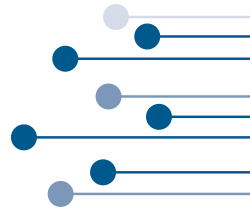


Intercultural Communication Competence



In Chapter 1, you read that every culture provides its members with rules specifying appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Were you to approach intercultural communication from the perspective of attempting to learn the norms of all cultures, it certainly would be an impossible task. There is no way that you could learn all the rules governing appropriate and inappropriate behavior for every culture with which you came into contact. You would always be doing something wrong; you would always be offending someone. In fact, you wouldn't even know if you were expected to conform to the other culture's norms or if you were expected to behave according to your own culture's norms while respecting those of the other. Your communication likely would suffer, as your violation of norms would be a form of noise limiting the effectiveness of your communication.

This chapter begins, then, with a consideration of 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, and postethnic cultures.

Then you'll read about anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, and stereotypes and prejudice as barriers to effective and appropriate intercultural communication. The chapter concludes with a consideration of ethics in intercultural communication.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Give examples of intercultural communication competence skills appropriate to more than one culture
2. List the barriers to effective and appropriate intercultural communication
3. Give an example of ethnocentrism that demonstrates it as a barrier to intercultural communication
4. Distinguish between stereotypes, prejudice, and racism and show how each is a barrier to intercultural communication
5. Discuss ethical guidelines for intercultural communication

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.) It would seem that 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.

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 consideration for appropriateness—that is, that 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:

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

Focus on Skills 2.1

Assessing Intercultural Communication Competence

Read the following court transcript:

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.

Source: Quoted in Liberman (1981).

1. Assess the intercultural communication competence of the magistrate and the defendant from the transcript alone.
2. The defendant is an **Aboriginal** in an Australian court. Liberman (1990a, 1990b) describes the unique form of public discourse that evolved among the 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 the 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. Western European discourse style is direct, confrontational, and individualistic. Thus, it can be said that the Aboriginal defendant in the example finds it difficult to communicate a defense by opposing what has been 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?
3. Obviously the magistrate knows the defendant is an Aboriginal. Does the magistrate’s questioning demonstrate intercultural communication competence?

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 peoples think and behave is essential for communication with them.

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 Dattuyawat (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. P. 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 Thais use rhetorical reflection to build rhetorical sensitivity. In Thai culture, the development of the relationship contributes to intercultural communication competence.

Intercultural Communication Ethics

As a branch of philosophy, ethics addresses the question of how we ought to lead our lives or 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 of intercultural communication competence are specific to culture. Are there ethics that transcend all cultures, or are all ethics, too, specific to culture?

Focus on Culture 2.1 is an example of how identity can raise ethical questions.

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.

Focus on Culture 2.1

Identity Ethics

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.

President Donald Trump often mocked Warren's claims of Cherokee heritage, referring to her as "Pocahontas." 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 6 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 apologized for claiming American Indian identity privately to the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation and later 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).

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.
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.

Developing ethical principles to guide intercultural interactions is a difficult task. Even though Kale's principles may be more acceptable in some cultures than in others, they are certainly a beginning step.

Multiple Cultural Identities

How does having multiple cultural identities affect intercultural communication competence? In the following sections, we address how being competent in the communication skills of more than one culture affects intercultural communication competence. We'll look at third culture, multiculturalism, and postethnic cultures.

Focus on Theory 2.1

Is the Academic Discipline of Intercultural Communication Intercultural?

Is the intercultural communication field of study truly intercultural? Is there an ethical issue applying a Western perspective to other cultures? As discussed in this chapter, 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 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, then, 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).

Third Culture

John Useem, John Donahue, and Ruth Useem (1963) introduced the concept of *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 four 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 marriage 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, child rearing, and relations with families and friends. Tili and Barker (2015) studied marriages of Asian and Caucasian U.S. spouses. Their



The wedding of Prince Harry and U.S.-born Meghan Markle had elements of both cultures with a gospel choir and U.S. Episcopal bishop Michael Curry who references African-American spirituals and Black enslavement.

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 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 uses that to build rhetorical sensitivity as the relationship continues to develop. The individuals who attempt to build a new culture may be rhetorical sensitives. 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).

Another use of the term *third culture* has been 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 of no longer feeling comfortable in any specific culture. In some ways, 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).

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 a way to create diverse communities (D. B. Willis, 1994)? There are suggestions of difficulties: Third-culture kids may have difficulty in maintaining relationships and in 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 has tolerance for 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.

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; 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. 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, German chancellor Angela Merkel, former Australian prime minister John Howard, former Spanish prime minister José María 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” (Weaver, 2010).

The same concern that multiculturalism has failed exists in the United States. Increased immigration and international terrorism and domestic terrorism have led to renewed pressures against multiculturalism. In April 2013, 3 people were killed and 264 injured when two bombs exploded at the Boston Marathon. The FBI identified two suspects, brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. Although they had never lived in Chechnya, the brothers identified as Chechen. Their family emigrated in 2002 and applied for refugee status. Both spoke English well. Tamerlan enrolled in a community college and married a U.S. citizen. He was quoted as having said that he “didn’t understand” Americans and had not a single American friend (Weigel, 2013). Dzhokhar became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2012 and enrolled in a university program in marine biology. He was reported to be greatly influenced by his older brother. Some believe that the brothers were motivated by an anti-American, radical version of Islam that Tamerlan had learned in the Russian republic Dagestan or that they had learned in the United States.

Some columnists began to label the tragedy as an example of the failure of multiculturalism. Mike Gonzalez (2013), for example, asks how two refugee recipients of free education in the United States could not assimilate. Assimilation, Gonzalez asserts, does not connote coercion and loss of ancestral culture, but it does mean patriotism. (You’ll read more about assimilation in Chapters 10 and 11.)

Postethnic Cultures

You read earlier in this chapter that John Dewey criticized cultural pluralism as encouraging people to identify themselves as members of one group. If a person is born female in Texas of 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 so we aren’t 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 ethno-racial 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.

Barriers to Intercultural Communication

LaRay M. Barna (1997) developed a list of six barriers to effective and appropriate intercultural communication: anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations, and language. Her categories of barriers are used here when discussing problems that can arise in intercultural encounters. The first four kinds of barriers are discussed in this chapter. Nonverbal misinterpretations and language are discussed separately in following chapters. Taking these common mistakes into account can help you improve your intercultural communication skills.

Anxiety

The first barrier 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 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 second barrier is assuming similarity instead of difference. A middle-class Angolan teenager may purchase a CD of American music. Does that demonstrate that all teenagers like the same music? The cultural difference may be 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 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. 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 cafés is common in Denmark. Pictures were wired to the police showing numerous strollers parked outside cafés 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.

School districts in the United States have been accused of assuming similarity by groups such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations. 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.

Focus on Culture 2.2

Benjamin Franklin's Remarks on American Indians

Savages we call them, because their Manners differ from ours, which we think the Perfection of Civility; they think the same of theirs.

Perhaps, if we could examine the Manners of different Nations with Impartiality, we should find no People so rude, as to be without any Rules of Politeness; nor any so polite, as not to have some Remains of Rudeness. . . . An Instance of this occurred at the Treaty of Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, anno 1744, between the Government of Virginia and the Six Nations. After the principal Business was settled, the Commissioners from Virginia acquainted the Indians by a Speech that there was at Williamsburg a College, with a Fund for Educating Indian youth; and that, if the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their young Lads to that College, the Government would take care that they should be well provided for, and instructed in all the Learning of the White People. It is one of the Indian Rules of Politeness not to answer a public Proposition the same day that it is made; they think it would be treating it as a light manner, and that they show it Respect by taking time to consider it, as of a Matter important. They therefor deferr'd their Answer till the Day following; when their Speaker began, by expressing their deep Sense of the kindness of the Virginia Government,

in making them that Offer; "for we know," says he, "that you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in those Colleges, and that the Maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinc'd, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and 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 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. We are however not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful Sense of it, 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."

Source: Quoted in Mott & Jorgenson (1936).

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 third barrier to effective intercultural communication is **ethnocentrism**, or 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 climate change is a fact and, as a result, 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?

After reading the comments by Benjamin Franklin (see Focus on Culture 2.2), 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).

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 forms for something as simple as a person's name is not that simple if you recognize how widely practices vary. For example, in Mexico, people may have two surnames, with the first from the father's first surname and the second from the mother's surname. Often, only the first surname is used and the second abbreviated. When

a woman marries, she usually retains both of her surnames and adds her husband's first surname. 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 93 million people share the name *Wang*—the most common surname in the world. Second most occurring is *Li*, with some 92 million Chinese. The most prevalent surname in the United States, *Smith*, is shared by 2.4 million people.

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

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.

Stereotypes and Prejudice

Stereotypes and prejudice 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

Global Voices

The easiest idea to sell anyone is that he is better than someone else.

Source: Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954, p. 372).

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).

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 judgments made on the basis of any group membership. 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.

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.

Identify the stereotypes in the following examples of sign language and in sports team logos: Until recently, the sign for *Japanese* in American Sign Language was a twist of the little finger at the corner of the eye to denote a slanted eye. The new sign, taken from Japanese Sign Language, is a hand signal to show the shape of the Japanese islands (Costello, 1995). In Japanese Sign Language, the sign for *foreigner* is the index finger making a circular motion around the eye denoting “round eye.”

Are American Indian logos and mascots stereotypes? Some say the stereotypes are positive; others find them demeaning. 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. Central Michigan, Florida State, Midwestern State, Mississippi College, and the University of Utah retained their eligibility by receiving support from the eponymous tribe. Schools under this ban include the Florida State Seminoles, the Illinois Fighting Illini, and the Utah Utes. The University of North Dakota (UND) was one of the 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 has; one hasn't. 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 name. The law was repealed. Supporters of the name sued the NCAA. The suit failed. A statewide referendum voted to remove the name, and the university has done so.

The National Congress of American Indians and other tribal organizations have protested the name *Washington Redskins* as perpetuating a demeaning stereotype. A U.S. historian has noted that *Cleveland Indians*, *Kansas City Chiefs*, and *Atlanta Braves* are not slurs, but *Redskins* has historically been an ethnic slur. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office ruled that *Redskins* cannot be registered as a trademark as it is derogatory; however, in 2017, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that not allowing disparaging names



Is the team name “Washington Redskins” a demeaning stereotype?

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 recently settled claims for racial profiling minority customers 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

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 stands for bravery, courage, and a stalwart spirit. Current team owner Dan Snyder remains adamant that he will never change the name.

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 terrorist activity. Profiling also

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, or gender identity. For the most part, the policy does not apply to screening at borders and airports or to local or state law enforcement.



Some contend that profiling is necessary for homeland security; others argue that increased racial profiling only raises ill feelings toward the United States.

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.

Negative Effects on Communication

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

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 a belief that places individual women, people of color, and gay men at risk. Popular television may reinforce those stereotypes. Shaheen (1984), for example, has cited the four Western myths about Arabs as shown on television: Arabs are wealthy, barbaric, sex maniacs, and terrorist minded.
3. Stereotypes also impede communication when they cause us to assume that a widely held belief is true of any one individual. For example, if a group is stereotyped as dishonest, that does not mean that any one individual in that group is dishonest. A classic psychology study in the 1970s had two groups of undergraduates read stories about a woman. The stories were identical, except that one had the sentence “Betty is now a lesbian.” On a test one week later, individuals in the group who had read that Betty is a lesbian were much more likely than individuals in the other group to recall having read that Betty never dated men. In fact, the story that both groups had read stated that Betty dated men occasionally. The group’s stereotype of a lesbian influenced what they recalled having read (Snyder & Uranowitz, 1978). Do you think that stereotype is commonly held today?

Focus on Skills 2.2

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 as a costume is misuse of a cultural symbol and **cultural appropriation** or the use for other purposes of something that has cultural meaning or significance for someone.

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, which 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?



Keziah
@daumkeziah

Follow

I don't see the big deal of me wearing a gorgeous dress I found for my last prom. If anything, I'm showing my appreciation to other cultures and I didn't intend to make anyone think that I'm trying to be racist. It's just a dress. ❤️

7:18 PM - 27 Apr 2018

74 Retweets 1,856 Likes



311 74 1.9K

Twitter/@daumkeziah

Keziah Daum (an 18-year-old from Utah) wore a *qipao* or *cheongsam* (a tight-fitting Chinese dress with a high collar and side split) for her prom. Her tweeted images ignited a social media storm. One person protested, "My culture is NOT your ... prom dress," while another said, "I am very proud to have our culture recognized by people in other countries."

Case Study: Asian-Americans

Asian-American groups in the United States have experienced stereotyping, which, although often positive, has impeded communication. 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 up to 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 Asians immigrating to the United States between 1981 and 1989. The label *Asian-American* includes more than 30 ethnicities, with family origins extending from East Asia and Southeast Asia to the Indian subcontinent as well as the Philippines and Indonesia. The continued use of the term *Asian-American* contributes to a stereotype of some 17 million people of Asian ancestry as a single community (5.6% of the population).

Some 51% of Asian-Americans have a bachelor's degree, compared to 30% of the general population. Census data show that Asian-Americans have the highest median annual income of \$73,060 (compared to \$53,600 for all U.S. households). 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. Asian-Americans of all groups are most often portrayed in the press as industrious and intelligent; enterprising and polite, with strong values; and successful in schools and business and 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

The stereotype can become a self-fulfilling prophecy for the person stereotyped. Research by psychologists Steele and Aronson (1995) has shown that a negative stereotype creates a threat that can distract the individual stereotyped and lower performance.

Hamilton and Harwood (1997) note that while cultural differences may be the most visible among people, they may not be the 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.

(2010) showed that 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.

But, Asian-American high school students of all backgrounds complain that teachers often counsel Asian-Americans 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 continue to do this even to those who are fluent in English and that the reason why teachers do this is that Asians are perceived as not being free thinking or extroverted.

California public universities are not allowed to use racial criteria in admissions. Berkeley's enrollments in 2017 were 40.5% 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-Americans need 140 more SAT points than Whites for admission and Blacks need 310 fewer points for admission (Espenshade & Radford, 2009). In 2014, Students for Fair Admissions filed suit against Harvard on behalf of Asian-Americans who had been rejected over its affirmative action admission policy alleging Harvard discriminates by requiring higher standards for Asian-American students and rating 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 case will be appealed.

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" is 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.



Asian American Resource Workshop

Abercrombie & Fitch (A&F) pulled a line of T-shirts after complaints. The T-shirts showed Asian cartoon characters. Printed on the shirts were 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, "These graphic T-shirts were designed with the sole purpose of adding humor and levity to our fashion line."

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, & 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.

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 the Jews. Nazi belief was that humanity comprises biologically distinct subspecies and that some are inherently superior and others inherently inferior (Fredrickson, 2002). Examine racism in the following examples of India, the Roma, Koreans in Japan, and White privilege in the United States.

Case Study: India

One example today is found in the northeastern portion of India. Some people from there say they are the target of racism for having “Asian” facial features. Most northeastern

Focus on Technology 2.1

Can Technology Be Prejudiced?

Google Photos (in 2015) algorithmically identified Black people as gorillas. 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 if one did a Google search for a name more likely to be of African-American descent (e.g., DeShawn,

Darnell, or Jermaine), ads for companies that locate criminal records were more likely to be displayed than for names more commonly assigned to Whites (e.g., Geoffrey, Jill, or Emma; Sweeney, 2013). Amazon facial detection technology labeled darker-skinned women as men 31% of the time. Law professor Frank Pasquale (2015) contends that machine algorithms are learning our stereotypes.

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 5 years in jail. Activists in the region charge that the law is rarely enforced as police are as likely as anyone to participate in the harassment.



Hindustan Times/Hindustan Times/Getty Images

Case Study: The Roma

The **Roma** are believed to have migrated from 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 by medieval Europeans, who thought all dark-skinned people came from Egypt. Leading a nomadic life, the Roma were often regarded as tramps and accused of thefts and robberies. From the beginning of the 17th century, attempts were made to forcibly assimilate the Roma people by requiring permanent settlement and banning the Romany language. The Roma were particularly persecuted by Nazi Germany. About 500,000 died in Nazi gas chambers and concentration camps. The 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.

The Roma have no nation-state of their own and now number approximately 10 million in Europe, mainly in the Balkans and in Central and Eastern Europe, and about 2 million elsewhere, mainly in North and South America and North Africa. 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 the countries shifted to market economies and many people lost jobs, the Roma have again experienced discrimination (Herakova, 2009).



Sipa USA via AP

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

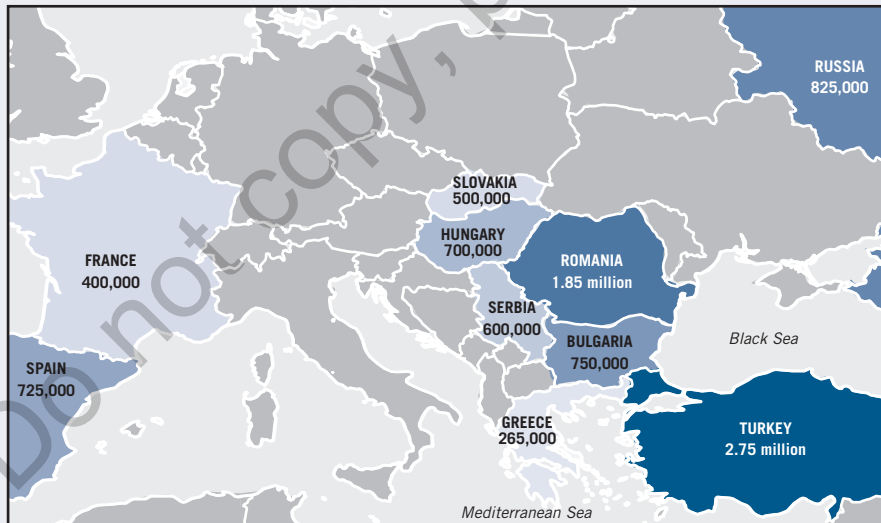
Roma and other peoples demonstrate against discrimination of nomad people in Berlin in 2016.

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 the Roma are uncivilized and inferior to European society (Kaneva & Popescu, 2014). As recently 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 states have made better treatment of the 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.

Map 2.1 Ten Highest European Roma Populations



Source: Based on data from the Council of Europe’s Roma and Travellers Division (2012).

Case Study: 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 time and again 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.

Focus on Skills 2.3

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 (2014, p. A7).

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 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 (*Mintohren*) was founded by Korean residents and concerned Japanese to fight for the human and civil rights of the Korean residents in Japan.

Case Study: White Privilege

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://nationalseedproject.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 right-handed people do not tend to recognize how the world favors right-handedness. White culture resulted from a synthesis of ideas, values, and beliefs inherited from European ethnic groups in the United States. 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 Whites themselves are relatively unaware of their racial identity compared to 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 a racial identity and 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 prejudice to 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 of the statements 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 Blacks and negative traits with dark-skinned Blacks. According to Ronald Jackson, Chang In Shin, and Keith Wilson (2000), through acknowledging the superiority and privilege of Whites 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 Whites 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).

It's important to note that both Whites and people of color are participants in this process. All people must challenge negative perceptions of race. Scholars such as McPhail (2002) argue that such perceptions must be engaged openly to remedy the communication patterns between racial groups.

Critics of the concept of White privilege point out that there is a wide diversity of peoples identified as White and argue that the concept ignores differences among White microcultures. Other critics reference intersectionality to explain that we have



moodboard/Thinkstock

Are bandages racist? What color are flesh-colored bandages?

overlapping social identities of gender, race, and social class, among others, and can be privileged in some ways and not privileged in others.

Hate Speech

Wherever it occurs, communication can play a role in either spreading prejudice and racism or stopping their spread. 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). 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 comment that evaluations of individual minority group members can be biased by overheard derogatory ethnic labels when the person's behavior is less than perfect.

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 or verbal slurs directed against specific groups 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, 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 such regulations 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, 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.

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. In its annual report, the Simon Wiesenthal Center identified more than 500 hate websites. The first federal prosecution of an Internet hate crime occurred in 1996. A 19-year-old former student at the University of California, Irvine, sent an e-mail message signed “Asian hater” to about 60 Asian students, accusing Asians of being responsible for all crimes on campus and ordering the students to leave the campus or be killed by him. He was convicted in 1998 of interfering with students’ civil rights to attend a public university.

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, if they do so knowingly and if it’s technically possible to prevent it. The First Amendment would not permit such a restriction in the United States. 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, **microaggression** refers to 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?” Studies have now documented that seemingly minor slights negatively impact psychological well-being by increasing anxiety, diminishing self-esteem, and diminishing self-efficacy (G. Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2016). Some critics of these concerns label this a part of **political correctness** and a threat to free speech.

One 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 each of us says about racial discrimination really does matter. Your vocal opinions affect what others think and say.

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

Source: Gayle (2013).

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?

SUMMARY

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, and postethnic cultures.

This chapter focuses on recognizing and avoiding breakdowns in intercultural communication. LaRay M. Barna developed a list of six such barriers: 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, whereas *prejudice* refers to the irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Finally, ethics of intercultural communication are presented as a guide for intercultural interactions and intercultural communication studies.

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 to be racist be banned from your campus?
4. What are the most critical elements of intercultural communication competence?
5. 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?
6. Kale suggests that peace is a fundamental human value that could guide intercultural interactions. Evaluate this proposition.

KEY TERMS

Aboriginal 39	Intercultural communication	Racism 51
Anxiety 47	effectiveness 38	Rhetorical sensitivity 40
Authoritarian personality 56	Microaggression 63	Roma 57
Cultural appropriation 53	Multiculturalism 45	Stereotype 50
Cultural relativism 50	Othering 58	Third culture 43
Ethnocentrism 49	Political correctness 63	White privilege 60
Hate speech 62	Postethnicity 46	
Intercultural communication	Prejudice 51	
competence 38	Profiling 52	