

# CHAPTER

# 1

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

- In general, how does culture provide for humans?
- What are the meanings of the terms culture, subculture, ethnicity, co-culture, subculture, subgroup, and race?
- What are some of the major issues in today's cultural contact zones?

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**T**oday about 7 billion people live on Earth, and no two of them alike. People can be small and large and in many colors. We wear different clothes and have different ideas of beauty. Many of us believe in one God,<sup>1</sup> others believe in many, and still others believe in none. Some people are rich and many are desperately poor. Have you ever considered why there's not one human culture rather than many cultures? Biologists Rebecca Cann, Mark Stoneking, and Allan C. Wilson (1987) studied genetic material from women around the world and contend that all humans alive today share genetic material from a woman who lived some 200,000 years ago in sub-Saharan Africa. Their African "Eve" conclusion may be supported by linguistic observations. Cavalli-Sforza, Piazza, Menozzi, and Mountain (1988) have shown that considerable similarity exists between Cann's tree of genetic relationships and the tree of language groups, which hypothesizes that all the world's languages can be traced to Africa.

Languages that are the most different from other languages today can be found in Africa. This may suggest that they are older. Africa's Khoisan languages, such as that of the !Kung San, use a clicking sound, which is denoted in writing with an exclamation point. Such evidence, along with genetic evidence, suggests that all of us alive today share ancestry from one group in Africa. How then did diverse cultures develop?

Climate changes or some other pressure led to migrations out of Africa. The first may have been along the coastline of southern Asia through southern India into Australia. The second wave may have traveled to the Middle East, and from there, one branch went to India and a second to China. Those who left the Middle East for Europe may have actually traveled first through Central Asia and then throughout the world to other parts of Asia, Russia, the Americas, and Europe (Wells, 2002).

Centuries of geographical separation were concurrent with the development of diverse ways of interpreting the world and the environment and relating to other peoples. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2010) contends that our world, our environment, is so complex and so varied on the planet that social networks and cultures developed to regulate life so that we could survive. For much of the latter part of the 20th century, the dominant worldview was us versus them. Failures of political leadership led to two world wars and many regional wars. Today's challenges in the contact zone where cultures interact are identified as ethnic and religious conflict, the changing role of women, technology, migration, and environmental sustainability.

## REGULATORS OF HUMAN LIFE AND IDENTITY

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As Damasio suggests, culture is a regulator of human life and identity. That regulatory function extends to cultures within cultures, which we will study as subcultures, co-cultures, and subgroups.

### Culture

Cultures provide diverse ways of interpreting the environment and the world, as well as relating to other peoples. To recognize that other peoples can see the world differently is one thing. To view their interpretations as less perfect than ours is another.

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

Later, the Greeks began to use the word to mean “outlandish, rude, or brutal.” When the word was incorporated into Latin, it came to mean “uncivilized” or “uncultured.” The Oxford English Dictionary gives the contemporary definition as “a rude, wild, uncivilized person,” but acknowledges the original meaning was “one whose language and customs differ from the speaker’s.”

### Nineteenth-Century Definition

In the 19th century, the term *culture* was commonly used as a synonym for *Western civilization*. The British anthropologist Sir Edward B. Tylor (1871) popularized the idea that all societies pass through developmental stages, beginning with “savagery,” progressing to “barbarism,” and culminating in Western “civilization.” It’s easy to see that such a definition assumes that Western cultures were considered superior. Both Western cultures, beginning with ancient Greece, and Eastern cultures, most notably imperial China, believed that their own way of life was superior. The study of multiple cultures without imposing the belief that Western culture was the ultimate goal was slow to develop.

### Today’s Definition

Cultures are not synonymous with countries. Cultures do not respect political boundaries. Border cities such as Juárez, El Paso, Tijuana, and San Diego can develop cultures that in some ways are not like Mexico or the United States. For example, major stores in U.S. border cities routinely accept Mexican currency.

In this text, **culture** refers to the following:

- A community or population sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining; that is, large enough to produce new generations of members without relying on outside people.
- The totality of that group’s thought, experiences, and patterns of behavior and its concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and how those evolve with contact with other cultures. Hofstede (1994) classified these elements of culture into four categories: symbols, rituals, values, and heroes. **Symbols** refer to verbal and nonverbal language. **Rituals** are the socially essential collective activities within a culture. **Values** are the feelings not open for discussion within a culture about what is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, normal or abnormal, which are present in a majority of the members of a culture, or at least in those who occupy pivotal positions. **Heroes** are the real or imaginary people who serve as behavior models within a culture. A culture’s heroes are expressed in the culture’s **myths**, which can be the subject of novels and other forms of literature (Rushing & Frenzt, 1978). Janice Hocker Rushing (1983) has argued, for example, that an enduring myth in U.S. culture, as seen in films, is the rugged individualist cowboy of the American West.

**FOCUS ON CULTURE 1.1****Personalizing the Concept**

Let's try to develop a personal feeling for what is meant by the term *culture*. I will assume you have a sister, brother, or very close childhood friend. I would like you to think back to your relationship with that sibling or friend. Probably, you remember how natural and spontaneous your relationship was. Your worlds of experience were so similar; you shared problems and pleasures; you disagreed and even fought, but that didn't mean you couldn't put that behind you because you both knew in some way that you belonged together.

Now let's imagine that your sibling or friend had to leave you for an extended period. Perhaps your sister studied abroad for a year or your brother entered the military and served overseas. For some time, you were separated. Time brought you back together again, but you recognized that your relationship had forever changed because of the different experiences you had had during that separation. You still had years of common experiences and memories to reinforce your relationship, but sometimes differences cropped up from your time apart—small differences, but differences nonetheless—that led you both to know that you were more separate than you had been before.

During the time your sister studied abroad, she likely acquired new vocabulary, new tastes, and new ideas about values. She uses a foreign-sounding word in casual conversation; she now enjoys fast food or hates packaged food; she now has strong feelings about politics. Of course, these are small things, but they somehow remind you that you don't share as much as you had in the past. During the time of your separation, each of you had different experiences and challenges and had somehow been changed by those experiences and challenges. In a very simple way, this experience can be the beginning point of understanding what is meant today by the term *culture*. Even so, it illustrates only one aspect of the word's definition—shared experiences.

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

As Collier and Thomas suggest each of us has a cultural identity. That identity may or may not be the same as citizenship in one of the world's 200-some countries. Consider for a moment where you learned your symbols, rituals, values, and myths.

We can have no direct knowledge of a culture other than our own. Our experience with and knowledge of other cultures are limited by the perceptual bias of our own culture. An adult Canadian will never fully understand the experience of growing up an Australian. To begin to understand a culture, you need to understand all the experiences that guide its individual members through life. That includes language and gestures; personal appearance and social relationships; religion, philosophy, and values; courtship, marriage, and family customs; food and recreation; work and government; education and communication systems; health, transportation, and government systems; and economic systems. Think of culture as everything you would need to know and do so as not to stand out as a "stranger" in a foreign land. Culture is not a genetic trait. All these cultural elements are learned through interaction with others in the culture (see Focus on Culture 1.1).

Can there be a more critical time to study intercultural communication? Intercultural communication refers not only to the communication between individuals of diverse cultural identities but also to the communication between diverse groups. This text focuses on two equally important aspects of improving intercultural communication: first, that your effectiveness as an intercultural communicator is in part a function of your knowledge of other peoples and their cultures and, second, that as you learn more about other people from various cultures, you also discover more about yourself. This results in an appreciation and tolerance of diversity among people and makes you a more competent communicator in multicultural settings.

## Cultures Within Cultures

Just as culture is a regulator of human life and identity, so can cultures within cultures be. Now let's look at the definitions of the terms *subculture*, *ethnicity*, and *co-culture* as attempts to identify groups that are cultures but that exist within another culture.

### Subculture

Complex societies such as the United States are made up of a large number of groups with which people identify and from which are derived distinctive values and norms and rules for behavior. These groups have been labeled *subcultures*. A **subculture** resembles a culture in that it usually encompasses a relatively large number of people and represents the accumulation of generations of human striving. However, subcultures have some important differences. They exist within dominant cultures and are often based on economic or social class, ethnicity, or geographic region.

## FOCUS ON CULTURE 1.2

## Superstitions



Some cultural customs are often labeled as *superstitions*. They are the practices believed to influence the course of events. Whether it is rubbing a rabbit's foot for luck or not numbering the 13th floor in a building, these practices are part of one's cultural identification. We may not follow them, but we recognize them. For example, in Mexican *pulquerias*, saloons where people gather to drink *pulque*, a distillate of cactus, it's considered good fortune to get the worm in your cup.

In Japan, you may see a *maneki neko*, or "beckoning cat" figurine, with its front paw raised. The beckoning gesture brings customers into stores and good luck and fortune into homes.

In China, sounds and figures reflect good fortune. The phonetic sound of eight, *baat* in Cantonese and between *pa* and *ba* in Mandarin, is similar to *faat*, meaning prosperity. The number 8, then, is the most fortuitous of numbers, portending prosperity. The date and time of the 2008 Olympics' opening ceremony on August 8 had as many eights as possible (8:08:08 p.m., August 8, 2008). In Hong Kong, a license plate with the number 8 is quite valuable. But the number 4 can be read as *shi*, which is a homophone for death, so hospitals may not have a Room 4. Some Chinese would avoid buying a house with a street address with the number 4.



Beckoning cat

Superstitions are only a small part of culture but certainly an interesting part. Culture, then, refers to the totality of a people's socially transmitted products of work and thought. All these elements are interrelated like a tangled root system. Pull on one, the others move. Change one, the others must change.

### FOCUS ON THEORY 1.1



Read the following court transcript (Lieberman, 1981) and assess how successful you think the communication was.

*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.

Of course, it is doubtful that the defendant understands the proceedings. On the basis of this exchange, we also could raise doubts about the defendant's "statement." If I told you the defendant was an **Aboriginal** in Australia, could you say more about the interaction? How you attempt to answer that question illustrates two major approaches to intercultural communication.

If you examined the transcript in detail to locate the problems the defendant and the magistrate had in their exchange, your approach was *ethnographic*. If you asked for information about Aboriginals and the Australian legal system, your analysis would be called a *cultural studies approach*.

**Ethnography** is the direct observation, reporting, and evaluation of the customary behavior of a culture. Ideally, ethnography requires an extended period of residence and study in a community. The ethnographer knows the language of the group, participates in some of the group's activities, and uses a variety of observational and recording techniques. In a sense, the accounts of 15th-century explorers of the unfamiliar cultural practices they encountered were primitive ethnographies.

Modern ethnography tries to avoid questionnaires and formal interviews in artificial settings; observation in natural settings is preferred. The objective is an analysis of cultural patterns to develop a grammar or theory of the rules for appropriate cultural behaviors.

An ethnographic approach to understanding the dialogue between the magistrate and the defendant would use the perspective of the parties themselves to analyze the problems that each faces in the attempt to communicate. Thus, it appears that the Aboriginal defendant is engaged in a strategy of giving the answers "Yes," "No," or "Hm" that will best placate the magistrate (Lieberman, 1990a).

A **cultural studies** approach attempts to develop an ideal personification of the culture, and then that ideal is used to explain the actions of individuals in the culture. For example, using the cultural approach, it would be important to know that the Aboriginal people began arriving on the Australian continent from Southeast Asia 40,000 years before North and South America were inhabited and that it wasn't until 1788 that 11 ships arrived carrying a cargo of human prisoners to begin a new British colony by taking control of the land. Lieberman (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 (Lieberman, 1990b). The ethnographic and cultural approaches are complementary and together can help our understanding of breakdowns in intercultural communication.



## Economic or Social Class

It can be argued that socioeconomic status or social class can be the basis for a subculture (Brislin, 1988). *Social class* has traditionally been defined as a position in a society's hierarchy based on income, education, occupation, and neighborhood. Gilbert and Kahl (1982) argue that in the United States, the basis of social class is income and that other markers of social class follow from income level. For example, income determines to some extent who you marry or choose as a lover, your career, and the neighborhood in which you are likely to live.

Melvin Kohn (1977) has shown that middle-class and working-class parents emphasize different values when raising children. Middle-class parents emphasize self-control, intellectual curiosity, and consideration for others. The desired outcomes of self-direction and empathic understanding transfer easily to professional and managerial jobs that require intellectual curiosity and good social skills. Working-class parents emphasize obedience, neatness, and good manners. Gilbert and Kahl (1982) argue that these lead to a concern with external standards, such as obedience to authority, acceptance of what other people think, and hesitancy in expressing desires to authority figures. These working-class concerns can be a detriment in schools, with their emphasis on verbal skills. The resulting learned behaviors transfer more directly to supervised wage labor jobs. Though these observations are based on large numbers of students, they should not be interpreted to apply to any one family. Working-class parents who encourage verbal skills through reading and conversation have children who are as successful in school. Although the United States does have social classes that have been shown to have different values, many people in the United States believe that these barriers of social class are easier to transcend in the United States than in other countries.

## Ethnicity

Another basis for subcultures is ethnicity. The term *ethnicity* is like the term *race* in that its definition has changed over time. Its different definitions reflect a continuing social debate. **Ethnicity** can refer to a group of people of the same descent and heritage who share a common and distinctive culture passed on through generations (Zenner, 1996). For some, *tribes* would be a more understood term. In Afghanistan, for example, people identify by tribes—Tajiks and Pashtuns. According to some estimates, there are 5,000 ethnic groups in the world (Stavenhagen, 1986). Ethnic groups can exhibit such distinguishing features as language or accent, physical features, family names, customs, and religion.

**Ethnic identity** refers to identification with and perceived acceptance into a group with shared heritage and culture (Collier & Thomas, 1988).

Sometimes, the word *minority* is used by some. Technically, of course, the word *minority* is used to describe numerical designations. A group might be a minority, then, if it has a smaller number of people than a majority group with a larger number. In the United States, the word *majority* has political associations, as in the *majority rules*, a term used so commonly in the

United States that the two words have almost become synonymous. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *minority* was first used to describe ethnic groups in 1921. Since that time, advantage has been associated with the majority and disadvantage has been associated with the minority.

Just as definitions of words such as *culture* have changed, the way words are written has changed. In U.S. English, ethnic groups are usually referred to in hyphenated terms, such as *Italian-American*. The hyphen gives the term a meaning of a separate group of people. Most style manuals today have dropped the use of the hyphen, as in *Italian American*, using *Italian* as an adjective, giving the meaning of “Americans of Italian descent”—a change that puts the emphasis on what Americans share rather than on what makes groups different from one another. This text uses the hyphen to communicate the meaning of a culture within a culture.

What about ethnic groups, such as German-Americans, who are not commonly referred to by a hyphenated term? Does this mean these groups have lost ethnic identities in an assimilated U.S. nationality? Does this imply that the U.S. national identity is composed only of those assimilated groups? To determine what labels to use in its job statistics, the U.S. Labor Department asked people how they prefer to be identified. The results for those people who did not identify as Asian-American, American Indian, Black, Hispanic, or multiracial are shown in Table 1.1A. Very few people chose to use the term *European-American*, which would indicate a culturally based identification.

Most chose *White* or *Caucasian*, which at best is a sociohistorical racial label. This text uses the word *White* in this same sense. The same survey noted that the label preferred by native tribes is *American Indian* (see Table 1.1B).

In a 1977 resolution, the National Congress of American Indians and the National Tribal Chairmen’s Association stated that in the absence of a specific tribal designation, the preferred term is *American Indian* and/or *Alaska Native*. This text uses that label as it is important to use the label the group itself prefers.

See Focus on Culture 1.3 for the experience of the Māori of New Zealand. In New Zealand, for voting and land claims, one elects to be Māori.

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

## Co-Culture

Whereas some define *subculture* as meaning “a part of the whole,” in the same sense that a subdivision is part of—but no less important than—the whole city, other scholars reject

**Table 1.1** U.S. Department of Labor's Race and Ethnic Categories

As part of a review of which race and ethnic categories to use in its job statistics, the U.S. Labor Department asked people nationwide in approximately 60,000 households how they prefer to be identified.	
A. Percentage responses by people not identifying as Asian-American, American Indian, Black, Hispanic, or multiracial	
White	61.7
Caucasian	16.5
European-American	2.4
Anglo	1.0
Some other term	2.0
No preference	16.5
B. Percentage responses by native tribespeople	
American Indian	49.8
Native American	37.4
Alaskan Native	3.5
Some other term	3.7
No preference	5.7

*Source:* From U.S. Labor Department, reported in *U.S. News & World Report*, ("People labels," 1995, p. 28).

the use of the prefix *sub* as applied to the term *culture* because it seems to imply being under or beneath and being inferior or secondary. As an alternative, the word **co-culture** is suggested to convey the idea that no one culture is inherently superior to other coexisting cultures (Orbe, 1998).

However, mutuality may not be easily established. Assume the case of a homogeneous culture. One of the many elements of a culture is its system of laws. The system of laws in our hypothetical homogeneous culture, then, was derived from and reflects the values of that culture. Now assume immigration of another cultural group into the hypothetical culture. New immigrants may have different understandings of legal theory and the rights and responsibilities that individuals should have in a legal system. In the case of a true co-culture, both understandings of the law would be recognized.

## FOCUS ON CULTURE 1.3

## The Māori of New Zealand



New Zealand Māori dance.

The original inhabitants of what is today known as New Zealand were Polynesians who arrived in a series of migrations more than 1,000 years ago. They named the land Aotearoa, or land of the long white cloud. The original inhabitants' societies revolved around the *iwi* (tribe) or *hapu* (subtribe), which served to differentiate the many tribes of peoples. In 1642, the Dutch explorer Abel Janszoon Tasman sailed up the west coast and christened the land Niuew Zeeland after the Netherlands' province of Zeeland. Later, in 1769, Captain James Cook sailed around the islands and claimed the entire land for the British crown. It was only after the arrival of the Europeans that the term Māori was used to describe all the tribes on the land. Those labeled Māori do not necessarily regard themselves as a single people.

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

Activism in the late 1960s brought a renaissance of Māori languages, literature, arts, and culture, and calls to address Māori land claims as the Treaty of Waitangi became the focus of grievances. In 1975, the government introduced the Waitangi Tribunal to investigate Māori land claims, which

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resulted in some return of Māori land. In 1994, the government proposed to settle all Māori land claims for \$1 billion—a very small percentage of current value.

Today, New Zealand's population by descent is approximately 13% Māori and 78% Pakeha (European). New Zealand is governed under a parliamentary democracy system loosely modeled on that of Great Britain, except that there are two separate electoral rolls: one for the election of general members of parliament and one for the election of a small number of Māori members of parliament. Pakeha can enroll on the general roll only; people who consider themselves Māori must choose which one of the two rolls they wish to be on. The following article appeared in an August 1999 edition of the newspaper *The Dominion*.

### What Makes a Māori?

The definition of "Māori" for voting purposes . . . is entirely one of self-definition. The 1956 Electoral Act defined a Māori as "a person belonging to the aboriginal race of New Zealand, and includes a half-caste and a person intermediate in blood between half-castes and persons of pure descent from that race."

In 1975, the Labour government, prompted by then Māori affairs minister Matiu Rata, rewrote the act to define a Māori as "a person of the Māori race of New Zealand, and includes any descendant of such a person who elects to be considered as a Māori for the purposes of this act." Such a person could choose either the Māori roll or the general roll. So, if you are descended from a Māori, then you are Māori and can choose to vote on the Māori roll. Nigel Roberts, head of Victoria University's School of Political Science and International Relations, says such self-identification is appropriate: "I think that ethnicity is very largely, in the late 20th century, a matter of identification—it is a cultural matter. The world has moved on from classifying people by blood, which was a meaningless definition."

What about Treaty of Waitangi settlements? How does one prove entitlement to the land, fisheries quota, shares, and cash that are being returned to Māori in compensation for successive Crown breaches?

The definition is different again—and more stringently enforced. The South Island's Ngai Tahu iwi was awarded \$170 million compensation [in 1998] after a gruelling process of Waitangi Tribunal hearings, mandating, and negotiations. Ngai Tahu *whakapapa* (genealogy) unit spokeswoman Tarlin Prendergast says the iwi is in the fortunate position of having good records from an 1848 census of Ngai Tahu members, just before the Crown's purchase of South Island land. And in 1920, a group of *kaumatua* had travelled around Ngai Tahu settlements recording the whakapapa of families. "Anyone who is Ngai Tahu must be able to show their lines of descent from a *kaumatua* alive in 1848.

"That is the basis of our tribal membership," she says. "It is up to the individuals to align themselves with the *runanga* (area council) that they say they come from and to keep alive their connections. We call it *ahi kaa*—keeping the home fires burning."

Source: Milne (1999, p. 9). Reprinted with permission.

## Case Study: American Indians

Can one nation have two legal systems? Can two legal systems coexist equally? Some 309 distinct nations exist by treaty within the territorial limits of the United States. One is the government in Washington, DC. The remaining 308 are American Indian nations that enjoy some areas of complete sovereignty and some areas of limited sovereignty. By treaty, the American Indian nations have their own territory, governmental structure, and laws; collect their own taxes; and are protected by U.S. federal law in the practice of their culture and religion (Dudley & Agard, 1993). The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 proclaimed “to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right to believe, express and exercise the traditional religions.”

Recent Supreme Court decisions, however, have negated this law. In 1988, in *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protection Association*, the Supreme Court held that the U.S. Forest Service could build a road through an area sacred to three Indian tribes. And in 1990, in *Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith*, the Court held that the state could deny unemployment benefits to two men fired from their jobs because they ingested peyote as part of their religion. The *Smith* decision has now been cited in cases involving a Sikh’s wearing a turban on the job, a Hmong couple’s protesting their son’s autopsy, and an Amish man’s refusal to post traffic signs. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 attempts to restore those rights; however, the point being made here is that the U.S. government exercises ultimate dominance over all indigenous peoples within its boundaries.

When nations adopt one system of laws, that system reflects the cultural values of one culture. But when one is surrounded by a more powerful culture or exists within the culture of the other, the less powerful culture must accept the laws and legal system of the other, thus subordinating any other understanding of legal systems. At least in this one way, the groups are not mutually powerful. The case of American Indians supports the argument that the term *co-culture* does not accurately reflect reality in the United States. Just as the term *subculture* has undesired consequences, so too does *co-culture*. In an attempt to avoid misunderstandings, this text avoids using either word. Instead, as much as possible, the phrase “cultures within cultures” is used throughout to more accurately represent the reality of contemporary U.S. life.

Just as each of us has a cultural identity, we may have a one or more subcultural identities based on social class, ethnicity, or geographical region. Consider for a moment if you learned any symbols, rituals, values, and myths that you acknowledge and share with others. If you were born and reared in the U.S. South, do you acknowledge that subculture as part of your identity? Did your parents or your country of birth provide you with an important part of your identity?

## Subgroup

Just as cultures and subcultures are regulators of human life and identity, so can subgroups. Let’s look at the definition of the term **subgroup** and look at how subgroups can function in a similar manner to cultures and subcultures.

### Definition

Psychologists have long recognized that subgroups, or membership groups, have an important influence on the values and attitudes you hold. Like cultures, subgroups provide members with relatively complete sets of values and patterns of behavior, and in many ways pose similar communication problems as cultures. Subgroups exist within a dominant culture and are dependent on that culture. One important subgroup category is occupation. Think of large organizations and of occupations in which most people dress alike, share a common vocabulary and similar values, and are in frequent communication, as through magazines and newsletters. These subgroups include nurses and doctors, police officers, and employees of large organizations such as Microsoft.

Subgroups usually do not involve the same large number of people as cultures and are not necessarily thought of as accumulating values and patterns of behavior over generations in the same way cultures do.

### Deviant Label

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

### Temporality

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

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

### “Wannabe” Behavior

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

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

## RACE AND SKIN COLOR

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Can race or skin color be the basis of cultural or subcultural identification? One important factor would be the Collier and Thomas (1988) criteria for cultural identity of identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as norms for conduct.

### The Concept of Race

It was popularly believed that differences between peoples were biological or racial. From the popular biological perspective, **race** refers to a large body of people characterized by similarity of descent (Campbell, 1976). From this biologically based definition, your race is the result of the mating behavior of your ancestors. Some physical traits and genes do occur more frequently in certain human populations than in others, such as some skull and dental features, differences in the processing of alcohol, and inherited diseases such as sickle-cell anemia and cystic fibrosis.

The biologically based definition is said to derive from Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist, physician, and taxonomist, who said in 1735 that humans are classified into four types: *Africanus*, *Americanus*, *Asiaticus*, and *Europeaeus*. Race became seen as biologically natural and based on visible physical characteristics such as skin color and other facial and bodily features. In the 19th century, scientists thought that the races had different kinds of blood, so hospitals segregated blood supplies.

Twentieth-century scientists studying genetics found no single race-defining gene. Popular indicators of race such as skin color and hair texture were caused by recent adaptations to climate and diet. Jablonski and Chaplin (2000) took global ultraviolet measurements from NASA's Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer and compared them with published data on skin color in indigenous populations from more than 50 countries. There was an unmistakable correlation: The weaker the ultraviolet light, the fairer the skin. Most scientists today have abandoned the concept of biological race as a meaningful scientific concept (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, & Piazza, 1994; Owens & King, 1999; Paabo, 2001).

Another way to define race is as a sociohistorical concept, which explains how racial categories have varied over time and between cultures. Worldwide, skin color alone does not define race. The meaning of race has been debated in societies, and as a consequence, new categories have been formed and others transformed. Dark-skinned natives of India have been classified as Caucasian. People with moderately dark skins in Egypt are identified as White. Brazil has a history of intermarriage among native peoples, descendants of African slaves, and immigrants from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, but no history of explicit segregation policies. So in Brazil, with the world's largest Black population after Nigeria, and where half of



the population is Black, there are hundreds of words for skin colors (Robinson, 1999), including a census category *parda* for mixed ancestry. The biologically based definition establishes race as something fixed; the sociohistorically based definition sees race as unstable and socially determined through constant debate (Omi & Winant, 1986). People may be of the same race but of diverse cultures: Australia and South Africa have very different cultures that include individuals of the same ancestries. Then, too, people can be of the same culture but of different ancestries: The United States, for example, is a culture of people of many ancestries (see Focus on Culture 1.4).

### FOCUS ON CULTURE 1.4

#### U.S. Census Bureau Definitions of Race



Information on race has been collected in every U.S. census beginning with the first in 1790, but what the U.S. Census bureau considered as a racial category has changed in almost every census.

For example, according to Gibson and Jung (2002) from 1790 to 1850, the only categories used were "White and Black (Negro), with Black designated as free and slave" In 1860, American Indians (excluding those living on reservations) and Chinese were identified separately. Japanese were identified separately starting in 1870.

During decades of high immigration, Irish, Italians, and many central European ethnic groups were considered distinct races. "Armenians were classified as white in some decades, but not in others" (Hotz, 1995, p. A14).

In the 1930 census, there was a separate race category for Mexican; later people of Mexican ancestry were classified as White and today as Hispanic but who could be of any race.

Immigrants from India have gone from Hindu, a religious designation used as a racial category, to Caucasian, to non-White, to White, to Asian Indian.

Michael Omi, an ethnic studies expert at UC Berkeley, described the resulting confusion, "You can born one race and die another" (Hotz, 1995, p. A14).

## Identity and Race

To be a co-culture or subculture, individuals must identify with one another as a group. Racial categories were created by power-holding Europeans who constructed the cultural and behavioral characteristics associated with each racial category, linking superior traits with Europeans and inferior traits with Blacks and Indians. 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 (Dyer, 1997; Hayman & Levit, 1997; Katz & Ivey, 1977).

Peggy 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.

McIntosh has written about **White privilege**, which describes 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. (p. 12)

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.

According to Jackson, Shin, and 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. 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.

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

Are race and skin color an identifying factor determining a co-cultural or subculture identity? The answer is not simple. Race and skin color can be an identifying factor, but they don't necessarily define co-cultural or subculture identity.

## THE CONTACT ZONE

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Mary Pratt coined the term *contact zone* to refer to “the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (1992, p. 6). What characterizes the contact zone where cultures, subcultures, and subgroups come into contact? Is it the relationship characterized by Herodotus’ sense of the word *barbarian* or by the later sense of the word, involving as Pratt suggests “coercion, inequality, and intractable conflict?”

The 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis included an exhibit of living “foreign people.” The head anthropologist at the fair wrote in an essay “The Trend of Human Progress” that humans “are conveniently grouped in the four culture grades of savagery, barbarism, civilization, and enlightenment. . . . The two higher culture-grades [are]—especially the Caucasian race, and . . . the budding enlightenment of Britain and full-blown enlightenment of America” (quoted in Wexler, 2008, p. 204). The human “exhibits” at the fair were grouped to illustrate this progression.

**Othering** refers to the labeling and degrading of cultures and groups outside of one’s own (Riggins, 1997). Indigenous peoples, women, lesbians and gay men, and ethnic groups have been “othered” by other groups in language. One common way is to represent the Other as the binary opposite. For example, “Colonists were hard-working; natives were lazy” (Jandt & Tanno, 2001).

It seems as people create a category called “us,” another category of “not us” or “them” is created. The collective pronouns *us* and *them* become powerful influences on perception. The names given to “them” can be used to justify suppression and even extermination. Bosmajian (1983) calls this “the language of oppression.” The Nazis labeled Jews “bacilli,” “parasites,” “disease,” “demon,” and “plague.” Why do the words used to refer to “them” matter? It’s because although killing another human being may be unthinkable, “exterminating a disease” is not. Segregation was justified when Blacks were considered “chattel” or property. The subjugation of American Indians was defensible when the word *savage* was used. And the words *chicks* and *babes* labeled women as inferior.

Some would argue that the forced categorization of national censuses is a form of othering. The first U.S. census was supervised by Thomas Jefferson in 1790. People were counted as free Whites, slaves, or “others,” which included American Indians and free Blacks.

By the early 1800s, people who were one quarter Black (i.e., had one Black grandparent) were counted by the census as mulatto. Later, that became the “one-drop rule,” a racist device to ensure that slaveholders’ multiracial children remained slaves.

In 1911, a congressional commission developed the “Dictionary of Races of People” with 45 non-White racial subgroups. After opposition, the government discarded that category system. Yet other categories were used. After the Mexican-American War in 1848, the census counted people with Spanish surnames as White. By 1930, a separate “Mexican” category was created. By 1940, it was eliminated. Since 1980, Hispanicity has been treated as an ethnicity apart from race and asked in a separate question.

The census categories in use today were drafted to help agencies enforce civil rights laws. People have been asked to choose one racial classification from White, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Other. In a separate question, people were asked whether they were of Hispanic origin. In the 1980 census, the Census Bureau for the

first time asked U.S. residents to volunteer their ethnic origin. Ten percent did not answer. Of the remaining 90%, 83% identified with an ethnic group. Only 6% refused ethnic labeling by using the term *American*. In this book, you will find no reference to any group as “they” or “them,” for it is my belief that doing so encourages you to continue thinking of “them” as different from and, in some way, not as good as “we.”

### FOCUS ON CULTURE 1.5

#### We and They



<p>Father, Mother, and Me, Sister and Auntie say All the people like us are We, And everyone else is They.</p> <p>And They live over the sea While we live over the way, But—would you believe it?—They look upon We As only a sort of They!</p> <p>We eat pork and beef With cow-horn-handled knives. They who gobble Their rice off a leaf Are horrified out of Their lives; While They who live up a tree, Feast on grubs and clay, (Isn't it scandalous?) look upon We As a simple disgusting They!</p>	<p>We eat kitcheny food. We have doors that latch. They drink milk and blood Under an open thatch. We have doctors to fee. They have wizards to pay. And (impudent heathen!) They look upon We As a quite impossible They!</p> <p>All good people agree, And all good people say, All nice people, like us, are We And everyone else is They: But if you cross over the sea, Instead of over the way, You may end by (think of it!) looking on We As only a sort of They!</p>
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—Rudyard Kipling

### Today's Contact Zone Challenges

Several issues are particularly conflict prone in today's contact zone: ethnic and religious conflict, role of women, technology, migration, and environmental sustainability. A recent Pew Research Center (2007) worldwide survey finds that there are increasing concerns about inequality, threats to culture, threats to the environment, and threats posed by immigration. In

nearly every country surveyed, people express concerns about losing their traditional culture and national identities and feel their way of life needs protection against foreign influences.

### Ethnic and Religious Conflict

With the end of the Cold War and ideological conflict, the world has seen an increase in ethnic and religious conflict. These conflicts have largely been based on conflicts in cultural values and have seen hatred, fear, and violence. Consider just these examples:

- *Basque Separatist Conflict in Spain* (beginning in 1958). The rebel group Basque Fatherland and Liberty guerrilla group (ETA) has waged an urban guerrilla movement for independence for the Basque region of northern Spain.
- *Northern Ireland Conflict* (beginning in 1969). The Irish Catholic minority sought to break away and join the Irish Republic. The IRA conducted an urban guerrilla campaign and Protestant groups waged a largely underground war against the Catholic population.
- *Sri Lankan Civil War* (beginning in 1983). Sri Lanka's civil war was due to problems between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority. In the 1980s, India intervened on the government's side, but later withdrew its troops (L. R. Kohn, 1986).
- *Rwandan Civil War* (beginning in 1994). The Rwandan government, dominated by the Tutsi tribe, overthrew the old government dominated by the Hutu tribe. Before losing power, the Hutu militia massacred over half a million people.



Rows of the skulls of victims of the Rwanda genocide of 1994

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- *Roma*. In 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).

Add to this list Kosovo, Chechnya, Indonesia, Bosnia, India, the Middle East, and Nigeria and the deaths could total a million. Add then to the list the major terrorist attacks around the world, as well as ethnic and religious attacks within a country, and the challenge is obvious.

While some would content that history, politics, and economics are motivators for some of these conflicts, it cannot be denied that differing perceptions and value systems along with coercive actions to gain other's compliance with one's perception and value system contributed to these conflicts.

In Chapter 3 you will read about culture and perception and in Chapters 7, 8, and 9 you will read about cultural values. One objective is to develop a better understanding of these as critical factors in intercultural communication.

### Role of Women

In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. According to the convention, discrimination against women is:

... any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The measures to end discrimination included:

- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal systems, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

In July 2010, the UN General Assembly voted unanimously to create a single UN body tasked with accelerating progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The objectives that were raised included:

- Promoting gender equality and empowering women is essential to the achievement of development goals.
- The need to strengthen the full integration of women into the formal economy.
- Boost national and international efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

- Improve access to health systems for women and girls.
- Creating a new vision for conserving earth's biological diversity that must encompass gender. ("In historic move," 2010)

In Chapter 10, you will read about the status of women and how that relates to cultural values.

### Technology

Opponents of technology argue that it has made "the corporation the most powerful institution on earth" (Frank, 2000). Global corporations such as Monsanto, Time Warner, and McDonald's are seen as undermining local cultures. Technology has made it possible for Mexico to have frappuccinos at Starbucks and the United States to have the novels of Carlos Fuentes (Cowen, 2002). Because the United States has promoted both free markets and democracy throughout the world, technology is perceived as reinforcing U.S. wealth and dominance. Between July and October 2002, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press surveyed some 38,000 people speaking 46 languages around the world. In country after country where people like U.S. technology and popular culture, they are displeased with the spread of U.S. ideas and cultural values (see Table 1.2), which are seen as embedded in U.S. technology.

Country	Spread of U.S. Ideas a "Good Thing" (%)	Like U.S. Music, Movies, TV (%)	Like U.S. Science and Technology (%)
Canada	37	77	76
Britain	39	76	77
Russia	16	42	41
Mexico	22	60	69
South Korea	30	53	81
South Africa	43	71	79
Turkey	11	44	67
Egypt	6	33	51
Jordan	13	30	59
Pakistan	2	4	42

Source: Pew Research Center (2002).



On January 1, 2002, 300 million people in 12 Western European nations adopted the euro, the first common currency since the Roman Empire two millennia ago. New bills and coins replaced German marks, French francs, and other national moneys. No images of people or specific buildings appear in the designs for the new bank notes. Rather, anonymous architecture was designed to represent the countries' shared culture. Today the European Union (EU) has grown to 27 member nations. Its population is larger than that of the United States and its economy roughly equal to it. While the euro does symbolize European unity, the recent economic crisis saw two or three countries consider leaving the EU.

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Chapter 11 addresses the issues of spread of products and practices from one culture to another made possible by advanced technology, as well as how some peoples view that as the influence one country can have on another.

### Migration

In both poor and rich countries, people are concerned about immigration. Large majorities in nearly every country express the view that there should be greater restriction of immigration and tighter control of their country's borders. Table 1.3 shows the percentage of citizens in selected countries who favor restricting immigration.



### FOCUS ON CULTURE 1.6



It's not only U.S. ideas that are spread by technology. Japan and Korea have a two-thousand-year history of contact. In modern times, relations have been bitter, largely resulting from the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, which included Japan conscripting Koreans into forced labor in Japan and conscripting some 200,000 Korean and Chinese young women to serve as "comfort women" at military installations.

Against this backdrop, in 2002 came the South Korean television miniseries *Winter Sonata*, starring Choi Ji-woo and Bae Yong Joon, about first love, lost memory, and unknown family ties. In 2009 the series was adapted into an anime series. The series was broadcast on Japan's NHK and has had a major following in Japan and throughout Asia.

Bae Yong Joon became the most popular man in Japan. The actor was nicknamed "Yonsama" by the Japanese. *Sama* is an honorific usually reserved for royalty. In the series he plays "a sensitive, bespectacled architect with hair dyed brown and a scarf tied in a different way in each scene" (Onishi, 2004, para. 11). Older Japanese women said it reminded them of "simpler times at home." Yonsama represented qualities Japanese women found lacking in Japanese men. He was "sincere, pure, giving, passionate and soothing" (para. 16).

After the series aired, Japanese tourism to South Korea grew by 40% in 2004. Japanese women took tours of the location where the series was filmed, others enrolled at his alma mater, others enrolled in Korean conversation classes. Total increased economic activity attributed to the series and Yonsama was estimated as \$2.3 billion.

Media scholars have labeled Yonsama as one of the first *kkonminam* icons, young boyish male pop idols with style and fashion. Jung (2011) describes Bae Yong Joon's popularity with Japanese middle-aged women as an attraction to constructed "soft masculinity."

Yonsama's popularity in Japan continued long after the series. His 2009 book on Korean culture sold 50,000 copies in its first day of release in Japan. In the past, Koreans were discriminated against in Japan. *Winter Sonata* and Yonsama have changed that prejudice.

Immigration issues in Europe and the United States are quite distinct. In Europe, the issues focus more on concerns over Islam and cultural differences. Historically, Europe is a continent of nations with aging populations and falling birthrates. European population may drop by 2.5 million a year by the middle of the century. In contrast, the Muslim population has doubled to about 15 million since the 1980s and has become its largest minority. Some see the religious head scarves, the arranged marriages, and conservative imams as challenges to equality and democracy.

**Table 1.3** Global Attitudes Toward Immigration

<i>Country</i>	<i>Percentage Agreement With Restricting Immigration</i>
Côte d'Ivoire	94
Indonesia	89
South Africa	89
Italy	87
United States	75
Israel	74
Mexico	71
France	68
Germany	66
China	52
Japan	47

*Source:* Pew Research Center (2007).

Consider the challenge Sweden, a country of 9 million, is facing: More than 2 million Iraqis have fled their homeland since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. Most are living in Syria, Jordan, and other Middle Eastern nations where they are not allowed to work and are denied visas, but they are unwilling to go home. Now a growing number are heading toward Europe, especially Sweden, which for decades has offered refugees and asylum seekers government aid and generous family reunification plans. As of 2011, Sweden had 82,629 refugees and another 18,635 asylum seekers.

Some of the refugees pay smugglers up to \$15,000 for passage to Sweden. Refugees must then apply for asylum and learn Swedish with its many sounds for the letter *g*, adapt to Swedish culture without the familiar calls to prayer, eat meat that was not slaughtered according to Islamic tradition, and drink hot tea in a land of lattes and espressos.

Consider France: For more than 200 years since the French Revolution, France has declared that distinctions of race or creed must be submerged for the good of La France. Everyone is French, so no politician campaigns for the votes of ethnic groups. The French are so committed to the idea of equality that it is against the law to survey the population by race, ethnicity, or religion.

Despite the burgeoning population of immigrants from North African and Muslim countries, France has no Black or Arab mayors and no minorities representing mainland France in the National Assembly. Philippe Maniere, director of the Montaigne Institute, a nonpartisan think tank, said, "In France, we still believe in this completely idealistic principle born during our revolution that you should not talk about your community [of origin] because it gives the impression you will favor it, which is unacceptable" (quoted in Baum, 2008, p. A3).

North Americans are generally more welcoming to immigrants than Western Europeans are. The issues in the United States focus more on Hispanic immigrants and employment.

Consider the United States: Immigration accounts for more than 40% of the U.S. growth since 2000. The challenge that migration presents has been identified by Robert Putnam (2007) in a new study based on 30,000 interviews in the United States. The greater the diversity in a community, the less civic engagement it shows: Fewer people vote, fewer volunteer, less is given to charities, and less cooperative work is done on community projects. In addition, the greater the diversity in a community, the less people trust each other, not only across ethnic lines but also within the lines. In other words, people in the most ethnically mixed neighborhoods show the least trust not only of other ethnicities but also of people of their own ethnicity.

Putnam was concerned that his research would be used to argue against immigration, affirmative action, and multiculturalism, and that has occurred. Putnam's research, in total, does argue the following:

- Increased immigration and diversity are not only inevitable in modern societies but over the long term are desirable. The history of the United States demonstrates that over the long run, ethnic diversity is an important social asset.
- In the short to medium run, immigration and ethnic diversity challenge social solidarity and inhibit the strength of relationships that bond people similar people together and bridge people of diversity.
- In the medium to long run, successful immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity and dampen the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities.

Putnam's research findings are consistent with conflict studies that show that the challenge of modern immigrant societies is to create new broader definitions of the sense of "we"—that is, to create a larger, more inclusive sense of identity.

Consider India's approach. On August 15, 1947, the new independent state of India was born on a subcontinent with a history of bloody divisions. Its very survival was in doubt. No other national state has ever had the diversity of ethnic groups, mutually incomprehensible language (35 languages spoken by more than a million people each), a variety of topography and climate, and a diversity of religions and cultural practices. Six decades later, India is the world's largest democracy, with years of rapid economic growth.

In stark contrast to the U.S. motto of *e pluribus unum*, India embraced *e pluribus pluribus*. The idea India has embraced is one land embracing many. If the United States is a melting pot, India is a *thali*, a selection of dishes in different bowls on one plate to make one meal. Instead of suppressing diversity in the name of a single national identity, India acknowledges pluralism. All groups, faiths, tastes, and ideologies were to participate in the new system. It wasn't easy. India suffered caste conflicts, clashes over the rights of different linguistic groups, religious riots between Hindus and Muslims, and threats of separation from various ethnicities.

India permits all religions to flourish while ensuring none is privileged by the state. Muslims have their own "personal law" to govern their marriages, divorces, and deaths distinct from the common civil code. No one identity has triumphed in India: India saw a Roman Catholic political leader replaced by a Sikh sworn in as prime minister by a Muslim in a country that is 81% Hindu (Tharoor, 2006, 2007).

Chapters 12 deals directly with immigration. Chapters 13 and 14 deal with groups within cultures, subcultures and subgroups, and their relationships with the dominant culture.

## Environmental Sustainability

Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean is one of the most remote locations on Earth. The gigantic stone statues located in the Rono Raraku volcanic crater are all that remain of what was a complex civilization. The civilization disappeared because of the overexploitation of environmental resources. Competition between rival clans led to rapid deforestation, soil erosion, and the destruction of bird populations, undermining the food and agricultural systems that sustained human life (Diamond, 2005). The Easter Island story is a case study of the consequences of failure to manage shared ecological resources.

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), also known as the Brundtland Commission, defined sustainable development as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.”

One revision of this definition is attributed to the state of Oregon: Sustainability means “using, developing and protecting resources at a rate and in a manner that enables people to meet their current needs and also provides that future generations can meet their own needs” (Oregon Department of Transportation, 2007, para. 1) and “Sustainability requires simultaneously meeting environmental, economic and community needs” (“Sustainability,” 2008). Such definitions have become the basis of significant international policy.

People fill every ecological niche on the planet, from icy tundra to rainforests to deserts. In some locations, societies have outstripped the carrying capacity of the land, resulting in chronic hunger, environmental degradation, and a large-scale exodus of desperate populations.

Climate change is now a scientifically established fact. Just a few years ago, the world was debating whether climate change was taking place and whether it was human induced. Today the debate is over, and climate skepticism is an increasingly fringe activity. Nonetheless, the exact impact of greenhouse gas emission is not easy to forecast. In 2004, the United States, with 4.6% of the world’s population, accounted for 20.9% of the world’s carbon emissions. China with 20% of the world’s population, accounted for 17.3% of carbon emissions. Russia, India, and Japan accounted for about 5% each.

People have unequal incomes and wealth across the world. Climate change will affect regions very differently.

### Global Voices

Twenty years ago, Chico Mendes, the Brazilian environmentalist, died attempting to defend the Amazon rainforest against destruction. Before his death, he spoke of the ties that bound his local struggle to a global movement for social justice: “At first I thought I was fighting to save rubber trees, then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon rainforest. Now I am fighting for humanity.”

*Source:* United Nations Development Programme (2008, p. 6).

Climate change is already starting to affect some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world, threatening food supplies, coastlines, health, and the survival of countless species.

Throughout this text, you will find Focus on the Environment boxes that will help you apply the concepts of intercultural communication to this global issue.

## SUMMARY

Our culture provides regulation for life and provides individual identities. Today the term *culture* refers to the totality of a large group's thoughts, behaviors, and values that are socially transmitted, as well as to members who consciously identify with the group. The term *subculture* refers to a group that exists within a culture, usually based on social class, ethnicity, or geographic region. As the prefix *sub* can mean "less than," some scholars prefer the term *co-culture* to indicate that no one culture is inherently superior to other coexisting cultures. Finally, the term *subgroup* refers to groups that provide members with relatively complete sets of values and patterns of behavior and in many ways pose similar communication problems as cultures.

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

The term *contact zone* refer to the space in which cultures come into contact and establish ongoing relations, usually involving coercion, inequality, and conflict. The term *othering* refers to the labeling and degrading of cultures and groups outside of one's own. Indigenous peoples, women, lesbians and gay men, and ethnic groups have been othered by other groups in language. One common way is to represent the Other is as the binary opposite, for example, "Colonists were hard-working; natives were lazy."

Finally, today's challenges in the contact zone are identified as ethnic and religious conflict, the changing role of women, technology, migration, and environmental sustainability. Each of these is addressed in subsequent chapters.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Expand on Damasio's thesis that culture is a regulator of human life and identity. What does culture provide to its members?
2. How does one acquire cultural, subcultural, and subgroup identities?
3. Why do you believe social class differences, ethnic identity, and skin color are difficult for most people in the United States to discuss?
4. Can it be said that ethnic and religious conflicts were less prominent during the Cold War era?
5. Why do some people in the world admire the United States? Why do others feel differently?
6. Will environmental issues divide or unite the world?

## KEY TERMS

Aboriginal 11	ethnography 11	subculture 8
co-culture 14	heroes 6	subgroup 17
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## NOTE

1. The word *God* is capped through this text, but no endorsement of any religion is implied. The intent is to honor all religions.

## READINGS

All readings are from *Intercultural Communication: A Global Reader* (Jandt, 2004).

Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Race, History, and Culture” (p. 1)

M. Gene Aldridge, “What Is the Basis of American Culture?” (p. 84)

Ashis Nandy, “Consumerism: Its Hidden Beauties and Politics” (p. 400)

Randy Kluver, “Globalization, Informatization, and Intercultural Communication” (p. 425)

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