

2

COMMUNICATING IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY AND WORLD



Flashpop/DigitalVision/via GettyImages

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- 2.1. Explain the significance of intercultural communication in global and local communities.
- 2.2. Analyze the relationship between culture and communication, including exploring the impact of varying attitudes toward diversity.
- 2.3. Demonstrate influences on cultural identity, distinguishing between cultures and co-cultures.
- 2.4. Illustrate six dimensions of cultural variability, explaining how understanding them helps to reduce the strangeness of strangers.
- 2.5. Explore how digital technology brings diversity into our lives.

According to Edward T. Hall, “Culture is communication and communication is culture.”¹ For that reason alone, an understanding of culture’s influences is essential to communicate effectively in a multicultural society and world. The study of culture is the study of people. Even without our consciously being aware of it, our culture passes on to us a system of thinking and behaving. As we internalize the messages, we develop a shared group identity, common beliefs and values, and rules for living within our culture. Every culture inculcates its members with a worldview—a framework used to interpret the world and its people, and which we express through our communication.² The connection between culture and communication is revealing—especially since culture influences what we think about ourselves and others.

As we continue our discussion of the relationship between culture and communication, ask yourself these questions: Have you ever decided that you liked or disliked someone whom you had not yet met? Has anyone ever done the same to you, that is, formed a positive or negative opinion of you, judged you, without really knowing you? If your answer to either of these questions is yes, it is likely that *stereotypes*, the mental images that guide reactions to others, played a role. A stereotype expresses the knowledge, beliefs, and expectations we have of the members of a particular group.³ Whereas some of the stereotypes we hold of members belonging to a particular cultural group may be positive, others may be astoundingly negative and overgeneralized. Some contain kernels of truth, whereas others prevent us from recognizing our misconceptions.

What groups of people do you stereotype positively and/or negatively? What stereotypes might others hold of you? And how do our evaluations of one another affect our communication? Stereotyping is just one of the topics we address in this chapter as we explore a host of factors that influence our willingness and readiness to communicate in a multicultural world and society.

GLOBALIZATION, DIVERSITY, AND MULTICULTURALISM

Countries around the world and communities within the United States are interconnected. However, when confronted with a diversity of connectivity opportunities, out of fear, some don’t welcome those they consider to be different. Instead, they seek to reduce the availability of intercultural contacts. According to Russell Jacoby, author of *On Diversity*, rather than becoming more accepting of cultural differences, many spend an abundance of their time communicating with others incredibly similar to themselves. Demonstrating a desire to communicate online and offline with those who both mirror thinking and confirm beliefs, they end up becoming more and more alike. Sadly, sameness and uniformity of outlook are not what we 21st-century communicators need. Rather, we should be seeking to open ourselves to the diversity of viewpoints and attitudes that can enrich our communication and relationships.⁴

The Global Village

Globalization is the increasing economic, political, and cultural integration and interdependence of diverse cultures—the worldwide integration of humanity. **Diversity**, a related concept, is the recognition and valuing of difference, encompassing such factors as age, gender, race,

ethnicity, ability, religion, education, marital status, sexual orientation, and income. Because we remain likely to work and live with people from all over the world, the time is right to learn about other cultures so that we refrain from unfairly stereotyping others and are better prepared to navigate the world together.

An early observer of how technology affects behavior and thinking, Marshall McLuhan predicted many years ago that our world would become a global village.⁵ He was right. We are linked physically and electronically to people around the globe. Digital technology is playing its part in erasing the notion of territorial boundaries between countries, gradually eroding the idea of the term *nation*.

People who used to remain strangers now can become our friends and coworkers, highlighting the importance of **multiculturalism**—engagement with and respect toward people from distinctly different cultures. In addition to using the Internet with increasing frequency, many of us move a number of times during our lives for personal or professional reasons.⁶ Others travel abroad regularly, some to visit relatives (one in five Americans was born abroad or has at least one parent who was), others to represent an employer, and still others to vacation. Each of these moves, whether in or beyond the borders of the United States, provides us with opportunities to improve cultural understanding. We don't have to be in the diplomatic corps to assume an active role. And if we're within the U.S., no passport is required.

SKILL BUILDER

INTERACTION ASSESSMENT

Consider the last interaction you had with someone whose cultural background differed from your own. Identify the communication challenges you faced. Among challenges confronted, for example, might be language (verbal and nonverbal); ways of thinking, including contrasting attitudes, beliefs, and values; and differing cultural perspectives.

Assess how well you were able to handle each of the named communication challenges by rating yourself from 1 to 10 on each challenge listed, where 1 represents handling the challenge extremely ineffectively and 10 represents handling it extremely effectively.

What might you have done differently to better manage each communication obstacle? How might being more mindful—more aware of how the behaviors and ways of thinking of a person from another culture are likely to differ from those of your own—have helped to enhance communication?

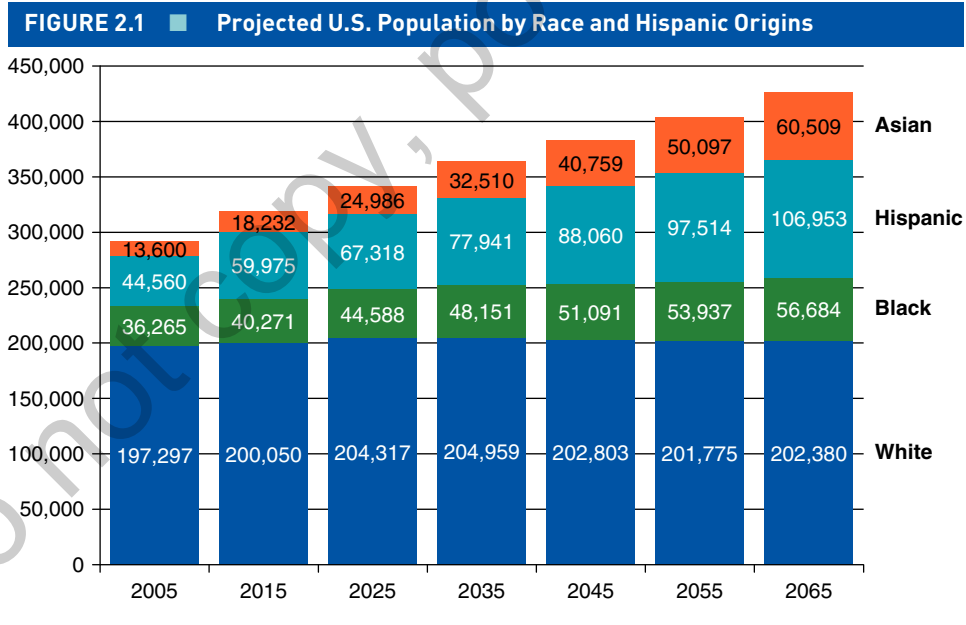
The specific behaviors that identify us as effective and competent communicators in our own culture may not be the behaviors that contribute to persons from other cultures perceiving us as either as effective or competent. For example, in the United States we believe in getting to the point. In Japan, people spend time socializing before saying what's on their mind. By developing a cultural perspective—an appreciation for cultural differences—we acknowledge that what works in one culture will not necessarily work in another culture. Instead, we need to be

sensitive to cultural differences and demonstrate our ability to adapt to the explicit and implicit rules at work in other cultures.

Diversity Reshapes the Future

Demographers tell us that diversity is reshaping our country's future and transforming our person-to-person ties even more quickly than was originally predicted, with the number of white people declining, with nearly 4 in 10 people identifying as other than white.⁷ According to 2020 U.S. Census Bureau reports, 191.7 million people identify as non-Hispanic white people. For the first time, the percentage of white people dropped below 60 percent. These census figures show 57.8 percent of the population identified as non-Hispanic white people or white alone, 12.1 percent as Black or African American alone, 6.1 percent as Asian alone, 1.1 percent as American-Indian and Alaska Native alone, and 2.8 percent as two or more races. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders comprise .2 percent of the population. At 18.7 percent, Hispanics and Latinos are now the largest minority group. The under 18 population is now majority people of color at 52.7 percent. Within one generation, underrepresented groups are forecast to become the majority.⁸ (See Figure 2.1 to see how we have more than realized the projections forecast in 2015.) More than half the children in the United States currently are of a minority race or ethnic group.⁹

The United States is the most demographically diverse country in the world, making it very probable that the number of contacts we have with people of other cultures will continue



Source: Pew Research Center, "Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to the U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065," September 28, 2015, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065>.

to increase in the future. This alone makes it important for us to be able to understand and communicate with those whose backgrounds, nationalities, and lifestyles differ from our own.

Ready to Embrace Diversity?

Some people, as we noted, are not eager to embrace diversity. In *Bowling Alone*, written at the turn of this millennium, author Robert Putnam reported that reciprocal and trustworthy social networks were on the decline. Aware that people were doing more and more things alone, Putnam asked why this was so. After studying 30,000 people across the United States, Putnam found a correlation between ethnically mixed environments and withdrawal from public life. He reported that the people living in diverse communities tended to “hunker down.” Sadly, they were more likely to distrust their neighbors—whether they were of the same or a different race, a similar or different background.¹⁰ To what extent, if any, do your experiences support this?



Are you up to meeting the challenges of increased diversity?

iStock.com/Rawpixel

It Is Different in the Working World

Happily, the working world reveals a different story. In organizations, people with *identity diversity* (people who come from different races and religions) and *cognitive diversity* (people who come from different outlooks and training) come together to do the organization's work.

Thus, the challenge facing us is to follow the lead of diverse organizations by creating a new and broader sense of “us.” In effect, we need to harness community out of diversity.¹¹

What Happened to the Melting Pot?

To what extent has the amount of contact you have with people of diverse cultural backgrounds changed since you were a child? Changes in demography and technology give you opportunities to interact with others unlike yourself. For many of us, intercultural communication is now the norm. In fact, living in the United States gives us an incredible opportunity to engage in intercultural communication without having to pay for international travel. But it hasn't always been that way.

The Melting Pot Philosophy

Years ago, the United States embraced a **melting pot philosophy**. According to that theory, when individuals immigrated to the United States, they lost or gave up their original heritage and became Americans. The national motto, *E pluribus unum* (a Latin phrase meaning “out of many, one”), reflected this way of thinking. It was believed that diverse cultural groups should be assimilated into the parent or dominant culture.

The Philosophy of Cultural Pluralism

Over time, the philosophy of **cultural pluralism**, allowing for cultures to maintain differences while coexisting in broader society, replaced the melting pot philosophy. Cultural pluralists believe in respect for uniqueness and tolerance for difference. In a multicultural society, every group will do things differently, and that's OK.



Cultural pluralism values difference and coexistence of multiple groups within society.

iStock.com/RoosterHD

The Many Facets of Intercultural Communication

The remainder of this chapter explores the ways cultural values and habits influence interaction. We introduce you to **intercultural communication**, the process of interpreting and sharing meanings with individuals from different cultures,¹² to help you better understand how cultural variability influences communication. In reality, we practice intercultural communication in our own backyards as well as with people around the world.

Among intercultural communication's many aspects are **interracial communication** (which occurs between people of different races), **interethnic communication** (which occurs when the communicating parties have different ethnic origins), **international communication** (which occurs between people representing different political structures), and **intracultural communication** (which includes all forms of communication among members of the same racial, ethnic, or other co-culture groups). Familiarizing ourselves with the many faces of culture prepares us to respond appropriately to varied communication styles, expands our choices as communicators, and increases our effectiveness in interacting with people from diverse cultural groups.

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION ARE CONNECTED

Culture is the lens through which we view the world. It is the mirror we use to reflect and interpret reality.¹³ It teaches us how to think and what to think about. It reveals to us what is beautiful or ugly, helpful or harmful, appropriate or out of place.

Culture Is a Teacher

In effect, every culture provides its members with a series of lessons. Among the lessons we learn are how to say “hello” and “good-bye,” when to speak or remain silent, how to act when angry or upset, where to focus our eyes when functioning as a source and receiver, how much to gesture, how close to stand to another, and how to display emotions such as happiness or rage. By instructing its members, culture guides behavior and communication, revealing to members how to act, think, talk, and listen.¹⁴ The term **enculturation** refers to the process of acquiring a

culture. We learn some of culture's lessons directly as when a caregiver reminds us to say "thank you" after helping us. Other lessons we learn indirectly by watching and observing others.

Cultural Ignorance Is Costly

Cultures outside of our own operate with their own expectations for behavior and communication. If we fail to realize that people from different cultures may not look, think, or act as we do, we risk appearing insensitive, ignorant, or **culturally confused** (lacking knowledge of cultural difference). The culturally confused pay a high price. The following examples demonstrate the cost of cultural ignorance and its effect on communication.

- Showing the sole of a shoe (while crossing one's legs, e.g.) means nothing to observers in the United States or Europe. In Muslim cultures, the gesture is perceived as insulting.¹⁵ Similarly, crossing your legs in the United States indicates you are relaxed, whereas in Korea it is a social faux pas.
- Blinking while another person talks is considered normal to North Americans; to Taiwanese people it is considered impolite.¹⁶
- McDonald's fast-food chain unintentionally offended thousands of Muslims when it printed an excerpt from the Koran on its throwaway hamburger bags.¹⁷ Muslims saw this as sacrilegious.
- The Japanese view business cards as an extension of a person, handling them with great care, whereas North Americans view them as a business formality and a convenience. Consequently, Americans often end up insulting Japanese people by treating a business card too casually.¹⁸
- Arab people typically adopt a direct body orientation when communicating, which can seem aggressive and unnerving to North American people, who employ a stance that is somewhat less direct. Arab and South American people also tend to gesture vigorously when speaking to others, which the less physical North Americans construe as inappropriate and unmannerly. It is common in Middle Eastern cultures for both males and females to physically exaggerate responses, whereas in the United States emotions are more likely to be less public. In Japan, individuals may try to hide or mask certain emotions. It is common among Asian cultures to exhibit reserve and emotional restraint.
- North Americans place a high value on looking someone in the eye and tend to distrust those who fail to do so. The Japanese, in contrast, believe eye contact over a sustained period of time shows disrespect. Among Asian cultures, too much eye contact is deemed intrusive. Arab people, on the other hand, maintain direct eye contact for prolonged periods.



Many Americans were confused when an Iraqi journalist threw a shoe at President George W. Bush during this 2008 press conference, but in many Arab cultures shoe throwing is a form of protest.

Associated Press/APTN

Stereotypes and Prejudice Can Do Harm

Stereotypes and prejudice influence our reactions to people whose cultures differ from our own. *Stereotypes*, again, are mental images we carry around in our heads. They are shortcuts, both positive and negative, that we use to guide our reactions to others.¹⁹ Stereotypes can generate unrealistic pictures of others and prevent us from distinguishing an individual from a group. Racial profiling is just one example of how stereotyping affects us.

Why do we engage in racial profiling? Consider these facts: The human brain categorizes people by race in the first one-fifth

of a second after seeing a face. Brain scans suggest that, even when asked to categorize others by gender, people also categorize them by race.²⁰ Could this be a factor in racial profiling? Racial profiling is indicative of prejudice. *Prejudice* describes how we feel about a group of people whom, more likely than not, we don't know personally. A negative or positive prejudgment, prejudice arises either because we want to feel more positively about our own group or because we feel others present a threat, real or not.²¹ Thus, prejudice leads to the creation of in- and out-groups with out-group members becoming easy targets for discrimination.

Because of the negative expectations that stereotypes and prejudice produce, we may try to avoid interacting with people who are the objects of our prejudice (perhaps those of another race) or attack them when we do. (We discuss stereotypes and prejudice in more depth in Chapter 3.)

Cultural Imperialism Presents Dangers

Cultural imperialism is the dominion of one culture over another culture. When one culture presents itself as superior to others, relationships between members of the diverse cultures suffer. Not taking cultural practices into account impedes relationship building, whereas recognizing, respecting, and responding to differences among cultures allows for more meaningful relationships.

Again, we need to be mindful not to rely on stereotypes. Everyone from a particular culture does not necessarily exhibit the same characteristics and communication traits. Failing to develop insights into cultural nuances can lead to lost opportunities and increased levels of tensions between people.

Being unaware of how others outside a culture view that culture's members can be equally costly. Deficient -awareness of self and other cultures takes a toll on individuals and society. A survey was conducted of 1,259 teenagers from 12 countries whose main contact with Americans was through popular culture, including television programs and movies they watched and the

music they listened to. Based on these experiences, in their judgment, Americans were violent, materialistic, sexually promiscuous, disrespectful of people unlike them, unconcerned about the poor, and prone to criminal activity. The study concluded that the export of American popular culture contributed to impressions of cultural imperialism. Because the way of life in the United States was promoted as superior to other ways of life, feelings of anti-Americanism had been fostered inadvertently. People around the world express concern that the U.S. does not consider the interests of others to the extent it should.²²



American cultural influence is visible around the world from small villages to major cities like Tokyo.

iStock.com/tanukiphoto

According to critics of cultural imperialism, the news, entertainment, and products of industrialized countries such as the United States tend to overwhelm the national cultures of other countries. There are signs, however, that the reign of American pop culture is beginning to erode. Increasing numbers of foreign films have been successes in the United States. U.S. music charts also regularly feature vocalists from the United States or other countries who sing in foreign languages, often Spanish. Foreign news services are increasingly influencing news coverage. Such exposure contributes to learning about diverse cultures and ourselves.

Advances don't come easy, however. In fact, in 2020, President Trump bemoaned the accolades bestowed on the film *Parasite* complaining that the United States had enough problems with South Korea when it came to trade for us to bestow them the honor of an Academy Award.²³

Cultural Flexibility Is Key

When we interact with people whose values or behavioral norms are different from ours, we need to be able to accept that diversity. Being culturally flexible enables us to communicate more effectively.

Ethnocentrism Has Perils

When we reject diversity, we exhibit **ethnocentrism**, the tendency to see our own culture as superior to all others. This also is a key characteristic of failed intercultural communication. People who are ethnocentric experience great anxiety when engaging with people outside their culture. They may say things like, “They take our jobs,” “They’re everywhere,” or “They’re just not like us.” The more ethnocentric individuals are, the greater their tendency is to view groups other than their own as inferior. As a result, they blame others for problems they face and often turn the facts inside out, making unsupported accusations.²⁴ When we develop sets of “alternative facts,” we close ourselves to learning the truth.

In an effort to combat revisionist histories, some decide to take action. Theo Wilson was one such person. Wilson was a Black man who had posted YouTube videos about culture and race. Wilson soon found himself being trolled by people who attacked him with racial slurs and cited

twisted facts. Wilson decided to go undercover online by presenting himself as a white supremacist in an effort to figure out the reasons for their hatred of him. He created a ghost profile of a white supremacist and named his avatar John Carter. Through the 8 months he communicated with other white supremacists, he came to appreciate how their existence in an alt-right bubble contributed to their ability to generate an endless stream of nonwhite and non-Christian groups to blame for their problems as they struggled to maintain their cultural traditions; yet they were unable to offer any viable solutions.²⁵

Keep in mind that ethnocentrism is measured on a continuum; it is not an all or nothing thing. We can be ethnocentric to varying degrees when it comes to different cultural groups. We may have a low degree of ethnocentrism when it comes to individuals from Japan, but because of the political climate a higher degree of ethnocentrism about individuals from Iran. What we need to be mindful of is how much our ethnocentrism influences our interaction with members of these groups and what we can do to reduce it.

Cultural Relativism Has Promise

The opposite of ethnocentrism is **cultural relativism**. When you practice cultural relativism, instead of viewing the group to which you belong as superior to all others, you recognize that all cultures are different and work instead to understand the behavior of other cultural groups based on the context in which the behavior occurs, not just from your own frame of reference.

Whether you display more of the characteristics of one who is ethnocentric or one who is a cultural relativist will influence both the nature and outcomes of your communication.

SKILL BUILDER

WHAT DOES MY BEHAVIOR REVEAL ABOUT ETHNOCENTRISM AND CULTURAL RELATIVISM?

The six behaviors listed below are likely to be exhibited by persons with ethnocentric tendencies. For each of the six behaviors, please provide a concrete example of how you either exhibited or did not exhibit the behavior when communicating with at least three different persons from three different cultures.

1. I go out of my way to be with people who are like me.
2. I can cooperate with people like me, but I find it difficult to cooperate with people unlike me.
3. I trust those who are like me more freely than I trust those who are different from me.
4. I am less fearful when I am around people like me than when I am around people unlike me.
5. I am much more apt to blame people unlike me for causing trouble than I am to blame people like me.
6. I believe that people unlike me should make an effort to become more like me.

What do each of the specific examples you supplied reveal? Are there some people who belong to cultures different from your own that you are more comfortable with than others? What steps are you willing to take, if any, to minimize the potentially negative effects of ethnocentrism?

EXPLORING CULTURAL IDENTITY: CULTURES WITHIN CULTURES

To become more adept at communicating with people who differ culturally from us, we need to learn not only about other cultures but also about our own. Differences in gender, age and generational membership, racial and ethnic background, socioeconomic status, religion, and physical ability affect not only our identity but also how we perceive and relate to others.

Cultural Identity and Communication Presence

We all belong to a number of groups, including those defined by their gender, age, racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and physical identities. Our cultural identity, based on these group memberships, influences our behavior, including our personal, community, and professional relationships. Let's look at how.

Gender Roles

Gender is a culturally constructed concept revealing how each of us has been socialized in relation to our sex. We may perceive ourselves to be feminine, masculine, or androgynous (possessing an amalgam of masculine and feminine qualities). How we define gender roles affects the ways males and females present themselves, socialize, work, perceive their futures, and communicate. U.S. men tend to adopt a problem-solving orientation, while women tend to be relationship oriented.²⁶ Some people do not feel connected to the sex assigned to them at birth and identify as transgender. Additionally, people might identify as belonging to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual or allied communities (LGBTQIA).

Age and Generational Membership

We also have ideas regarding the meaning and significance of age, including how people our age should look and behave. In the United States, large numbers of people place great value on appearing youthful and younger than their actual ages. In contrast, in Muslim, Asian, and Latin American cultures, people respect rather than deny aging.

In addition to age, we also need to acknowledge the role generational differences play in our communication with one another.

Demographers usually classify people into the following generations: matures, boomers, Gen X, Gen Y (the millennial generation), iGen (or Gen Z) and generation Alpha.

The Greatest Generation. Called “the greatest generation,” matures were born between 1900 and 1945. World War II and the Cold War were two of their defining experiences. Matures are known for respecting authority, following the rules, being loyal to their employing organizations, and respecting timeliness.

The Baby Boomers. Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, came of age during the space race, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and Watergate. They are famous for questioning authority, displaying a “can do” attitude, and focusing on how to get their way. The first TV generation, boomers actually had to get off the couch to change channels.

Generation X. Gen X-ers, who were born between 1965 and 1982, saw traditional gender roles bend and flex. The Web emerged during their formative years. They are known for seeking



Generational differences may pose communication challenges.

iStock.com/FatCamera

a work–life balance and being loyal to people, not organizations.

Generation Y. The Millennials. Gen Y members, born between 1983 and 1995, are referred to as the millennial generation or as digital natives. They are known for being technologically savvy. They also have exceedingly high expectations and think they are proficient multitaskers. They are apt to spend more time with the Internet and media than they do face-to-face with others. One out of three Gen Y members is a minority.

iGeneration (Gen Z). The postmillennial generation (born after 1995) is the most digitally savvy among us and the first generation to grow up with smartphones. Also called Generation Z or the App Generation, the iGeneration has no memory of a time without social media. Although still forming their identities, they nonetheless are expected to present a crystallized and idealized online identity.²⁷ Described as conscientious, somewhat anxious, and predisposed to “play it safe,” they are looked to as prime influencers of tomorrow and mindful of the future. They tend to embrace anonymous media platforms where incriminating images disappear virtually instantly. Sometimes referred to as “millennials on steroids,” they are concerned with their personal brands but believe that the generation before them posted too openly.²⁸

Generation Alpha (a moniker that signals a transition to the Greek alphabet and the start of something new). This generation’s members were born in 2010 and after. Forecast to be the most technologically immersed generation ever, they also are the most likely to spend most of their childhood in living arrangements that don’t involve both of their biological parents. This cohort’s members also are said to care more about issues and display an impatience to get things done.²⁹

Racial and Ethnic Identities

Our racial and ethnic identities are similarly socially constructed. Some racial and ethnic groups, for example, share experiences of oppression. Their attitudes and behaviors may reflect their struggles, influencing their attitudes toward contemporary issues such as affirmative action.

ETHICS AND COMMUNICATION

THROUGH OTHERS' EYES

1. Imagine you arrive in the United States from another country. Though perhaps unlikely, also imagine that you are totally unfamiliar with what life in the United States is like. In fact, until now you have never viewed American television, watched American films, or listened to American music. You do, however, read and understand English. You find a programming guide on the Internet. Based on your perusal of the titles and descriptions of prime-time network and cable programming, as well as streaming options, what characteristics would you attribute to Americans? How many of your listed characteristics would you consider positive? Negative?
2. If asked to summarize your discoveries, what conclusions would you draw about what Americans value? What subjects would you identify as of great interest to Americans? How would you assess their attitudes toward people from other cultures? What suggestions would you like to offer them?
3. Complete the same exercise, only this time focus on those programs that feature the members of a particular co-culture. Based on what you view, what conclusions can you draw about the selected co-culture's members? Compare and contrast these conclusions with the conclusions drawn about Americans in general.
4. Finally, complete the same exercise again, only this time focus on those programs that feature members of another culture from another country. Based on programs you view, what conclusions can you draw about the members of this culture? How do they compare and contrast with the conclusions drawn about Americans in general and your selected co-culture? What characteristics common to Americans might members of this culture evaluate favorably and unfavorably? What are their key points of similarity and difference?

Religious Identity

Religious identity is at the root of countless contemporary conflicts occurring in numerous areas, including the Middle East, India, Pakistan, and the United States, with anti-Muslim sentiment becoming a factor in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.³⁰ The least religiously diverse states in the United States are in the South.³¹

Socioeconomic Identity

Similarly, socioeconomic identity frames how we respond to issues of our day. The significant gap between the ultra-wealthy and the middle and working classes in the United States is contributing to their developing different attitudes on a wide array of issues. For example, during the coronavirus pandemic those who were economically secure had very different attitudes toward stay-at-home orders than did those who were economically challenged.



Religious identity is a source of conflict around the world. In Bangladesh a crowd protests the persecution of Rohingya Muslims.

iStock.com/Farid_Ahmed

National Identity

National identity refers to our legal status or citizenship. People whose ancestors were from other countries may have been U.S. citizens for generations, yet even though they persist in the struggle to be accepted as American, some still perceive them as foreigners.

Physical Ability

In 2019, Ali Stroker made history becoming the first actress in a wheelchair to win a Tony award. She won it for her performance as Ado Annie in the Broadway play *Oklahoma*.³² While we can't change

our race, becoming disabled can happen in an instant. Individuals without disabilities are prone to viewing disability as an unfortunate condition, but according to many who have disabilities, it can be rewarding to belong to the community of individuals with disabilities. While interacting with people with disabilities may require adaptations—using sign language to communicate with members of the Deaf culture, identifying yourself first when speaking with someone who is visually impaired, placing yourself at eye level when communicating with a person in a wheelchair—it also is true that disability is but one feature of the person, not their only identifying characteristic.

EXPLORING DIVERSITY

WORK ORIENTATIONS

Culture influences many of our work orientations, including the ability to work in a team, conceptions of leadership, ideas of rewards, attitudes toward gender, ideas about power, the amount of uncertainty one can tolerate, and the topics discussed with coworkers. Of course, culture also impacts ability to work with the members of diverse generations.

1. First, explain how your cultural identification influences you on each of the variables identified in the previous paragraph.
2. Next, discuss the behaviors that you and others of your generation should adopt in order to work successfully in organizations alongside members of earlier and/or later generations. What would you explain to members of these other generations regarding how to work successfully with you?
3. Finally, indicate how you would determine if an organization's culture reflected your values and was a good fit for you.

Distinguishing Between Cultures and Co-Cultures

A **culture** is the system of knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that are acquired, shared, and used by its members during daily living.³³ Within a culture as a whole

are co-cultures. **Co-cultures** are composed of members of the same general culture who differ in some ethnic or sociological way from the parent culture. As we see, in our society, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Japanese Americans, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA people, and older adults are just some of the co-cultures belonging to the same general culture³⁴ (Figure 2.2). Thus, co-culture is not based on the country in which you were born or raised but rather on the smaller groups of people with whom you identify. Your co-culture identity may be stronger or weaker than your national culture identity. Additionally, it is possible to identify with more than one co-culture.

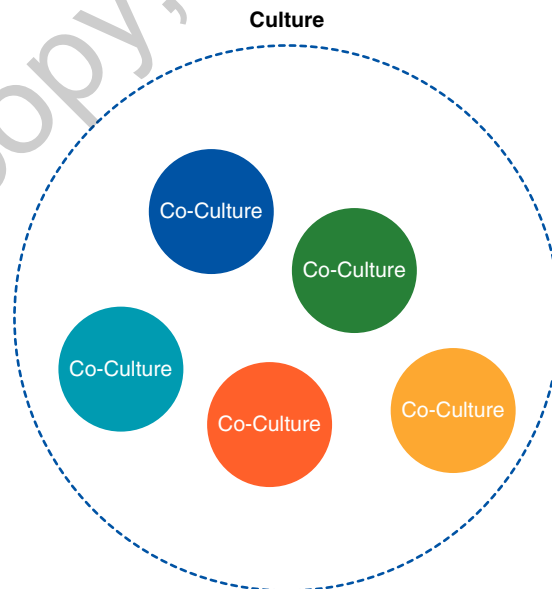
Variations Among Co-Cultures

Co-cultures have varying norms and different ideas about what ought to be. They may share values such as veganism, adopt a particular symbol such as the rainbow flag used by members of the LGBTQIA community, wear specific clothing articles like the Mormons and Hasidim, and/or use jargon or a specialized vocabulary understood by other members of the co-culture.

Co-Cultures and Communication Strategies

Have you ever identified as an outsider? People who believe they belong to a marginalized group—that is, a group whose members feel like outsiders—have a number of options to choose from regarding how they want to interact with members of the dominant culture or even if they want to interact with them at all. Have you, or has anyone you know, used any of the strategies that follow?

FIGURE 2.2 ■ A Culture and Its Co-Cultures



Assimilation. Co-culture members who use the strategy of **assimilation** attempt to fit in or join with members of the dominant culture. They converse about subjects that members of the dominant talk about, such as cars or sports, or they dress as members of the dominant culture dress. They give up their own ways in an effort to assume the modes of behavior of the dominant culture, placing more value on fostering relationships with members of the host culture.

Accommodation. In comparison, co-culture members who use the strategy of **accommodation** attempt to maintain their cultural identity even while they strive to establish relationships with members of the dominant culture, placing value on both their culture and the host culture. A gay man or lesbian who takes their partner to an occasion at which members of the dominant culture will be present, such as a company or family celebration, is using the strategy of accommodation.

Separation. On the other hand, when members of a co-culture resist interacting with members of the dominant culture, they employ the strategy of resistance, or **separation**. Because these people, such as Hasidic Jews, prefer to interact with each other rather than have contact with people they perceive to be outsiders, they tend to keep to themselves, placing more value on maintaining their cultural heritage.

Co-Cultures and Communication Approaches

Members of co-cultures can use passive, assertive, or more aggressive/confrontational communication approaches in their efforts to accomplish their objectives relative to the dominant culture.

Passive Communication. Co-culture members who use a passive communication approach seek to avoid the limelight. They accept their position in the cultural hierarchy. Rather than defend their ways and oppose others, they embrace the cultural beliefs and practices of the dominant culture. Recent immigrants to the United States who desire to attain citizenship may choose this path, hoping to blend in so that they do not disturb the status quo.

Assertive Communication. Co-culture members who use an assertive communication approach may seek to communicate a shared cultural identity with members of the dominant group. They want others to accommodate their diversity. They are receptive to rethinking a number of their ideas and may give up or modify some while holding on to others. After the



Spaces like the Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods in New York City are reflective of separation.

iStock.com/Cezary Wojtkowski

September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, for example, many Arab Americans spoke openly of their patriotism, their support for the war against terror, and their desire for others to allow them to live according to their values and beliefs.

More Aggressive/Confrontational Communication. Co-culture members who use a more aggressive communication approach defend their own beliefs and traditions with intensity and may be perceived by members of the dominant culture as “hurtfully expressive” or “self-promoting.”

They make it difficult for members of the dominant culture to ignore their presence or pretend they do not exist.³⁵ They adopt this strategy to demarginalize themselves and actively participate in the world known to members of the dominant culture. In the early years of Act Up, a gay rights organization, members employed this approach (Table 2.1).

Understanding both the general culture and its co-cultures is essential for effective communication. Merely knowing another's language is not enough. It also is necessary to become aware of the norms and rules of the culture or co-cultures that might influence the nature of interactions you have with its members. It is important to understand the ways culture shapes interaction.

DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE IN ACTION

By exploring six dimensions used to distinguish cultures from one another, we can increase our ability to understand our own and other cultures, thereby helping to reduce the strangeness of those we once perceived to be strangers. These six dimensions are (1) individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, (2) high-context versus low-context communication cultures, (3) high power distance versus low power distance cultures, (4) monochronic versus polychronic cultures, (5) masculine or feminine cultures, and (6) **uncertainty avoidance**, which is a reflection of a culture's tolerance for ambiguity and acceptance of risk.

As we introduce each of these cultural variations, keep in mind that no culture is purely one or the other; rather, cultures vary in the degree to which they possess each of the characteristics. Also think about the ways in which cultures can influence one another. Although members of a culture may have emphasized one variable over the other at different points in the

TABLE 2.1 ■ Preferred Strategies and Communication Approaches of Marginalized Groups

| Strategy | Communication Approach | Example |
|---------------|------------------------|--|
| Separation | Passive | Lunching alone |
| | Assertive | Opting to live with like people |
| | Confrontational | Criticizing discriminatory practices of the dominant culture |
| Accommodation | Passive | Wearing a yarmulke to work, wearing a sari to a party |
| | Assertive | Sharing information; engaging in education of others |
| | Confrontational | Critiquing others to promote change |
| Assimilation | Passive | Emphasize commonalities to fit in |
| | Assertive | Downplay differences but reveal feelings |
| | Confrontational | Staging a protest to negotiate position |

culture's history, that does not mean that the culture can't change once strongly impacted by the behaviors displayed by members of another culture. For example, both the United States (an individualistic culture) and Japan (a collectivistic culture) have influenced one another with the U.S. becoming more collectivistic and Japan becoming more individualistic. Also, remember that not every member of a culture will embody the primary cultural value to the same extent or express themselves similarly in all contexts.

Individualism Versus Collectivism

The cultural dimension of individualism versus collectivism reveals how people define themselves in their relationships with others.

Individualistic cultures, such as those of Great Britain, the United States, Canada, France, and Germany, stress individual goals, whereas **collectivistic cultures**, represented by Japan, China, South Korea, Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Nigeria, give precedence to group goals. Individualistic cultures cultivate individual initiative, achievement, and power, while collectivistic cultures tend to nurture group influences, tradition, and conformity. This means that, whereas the “I” may be most important in individualistic cultures with persons being primarily self-oriented and valuing their privacy, the “we” (concern for the larger group) is the dominant force in collectivistic ones. In collectivistic cultures, the individual is expected to fit into and be loyal to the group. In individualistic cultures, emphasis is placed on developing the sense of self.

High Context Versus Low Context

A second way that cultures vary in communication style is in their preference for high-context or low-context communication.

Whereas high-context cultures, such as in China, Japan, and South Korea, gather information from the context, low-context cultures, such as in the United States and Germany, pay close attention to the verbal code. Cultures with **high-context communication** systems are tradition bound. Their cultural traditions shape the behavior and lifestyle of group members, causing them to appear to members of low-context cultures to be overly polite and indirect in relating to others. When members of high-context cultures communicate, because context is central, not much background information is shared. In contrast, cultures with **low-context communication** systems generally encourage members to tell practically everything, and to exhibit a more direct communication style. Members of high-context cultures place significant value on “face-saving,” desiring to avoid embarrassing themselves or others. While members of low-context cultures will argue a point, high-context culture members prefer not to disagree, criticize publicly, or say no for fear of causing the other person to lose face.

Members of low-context cultures tend to gather background information when meeting someone for the first time. Thus, they will ask people they have just met where they went to college, where they live, and who they work for. People from high-context cultures are much less likely to ask such questions up front.³⁶ In addition, people from low-context cultures are apt to feel that they have to explain everything rather than rely on nonverbal, contextual information.

In contrast, people who believe that most messages can be understood without direct verbal interaction reveal their preference for high-context communication. Asian cultures typically emphasize high-context communication, whereas Western cultures typically represent low-context systems. For example, Japanese people traditionally value silence, believing that a person of few words is thoughtful, trustworthy, and respectable. For members of high-context cultures, silence communicates mutual understanding, whereas it makes members of low-context cultures feel uncomfortable. Thus, Japanese people spend considerably less time talking than do people in the United States. This orientation also helps explain why the Japanese often perceive self-disclosures during interaction as socially inappropriate.

High Power Distance Versus Low Power Distance

Power distance measures the extent to which individuals are willing to accept power differences and inequalities among people.

Individuals from **high power distance cultures** such as Saudi Arabia, India, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia, view power as a fact of life and are apt to stress its coercive or referent nature. Superiors and subordinates in these countries are likely to view each other differently; subordinates are quick to defer to superiors. In contrast, individuals from **low power distance cultures**, such as Israel, Sweden, and the United States, believe power should be used only when it is legitimate; thus, they are apt to employ expert or legitimate power. Superiors and subordinates from low power distance countries emphasize their interdependence by displaying a preference for consultation; subordinates will even contradict their bosses when necessary.³⁷ Low power distance cultures stress equality among people and their interdependence despite their occupying different power levels. This mind-set is apparent when persons with less power address those with more power by their first names. In contrast, in high power distance cultures, power rests in the hands of the few rather than being distributed throughout the population. The hierarchy of relationships, rather than relationship interdependence, maximizes perceptions of power differences.

Monochronic Versus Polychronic

Chronemics refers to time use. How we perceive time also influences our communication, with different conceptions of time making themselves visible in our interactions with others. Life in some places around the globe is not as fast paced as it is in most of Europe and North America. In Kenya, Argentina, and southern U.S. states, activities are often conducted at a slower rhythm and without the same sense of urgency. When not understood, such differences in conceptual orientation can become frustrating. According to Hall, cultures approach time in one of two ways: as monochronic or polychronic.³⁸

People attuned to **monochronic** time schedule time carefully, one event at a time, preferring to complete an activity before beginning another. This orientation, common in Western cultures, perceives time to be linear—having a beginning and an end. In contrast, people brought up using **polychronic** time are not obsessed with time and refuse to be its slaves. They perceive time to be cyclical. Rather than rigidly scheduling or segmenting their time, they readily give



People accustomed to polychronic time tend to take on multiple tasks at once.

iStock.com/Paul Bradbury

ures, members value aggressiveness, strength, and material symbols of success. In highly **feminine cultures**, members value relationships, tenderness in members of both sexes, and a high quality of life. Among highly masculine cultures are Japan, Italy, Germany, Mexico, and Great Britain. Among highly feminine cultures are Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Thailand, and Chile. Masculine cultures socialize members to be dominant and competitive. They tend to confront conflicts head-on and are likely to use a win–lose conflict resolution strategy. In contrast, the members of feminine cultures are more apt to compromise and negotiate to resolve conflicts, seeking win–win solutions. Thus, whereas masculine cultures emphasize maximal distinctions in the behavior of men and women and stress assertiveness, feminine cultures are characterized by more overlap in the social roles performed by men and women, and underscore the importance of nurturing.

Gender norms, however, continue to evolve, with a competing version of masculinity—one stressing a duty to protect the weak—emerging to challenge the more traditional version stressing toughness.⁴¹

Uncertainty Avoidance

Many of us go out of our way to avoid the uncertainty we experience when we find ourselves in uncomfortable or unfamiliar situations. Not all cultures, however, are equally bothered or stressed by uncertainty. Rather, cultures vary in their tolerance for uncertainty, also known as their tolerance for ambiguity.

Were we to belong to a culture with a low tolerance for uncertainty, such as in Japan, Greece, Argentina, and Chile, we probably would avoid interacting in situations and with people who are unfamiliar. We also would likely avoid taking risks and find it challenging to handle differences in opinion and a lack of specificity. In contrast, were we a member of a culture with a high tolerance for uncertainty, such as in Denmark, Great Britain, and Ireland, we more than likely would enjoy new situations and people, have a “live and let live” attitude toward differences in opinion, be able to cope with vagueness, have nonspecific timetables, and feel comfortable

in to distractions and interruptions, even choosing to tackle several different problems or hold several different conversations at the same time. Additionally, rather than trying to be on time, like monochronic people, polychronic people may be late for an appointment, change an appointment right up to the last minute, or opt not to arrive for their appointment at all.³⁹

Masculine Versus Feminine

Cultures differ in their attitudes toward gender roles.⁴⁰ In highly **masculine cul-**

handling risk, stress, and anxiety. The U.S. falls a little past the mid-point toward the high tolerance end of the scale.

Interpreting Cultural Differences

Where a culture falls on the individualistic–collectivistic, low-context versus high-context communication, masculine–feminine, power distance, time, and uncertainty tolerance scales affects the interactional preferences of its members. Developing a fuller comprehension of these dimensions can improve communication between the members of diverse cultures. For example, knowing whether individuals tend to understate their accomplishments or take credit for personal achievements can keep you from passing judgments that may be ill-founded. Understanding where individuals fall on the remaining cultural continua, whether they have a preference for individual or group goals, how they view power differentials, how they conceive of silence, the degree to which they value assertiveness and confrontation compared with relational harmony and the expression of feelings can guide us in responding more mindfully.

When people from diverse cultures interact, unless their differences in orientation are acknowledged, interactions may well result in misunderstandings that could have been avoided had we only been mindful.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNITY, AND THE NATURE OF OUR CONNECTIONS

Like communication, digital technology and culture shape one another. Together, they are redefining the meaning of “community,” including the nature of neighborhoods and neighbors, the dangers of polarization and division, and options for extending our communication reach and settings.

Neighborhoods Need Not Be Real

When we speak of community today, we no longer are limited to real neighborhoods. We have widened the concept of community to include those existing in cyberspace, and the number of virtual communities in cyberspace continues to rise. Because the Internet permeates national boundaries, it erodes the connection between location and experience, enabling us to interact more easily with people who have different worldviews than we do.⁴² At the same time, it enables us to find groups of people who think the same way we do and who resemble us in every conceivable way.

We Consciously Select Digital Neighbors

We choose our “online neighbors” just as we choose a real neighborhood.

The fear in this development is that communicating solely with like-minded people may lead to the polarization of opinions, whereas communicating with mixed-minded people tends to bring about a moderation of viewpoints.⁴³ A preference for likeness and an intolerance for

difference often leads to the development of online in-groups (composed of people whom we perceive to be like us) and out-groups (composed of those we view as different from us) whom we may block or “unfriend.”

Be Wary of Those Who Seek to Divide and Polarize

Bad actors on social media have the ability to negatively impact our perceptions of others and opposing viewpoints, allowing the opinions they post to polarize us, divide us, and drive us further apart. The gulf in how we see things reflects both affective polarization (contributing to our disliking others more) and ideological polarization (a measure of how far apart we are on issues of concern, such as Black Lives Matter, gun control, and abortion).

Unfortunately, exposing ourselves to opinions countering our own, instead of swaying us to give more credence to opposing viewpoints, typically results in our “digging in our heels,” serving to strengthen our original position. Since social media tend to feature and lead with extreme positions, we end up pushed away from, even repulsed by, others’ stances, while our own positions are reinforced. For some reason, social media plays to the extremes rather than leading with moderate views. Instead of reinforcing our own viewpoints and deeming the viewpoints of those opposed to ours as “crazy,” it is more effective to seek out people and positions that are more to the center.⁴⁴

Other Reasons We Seek Digital Communities: Avatars and Gaming

Many virtual communities are social networking sites in which users create profiles or avatars—alternate selves or images of characters—that they use to interact with others online. Why are people seeking multiple lives? Could it be because the neighborhoods they live in are not delivering the person-to-person contacts they seek? Millions of people go online in search of surrogate neighborhoods and relationships. This has led some critics to assert that rather than bringing people together, computer networks are isolating us. They contend that online communities are missing the essence of real neighborhoods, including a sense of location and a feeling of permanence and belonging. But is this necessarily so?

During the Covid-19 pandemic, real life had to move online, and it accomplished this in part via gaming, with interest in participating in gaming communities rising 29 percent. An array of virtual communities became substitutes for our real-life communities. Virtual and augmented reality made it possible for us to do online what the pandemic made it unwise for us to do in the real world—attend concerts, date, and play games, including sports. In fact, more virtual activities now take place inside of gaming communities, including research, shopping, messaging, social experiences, and live events, with gaming becoming the central hub for our virtual lives.⁴⁵ Have digital happenings and customized locations provided you with new kinds of shared experiences and diverse connection opportunities?

Be Aware of the Power of Digital Dialogue

On the bright side, sites such as Facebook do let us stay in touch with friends as well as provide opportunities to reacquaint us with those with whom we have lost touch. They also let us friend people we barely know. The ability to reach so many different people from so many different places so quickly gives communicators a new sense of power. Wherever we live, we can use the Internet to help bring diversity and new cultures into our lives, changing our social, political, and business lives. Some worry that the culture of computing, especially participating in the Internet's message boards, attracts extreme political positions and contributes to long-standing international conflicts. In contrast, advocates believe it facilitates international dialogue.⁴⁶

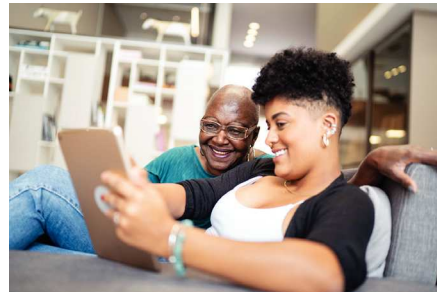
Are all voices really being heard? Are we becoming more or less tolerant of each other? Are we aware that words posted to global online groups have consequences, just as they do when delivered in person? If we use the Internet wisely, we will find ways to increase the scope and diversity of our knowledge and develop our abilities to work together in diverse teams to solve personal, professional, and societal problems.⁴⁷

Good and Bad Connections

The Internet can be used for good and for evil. Those in control of governments during periods of unrest in places such as Egypt and China have censored the Web, even suspending access to YouTube and Twitter in the effort to preserve their power by controlling what the people in their countries were able to say and see over the Internet. However, tech-savvy activists usually find ways to circumvent such Internet controls. In fact, the Arab Spring uprisings across the Middle East in the 2010s played out on a global digital stage.⁴⁸ The number of people going online to follow world events or for social networking continues to grow.

The **digital divide**, which refers to inequality in access to technology and the Internet, is shrinking. Members of minority groups, older adults, and people with lower incomes are going online in greater numbers, democratizing access. Still, gaining access to computers remains a problem in many places around the world because of high poverty levels and the absence or unreliability of electricity.

Let us close this section with some questions for you to think about. When you go online, do you seek to interact in communities based on difference or likeness? In other words, how many of the sites you visit online are visited by people who think and behave similarly to you, and how many are frequented by people who think and behave differently from you? Do you think the Internet is better at creating more insular communities, or does it foster interest in diversity?



Instruction in new technology has helped to bridge the digital divide between young and old.

FG Trade/E+/ via Getty Images

COMMUNICATION SKILLS: PRACTICE COMMUNICATING INTERCULTURALLY

Despite technology's inroads, there are too many of "us" who do not work as hard as we should at communicating with people from different cultures, simply because we do not wish to live or interact with "them."⁴⁹ To counter this, we need to make reducing the strangeness of strangers a priority in our lives. How can we do this?

Focus on mastering and maintaining these skills as you work to eliminate ineffective behaviors.

Refrain From Formulating Expectations Based Solely on Your Culture

When those you interact with have diverse communication styles, it is critical that you acknowledge the differences and accept their validity. By not isolating yourself within your own group or culture, you allow yourself to be more fully a part of a multicultural society and thus a better communicator.

Recognize Faulty Education Can Impede Understanding

It is important to identify and work to eliminate any personal biases and prejudices you have developed over the years. Determine, for example, the extent to which your family and friends have influenced your feelings about people from other cultural groups. Do those you have grown up with appear comfortable or uncomfortable relating to people of different cultural origins? To what extent have their attitudes affected your intercultural communication competence?

Be Mindful of Your and Others' Behavior

Instead of relying on how you once felt, make the effort to be "fully present" when interacting with those whose cultures differ from yours. Consider how your thoughts and communication preferences may compare and contrast with the thoughts and communication preferences of persons with different cultural roots. By practicing the intercultural sensitivity resulting from mindfulness, your communication can help bridge cultural differences and discover common ground.

Commit to Developing Intercultural Communication Skills for Life in a Multicultural World

Although culture is a tie that binds, the creation of a global village makes it essential that you leave the comfort of your cultural niche, become more knowledgeable of other cultures, and strive to be culturally aware.

Familiarize yourself with the communication rules and preferences of members of different cultures so that you can increase the effectiveness of your interactions. Act on these suggestions.

- Seek information from people whose cultures are different from your own.
- Try to understand how the experiences of people from different cultures lead them to develop different perspectives.

- Pay attention to the situation and context of any intercultural communication.
- Make efforts to become a more flexible communicator; don't insist that people from other cultures communicate on your terms.

COMPLETE THIS CHAPTER 2 CHECKLIST

- 2.1** I can explain the significance of intercultural communication in global and local communities.

Globalization is the increasing economic, political, and cultural integration and interdependence of diverse cultures. Diversity is the recognition and valuing of difference. Multiculturalism is the practice of respecting and engaging with people from different cultures. Through intercultural communication, we interpret and share meanings with individuals from different cultures. As demographics changed and minorities gained visibility in all areas of society, cultural pluralism, or acknowledging that other cultural groups are equal in value to one's own, has gained prominence, replacing the melting pot philosophy. Respect and appreciation for difference are key in today's society.

- 2.2** I can analyze the relationship between culture and communication, including exploring the impact of varying attitudes toward diversity.

Culture is communication and communication is culture. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to see one's own culture as superior to all others. Cultural relativism is the opposite of ethnocentrism. Stereotypes are mental images or pictures we carry around in our heads; they are shortcuts we use to guide our reactions to others. A prejudice is a negative or positive prejudgment that leads to the creation of in- and out-groups.

- 2.3** I can demonstrate influences on cultural identity, distinguishing the difference between cultures and co-cultures.

Among the groups that influence cultural identity, and on which cultural identity is based, are those defined by gender, age, racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, national, and generational identities. A culture is a system of knowledge; beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that are acquired, shared, and used by members. A co-culture is a group of people who differ in some ethnic or sociological way from the parent culture.

- 2.4** I can illustrate six dimensions of cultural variability, explaining how understanding them helps to reduce the strangeness of strangers.

Cultures vary in six general ways: (1) individualism versus collectivism, (2) high versus low context, (3) high versus low power distance, (4) monochronic versus polychronic, (5) masculine versus feminine, and (6) uncertainty avoidance. Individualistic cultures stress individual goals. Collectivistic cultures stress group goals. High-context communication cultures are bound to tradition and value indirectness. Low-context communication cultures encourage directness in communication. High power distance cultures view power as a fact of life with subordinates deferring to superiors. Low power distance cultures believe power should be used only if legitimate. Monochronic cultures

schedule time carefully. Polychronic cultures refuse to be restricted by time. Masculine cultures value aggressiveness, strength, and material success. Feminine cultures value relationships, tenderness, and high quality of life. Uncertainty avoidance is a measure of tolerance for ambiguity and acceptance of risk. Understanding these six dimensions adds to our storehouse of knowledge, enhancing our communication competence and our ability to adapt to cultural differences.

2.5 I can explore how digital technology brings diversity into our lives.

For many of us, the Internet and social media facilitate this by enabling us to join a wide range of online communities and interact with people who hold different worldviews. They also inform us of the dangers of polarization and division, demonstrating the risk we face of becoming more isolated or insulated from diverse viewpoints. On the other hand, they facilitate the augmenting of real-life experiences with digital ones, particularly those that exist within the context of gaming. Technology enhances our opportunities to communicate within and across cultural boundaries in both real and virtual communities.

BECOME A WORD MASTER

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| accommodation | low-context communication |
| assimilation | masculine cultures |
| co-cultures | melting pot philosophy |
| collectivistic cultures | monochronic |
| cultural imperialism | multiculturalism |
| cultural pluralism | polychronic |
| cultural relativism | separation |
| culturally confused | uncertainty avoidance |
| culture | |
| digital divide | |
| diversity | |
| enculturation | |
| ethnocentrism | |
| feminine cultures | |
| globalization | |
| high power distance cultures | |
| high-context communication | |
| individualistic cultures | |
| intercultural communication | |
| interethnic communication | |
| international communication | |
| interracial communication | |
| intracultural communication | |
| low power distance cultures | |