat theory, the threat does not need to be real to lead a dominant cultural group to express prejudice toward a minority group.

Racism

Racism is not simply prejudice. Racism is the belief and practice of racial privilege or social advantages based on race. The term came into common usage in the 1930s to describe Nazi persecution of Jewish people. The Nazis' belief was that humanity comprises biologically distinct subspecies, some that are inherently superior and others that are inherently inferior (Fredrickson, 2002). Racism has been studied from two primary perspectives: (1) how White people have advantages and (2) how people of color have suffered disadvantages.

Colorism and White Privilege

First, lighter skin color can have advantages. Technically independent of racism, **colorism** is the allocation of privilege based on the lightness of one's skin color. As colorism can occur within a racial group, it is a concept related to but different from racism. While the terms *race* and *skin color* are not consistent across cultures, in a review of studies worldwide, Dixon and Telles (2017) concluded that a color hierarchy exists across cultures in which white or light skin is considered more desirable and modern. In the Americas, colorism is tied most closely to European colonialism. Throughout the Indian Ocean and North Africa,Arab features, including lighter skin, were associated with status, privilege, and cultural superiority (Jablonski, 2012). In some Asian cultures, dark skin is associated with working in the fields and poverty. Lighter skin is associated with a higher socioeconomic status.

In the 1930s, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of White supremacy as a global phenomenon (1935; reissued in 1995). Later, Theodore W. Allen introduced the term **White privilege**, which later was popularized by Peggy McIntosh (1989). She uses the term to describe how a dominant culture empowers some:

> As a white person, I have realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in on each and every day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks (paras. 2–3, https://nationalsee d project.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack).

McIntosh (1994) uses a comparison to being right-handed. Pick up a pair of scissors, grasp a door handle, and sit at a student's desk. They are all designed for right-handed people. Yet

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right-handed people do not tend to recognize how the world favors right-handedness. White culture in the United States resulted from a synthesis of ideas, values, and beliefs inherited from European ethnic groups. As the dominant culture in the United States, White culture is the foundation of social norms and organizations.

White privilege exists in the United States as well as other nations, particularly South Africa (Drzewiecka & Steyn, 2009). Scholars from a variety of disciplines have argued that White people in the United States are observed by other groups to be distinct, superior, and unapproachable, whereas White people themselves are relatively unaware of personal racial identity compared with people of color (Bahk & Jandt, 2003, 2004; Dyer, 1997; Hayman & Levit, 1997; Katz & Ivey 1977). People of color are likely to be more aware of racial identity and to associate inferior traits with skin color. Racial categorization is prevalent, especially among people who live in a multiracial society. When given a list of racial categories, most people can identify their own racial group and those of others (Montepare & Opeyo, 2002). This perception of racial disparity can lead to socially constructed stereotypes and prejudices that influence interracial communication.

In one study conducted by Maddox and Gray (2002), participants were presented with photographs of Black discussants and statements made by the discussants. The skin tone (lightness and darkness) of discussants was varied in the photographs. The participants were asked to match each statement with the photograph of the discussant who they believed made the statement. The study found that both Black and White participants used race as an organizing principle in their perceptions—participants tended to associate positive traits with light-skinned Black discussants and negative traits with dark-skinned Black discussants.

According to Ronald Jackson, Chang In Shin, and Keith Wilson (2000), through acknowledging the superiority and privilege of White people in U.S. society, people of color can come to internalize their status as inferior and believe White interaction partners regard them as mediocre, unprivileged, and subordinate. While White people may expect the privileges of being White, some may feel that they are being targeted as the "evil nemesis" when they do not feel personally responsible for racism (R. L. Jackson & Heckman, 2002).

Critics of the concept of White privilege point out that many diverse people identify as White and argue that the concept ignores differences among White microcultures. Other critics reference intersectionality to explain that we have overlapping social identities of gender, race, and social class, among others, and can be privileged in some ways and not privileged in others.

Disadvantages Faced by People of Color

Second, racism has been examined in terms of the disadvantages suffered by people of color. These perspectives can be grouped under the term **critical race theory**. Critical race theory has become a politically charged issue. The political controversy is not addressed in this description. Critical race theory first developed in the legal academy within the field of critical legal studies, which posits that law is not neutral or apolitical. The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to critique how traditions of slavery and segregation and the social construction of race became institutionalized to perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to second-class citizenship (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Rather than focus on racism in acts perpetrated by

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some individuals, the central tenet of critical race theory is that racism is codified in law and public policy, such as in voting restrictions. As such, critical race theory recognizes that racism has impacted all groups of people of color. Critical race theorists recognize that while laws and public policy can be used to enforce racial inequality, laws also are a tool for racial equality. For example, for years, laws in the United States enforced racial inequality in public education, but it was through the courts that segregation was overturned.

Critical race theory has many critics. Some argue that it divides society into "oppressed" and "oppressor" groups and focuses on separate group identity over shared identities. That struggle over identity became pointed in a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court school assignment case on whether race could be a factor in maintaining diversity in schools. Chief Justice John Roberts stated, "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." But Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, "It's very hard for me to see how you can have a racial objective but a nonracial means to get there."

Racism is not limited to any one nation. The following examples describe just a few of many cases.

France's Universalism

France, with a population of some 69 million people, is one of the most modern countries in the world as well as one of the most ethnically diverse in Europe. In contrast to the multiculturalism that characterizes the United States, France's belief can be described as universalism, meaning that all French citizens share a single French identity regardless of country of origin or ancestry. As a colonial power, France required those under its colonial rule to learn the French language and culture. In the case of Algeria, Algerians were considered French citizens. In contemporary France, identity politics or labeling citizens based on racial or ethnic background calls to mind the horrors of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany. The concept of race is considered a somewhat taboo topic.

France has not collected data on religious affiliation since its 1872 census. An 1875 law prohibited state authorities from collecting data on ethnicity and religious beliefs. This was reaffirmed by a law passed in 1978 that banned the collection of data based on race, and today, French law largely bans the collection of data on an individual's race, ethnicity, or religion. The word *race* is not found in French legislation or official documents. In 2018, France's National Assembly voted unanimously to remove the word race from the constitution as an outdated term. Its constitution now reads, "France is an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social Republic. It ensures equality before the law for all citizens, without distinction of sex, origin, or religion." The government's objective is to avoid using race as a means of differentiating between individuals (LaBreck, 2020).

France cites the United States as a contrasting model of a multicultural society with racial identities that are fixed and reinforced by laws and policies, resulting in a culture composed not of citizens but of cultural groups. Marceau Long, former president of France's Haut Conseil à L'Intégration, described U.S. multiculturalism as "another way of imprisoning people within ghettos" (quoted in Malik, 2023, para. 2).

France's official policy is not without objection, as social justice advocates argue for the acknowledgement of racism within France. The argument is that the French policy of "color

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POINT/COUNTERPOINT 2.2: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Teaching critical race theory (CRT) in schools has become a heated debate.

Generally, CRT is an academic legal theory focused on race and the law taught in higher education and law schools. Some states have banned teaching CRT in primary and secondary schools. In many cases, the objections to teaching CRT in schools refer to some tenets of CRT, such as white privilege and systemic racism, being taught as facts independent of the broader theory. Many history teachers have taught slavery and racism since well before the term CRT came into popular use.

People involved in the debate over CRT often have different understandings of exactly what teaching CRT in public schools means. The Texas law HB 3979, for example, makes it illegal to require a teacher or curriculum to teach that:

"an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously."

"an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex."

"an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of the individual's race or sex."

"meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist or were created by members of a particular race to oppress members of another race."

"with respect to their relationship to American values, slavery and racism are anything other than deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to, the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality" (Texas House Bill 3979, 2021).

Arguments against teaching elements of CRT include that the theory is divisive along racial lines and that it stresses the differences between races rather than commonalities. Opponents also argue that CRT actually promotes racism by framing history such that individuals with white skin color are guilty of things individuals of their race did in the past but that they didn't do. Others argue that it indoctrinates people of color into believing they will always be victims.

Arguments in favor of teaching elements of CRT stress that only through an awareness of institutional racism will positive change come about.

If your local school board was considering a ban along the lines of the Texas law, what analysis of the issue could you provide to them?

blindness" and "assimilation" still differentiates groups such as Muslims and those of North African origin, justifying their marginalization (Malik, 2023).

Racism in Northeastern India

The World Values Survey (2012) of global attitudes and opinions has asked respondents in more than 80 countries to identify people from a list whom they would not want as neighbors. The list includes "people of a different race." Assuming that answers to this question are an indication of racial (in)tolerance, in only two countries, India and Jordan, did more than 40 percent of respondents say they would not want a neighbor of a different race.

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One example of racism in India is found in the country's northeastern region. Some people from there say they are the target of racism for having "Asian" facial features. Most northeastern Indians, at some time, have experienced culturally insensitive questions, such as "Is it true you eat snakes?" Many are on the receiving end of name-calling and racial slurs, such as *chinki* and *chow mein*. So widespread is this racism that in 2012 the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs determined that the use of the term *chinki* to refer to people in the northeast would be considered a criminal offense with a penalty of up to five years in jail. Activists in the region charge that the law is rarely enforced, as police are as likely as anyone to participate in harassment.

A candlelight vigil against racism and the beating and killing of a 19-year-old student in India's northeastern region.

Virendra Singh Gosain/Hindustan Times/via Getty Images

The Roma in Europe

The **Roma** are believed to have migrated out of India more than a millennium ago, first settling in Persia, then arriving in Europe in the 13th or 14th century. The name *Gypsy* was mistakenly applied to this group by medieval Europeans, who thought all dark-skinned people came from Egypt. Leading a nomadic life, the Roma were often regarded as vagrants and accused of thefts and robberies. From the beginning of the 17th century, attempts were made to forcibly assimilate the Roma people. In Bulgaria, forced assimilation included name changes, banning the Romani language, and banning Romani music from media. Roma were particularly persecuted by Nazi Germany. About 500,000 died in Nazi gas chambers and concentration camps. Roma language and culture, including remembrance of the Holocaust (known in the Roma language as *porraimos*, or "the devouring"), are central to Roma identity throughout the world.

Roma have no nation-state of their own, so estimates of their population are very unreliable. However, they are estimated to be the largest ethnic minority group in the European

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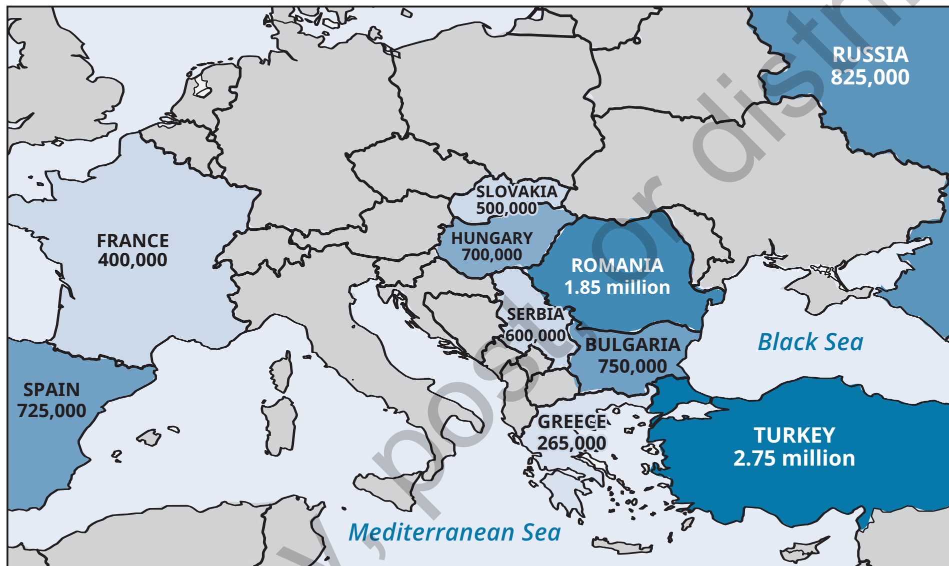
Union, at approximately 10 million people, mainly living in the Balkans and in Central and Eastern Europe. About 2 million Roma are estimated to live elsewhere, mainly in North and South America and North Africa (see Figure 2.1). Romania has the largest number—about 500,000 according to census data but more reliably estimated at 2.5 million. For decades, Eastern European communist governments suppressed prejudice against the Roma and banned the nomadic life. As these countries shifted to market economies and many people lost jobs, Roma have again experienced discrimination (Herakova, 2009).

FIGURE 2.1 ■ Ten Highest European Roma Populations



Source: Based on data from the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Division. (2012). Who are the Roma people? Retrieved from http://www.euronews.com/2012/04/30/who-are-the-roma-people-

The creation and expansion of the European Union made it possible for citizens to move freely across national boundaries. Italy, for example, had 210,937 foreign residents in 1981. That number grew to more than 4 million by 2006, with many migrating from Romania. In 2005, a councilman in a northern region of Italy appeared on television, stating, "Nomads, they are animals," and suggested "a vaccine for Roma children which, with their saliva and spit, might 'infect' Italian children attending the same schools" (Nicolae, 2006, p. 138). On national television, the president of the National Association of Sociologists of Italy claimed that the Roma stole children and then sold them "sometimes in parts" (Nicolae, 2006, p. 138). Graffiti appeared on walls: "Gypsies go away" and "Gypsies to the gas."

Italian politicians proposed a census of the Roma in Italy as a first step to ending the discrimination. Yet, as Guillem (2011) explained, the census itself was a form of othering, reinforcing the belief that Roma are "uncivilized" and "inferior" (Kaneva & Popescu, 2014). As recently

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as 2010, France deported 1,000 Roma to Romania and Bulgaria and bulldozed some 300 Roma camps. France's actions were called a "disgrace" by the European Commission and have been likened to ethnic cleansing (Bennhold & Castle, 2010).

The European Union has made better treatment of Roma a condition for new members. Critics charge that these efforts are for the purpose of reducing migration into the more prosperous Western European nations.

Roma and other peoples demonstrate against discrimination toward nomad people in Berlin in 2016.

Markus Heine/NurPhoto/via Getty Images

Koreans in Japan

The relationship between Japan and Korea reflects deep-seated and long-standing prejudice. Historically, Korea had closer ties to China than did Japan, and both Korea and China tended to view Japan as a "troublemaking" state. This view was reinforced by Japanese incursions into Korean territory and 35 years of Japan's colonial rule. It has only been in recent years that the South Korean and Japanese governments have signed mutual-friendship treaties, established normal diplomatic relations, and entered into joint economic development agreements. In an act of historic symbolism, South Korea and Japan cohosted the 2002 World Cup soccer games. Despite economic ties, there remains a sense of *han*, or bitter resentment, that many Koreans feel toward the Japanese.

After Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910, thousands of Koreans migrated into Japan seeking employment. Following the great 1923 Kanto earthquake in Japan, it was rumored that Koreans were poisoning water supplies. Mob violence left some 6,000 Koreans dead. Later, between 1939 and 1945, more Koreans were forced by the Japanese government to migrate to work in mines (Weiner, 1994). During World War II, the Koreans in Japan were forced to become Japanese nationals. Japan's surrender to the Allied Forces brought an end to the

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annexation of Korea, and the majority of Koreans who had been brought to Japan under forced immigration returned to Korea, but some 500,000 to 600,000 remained in Japan (Fukuoka, 1996).

When the San Francisco peace treaty came into effect in 1952, the government of Japan claimed that the Koreans then in Japan should not be granted Japanese nationality. The descendants of the Koreans who remained in Japan, who may never have been to Korea and who may not have spoken Korean, were legally foreigners.

As the largest minority group in Japan, Japanese-born Koreans are the victims of social, economic, and political prejudice. Japanese law provides little or no protection against the housing and employment discrimination many Japanese-born Koreans experience. In 1974, the National Council for Combating Discrimination Against Ethnic Minorities (*Mintohreri*) was founded by Korean residents and concerned Japanese to fight for the human and civil rights of Koreans in Japan.

FOCUS ON SKILLS 2.2: CAN MAPS BE RACIST?

Even international issues can become local issues. Assume you work in the governor's office in Virginia. The Virginia legislature passed a bipartisan bill that would require new public school textbooks in the state to note that the Sea of Japan is also referred to as the East Sea. You learn that New Jersey and New York are considering similar legislation.

The legislation was proposed by a Korean immigrant living in Virginia who saw that in his son's fifth-grade textbook, what he knew to be the East Sea was labeled as the Sea of Japan. Mark Keam, a Korean-American member of the Virginia House of Delegates, said that the labeling reminds Korean-Americans of Japan's 35-year colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. "When Virginia's kids are learning history and geography about that part of the world, they should be taught properly that there are two sides of the story."

Japan's government hired lobbyists to try to defeat the bill. Ambassador Kenichiro Sasae wrote to Virginia's governor that "positive cooperation and the strong economic ties between Japan and Virginia may be damaged" if the bill becomes law. After similar bills were introduced in New Jersey and New York, Japan's chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga called them "extremely regrettable" and pledged a "response through diplomatic channels." Both Korean and Japanese governments posted old maps and documents online. Korean arguments are that the name *East Sea* has been in use for hundreds of years and that *Sea of Japan* was used only when Korea was under Japanese rule. Japanese arguments state that *Sea of Japan* has been used on maps since 1602 and dismiss *East Sea* as only a name used locally in South Korea.

1. Now that you understand the relationship between Japan and Korea, how do you advise the governor?
2. What can you do to influence the course of centuries of misunderstanding in order to reduce this communication barrier?

Source: Simon, R. (2014, February 24). Textbooks caught in a global clash. *Los Angeles Times*, p. A7.

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COMMUNICATING RACISM

Prejudice and racism are commonly viewed as being rooted in a child's early socialization and fostered in communication with other people who are prejudiced or racist (Adorno et al., 1950). Examples from interpersonal communication and media support this hypothesis.

Interpersonal Contacts

Just overhearing racist comments has been shown to negatively affect a listener's evaluation of the person being spoken about. Research studies have demonstrated this effect (Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985; Kirkland, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1987). In the study conducted by Jeff Greenberg and Tom Pyszczynski (1985), groups of White college students observed a debate between a White student and an African American student and were asked to evaluate the skill of the debaters. The debates were staged so that the African American debater won half the time and lost half the time. Immediately after the debate and before the evaluations, a confederate made a derogatory ethnic slur against the African American debater, criticized the African American debater in a nonracist manner, or made no comment. Ethnic slurs cued prejudiced behavior. The study's results showed that when the audience overheard the derogatory ethnic slur, the rating given the African American debater who lost was significantly lower, but not so when the African American debater won. The researchers suggest that evaluations of individual minority group members can be biased by overheard derogatory ethnic labels when the person's behavior is less than perfect.

Another research project demonstrated that hearing other people express strongly antiracist opinions influences both public and private expressions of racist opinions. In their study, Blanchard, Lilly, and Vaughn (1991) interviewed college students on the way to classes. In each interview, three people were involved: the White interviewer, a White confederate, and a naive White respondent. The interviewer asked the confederate and respondent questions about how their college should respond to anonymous racist notes. The confederate always answered first. The study compared how the respondents answered the questions when the confederate answered with the most antiracist statements to how they answered when the confederate answered with the least antiracist statements. The results showed that hearing the confederate express strongly antiracist opinions produced dramatically stronger antiracist opinions than hearing opinions more accepting of racism. In a second study, Blanchard and colleagues showed the same results when the respondents expressed their answers privately on paper. On the basis of this research, it can be argued that cultural norms can minimize the public expression of discriminatory or otherwise interracially insensitive behavior. Yum and Park (1990), however, argue that for well-established stereotypes to change, more frequent information and stronger content are needed. What is said about racial discrimination really does matter. Vocal opinions affect what others think and say.

Hate Speech

Out of realizations that speech can cue prejudiced behavior in others, some have attempted to restrict that type of speech, often referred to as *hate speech*. **Hate speech** includes threats

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or verbal slurs directed against individuals or groups on the basis of their identity, including religion, ethnicity, nationality, color, descent, gender, or other identity factor. Hate speech can include verbal or physical acts, such as burning crosses or spray-painting swastikas on public or private property (Walker, 1994). Some cities and colleges in the United States have adopted policies attempting to ban hate speech. Strong arguments have been raised that such prohibitions are in violation of the First Amendment, which guarantees the right to protection from government abridgment of freedom of expression other than libel and obscenity. Others counter that hate speech is less like political expression and more like an action, such as a slap in the face (see Haiman, 1994), and that regulations against it are necessary to protect equality. Internationally, the trend since World War II has been to protect individuals and groups from expressions of hatred, hostility, discrimination, and violence. In fact, Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden all have statutes or constitutional provisions prohibiting forms of hate speech. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in Article 20(2), expressly provides that "any advocacy of national, racial, there are no laws that prevent them from regulating users' speech or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law." In 1992, when the U.S. Senate ratified this treaty, it stipulated that the United States would not be bound by this provision but would adhere to its own constitution.

Microaggressions

Because laws banning hate speech may not be constitutional in the United States, there are other, more positive approaches to dealing with prejudice and racism. Establishing cultural norms against such behaviors may be more effective. While hate speech refers to blatant threats or verbal slurs, **microaggressions** are everyday slights and snubs, sometimes unintentional, which nevertheless inflict harm. Simple examples include "You're Chinese, right?" "You're really pretty for a dark-skinned girl," and "How come you sound White?" Monnica Williams and her colleagues (2021) identified categories of microaggressions from research studies. They include, for example, criticizing others on the basis of real or perceived cultural differences, attempting to communicate by using stereotyped speech or behavior, and demonstrating belief in stereotypes, such as being more likely to commit crimes. Studies have now documented that seemingly minor slights negatively impact the psychological well-being of those on the receiving end by increasing anxiety, diminishing self-esteem, and diminishing self-efficacy (G. Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2016). Some critics label concerns around microaggressions a part of **political correctness** and a threat to free speech.

Media

In 1996, the U.S. Congress passed the Communications Decency Act, which made it a federal crime to put obscene and indecent words or images on the Internet. The concern was to protect children from pornographic material. The next year, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated a key provision of the law. The Court ruled that in seeking to protect children, the law violated the rights of adults.

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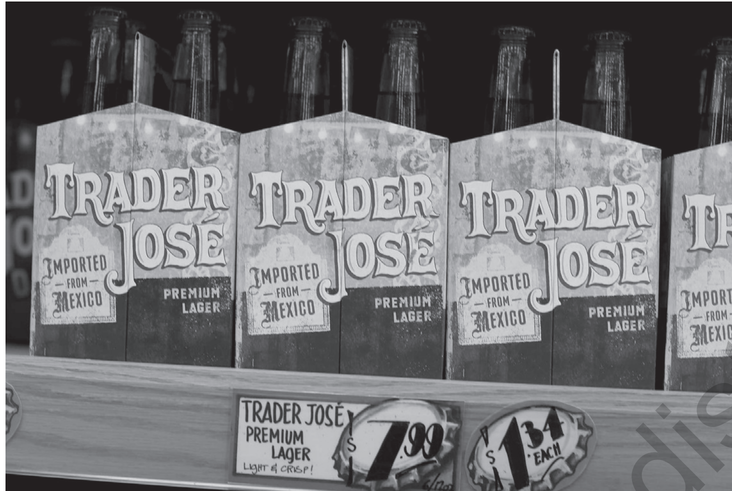

Trader Joe's, now owned by German supermarket chain Aldi, has some 500 stores nationwide. Known for its international product lines, it brands ethnic-inspired foods with such names as Trader Ming's, Arabian Joe's, Trade Jose's, Trader Giotto's, and Trader Joe San. Seventeen-year-old Briones Bedell posted a petition calling for Trader Joe's to remove and rebrand products with what she called racist labeling. A spokesperson for the company called its labeling a "lighthearted attempt at inclusiveness," and the company is changing its packaging (Curwen et al., 2020). Is Trader Joe's labeling an example of a microaggression?

Joe Raedle/Getty Images News/via Getty Images

FOCUS ON SKILLS 2.3: THE CONFEDERATE FLAG

A high school teacher witnessed a student pulling a Confederate flag out of his backpack before classes started. He draped the flag over his back as he walked to the campus quad with another student, who was wearing a Blue Lives Matter flag (a countermovement to Black Lives Matter). The teacher notified the assistant principal, who confiscated the Confederate flag but not the Blue Lives Matter flag. A notice went out on the school district's Facebook page, website, and app informing parents of the incident. The notice made it clear that the Blue Lives Matter flag was not confiscated, as the student's display of that flag was protected under the First Amendment, but that district policies prohibit students from wearing clothing or other items expressing hate speech.

1. Is displaying the Confederate flag on a public high school campus hate speech?
2. Are there laws that support the assistant principal's confiscating the Confederate flag?

Remember that the First Amendment prohibits governmentcensorship in the United States. Social media companies are not bound by the First Amendment. Still, government officials may attempt to influence social media companies' decisions (Perrino, 2022), and other organizations act as watchdogs on platforms' handling of users' speech. The Simon Wiesenthal Center, for

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example, has long monitored social media for hate in its Digital Terrorism and Hate Reports. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter all received ratings for hateful content. One reason Elon Musk gave for his acquisition of Twitter in 2022 was its censoring of speech. He restored accounts that had been banned and discontinued the platform's COVID-19 misinformation policy.

In contrast to the United States, the European Union has much stricter rules governing online content. Its Digital Services Act requires online companies to remove hateful and abusive content and misinformation. For example, with Germany's history of Nazism, free speech in the country is not absolute. Publicly displaying Nazi symbolism is illegal, as is denying the significance of the Holocaust. In 1997, Germany passed a law under which online providers can be prosecuted for offering a venue for content that is illegal in Germany, such as Nazi propaganda. To address online hatred and extremism, in 2017 Germany passed the Network Enforcement Act (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz, or NetzDG; also called the "Facebook Act"), which obligates social media networks to remove content that is "clearly illegal" within 24 hours after receiving a user complaint. The First Amendment would not permit such a restriction in the United States. When Musk tweeted, "The bird is free," a European Union official replied, "In Europe, the bird will fly by our rules" (Hiltzik, 2022).

FOCUS ON SKILLS 2.4: RACISM IN MEDIA

You are on the town council for a small township. A local television station posted a photo of a young boy dressed in Ku Klux Klan regalia—floor-length white robe with a white hood—for Halloween trick-or-treating on its Facebook page. In an interview, the boy's mother said that the costume was a family tradition—her brother had worn the costume when he was a young boy. Some Facebook users thought it was racism; one wrote that it is possible the boy thought it was a ghost costume. Later the boy's mother defended the costume: "It's supposed to be white with white, black with black, man with woman and all of that. That's what the KKK stands for. The KKK every year raises money to donate to the St. Jude's." The story immediately went viral and was picked up by media across the United States. Most media reports included the mother's statement without the last phrase about donations to St. Jude's.

At a town council meeting, citizens demand the town council take a position against racism. Among those who speak are several who argue for free speech. One individual, who identifies himself as an imperial wizard of the United Klans of America, says that today the KKK is unfairly ostracized.

1. You have studied the literature on communication and racism. What position would you take?
2. How would you explain your position?

Source: Gayle, A.-L. (2013, November 4). Mother responds to controversy after son dresses as Klansman for Halloween. WHSV3. http://www.whsv.com/news/headlines/Mother-Responds-to-Controversy-After-Son-Dresses-as-Klansman-for-Halloween--230306501.html

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To this point, you've read about the barriers to effective intercultural communications. Next, you'll read about ways to overcome those barriers.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS

We overcome intercultural communication barriers by developing intercultural communication competence. Communicating effectively in intercultural settings is known as *intercultural communication effectiveness* or *intercultural communication competence*. For the purposes of this textbook, let's agree to define **intercultural communication effectiveness** as the degree of the source's success in accomplishing the goals set out for the interaction. (Review the Western model of communication in Chapter 1.) One way to define intercultural communication competence places emphasis on the two behaviors of encoding and decoding (Monge, Bachman, Dillard. & Eisenberg, 1982). Encoding includes expressing ability, and decoding includes listening ability.

Intercultural communication is key in intercultural settings, both personal and institutional, up to and including the United Nations. According to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "The United Nations was created in the belief that dialogue can triumph over discord, that diversity is a universal virtue and that the peoples of the world are far more united by their common fate than they are divided by their separate identities" (United Nations, n.d.).

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The term **intercultural communication competence** has a broader meaning. For the purposes of this textbook, let's agree to define this term as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures (Spitzberg, 2000). This concept adds to effectiveness considerations of appropriateness—that is, relationship maintenance is valued. Intercultural communication competence requires understanding others' perceptions and values. Intercultural communication competence consists of affective, cognitive, and behavioral attributes (Bennett, 2009). Chen and Starosta's (1996) model of intercultural communication competence includes these three perspectives:

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1. *Affective or intercultural sensitivity*—to acknowledge and respect cultural differences
2. *Cognitive or intercultural awareness*—self-awareness of one's own personal cultural identity and understanding how cultures vary
3. *Behavioral or intercultural adroitness*—message skills, knowledge of appropriate self-disclosure, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, and social skills

Chen (1989, 1990) identifies four skill areas: personality strength, communication skills, psychological adjustment, and cultural awareness.

- *Personality Strength.* The main personal traits that affect intercultural communication are self-concept, self-disclosure, self-monitoring, and social relaxation. *Self-concept* refers to the way in which a person views the self. *Self-disclosure* refers to the willingness of individuals to openly and appropriately reveal information about themselves to their counterparts. *Self-monitoring* refers to using social comparison information to control and modify one's self-presentation and expressive behavior. *Social relaxation* is the ability to reveal little anxiety in communication. Competent intercultural communicators must know themselves well and, through their self-awareness, initiate positive attitudes. Individuals must express a friendly personality to be competent in intercultural communication.
- *Communication Skills.* Individuals must be competent in verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Intercultural communication skills require message skills, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, and social skills. Message skills encompass the ability to understand and use language and feedback. Behavioral flexibility is the ability to select an appropriate behavior in diverse contexts. Interaction management means handling the procedural aspects of conversation, such as the ability to initiate a conversation. Interaction management emphasizes a person's other-oriented ability to interact, such as attentiveness and responsiveness. Social skills are empathy and identity maintenance. Empathy is the ability to think the same thoughts and feel the same emotions as the other person. Identity maintenance is the ability to maintain a counterpart's identity by communicating back an accurate understanding of that person's identity. In other words, a competent communicator must be able to deal with diverse people in various situations.
- *Psychological Adjustment.* Competent intercultural communicators must be able to acclimate to new environments. They must be able to handle the feelings of culture shock, such as frustration, stress, and alienation, in ambiguous situations caused by new environments.
- *Cultural Awareness.* To be competent in intercultural communication, individuals must understand the social customs and social system of the host culture. Understanding how people think and behave is essential for communication with them.

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Consider these skills as you read the following example. A defendant in court is being questioned by a magistrate:

Magistrate: Can you read and write?
Defendant: Yes.
Magistrate: Can you sign your name?
Defendant: Yes.
Magistrate: Did you say you cannot read?
Defendant: Hm.
Magistrate: Can you read or not?
Defendant: No.
Magistrate: [Reads statement.] Do you recall making that statement?
Defendant: Yes.
Magistrate: Is there anything else you want to add to the statement?
Defendant: [No answer.]
Magistrate: Did you want to say anything else?
Defendant: No.
Magistrate: Is there anything in the statement you want to change?
Defendant: No.
Magistrate: [Reads a second statement.] Do you recall making that statement?
Defendant: Yes.
Magistrate: Do you wish to add to the statement?
Defendant: No.
Magistrate: Do you want to alter the statement in any way?
Defendant: [Slight nod.]
Magistrate: What do you want to alter?
Defendant: [No answer.]
Magistrate: Do you want to change the statement?
Defendant: No (Quoted in Liberman, 1981, pp. 249–250)

From reading the transcript alone, what could you say about the communication competence of the magistrate and the defendant? If you were told the defendant is an **Aboriginal** Australian man in an Australian court, presided over by a non-Aboriginal magistrate, would your assessment change? Liberman (1990a, 1990b) describes the unique form of public discourse that evolved among isolated Aboriginal people of central Australia: Consensus must be preserved through such strategies as unassertiveness, avoidance of direct argumentation, deferral of topics that would produce disharmony, and serial summaries so that people think together and "speak with one voice." If any dissension is sensed, there are no attempts to force a decision, and the discussion is abandoned. The Western European discourse style of Australia is direct, confrontational, and individualistic. Thus, it can be said that the defendant in the example finds it difficult to communicate a defense by opposing what has been

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said and rather frequently concurs with any statement made to him (Liberman, 1990b). Now that you have this information, does the defendant's strategy of giving the answers "Yes," "No," or "Hm" to placate the magistrate demonstrate intercultural communication competence?

In Chapter 1, you read that the definition of communication itself reflects the culture defining it. In a like manner, the understanding of intercultural communication competence reflects the culture defining it. Consider how it might be defined in high-context, collectivistic cultures. C. M. Chua (2004) showed that intercultural communication competence in collectivistic Malaysian culture differs from Western definitions in that in Malaysia there is more emphasis on relational issues. Komolsevin, Knutson, and Datthuyawat (2010) explain this by showing that people in high-context cultures are hesitant to engage in communication—that is, they are reserved and silent— until they have sufficient information to encode messages appropriate for the receiver. So being quiet and reserved in Malaysia and Thailand is a necessary first step for the competent intercultural communicator. But that same behavior might be evaluated negatively in more individualistic cultures.

Rhetorical sensitivity (R. R. Hart & Burks, 1972) refers to a communicator's attitudes about how to encode messages for the best receiver understanding and effect. The theory of rhetorical sensitivity describes three types of communicators (Darnell & Brockriede, 1976):

1. *Noble selves*—view themselves as the primary basis for communication choices; egotism and individualism communicating messages with little regard to the effect on the receiver
2. *Rhetorical reflectors*—view the desires and needs of the others as the primary basis for communication choices; display behavior believed to be desirable by the receiver
3. *Rhetorical sensitives*—combine concern for self with concern for others to encourage engagement in making decisions as to how to communicate

Komolsevin and colleagues (2010) use this theory to explain that Thai communicators use rhetorical reflection to build rhetorical sensitivity. In Thai culture, the development of the relationship contributes to intercultural communication competence.

IDENTITIES AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Earlier in this chapter, you read about stereotyping as making a judgment based on assumed group membership. To extend that definition now, stereotyping is making a judgment based on *one* assumed group membership. But as you read in Chapter 1, all of us can have multiple group memberships. In this section, you'll explore more ways of understanding cultural identity and the challenges of intercultural competence.

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Third Culture

John Useem, John Donahue, and Ruth Useem (1963) introduced the concept *binational third culture.* Casmir and Asuncion-Lande (1989) refined the concept **third culture** to refer to a new culture that two or more individuals from different cultures can share that is not merely the fusion of the separate cultures but a new coherent whole. One example is international marriage (also referred to as transnational marriage).

Five percent of marriages in Japan in 2008–2009 included a foreign spouse (with 4 times as many foreign wives as husbands). In South Korea, over 10% of marriages included a foreigner in 2010. In Taiwan, 13% of wives were foreigners in 2009. (Chinese citizens are not considered foreigners in Taiwan.) In France, the percentage of international marriages rose from about 10% in 1996 to 16% in 2009. In Germany, the rise was from roughly 11% in 1990 to 14% in 2010. Approximately one in five marriages in Sweden, Belgium, and Austria is with a foreign partner ("International Marriage," 2011).

Intercultural marriages face many barriers, including language, differences in religion and values, gender roles, views on child-rearing, and relations with families and friends. Tili and Barker (2015) studied marriages between Asian and Caucasian U.S. spouses. Their study identified the intercultural communication competencies in international marriages:

- *Self-awareness and other-awareness*—the ability to delineate cultural differences and similarities between themselves and their spouses
- *Open-mindedness*—being open to change in order to reconcile cultural differences
- *Mindfulness*—being aware of and sensitive to cultural differences rather than making assumptions about similarities
- *Self-disclosure*—meeting your spouse's needs for verbalizing emotions
- *Face support*—adapted to Asian spouse's need for certain customs (You'll read more about this concept in the next chapter.)

Think of a marriage between an individual raised in China and an individual raised in the United States. It might make a difference where the couple is living—China, the United States, or in a place characterized by some other culture. In the relationship, one individual could attempt to adopt the culture of the other, or both individuals could attempt to build a new culture beyond their original cultures. Using the rhetorical sensitivity theory, the individual who adopts the culture of the other may be a rhetorical reflector initially but then probably use that to build rhetorical sensitivity as the relationship continues to develop. The individual who attempts to build a new culture may be a rhetorical sensitive. Rhetorical sensitivity may be critical for intercultural marriages.

Some studies have concluded that intercultural marriages are difficult to establish and maintain; others have concluded that there is no evidence that they fail more often than intracultural ones (Tili & Barker, 2015).

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The term *third culture* has also been used to refer to children in expatriate families who reside outside of their home culture for years at a time (R. Useem & Downie, 1976). Other terms that have been used are *global nomads, transnationals*, and *internationally mobile children* (Gerner, Perry, Moselle, & Archbold, 1992). Ruth Useem (1999) argues that these people integrate elements of their home culture and their various cultures of residence into a third different and distinct culture and may experience cultural marginality because they no longer feel comfortable in any specific culture. In some ways, former president Barack Obama is a third-culture kid. He was born in Honolulu to a mother from the United States and a father from Kenya. When Obama was 2 years old, his father returned to Kenya. His mother remarried and moved to her new husband's homeland, Indonesia. Obama attended public school in Indonesia until he was 10 and then returned to Honolulu to live with his maternal grandparents. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks (2008) described Obama as a "sojourner who lives apart" (p. A33).

An intercultural marriage is a marriage between two people from different cultures.

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While most research has been with children from the United States, studies have shown that third-culture kids have a high level of interest in travel and learning languages and feel accepting of cultures and diversity (Gerner et al., 1992). Iwama (1990) found third-culture kids to be more self-confident, flexible, active, and curious and to have greater bilingual ability.

Does biculturalism as represented by third-culture kids represent a way to transcend nationalism and ethnocentrism and create diverse communities (D. B. Willis, 1994)? There are suggestions of difficulties: Third-culture kids may have difficulty in maintaining relationships and with direct problem solving (C. A. Smith, 1991).

Multiculturalism

Definitions of intercultural competence grounded in communication have tended to stress the development of skills that transform one from a monocultural person into a multicultural person. The multicultural person is one who respects cultures and tolerances differences (Belay, 1993; Chen & Starosta, 1996). Using rhetorical sensitivity theory, it could be argued that the multicultural person is more likely to be a rhetorical sensitive.

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As you read in Chapter 1, nation-states have become the predominant form of cultural identification. Most Western nation-states developed a single national identity in the 18th and 19th centuries. Increasing immigration has been perceived as a challenge to those single national identities. **Multiculturalism** concerns "the general place of minorities, programs designed to foster equality, institutional structures created to provide better social services, and resources extended to ethnic minority organizations" (Vertovec, 1996, p. 222); these became the way to respond to cultural and religious differences.

The Canadian Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism is often credited with developing the modern political awareness of multiculturalism, beginning with a preliminary report in 1965 (R. L. Jackson, 2010). Initially a policy to protect Indigenous cultures, multiculturalism became an official Canadian policy in 1971. Among its objectives were to help cultural groups retain their identity and overcome barriers to their full participation in society. Soon Australia and most member states of the European Union followed.

In the United States, the origins of multiculturalism date back as early as 1915 to philosopher Horace Kallen (1915, 1924/1970), who set forth the idea of cultural pluralism to describe the United States. He employed the metaphor of a symphony orchestra. Each instrument was an immigrant group that, together with other immigrant groups, created harmonious music. Kallen's opponents included John Dewey (Westbrook, 1991), who warned that cultural pluralism supported rigid segregation lines between groups. This criticism has persisted: Trinidad-born novelist Neil Bissoondath (2002) argues that multiculturalism stresses the divide between the mainstream culture and ethnic cultures and, in effect, enforces division and not integration. Hollinger (1995) has described the issue as a two-sided confrontation between those who advocate a uniform culture grounded in Western civilization and those who promote diversity.

Several European heads of state have denounced multicultural policies: Former British prime minister David Cameron, former German chancellor Angela Merkel, former Australian prime minister John Howard, former Spanish prime minister José Maria Aznar, and former French president Nicolas Sarkozy have all challenged their country's multicultural policies. Several European states—notably the Netherlands and Denmark—have returned to an official monoculturalism (Bissoondath, 2002). Chancellor Merkel, for example, announced that multiculturalism had "utterly failed" (quoted in Weaver, 2010, para. 4). Suella Braverman, daughter of immigrants from Mauritius and Kenya and Britain's home secretary in 2022 and 2023, said that multiculturalism has threatened the social cohesion of European nations and allows people to be "in a society but not of" the society (quoted in Wingate, 2023, para. 4).

Transculturalism

In contrast to the term multiculturalism, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the alternative concept **transculturalism** (sometimes called cosmopolitanism) to describe merging and converging cultures. Drawing from Ortiz, Cuccioletta (2002) defined transculturalism as the recognition that each person in a nation-state possesses multiple identities—those

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associated with their own cultural heritage, their host country, and their neighborhood. One's identity is not one-dimensional but multiple, refined, and in rapport with others.

While multiculturalism evokes a gathering of multiple and distinct contributions to a mainstream culture, transculturalism imagines a new common culture based in the meeting and the intermingling of different peoples and cultures. Transculturalism does not involve preserving distinct cultures, as it is argued that separate ethnic identities weaken the larger culture. Nor is transculturalism assimilation, as ethnic groups change the larger society as they integrate (Kymlicka, 2001).

Transculturalism is not without its critics. Brooks (2012) argues that in convergence, each group is contributing to the new blended culture, but each group is also losing some or perhaps all of its own identity as it assumes a new identity. Brooks sees this loss of cultural markers as too great to bear.

Postethnic Cultures

You read in our discussion of multiculturalism that John Dewey criticized cultural pluralism as encouraging people to identify themselves as members of one group. If a person is born a woman in Texas to immigrant parents from Mexico and then becomes an attorney, a Republican, and a Baptist and currently lives in Minneapolis, who is she? In the United States, can she identify herself as any one of these? As all of these? Will others most likely identify her first as Hispanic?

A postethnic perspective recognizes that each of us, like the Minneapolis attorney, lives in many diverse groups and is not confined to only one group. Angela Davis (1992) used the image of "a rope attached to an anchor": While we may be anchored in one community, our "ropes" should be long enough to permit us to move into other communities.

Hollinger (1995) describes a postethnic perspective as a challenge to the "right" of our grandparents to establish our primary identity. **Postethnicity** "prefers voluntary to prescribed affiliations, appreciates multiple identities, pushes for communities of wide scope, recognizes the constructed character of ethnoracial groups, and accepts the formation of new groups as a part of the normal life of a democratic society" (p. 116). Postethnicity recognizes that groups based on affiliations are as substantive and authentic as groups based on blood and history.

In one sense, postethnicity is an idealistic attempt to redefine groups rigidly based on ethnicity into groups based on voluntary interests. However, if viewed from the perspective of dominant U.S. cultural values—particularly individualism— postethnicity is a reaffirmation of individuals' right to define themselves by individual interest and not by heritage. Postethnicity in the United States may be an extension of extreme individualism. A postethnic perspective does not assume that everyone is the same. Rather, it recognizes our interdependent future and stretches the boundaries of "we." Using the rhetorical sensitivity theory, some will argue that postethnicity is an example of noble selves.

It's important to recognize the criticism of postethnicity: that it is idealistic to assume that others will not continue to label some people as members of a group and communicate with them as members of that group and not as individuals.

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The discussion of intercultural communication competence leads us to the next discussion of intercultural communication ethics.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ETHICS

As a branch of philosophy, ethics addresses the question of how we ought to lead our lives or decide what is right or wrong. The question to consider is whether there is an ethical standard that can be applied to all cultures or whether each culture has its own ethical standards of what is right and wrong.

Kenneth E. Andersen (1991) makes clear that ethical theories tend to reflect the culture in which they were produced and, therefore, present challenges in intercultural communication. Western ethics tend to focus on the individual and individual freedoms and responsibilities (Fuse, Land, & Lambiase, 2010). Other ethics focus more on community. As described in Chapter 1, Confucianism supports a just, orderly society with rituals for relationships that create a harmonious society. Interpersonal relationships and the concept of face are central to Confucianism. Confucian ethics revolve around the concept of *li*, or the social norms, rituals, and proprieties that characterize an orderly society. A recent study demonstrated that Confucian ethics guide people's lives today. Zhong (2008) found that U.S. students display a strong sense of individualism, while Chinese students tend toward collectivism. Confucianism is an example of ethics that privilege the community and society, as opposed to Western ethics that focus on individuals and rights.

What, though, guides the interactions of people from cultures with diverse ethical perspectives?

Closely related to intercultural communication competence is ethics. We saw that the understandings of communication and intercultural communication competence are specific to culture. Are there ethics that transcend all cultures? Or are all ethics, too, specific to culture?

Are there global values to guide intercultural interactions? Kale (1997) argues that peace is the fundamental human value. The use of peace applies not only to relationships among countries but to "the right of all people to live at peace with themselves and their surroundings" (p. 450). From this fundamental value, he developed four ethical principles to guide intercultural interactions:

1. Ethical communicators address people of other cultures with the same respect that they would like to receive themselves. Intercultural communicators should not demean or belittle the cultural identity of others through verbal or nonverbal communication.
2. Ethical communicators seek to describe the world as they perceive it as accurately as possible. What is perceived to be the truth may vary from one culture to another; truth is socially constructed. This principle means that ethical communicators do not deliberately mislead or deceive.

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3. Ethical communicators encourage people of other cultures to express themselves in their uniqueness. This principle respects the right of expression regardless of how popular or unpopular a person's ideas may be.

4. Ethical communicators strive for identification with people of other cultures. Intercultural communicators should emphasize the commonalities of cultural beliefs and values rather than their differences.

Examples of intercultural ethical issues include cultural identification, intercultural research, and the cultural basis of intercultural studies. In 2012, Elizabeth Warren (originally from Oklahoma, of working-class upbringing) was elected the first woman to the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts. During her career as a Harvard Law School professor, she had listed herself as Native American in law school directories. Challenged to provide proof of her ancestry by her Republican opponent, Warren said her family lore was that she had an Indian ancestor. She later did DNA testing to prove her ancestry. The results suggested she did have a distant American Indian ancestor in her lineage dating back six to 10 generations.

It was later revealed by the *Washington Post* that she had claimed American Indian as her race on a registration card for the State Bar of Texas. In response, Senator Warren privately apologized for claiming American Indian identity to the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation and later apologized publicly.

The secretary of state of the Cherokee Nation wrote in an opinion column in the *Tulsa World* that culture and kinship create tribal membership— not blood. "It offends us when some of our national leaders seek to ascribe inappropriately membership or citizenship to themselves" (Hoskin, 2019).

Intercultural research presents some unique issues with the issue of othering presented at the beginning of this chapter. Your instructor may assign a report on a culture other than your own. That puts you in the position of an intercultural researcher, and writing about a cultural group other than your own can place you in the position of othering that group. The Ugandan researcher Obbo (1990), from a culture often studied as an "other," wrote about her experience of studying Westerners, who often assume the position of researcher:

> Westerners, both academics and others, have responded to my fieldwork in their home countries in ways that reveal their discomfort when the accustomed power relationships between anthropologist and "native" are reversed. The fieldnotes of a non-Westerner studying Americans upsets and makes them anxious because they feel that their culture is on the line. (p. 29)

Obbo's observation made it clear to Western researchers how it can feel to be the subject of traditional intercultural research.

Tanno and Jandt (1994) developed some ethical guidelines for consideration in intercultural research:

- *Who determines the research question?* Involve individuals who are the subjects of the research in determining the research question. Oftentimes the research question is

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meant to seek information the researcher wants and excludes the subjects in framing the questions to be researched.

- *Who collects information, and how is it collected?* Involve those who are the subjects of the research in collecting data.
- *Who is the audience for the research?* The individuals who are the subjects of the research should learn from the information collected.
- *Who benefits from and owns the research?* Oftentimes the people who are subjects of research never benefit from the research, nor do they have any control in its dissemination and use.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) developed the concept of research from an Indigenous peoples' perspective: "When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, people participate on different terms" (p. 193).

Consistent with ethical protocols, a research project with Aymara women concerning sexual and reproductive health asked participants to sign an agreement to participate in the research. The researchers found that the women did not have an understanding of the concept of the right to refuse (Mulder et al., 2000). Are ethics themselves culture-bound?

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Is the intercultural communication field of study truly intercultural? Is there an ethical issue applying a Western perspective to other cultures? The discipline originated in the United States and has been developed in U.S. universities. Even scholars from the non-Western cultures have "failed to utilize the experiences of their own cultures . . . to demonstrate that they, too, have been able to see through the same eyes as those European and U.S. American scholars who

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have pioneered in this field" (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2014, p. 4). Yoshitaka Miike (2003a) has raised the question about whether "the topics we pursue, the theories we build, the methods we employ, and the materials we read adequately reflect and respond to the diversity of our communicative experiences in a globalizing world" (pp. 243–244).

One major criticism of Eurocentric intercultural communication research has been that the discipline has facilitated the commercial interests of the dominant North American and European cultures with consumers in other cultures (see, for example, Chapter 13 in this text). Western theories of communication often begin with the expression of unique individuality and a means of demonstrating independence. From an Asiacentric perspective, on the other hand, communication is a process in which we remind ourselves of the interdependence and interrelatedness of the universe (Miike, 2007).

In a dialogue with Miike, Molefi Kete Asante asserted, "The future of intercultural communication must reside in the courage of scholars to engage indigenous knowledge from all areas of the world. . . . We must learn to embrace new paradigms and their expert concepts that grow from the wisdom and teachings of diverse peoples" (Asante & Miike, 2013, p. 12).

SUMMARY

Barriers to intercultural communication include *othering*, a discursive process of classifying groups into a dominant in-group (the "Us") and other out-groups (the "Them") by a real or imagined difference. In the colonial era, for example Indigenous peoples were considered "not civilized" according to the standards of European colonizers. Other barriers to intercultural communication were identified by LaRay M. Barna as anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations, and language. The first four are discussed in this chapter. *Anxiety* refers to not being totally present in the communication transaction while focusing on one's feelings when one doesn't know what to do. *Assuming similarity instead of difference* refers to behaving as you would in your home culture. *Ethnocentrism* is negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standards of one's own culture.

The term *stereotype* is used to refer to negative or positive judgments made about individuals based on any observable or believed group membership. *Prejudice* refers to the irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, religion, or sexual orientation. *Racism* is prejudice with the exercise of power on or over the group through institutional, historical, and structural means. France's policy of universalism or color blindness is contrasted with U.S. multiculturalism. Prejudice and racism are fostered through interpersonal and media communication.

There have been many attempts to define the skills that make one an effective and competent intercultural communicator. The concept of intercultural communication competence is applied to individuals who have multiple cultural identities such as third cultures, multiculturalism, transculturalism, and postethnic cultures. Finally, ethics of intercultural communication are presented as a guide for intercultural interactions and intercultural communication studies and research.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify nearby school and athletic team mascots. Would any be considered stereotypes? Why, or why not?
2. What are possible consequences of using survey data, such as data on alcohol use, to conclude that a cultural group is superior to other groups?
3. Colleges and universities who have invited controversial speakers on campus have faced a challenge to free speech and hate speech policies. Should a speaker who is considered racist be banned from your campus?
4. How does France's color-blindness policy foster French citizens' identity?
5. What are the most critical elements of intercultural communication competence?
6. Several employers have introduced mandatory diversity and bias training to make employees aware of hidden biases. Programs that focus on what not to do have met with resistance by some. One author contends that such programs "strike fear in white audiences" who believe they have to answer for society's inequalities (Pierson & Lien, 2017, citing Claremont McKenna College professor Frederick R. Lynch). Do you believe diversity training can change attitudes and behaviors?
7. Kale suggests that peace is a fundamental human value that could guide intercultural interactions. Evaluate this proposition.

KEY TERMS

Aboriginal
Anxiety
Authoritarian personality
Colorism
Critical race theory
Cultural appreciation
Cultural appropriation
Cultural relativism
Ethnocentrism
Hate speech
Intercultural communication competence
Intercultural communication effectiveness
Microaggression
Multiculturalism
Othering
Political correctness
Postethnicity
Prejudice
Profiling
Racism
Rhetorical sensitivity
Roma
Stereotype
Third culture
Transculturalism
White privilege

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