The last third of the 20th century saw unprecedented improvement in human development: life expectancy 17 years longer than it was in 1960, infant mortality more than halved, and the combined enrollment in primary and secondary schools nearly 1.5 times higher. Among the factors contributing to these advancements was the unprecedented worldwide spread of markets and democracy referred to today as globalization.

Proponents of globalization argue that economic systems based on private property and competition are the most efficient and that democracy is the fairest political system the world has ever known (Friedman, 1999). Globalization has given Mexico frappuccinos at Starbucks and the United States the novels of Carlos Fuentes (Cowen, 2002).

Opponents of globalization argue that it has made “the corporation the most powerful institution on earth” (Frank, 2000). Global corporations such as Monsanto, AOL-Time Warner, and McDonald’s are seen as undermining local cultures. Because the United States has promoted both free markets and democracy throughout the world, global markets are perceived as reinforcing
Chapter 1

Table 1.1  What the World Thinks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Spread of U.S. ideas a “good thing” (%)</th>
<th>Like U.S. music, movies, TV (%)</th>
<th>Like U.S. science and technology (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


U.S. wealth and dominance. Between July and October 2002, the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press surveyed some 38,000 people in 46 languages around the world. In country after country where people like U.S. technology and culture, they are displeased with the spread of U.S. ideas and values (see Table 1.1).

Another reaction to globalization is the growing strength of ethnic identity through the world with a resulting growth of interethnic group hatred (Chua, 2002):

- In 1998, Indonesian mobs looted hundreds of Chinese shops and homes leaving more than 2,000 dead.
- Suicide bombings have become common events in Israel.
- In 2001, Middle Eastern terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center, seen by some as a symbol of greed and cultural humiliation, incinerating its occupants.

Can there be a more critical time to study intercultural communication? Intercultural communication refers not only to the communication between individuals of diverse cultural identifications but also to the communication between groups of diverse cultural identifications. 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, which results in an appreciation and tolerance of diversity
among people and which makes you a more competent communicator in
multicultural settings.

Many classrooms represent a cross section of the diversity of college
students—international students, students of various backgrounds and ethnic-
ities, students who see no relevant differences between cultures, and students
who have various perspectives on communication among peoples of diverse
backgrounds. Many classrooms can be models of the United Nations. Take
advantage of the diversity in your classroom to explore various perspectives on
the issues presented in this text.
What you can expect to learn of other people begins with your asking questions that affect both of you, jointly examining the issue and mutually benefiting from the experience. When studying with other people, we can examine our shared history, our common challenges and responses, and how we come to perceive one another through media.

In this introductory chapter, you will learn how the definition of the terms *culture*, *race*, *subculture*, *ethnicity*, *co-culture*, and *subgroup* has changed over the years. Finally, the rules for behavior that these groups provide for their members are described.

**CULTURE**

Many textbooks begin by defining terms. There is a reason for that: Communication is facilitated by the extent to which we have similar meanings for the terms we use. It should be simple to define terms, but in the area of intercultural communication the terminology can become quite personal because these are the words we and others use to refer to ourselves and each other. How these terms are defined can affect how we think of ourselves and how we are seen by others.

Some terms in common use were developed by outsiders to refer to some people who seem to share some features as a group even though the people didn’t really see themselves as a group. Other terms developed by outsiders to refer to a group of people carry with them meanings not accepted by that group. And other groups may develop terms to label themselves precisely for the reason of communicating an identity.

The definition of the word *culture* itself is an example of how terminology can become a battlefield.

**19th-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 peoples 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.
Today’s Definition

The study of multiple cultures without imposing the belief that Western culture was the ultimate goal was slow to develop. 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. In this text, culture refers to the following:

1. 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 peoples.

2. 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, that 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 & Frentz, 1978). Janice Hocker Rushing (1983) has argued, for example, that an enduring myth in United States culture as seen in films is the rugged individualist cowboy in the American West.

3. A process of social transmission of these thoughts and behaviors learned from birth in the family and schools over the course of generations.

4. Members who consciously identify themselves with that group, described by Collier and Thomas (1988) 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 that 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 a person’s cultural identity doesn’t provide complete or reliable information about that one 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. Growing up in the 21st century presents opportunities and challenges. But how any one person deals with those opportunities and challenges may be quite similar to or quite different from how others do.

We can have no direct knowledge of a culture other than our own. Our experience with and knowledge of other cultures is forever limited by the perceptual bias of our own culture. An adult Canadian will never fully understand the experience of growing up an Australian.

Race

Just as the word culture can affect us personally, so does the word race. Even more than the term culture, the term race continues to be a battlefield. Race and culture are not synonymous terms. It was popularly believed that differences between peoples were biological or racial. Only recently has it been recognized that one’s cultural environment largely influences one’s physical and mental characteristics.

From the popular biological perspective, race refers to a large body of people characterized by similarity of descent (Campbell, 1976). From this biological definition your race is the result of the mating behavior of your ancestors. Some physical traits and genes 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 biological 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. In the 19th century, scientists thought that the races had different kinds of blood, so hospitals segregated blood supplies.

Twentieth-century scientists studying genetics have found no single race-defining gene. Popular indicators of race such as skin color and hair texture were caused by recent evolution in response to climate and diet. 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. 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. And in contrast to the
United States, Brazil has a history of intermarriage among native peoples, descendants of African slaves, and immigrants from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. So in Brazil, where half of the population is Black, there are hundreds of words for skin colors (Robinson, 1999) even though there is an aversion to racial categorization. The biologically based definition understands race as something fixed; the sociohistorically based definition sees race as unstable and socially determined through constant debate (Omi & Winant, 1986).

In relation to culture, then, 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 is a culture of people of all races (see Box 1.1).

**Box 1.1**

**OFFICIAL RACIAL DEFINITIONS HAVE SHIFTED SHARPLY AND OFTEN**

Although the federal government has been collecting information about race for more than 200 years, official racial distinctions . . . changed over time.

(Continued)
CULTURAL ELEMENTS

To begin to understand a culture, you need to understand all the experiences that guide its individual members through life, such things as 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 Box 1.2).

Box 1.2

PERSONALIZING THE CONCEPT

Let’s try to develop a personal feeling for what is meant by the term culture. I’m going to assume you have a sister, brother, or very close childhood friend. I’d 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 of time. Perhaps your sister studied abroad for a year or your brother entered the military and served overseas. For some period of 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.
Canada has modified its currency with raised dots for the subgroup of persons with visual disabilities.
Culture, then, refers to the totality of a people’s socially transmitted products of work and thought. Thus Irish culture refers to everything commonly thought of as Irish. All these elements are interrelated like a tangled root system. Pull on one, the others move. Change one, the others must change.

Throughout this text, two elements of culture are illustrated: monetary and postal systems. Look at each example as a way of learning more about its culture of origin. For instance, Table 1.2 lists some of the monetary units used in the world.

The Dispute Over Defining Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>As of August 1994</th>
<th>As of August 1997</th>
<th>As of August 2000</th>
<th>As of August 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>1.3504</td>
<td>1.3430</td>
<td>1.760</td>
<td>1.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>1.3795</td>
<td>1.3814</td>
<td>1.482</td>
<td>1.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Peso</td>
<td>812.57</td>
<td>1107.50</td>
<td>1957.89</td>
<td>2712.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Krone</td>
<td>6.1000</td>
<td>6.9985</td>
<td>8.2169</td>
<td>7.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Franc</td>
<td>5.3175</td>
<td>6.1940</td>
<td>7.2273</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Deutsche Mark</td>
<td>1.5508</td>
<td>1.8366</td>
<td>2.1549</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Drachma</td>
<td>234.70</td>
<td>286.85</td>
<td>371.33</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>7.7273</td>
<td>7.7440</td>
<td>7.8003</td>
<td>7.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Punt</td>
<td>.6566</td>
<td>.6858</td>
<td>.8677</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Lira</td>
<td>1590.00</td>
<td>1790.00</td>
<td>2133.3</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Yen</td>
<td>100.11</td>
<td>118.43</td>
<td>108.67</td>
<td>119.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Peso</td>
<td>3.3968</td>
<td>7.790.00</td>
<td>9.3196</td>
<td>9.827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>1.5060</td>
<td>1.4645</td>
<td>1.7143</td>
<td>1.7585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Won</td>
<td>804.30</td>
<td>892.00</td>
<td>1114.8</td>
<td>1205.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>26.49</td>
<td>28.48</td>
<td>30.959</td>
<td>34.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Baht</td>
<td>25.04</td>
<td>31.65</td>
<td>40.816</td>
<td>42.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>Bolivar</td>
<td>188.0000</td>
<td>497.0000</td>
<td>689.65</td>
<td>1388.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>As of January 1999</th>
<th>As of August 2000</th>
<th>As of August 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Euro</td>
<td>1.167</td>
<td>1.1017</td>
<td>1.0298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Consult the business section of large daily newspapers or the Internet for rates the day you read this chapter. Use key words such as “currency exchange” or “currency calculator.” Values changed in the 8-year period shown in the table. Can you speculate as to possible reasons why?

a. Obsolete and no longer legal tender.
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. The euro symbolizes a new European unity. 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.

CULTURES WITHIN CULTURES

Now let’s look at the definitions of the terms subculture, co-culture, and subgroup as attempts to identify groups that are cultures but that exist within another culture.

Subculture

Complex societies like 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, race, or geographic region.

Social Class

It can be argued that social class or socioeconomic status is a subculture (Brislin, 1988). Social class has traditionally been defined as a position in 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 whom you marry or choose as a lover, your career, and the neighborhood in which you are likely to live.

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 outcome of self-direction and empathic understanding transfers 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 this leads 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, which emphasize largely verbal skills. The resulting learned behaviors transfer more directly to supervised wage labor jobs.

Although these observations are based on large numbers of students, they should not be interpreted to apply to 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 ethnic group is like the term race in that its definition has changed with time. Its different definitions
reflect a continuing social debate. **Ethnic group** 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).

Just as definitions of words like *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.

### Table 1.3
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Percentage responses by people not identifying as Asian-American, American Indian, Black, Hispanic, or multiracial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Percentage responses by native tribespeople</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaskan Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 only composed 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 1.3A. 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 1.3B). 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 Box 1.3 for the experience of the Maori of New Zealand—in New Zealand, for voting and land claims, one elects to be Maori.)

Box 1.3

THE MAORI OF NEW ZEALAND

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 Aorearoa, 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 *Maori* was used to describe all the tribes on the land. Those labeled Maori do not necessarily regard themselves as a single people.

The history of the Maori 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

(Continued)
Box 1.3, *Continued*

Maori and in English. Differences between the two versions caused considerable misunderstandings in later years. The Maori and the English may have had different understandings of the terms governance and sovereignty. In exchange for granting sovereignty to Great Britain, the Maori 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 Maori land was appropriated as settlers arrived.

Activism in the late 1960s brought a renaissance of Maori languages, literature, arts, and culture and calls to address Maori land claims as the Treaty of Waitangi became the focus of grievances. In 1975, the government introduced the Waitangi Tribunal to investigate Maori land claims, which resulted in some return of Maori land. In 1994, the government proposed to settle all Maori land claims for $1 billion—a very small percentage of current value.

Today, New Zealand’s population by descent is approximately 13% Maori 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 Maori members of parliament. Pakeha can enroll on the general roll only; people who consider themselves Maori 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 MAORI?**

The definition of “Maori” for voting purposes . . . is entirely one of self-definition.

The 1956 Electoral Act defined a Maori 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 Maori affairs minister Matiu Rata, rewrote the act to define a Maori as “a person
of the Maori race of New Zealand, and includes any descendant of such a person who elects to be considered as a Maori for the purposes of this act.” Such a person could choose either the Maori roll or the general roll. So, if you are descended from a Maori, then you are Maori and can choose to vote on the Maori 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 Maoris 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.”

---

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**

**Definition**

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

However, mutuality may not be easily established. 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.

Those understandings may conflict in some ways with the established legal system.

**Case Study: American Indians**

Can one nation have two legal systems? Can two legal systems coexist equally? There are 309 distinct nations existing by treaty within the territorial limits of the United States. One is the government in Washington, D.C. 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.

Nations adopt one system of laws, and 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.

**Inaccuracy of the Term**

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.

**Subgroup**

**Definition**

Finally, you need to know the concept of *subgroup*, or membership group. Psychologists have long recognized that 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 Eastman Kodak and IBM.
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 as 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, it is important that you 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 hence 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.

“Wanna-Be” Behavior

Recognize, too, that individuals can adhere to values and attitudes and behaviors of groups of which they are not a member. 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 “wanna-be,” 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.
RULES AND NORMS

Definition

Every culture and subgroup provides its members with rules of behavior, or what are called rules and norms. Rules may refer to socially agreed-on behavior or to individual guidelines for behavior. Norms specify appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Travel guides (see, e.g., Braganti & Devine, 1984; DeMente, 1986, 1989) prepare you for a trip by telling you how things are done in the country you’re visiting. Individuals are rewarded or punished as they conform to or deviate from the norms. Indeed, the extent to which a person is a member of a culture or subgroup is often gauged by his or her adherence to norms. In communication studies, it is assumed that behavior is governed by socially agreed-on norms or by one’s individual guidelines for behavior.

Case Study: The Military

Earlier, this chapter identified the military as a subgroup. An excerpt from the Army’s Drill and Ceremonies (see Box 1.4) provides an example of a subgroup norm. Notice how complete and detailed the description is.

Box 1.4

NORMS IN THE ARMY: SALUTES

The origin of the hand salute is uncertain. Some historians believe it began in late Roman times when assassinations were common. A citizen who wanted to see a public official had to approach with his right hand raised to show that he did not hold a weapon. Knights in armor raised visors with the right hand when meeting a comrade. The practice gradually became a way of showing respect and, in early American history, sometimes involved removing the hat. By 1820, the motion was modified to touching the hat, and since then it has become the hand salute used today.

Army personnel in uniform are required to salute when they meet and recognize persons entitled (by grade) to salute except when it is (Continued)
The student body at your college might be considered a subgroup and, as such, has rules of behavior. How well have you learned them? How does being a successful member of the student body involve knowing and complying with norms?

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, they 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 is 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.

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.

Even subgroups can develop shared superstitions. Athletic teams might wear a “winning jersey.” Norms and superstitions are only a small part of culture but certainly an interesting part.
FROM THE INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Many of us take our culture for granted. The only time that we may ever think about it is when we leave our own country to travel abroad or when we encounter someone with a culture so different from ours that we are forced to examine our own beliefs. Much of what we think is the “right” or “correct” way to act or to do something is actually part of the knowledge that we have learned from our culture. In other words, our culture teaches us rules or norms that tell us how to behave inside our culture. The word culture describes everything that makes a large group of people unique. Members of a culture share similar thoughts and experiences. One’s culture is part of one’s identity and is taught to one’s children. Culture also includes all the things that guide a group of people through life, such as myths, language and gestures, ways of communicating, economic systems, what kinds of things to eat, and how to dress.

People identify with being a member of a group. Being a member of a group helps to define who we are. We all are members of groups of different sizes. One of the largest groups that a person can belong to is a culture. Everyone belongs to a culture. No one chooses which culture to belong to. We simply are born into one.

Other groups that people may be a member of are subcultures (sometimes called co-cultures) and subgroups. Subcultures can be based on race, ethnicity, economic or social class, or geographic region. Some people think of race as a group of people descended from the same ancestors. Another definition of race is that it is sociohistorical in that it recognizes how categories of race have changed over time and how different cultures have different racial categories. Because of how the words used to identify people by race have changed, people can be born one race and die another. Ethnicity is a word that describes the shared descent or heritage of a group of people. Groups of people with the same ethnicity share the same cultural traits like language, religion, and customs that are passed on to the children. In very homogeneous cultures where there is little difference in race or ethnicity, people might identify with groups that have about the same degree of wealth or that live in the same area as they do.

Subgroups also help define who we are. Subgroups can be as small as a few people or as large as a major religion. For example, a high school student might identify with being a member of the football team or drama club, or a person might identify with being a Christian, a Buddhist, or a Jew. People can be members of many different groups at the same time, so a person might identify with being a Christian, a football player, and a member of the drama club. Subgroups also provide their members with norms that tell people how to behave and even think. So, for instance, a Christian cannot be a Buddhist
because Christians have rules that tell them they cannot be members of a different religion. People often make friendships based on their memberships in subgroups.

Business and politics constantly bring people of different cultural groups into contact with each other. Immigration is also a factor that continues to bring different cultures together. Knowledge of the norms of different cultures can help people to better communicate across cultures. It is possible through immigration and marriage to have members of the same family be members of different cultures. One day, your intercultural communication skills might even help you to talk with your in-laws.

**KEY TERMS**

- co-culture
- cultural identity
- culture
- ethnic group
- ethnic identity
- globalization
- heroes
- myths
- norms
- race
- reference group
- rituals
- rules
- subculture
- subgroup
- symbols
- values
- words