**Snapshot 8.9**



**S.A.D.**

Sadness

Interest

Anger

Fear

Surprise

**F.I.S.H.**

Disgust

Happiness

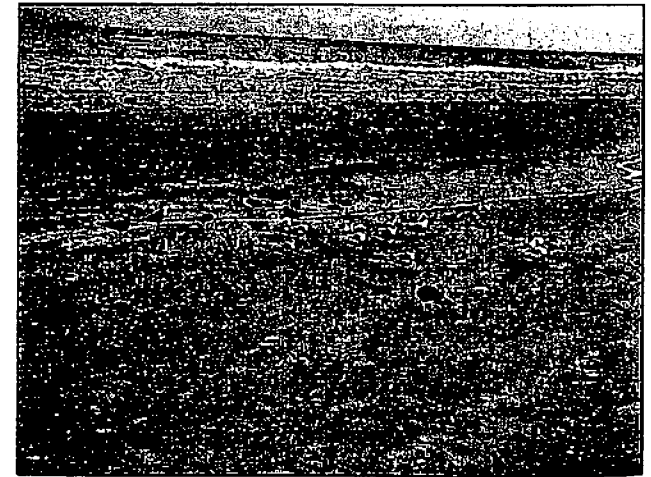*Did you correctly identify the emotions represented by each facial expression?*

**Snapshot 8.10**



Japanese "Como Hero" Sign

Chinese Obscene Sign

British Insult Sign

Hawaii Hang-Loose Sign

U.S. Victory Sign

Indian Namaste Greeting Sign

Italian "Perfect" sign
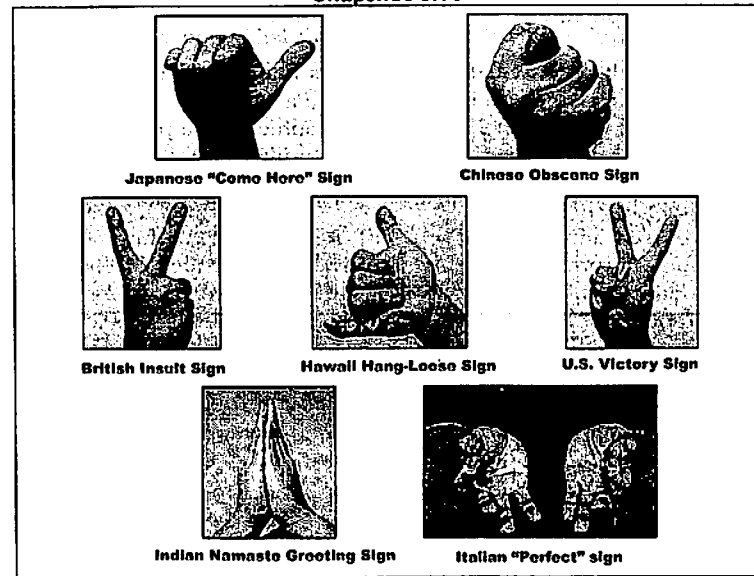
*How many intercultural gestures could you decode?* ✦

# What Causes Us to Hold Biases Against Outgroups?

# Chapter Outline

☐ Through Our Lenses: Communication Filters

- Perception and Communication
- Ethnocentrism and Communication
- Stereotypes and Communication
- Stereotypes and Media

☐ Nearsighted Focus: Ingroup/Outgroup Membership Boundaries

- Us Versus Them
- Where Do I Fit In?
- Intergroup Attributions

☐ Shattered Lens: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

- Prejudiced Remarks . . . or Innocent Jokes?
- Prejudice: Explanations and Functions
- Discrimination and Practice
- Different Types of Racism
- Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination

☐ Intercultural Toolkit: Recaps and Checkpoints

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**Scenario I:**

Although the paperwork for my identity change process (i.e., from an international student to a United States resident) went quickly, the affective metamorphosis process was incremental. Unlike Iowa City, the U. W. University District, in the late '70s, did have a mix of White students, Asian students, and some Black students. The interesting thing was that despite this diversity, I encountered more racist remarks and episodes (especially directed at me or to my husband, such as saying, "I heard you are married to a Chink"—along with making a "slant eye" gesture) than in all my four years in Iowa City.

I guess the concepts of majority and minority can be formed and intergroup consciousness can be developed only when a critical mass of people creates a rigid ingroup/outgroup boundary. Having a consciousness such as this, people begin to perceive scarce resources and intergroup competitions. During this stage, I was very conscious of my being "different"—with a burden.

—Stella, *College Instructor*

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**Scenario 2:**

I was born in Korea, but a European-American family in Oklahoma adopted me. I never paid much attention to the color of my skin or felt I was different in any way; I always thought of myself as a White American. However, when I was in junior high school, we had an assignment to bring one baby picture to class. As each person's picture was taped up on the board, students had difficulty guessing the identity of each child. Finally, when it was my turn, the whole class shouted in unison, "That's Jarod!" I was shocked. How did they all know? And that is when I realized I was different.

—Jarod, *Engineer*

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These real-life examples are but two of millions available. Ask members of a majority or minority group if they have ever been mistreated, or stereotyped, by others, and the answer would be a resounding "Yes!" However, if we ask the same persons if they are prejudiced or carry prejudicial feelings, we may get a resounding "No!" These examples illustrate two very important points about interactions with people from cultural groups other than our own. First, we usually experience interaction anxiety because we do not have enough information—or the information we have is outdated. When we communicate with people outside of our own group, our usual script may or may not work. This lack of knowledge can lead to misunderstanding, or ineffective communication, or both. If we feel vulnerable or don't have enough information, we may experience cultural or ethnic-racial identity distinctiveness.

Second, if we have only partial norms and rules to direct us through the communication interaction, we may fall back into using stereotypes. Although some of the stereotypes may have an aspect of truth, many group-based stereotypes are inaccurate. This scenario is the classic recipe for intergroup misunderstandings and prejudice. Communicating with strangers from other cultural groups involves the interplay between ingroup and outgroup membership boundaries.

This chapter is organized into four main sections. First, important concepts such as perception, ethnocentrism, and stereotypes will be discussed. Next, we will discuss the effects of interactions with those who are different from ourselves. Third, recommendations are given to filter out stereotypes, minimize prejudice, and find a sense of peace in our chaotic world. Last, we look at practical checkpoints to deal with ethnocentrism and prejudice issues.

## Through Our Lenses: Communication Filters

As discussed previously, culture shapes the way we see our world. Our vision of the world and information we absorb occurs through a complex filtering process. Both cognitive and affective (i.e., having to do with emotions) filters serve as eyeglasses we wear to interpret and evaluate behaviors of intercultural strangers. These eyeglasses allow us to see the world around us, make sense of the world, and interpret behaviors around us. But eyeglasses may also limit our vision to see what is directly in front of us.

### Perception and Communication

Human **perception** is the process of selecting cues from the environment, organizing them into a clear pattern, and interpreting that pattern. Perception is typically a three-step process of *selection, organization,* and *interpretation.* Each of these steps is heavily affected by cultural socialization. In the **selection process,** we pick out cues from our cultural landscapes. We learn to pay closer attention to the cues that are valuable in our culture. Because it is mentally impossible to pick up every detail and stimulus we receive, we selectively choose incoming data. What kind of data stands out for us? Any stimulus that is distinct or gets our attention quickly. If you are walking around a shopping mall, a person who has full-body tattoos, rainbow-dyed hair, or loud clothes may get you to do a double take. As another example, if a teacher speaks with a heavy accent, you will pay less attention to the lecture material but concentrate more on the sound of the teacher's voice, pitch, or tone. You may ask yourself, "Where is this accent from?" Another characteristic of the selection process is observing any change in the environment or with other people around. For example, suppose you walk into a movie theater where everyone is chatting. Suddenly, it turns quiet. You will probably be a little more observant of your behavior with those around you to assess why people have stopped talking. Culture plays a big part in what we selectively choose to pay attention to.

The second step in the perception process is **organization.** Our culture and the language we speak guide us to aspects of our environment that we consider important. We have learned from our cultural/ethnic socialization to organize our perceptions by grouping similar objects or things together and labeling them with a symbol or name. For example, ordinary folks name and catalog colors, such as gray, blue, green, red, orange, and so forth. However, if you are a fabric buyer for the Gap, you can probably use more distinctive labels to identify the different shades of gray and assign gender to them. For instance, you might assign chambray heather for men but heather gray

for women. You might choose different shades of blue for women, such as blue lotus, Miami sky, and dream. We also tend to fill in missing information in what we perceive to provide a more comprehensive and complete whole.

Suppose you are at the grocery store and you see a woman pushing a child in a baby stroller. You will "fill in" your inference that the woman is a mother and the child is hers. This "filling-in-the blank" tendency is derived from the meanings that we form in our everyday enculturation process. Due to cultural and personal experience differences, every individual has his or her own unique perceptual processes. What you choose to focus on depends on how you feel; what you see, hear, taste, smell, and touch; and the context.

The last step is **interpretation.** Interpretation allows us to attach meaning to the data we receive, which is also known as expectations. Expectations involve what we anticipate and predict about how others will communicate with us during an interaction. Our expectations influence the way we perceive and interpret cultural strangers' behaviors, and likewise their reactions to us are based on their expectations and preconceptions. Expectations are the filters of our perceptions of others. We have an image of how we expect people to act in a given situation. If a person violates our expectations, we will become surprised and emotionally aroused and pay more attention to this person's strange behavior (Burgoon, 2000).

More important, cultural differences in our perceptions are quite dramatic and reveal much about a culture. For example, food is an expression of the values and identities associated with a particular group. One of the most culturally specific meals is breakfast (Kapnick, 1999). What one cultural group finds pleasure in eating—fish and rice stew, tamales with red chilies, or miso soup—another group may find repulsive or disgusting. Peering in to see what other cultural groups eat for breakfast allows us to examine our individual filtering process:

- *Sudan:* Sudanese people wake up and drink coffee and tea. They start eating a "breakfast meal" at about 10 a.m. This meal typically is a bowl of *foul* (fava beans) mixed with onions, tomatoes, and feta cheese served with bread.

- *Northern China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong:* People eat warm or cold soybean milk, sweet or salty, served with a variety of condiments, including dried pork or shrimp, preserved cabbage, scallions, soy sauce, and vinegar topped with deep-fried breadsticks.

- *Vietnam:* A typical breakfast is *pho* (a beef-based broth soup), rice noodles, and meat with onions, herbs, jalapenos, bean sprouts, and hot plum sauce served on the side.

- *Japan:* Japanese people eat a bowl of miso soup, a bowl of rice, and a side dish of tofu, grilled fish, or vegetables for breakfast.

- *India:* Rice with *sambar* (lentils, spice, and vegetables), fish and rice stew, a yogurt salad, and tropical fruit.

- *Mexico:* Chilies with eggs, beans, or chorizo sausages, sweet bread, and rolls.

- *France:* Coffee with crisp bread, which is topped with butter and jam.

- *Russia:* *Tvorog,* farmer cheese mixed with jam and buttermilk.

- *Germany:* Soft-boiled eggs, cereal, cheese, spreadable liver sausage, ham or other cold cuts, rolls, and mixed bread.

- *South China, South Korea, and Japan:* Rice *congee* (boiled leftover rice with water) is served with a variety of side dishes, including spicy peanuts, preserved and salted duck egg, and *kim-chee* (spicy preserved cabbage) topped with green onions.

- *United Kingdom:* Coffee or tea, bacon, sausage, and eggs or a bowl of porridge, and sometimes toast with *marmite* (a concentrated, black yeast paste).

- *United States:* Eggs and toast are served with bacon, sausage, or ham. In the South, add grits, biscuits, and gravy but omit the toast. In the North, add hash brown potatoes. And in Hawaii, add two scoops of rice, spam, and gravy.

Interpretation, then, is all within an individual. How we perceive breakfasts has a lot to do with our own meanings of a "good breakfast." Interestingly enough, Sharon Kapnick (1999) believes that the U.S. breakfast is showing signs of globalization because "the U.S. breakfast is spreading with U.S. influence in the world—and the expansion of McDonalds and other fast-food eateries" (p. 106). In fact, Finbar, a man from Wales, agrees. The traditional Finnish breakfast (i.e., fried eggs, fried bread, fried tomatoes, ham, fried potatoes, and toast) has now been replaced with coffee or tea and toast. Because time has become a precious commodity, we need to conduct business, eat, and play in a timely manner. Simple fast food, regretfully, does replace the extended morning ritual of culture-based, deliciously prepared breakfast.

These three perceptual filters act as major barriers to effective intercultural communication. Ineffective communication between cultural groups often occurs because we assume that we perceive and

interpret other people's behavior in an objective, unbiased manner. The reality, however, is that our perceptions of others are highly subjective, selective, and biased. However, by being more mindful of the biased mindset we carry inside our mental map, perhaps we can "catch ourselves" more often and counter our preconceived expectations with flexible adjustments. In practicing flexible communication, we are ready to try on different styles and shades of eyeglasses—and to learn to see things from different lenses. We turn now to a discussion of three main filters that affect communication with intercultural strangers.

## Ethnocentrism and Communication

In the United States of America, there are three major team championship games. Teams compete to win the title and be declared National Football League Superbowl World Champions, National Basketball Association World Champions, and Major League Baseball World Series Champions. What these three examples illustrate is the ethnocentric tendency of U.S. sports. Are U.S. football, basketball, and baseball games played globally, internationally, and across borders? No. But the winners are declared the best in the world.

Before continuing your reading, fill out the brief Know Thyself 9.1 survey. The assessment is designed to help you determine the degree of your ethnocentrism tendencies.

| Know Thyself 9.1 Probing Your Ethnocentrism Tendencies | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Instructions:** The following items describe how people generally think about themselves and their cultural groups. Let your first inclination be your guide and circle the number in the scale that best reflects your overall agreement with the statement. The following scale is used for each item: | | | |
| 4 = SA = *Strongly Agree* | | | |
| 3 = MA = *Moderately Agree* | | | |
| 2 = MD = *Moderately Disagree* | | | |
| 1 = SD = *Strongly Disagree* | | | |
| Generally speaking | SA | MA | MD | SD |
| 1. I believe my culture has the best lifestyles compared with other cultures. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I like routines and a stable environment. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. My culture is very advanced in comparison with other cultures. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I don't like ambiguous or uncertain situations. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Know Thyself 9.1   Probing Your Ethnocentrism Tendencies (continued)**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. My culture provides the best opportunity for its members to achieve their goals. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I get very stressed in unfamiliar settings. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. My cultural group has the most colorful language and vocabulary. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. I don't like to approach strangers for anything. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. My culture has a very rich history and traditions. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. I get quite intimidated thinking of living in another country for more than a year. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Scoring:** Add up the scores on all the odd-numbered items and you will find your ethnocentrism score. *Ethnocentrism* score: _____. Add up the scores on all the even-numbered items and you will find your tolerance of ambiguity score. *Tolerance of Ambiguity* score: _____.

**Interpretation:** Scores on each attitude dimension can range from 5 to 20; the higher the score, the more ethnocentric and/or intolerant of ambiguity you are. If the scores are similar on both attitude dimensions, you are high on cultural ethnocentrism and high on your fear of ambiguous situations.

**Reflection Probes:** Take a moment to compare your scores with a classmate's. Think of the following questions: Where did you learn your attitudes about your own culture and its value compared with other cultures? What fears do you have in approaching new or unfamiliar situations? Why? How do you think you can prepare yourself more effectively in dealing with new cultural situations and cultural strangers?

**Ethnocentrism** comes from two Greek words and can be broken down into its components. *Ethno* refers to "one's own ethnic or cultural group," and *centrism* means that "one's own group should be looked upon as the center of the world." *Ethnocentrism* means that we consider the views and standards of our own ingroup as much more important than any outgroups. Outgroups are often at a disadvantage because we constantly make judgments about outgroups based on our own group's standards and values. Examples of standards include beliefs that one's own group practices the correct religion, knows how to treat people with respect, employs the best ways of educating their children, and votes for the most qualified political candidates (Brislin, 2003). Visually, ethnocentrism is the core (i.e., our valued ingroup is in the center), and all outgroups are placed at the periphery, the outside (see Double Take 9.1).

These comments are more common outside of the United States. Ethnocentrism has a way of allowing us to focus specifically on events that matter more on our soil than 10,000 miles away. This relates back to our discussion of proxemics: Whatever is closer to us has a little

**Double Take 9.1**

My husband, Don, was at a self-serve gas station a few years ago and, while in line, a white middle-aged customer became angry when the Korean cashiers communicated to each other in Korean. He yelled, "Speak English. This is America!" Then he turned to my (also white and middle-aged) husband and angrily stated that these foreigners ought to go back to where they came from. My husband realized that the angry man just assumed he'd agree with the comments be- cause they looked alike, and my husband wanted to let everyone within earshot know that he completely disagreed with the angry man. So, he responded by loudly saying, "Oh, no. I don't agree. I like them. I want more of them to come to our country." This silenced the impatient man, and my husband hoped it indicated, to everyone else who heard, that not all white middle-aged men were the same.

—Alex, *College Instructor*

more value. There are many examples of ethnocentric tendencies. The above example with sports events assumes that U.S. teams are the best, even though they are playing teams only within U.S. borders. The two Chinese characters for *China* translate as the "Middle Kingdom." The characters or pictographs for *China*, first written more than 4,000 years ago during the Hsia dynasty, are translated as "the center of the universe." Take a look at a nation's world atlas; it is not surprising that every nation depicts its own country in a central position on the map, with neighboring states shown as peripheral on the outside.

Ethnocentrism is a defense mechanism used to view our culture as superior to other cultures, and thus we perceive our way of life as the most reasonable and proper. As a result, we expect that all other groups should follow our way of living and behaving. Where does ethnocentrism come from? Like our perceptions, ethnocentrism is reinforced and learned through a cultural socialization process. It can consist of both implicit and explicit attitudes toward outgroup members' customs or behaviors.

As human beings, we display ethnocentric tendencies for three reasons: (1) we tend to define what goes on in our own culture as *natural* and *correct* and what goes on in other cultures as *unnatural* and *incorrect;* (2) we tend to perceive ingroup values, customs, norms, and roles as universally applicable; and (3) we tend to experience distance from the outgroup, especially when our group identity is threatened or under attack (Triandis, 1990). Let's take a look at the following example.

In 1998, U.S. actress Claire Danes and her movies were banned by the City Council of Manila, the Philippines. The actress made comments about her experience in Manila while filming scenes for *Brokedown Palace.* She said that the city "just . . . smelled of cock-

roaches. . . . There's no sewage system in Manila, and people have nothing there. People with, like, no arms, no legs, no eyes, no teeth. Rats were everywhere" (Spines, 1998, p. 66). After hearing the reaction from the Philippines, Danes apologized by releasing this statement: "Because of the subject matter of our film, *Brokedown Palace*, the cast was exposed to the darker and more impoverished places of Manila. My comments . . . only reflect those locations, not my attitude towards the Filipino people" (1998, September 30).

Claire Danes provides a sad but rich example of how we communicate ethnocentrism and racism. In fact, ethnocentrism comes in different gradations. Lukens (1978) used the communicative distances of indifference, avoidance, and disparagement to discuss the degrees of ethnocentrism. The **distance of indifference** (i.e., low ethnocentrism) reflects the lack of sensitivity in our verbal and nonverbal interactions in dealing with dissimilar others. From the use of insensitive questioning approaches to the use of "foreigner talk" (i.e., exaggeratedly slow speech or a dramatically loud tone of voice, as if all foreigners were deaf), the speech pattern serves as a reminder that these strangers are somehow exotic and quaintly different. The **distance of avoidance** (i.e., moderate ethnocentrism) reflects attempted linguistic or dialect switching in the presence of outgroup members, as well as displayed nonverbal inattention (e.g., members of the dominant group maintain eye contact only with members of their group) to accentuate ingroup connection and avoidance of outgroup members. Finally, the **distance of disparagement** (i.e., high ethnocentrism) refers to the use of racist jokes or hate-filled speech to downgrade outgroup members. For example, if you ask persons living in Manila or the Philippines or beyond, most of them would likely interpret Danes' comments as racist. The remarks were particularly offensive and drew international attention, because by insulting the country, Danes insulted the entire population of 84,525,639 Filipino people in the Philippines plus the Filipinos beyond the national border.

## Stereotypes and Communication

**Stereotypes** are exaggerated pictures we make about a group of people on the basis of our inflexible beliefs and expectations about the characteristics or behaviors of the group (Lippman, 1936; Stephan & Stephan, 1992; 1996). Before we discuss the concept of stereotypes further, let's check out the following story in Double Take 9.2.

Group membership (e.g., "Hawaiians," "Asians," "Latino/as," "lawyers," "janitors," and "New Yorkers") conjures certain stereotypic images in our mental map. A *stereotype* is an overgeneralization toward a group of people without any attempt to perceive individual variations. Stereotypes contain the content of our social categories. A stereotype can refer to a subconsciously held belief about a membership

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**Double Take 9.2**

I remember one incident, in particular, in which my graduate advisor's support was critical in encouraging me to move on. The incident was an exchange between myself and a professor when he explained why I did not receive a full-year teaching assistantship like the rest of the TA's. The exchange went something like this: "Stella, it's not that you're not good. It's just that life is like a horse race. Some horses get the first prize, and others are runners-up. . . . With your accent, it's just very difficult for you to make it to first place. . . . What I'm trying to say is . . ."

My heart sank upon hearing those words. At that moment, I genuinely had serious doubts about whether I belonged to this very Americanized "speech" communication discipline. It was my advisor's comforting words and academic faith in me that held me together in those days. It was also what my husband said to me that echoes still: "Stella, you should go back and tell your professor, what happens in a real horse race is that most people bet on the wrong horse—they have chosen poorly."

—Stella, *College Instructor*

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group. The content of stereotypes can convey both positive and negative information (e.g., "Mexicans have large families and many children," "All Asians are martial artists," or "French people are arrogant"). Thus, we use preconceived images in stereotyping a large group of individuals without tending to individual variations. When we stereotype French people as rude or believe that Mexicans have large families, we may be basing our stereotypes on past observations, media images, or what we have heard from others. The stereotype may stem from two to three communication incidents with just a handful of French people. Nevertheless, we devise categories that frame the expectation and meaning we attach to people's behavior or actions in general.

For example, when we learn that someone is *transgendered*, we tend to be instantaneously guided by the language category of transgendered. Frequently, an explanation of describing such a person will start with "imagine that you wake up one morning and find yourself in the body of the other gender." A transgendered male or female is unhappy as a member of the sex (or gender) to which he or she was assigned by the anatomical structure of the body, particularly the genitals. The person is physically normal but feels that he or she *belongs* to the other sex, or wants to *be* and *function* as do members of the opposite sex. We start assuming that this individual's every word and movement come from his or her sexual orientation. Unfortunately, we may be so captivated by the distinctive features of this label or naming process that we often forget to pay close attention to other unique and social qualities of this multifaceted person. Let's look at another example.

In 1998, someone blew up the Murrah building in Oklahoma City. Within the hour, "wanted" images of Arab Americans were highlighted across every national and international news channel. Arab Americans living in Oklahoma City, Norman, and other larger cities received constant phone threats and verbal assaults. Stereotypes of "terrorist" activity were focused only on Arab Americans, without considering other sources or alternative possibilities. The reality, in the end, was that two White Americans, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, were the "terrorists" who did the atrocious act.

Many factors shape our mindscape. One reason people stereotype is because of language usage. Paired words in the English language, for example, often encourage polarized thinking: straight or gay, us and them, females and males, Blacks and Whites, to name a few. Although polarized language usage allows us to manage our social environment more efficiently, polarized perception often leads us to interpret the social world as either good *or* evil, fair *or* unfair, and right *or* wrong. Beyond language and selective personal experience, the contemporary media play a critical role in shaping our stereotypes about our own group and those of others.

## Stereotypes and Media

Media images shape the way we view dissimilar others from different cultural/ethnic groups. As a result, we associate different stereotypes as "character types," or as specific ethnic groups who represent the associated images. For example, Elizabeth Bird (1999) observed that American Indian males seen in films and on television are often cast as "doomed warriors" who are strong and attractive. However, they are also often cast as either sidekicks to European American male actors or loved by strong, independent-spirited White women (e.g., *The Last of the Mohicans*). Another stereotype is the wise elder, who has the knowledge and is the source of ancient wisdom. Female American Indians are seen as maidens or princesses (e.g., Pocahontas), who are symbols of ancient wisdom and harmony with nature, more so in graphic art than on television and in movies (Bird, 1999). African Americans and Latino/as do not have it any easier. According to Orbe and Harris (2001), African American males are typically relegated to comedic roles, such as Sambo (lazy and content), Uncle Tom (quiet and respectful), and Buck (athletic and sexually powerful). African American women, however, are either sexually enticing or asexual and nurturing mammies. Latino/a Americans are limited to stereotypical roles associated with lower-status occupations.

It is inevitable that all individuals stereotype. The key to dealing with the issue is to learn to distinguish between inflexible stereotyping and flexible stereotyping. *Inflexible stereotyping* holds on to preconceived and negative stereotypes by operating on automatic pilot. We dismiss infor-

mation and evidence that is more favorable to the outgroup, and we presume one member's behavior represents all members' behaviors and norms. In comparison with inflexible stereotypes, we need to address the characteristics of *flexible stereotyping* (see Table 9.1).

| Table 9.1. Inflexible Versus Flexible Stereotyping | |
| --- | --- |
| **Inflexible Stereotyping** | **Flexible Stereotyping** |
| Automatic-Pilot Reaction | Mindful of Categorization |
| Rigid Categories | Open-Ended Categories |
| Premature Closure | First Best Guesses |
| Polarized Evaluations | Loose Interpretations |
| Information Distortion | Information Openness |
| Unwilling to Change Categories | Willingness to Change Categories |

Essentially, to be more mentally flexible means to become aware that we can and will stereotype members of an entire group. However, refraining from typecasting an entire group on the basis of slim evidence, or no evidence, is a good first step. Using loose, descriptive categories rather than evaluative categories is another way to mindfully *flex* our stereotypes. Using a qualifying statement or a contextual statement to frame our interpretations allows an outgroup member to be an individual and *not* a representative of an entire group. This is a critical destereotyping step. Finally, being open to new information and evidence gives us an opportunity to get to know, in-depth, the most important membership identities of the individuals within the group.

Flexible stereotyping allows us to be more open-minded, but inflexible stereotyping makes us shortsighted. Flexible stereotyping reflects a willingness on our part to change our loosely held images based on diversified, direct face-to-face encounters. Interacting with individuals who are different from us can be uncomfortable at times. We may even feel nervous or anxious because of their strange behaviors or unfamiliar accents. By being aware of our own zone of discomfort and admitting that we are anxious or confused in terms of how to approach the cultural stranger, we may also be taking a solid step forward, moving from inflexible stereotyping to flexible relating and connecting. *Perceptions, ethnocentrism,* and *stereotypes* provide the contents of our filtering process. We now move on to the outcome, our response to intercultural outgroup members.

## Nearsighted Focus: Ingroup/Outgroup Membership Boundaries

### Us Versus Them

Social identity theory is the study of ingroup and outgroup membership. It is part of the formation of our personal identity. Recall from

our earlier discussions in Chapters 2 and 5 that ingroup members are people with whom you feel close and have some kind of emotional connection, such as family members, close friends, and church members. Outgroup members are individuals to whom you do not feel emotionally close; you feel a sense of detachment and perhaps distrust. Being with ingroup members gives you a sense of security and belonging, and being with outgroups gives you a foundation for comparing group values, norms, and behaviors (Brewer & Miller, 1996).

From this perspective, members of particular social groups often prefer to perceive their ingroup more positively than negatively, especially if the comparison is with another group (e.g., gang members). We oftentimes tend to avoid interacting with outgroups as much as possible due to emotional vulnerability and interaction uncomfortableness. One aspect of ingroup membership is loyalty. *Loyalty* is defined as "adherence to ingroup norms and trustworthiness in dealings with fellow ingroup members" (Brewer & Miller, 1996, p. 24). Social groups in the United States pledge their loyalty in many ways: wearing fraternity and sorority T-shirts and emblems, wearing colors or tattoos associated with gang membership, wearing team colors, or dressing up like the mascot during sporting events. This ethnocentric loyalty to and preference for our own group increases both our self-esteem and our esteem of our group, resulting in stronger ingroup ties. For example, Wisconsin's Green Bay Packers football fans are known as "cheeseheads." Cheeseheads wear silly cheese hats and feel great camaraderie with other cheeseheads, even though outgroup members think this is very weird.

As ingroups and outgroups communicate with each other, intergroup communication occurs. **Intergroup communication** happens "whenever individuals belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group identification . . ." (Sherif, 1966, p. 12). Group loyalty and attachment are prominent. The **ingroup favoritism principle** states that there is positive attachment to and predisposition for norms and behaviors that are related to one's group. Ingroup favoritism ultimately enhances our desired ingroup and personal identities. *Personal identity* refers to the individual attributes that we use to conceptualize our sense of *unique self* (e.g., individual motivation, intelligence, attractiveness) in comparison with other individuals. The ingroup favoritism principle can also translate to our understanding of why people behave ethnocentrically in different cultures (see the "Ethnocentrism and Communication" section). When we behave ethnocentrically, we are basically protecting our group membership boundaries and, more fundamentally, our habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and responding. Countless research studies across cultures (see Devine, Hamilton, & Ostrom, 1994; Leyens, Yzerbyt, & Schadron, 1994) indicate that people

in all cultures tend to behave with ingroup favoritism and outgroup prejudice.

## Where Do I Fit In?

Membership in an ingroup is a matter of degree and variation. If norms, values, and social relationships within an ingroup influence the communication patterns of group members, the influence should depend on the extent to which one shares the norms (Kim, 1988). Admission to the ingroup and acceptance by the ingroup, on the basis of shared norms and values, are interrelated: The more an individual associates with the ingroup, the greater the conformity that is expected and reinforced. At the same time, if the ingroup does not approve of an individual's behavior, it can reject the ingroup member. Because of this variation in conformity among ingroup members, the boundary lines of ingroup and outgroup are sometimes blurred.

Although our ingroups offer us a sense of belonging and security, they also have the power to reject us. Chung (1998) interviewed Korean Americans and Vietnamese Americans in Oklahoma to understand why and when individuals felt like outgroup members within their own group. She found two explanations. First, some individuals perceived themselves as ethnically attached to their own ethnic groups. However, during ingroup interactions, they were perceived by their ingroup members as Americans—not as members of their own ethnic groups. They shared statements such as the following: "I think I am very Vietnamese and American at the same time, but each of the two groups perceives me as not totally one or the other"; "Koreans think I am too American, but at the same time I am really a true Korean." In one sense, both groups believed this person was not a clear "fit" in accordance with their stereotypic group images. This implies a sense of marginality because to associate with two groups, an individual tries to claim ties with both cultures.

The second explanation has to do with the context and status of the individual with whom one interacts. For example, a 29-year-old graduate student of Vietnamese ethnic descent but who was born in the United States said,

"Definitely!! [Most ethnic] people (especially the elders) are very traditional and conservative. If everything is not done in a traditional manner . . . they think I am too 'American' even though [similar ethnic] people of my age think the same way I do. [Many] people do not see you for who you are, they only see that you are different, therefore you must be bad." (Chung, 1998, p. 62)

The context can embody a strong set of ethnic traditions and values that are associated with status, age, and deference. Traditional Asian values emphasize the importance of reserve and formality in interper-

sonal relations, for example, and these values reflect the biggest communication problems among different generations of Korean Americans and Vietnamese Americans. The struggle often implies reconciling the conflict between the need to retain ethnic values and the need to pursue the prevalent American cultural values—individualism and equality of respect.

In sum, many persons engage in an ingroup/outgroup boundary-regulation mentality to satisfy their need for security and inclusion. Having an overly strong ingroup loyalty, however, may result in unfair stereotyping, intergroup prejudice, and discrimination.

## Intergroup Attributions

One of the outcomes of interacting among outgroup members is intergroup attributions. The intergroup attribution process helps us to make sense of our encounters by allowing us to interpret and evaluate outgroup members' behavior. Every day, we try to figure out why people behave the way they do. If expectations refer to our anticipations of what will happen in a given interaction, **attributions** are the explanation—the meaning of why people behave as they do. We use assumptions and built-in social categories to explain behaviors or events occurring around us. (See Figure 9.1).

There are three biases that typically occur during intergroup encounters. The first is known as the *fundamental attribution error.* A Chicano student, Fernando, gave an example:

> If a competitor or someone I dislike would go to an interview and not get the job, I would say something like "it's because he's lazy and stupid, that's why he didn't get the job." Now if I went to a job interview and did not get the job, I would say something like "it's because of the economic recession, budget cuts, or those foreigners coming in to grab my job."

In Fernando's example, with competitors or strangers, we tend to engage in negative dispositional attributions by *overestimating negative personality factors* in explaining a stranger's negative event and *underestimating situational factors*. However, if we encounter a negative event, we want to protect our self-image by using situational attributional factors to explain away the negative episode.

The second attribution bias is called the *principle of negativity.* We typically place more emphasis on negative information concerning our competitors or outgroup members. That is, negative news catches our eye more than the positive news, and we often fall back on negative stereotypes when interacting with outgroup members. For example, if Tyrone holds a negative bias against Sydney, an outgroup member, when his friend asks him what he thinks of her, Tyrone will pick out the one or two negative incidents he has observed and ignore all of her pos-

itive qualities. Furthermore, Tyrone might subscribe to the *illusory correlation principle* and typecast the entire outgroup (in this case, all women) as incompetent or tardy on the basis of a negative overgeneralization of the entire group.

The third attribution, the *favorable self-bias principle,* arises from positive events concerning our own behavior versus a stranger's behavior. For example, if we get a job promotion (a positive event), we will tend to attribute it to hard work and personal perseverance (positive dispositional attributions). However, if a cultural stranger gets a job, we would more likely attribute the promotion to luck or situational pressure (e.g., quota system, affirmative action). If we do not get the promotion (a negative event), we might well attribute our own misfortune to the bad economy or budget cuts (situational attributions). However, if a stranger does not get the promotion, we would tend to use negative dispositional attributions, such as incompetence or lack of leadership qualities.

There are many comparisons between how we view situational versus personality traits when comparing individualistic and collectivistic cultures. When comparing how U.S. and Japanese students attribute success, or failure, in recalling details of slides of scenes in foreign countries, U.S. students tend to remember more successful incidents and they explain their success in terms of their positive personal qualities and abilities. Japanese students, in contrast, remember more failed incidents and tend to attribute their failures to lack of ability, which reflects what some term the *self-effacement bias* (Kashima & Triandis, 1986; P. Smith & Bond, 1993).
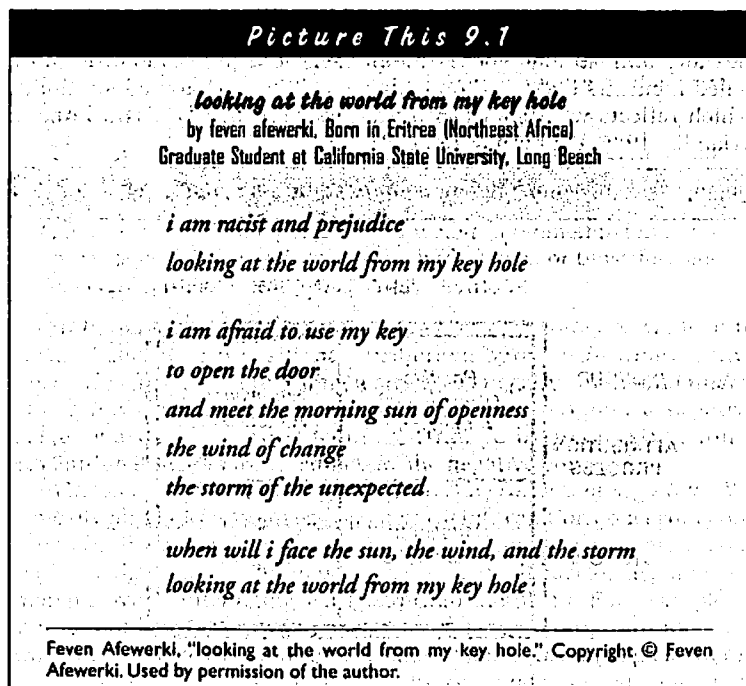
### Figure 9.1 Ingroup and Outgroup Attribution Differences

| ATTRIBUTION PROCESS | POSITIVE EVENT | NEGATIVE EVENT |
|---|---|---|
| INGROUP | Positive Dispositional Attributions | Situational Attributions |
| OUTGROUP | Situational Attributions | Negative Dispositional Attributions |

To sum up, using the beginning example of getting the job, if one of our ingroup members were to get a promotion, we would tend to attribute it to positive personality traits, such as being a hard worker and motivated. However, if an outgroup member got the job, we would attribute this event to any of the following possibilities: (1) luck or a special advantage; (2) manipulating and networking the right people; or (3) the person being an exception to the group (Pettigrew, 1978). In reverse, if one of our ingroup members did not get the job, we might be upset and believe it was an instance of unfair treatment or the bad economy. However, if an outgroup member did not get the job, we would likely use negative personality attributions to explain this (e.g., She wasn't going to get it anyway because she was a really lazy, irresponsible person).

## Shattered Lens: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

Before we discuss issues of prejudice, let's check out the poem in Picture This 9.1: "looking at the world from my key hole," by Feven Afewerki.

### Picture This 9.1

**looking at the world from my key hole**
by feven afewerki. Born in Eritrea (Northeast Africa)
Graduate Student at California State University, Long Beach

*i am racist and prejudice*

*looking at the world from my key hole*

*i am afraid to use my key*
*to open the door*
*and meet the morning sun of openness*
*the wind of change*
*the storm of the unexpected*

*when will i face the sun, the wind, and the storm*
*looking at the world from my key hole*

Feven Afewerki. "looking at the world from my key hole." Copyright © Feven Afewerki. Used by permission of the author.

A young child picks up behavioral cues from family members, the educational system, the peer group, mass media, and the general socialization process. These cues signal who belongs to the ingroup and who belongs to the outgroup. The term **prejudice** generally describes an individual's feelings and predispositions toward outgroup members in a perjorative or negative direction. However, prejudice can actually refer to either negative or positive predispositions and feelings about outgroup members—you can be indiscriminately for or against members of a particular group.

In the intercultural context, prejudice is a sense of antagonistic hostility toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because she or he is a member of that group. Such feelings are based on a "faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed" (Allport, 1954, p. 7). This hostility toward outgroup members stems from biased judgments made with little evidence to support the overgeneralization. Most people who hold prejudices do not interact with members of other groups because they believe it is a waste of their time.

### Prejudiced Remarks . . . or Innocent Jokes?

Prejudicial behaviors take many forms. One aspect includes comments and remarks. Let's think about this question for a moment: Do "innocent" remarks or biased jokes directed at an individual or ethnic group make them tolerable or acceptable? For example, in 2002, Los Angeles Lakers guard Shaquille O'Neal (Shaq) was interviewed on Fox television's *Best Damn Sports Show Period*. When the subject Yao Ming, a new basketball star, was mentioned, Shaq spoke with a mock Chinese accent and made mock kung fu moves. He told a reporter, "Tell Yao Ming, 'ching-chong-yang-wah-ah-soh . . .' I look forward to breaking down that mother f-----'s body. . . . He [Yao Ming] said my name three times, two in Chinese and one in American. You don't ever call me out. I'm from LSU" (Brown, 2003, p. D7). Shaq's comment was, in fact, problematic, according to Tang (2003), and many people knew about it from listening to Fox Sports Radio's *Tony Bruno Morning Extravaganza*, which played a recording several times.

Bruno, the radio host, said that Shaq's comment was "not racist" (Tang, 2003) and then invited listeners and radio commentators to call in jokes making racist fun of Chinese. For hours, people cracked jokes, such as offering free bike parking to increase Chinese attendance at basketball games, and so on. In the uproar following the broadcast, Shaq apologized to the public, calling his comments a joke. Yao accepted the explanation but added that many Asian people would not call this a joke. The question remains: Where do we draw the line? When is an ethnic joke just a joke, a form of prejudice, or a racist remark (see Snapshot 9.1)? Reflect on some of your favorite jokes or

recent jokes you have received online or via friends. How many are based on stereotypes or other forms of prejudice?

So, where do we draw the line? This question is difficult to answer. The main problem has a lot to do with our boundaries and the intention of the person who made the comment. We can argue that this form of ignorance has no malice or intent to offend. We can understand that in the unconscious incompetence stage, individuals do not realize that they are making comments that are hurtful, offensive, and intolerant. Shaq issued an apology. Many would argue that we should move on and forget about this little joke; Shaq meant no harm. However, communication is not only about intent; it is also about consequence or impact. When in doubt, we need to be mindful of our words and deeds—many times, words can actually inflict more emotional scars and pain than any physical damage. Furthermore, perpetually making such comments with intent to offend, hurt, and attack is the opposite side of the spectrum; opening a radio forum to invite more such comments is not mindful but a consciously incompetent, terrible act. Promoting such an event as Bruno did is disrespectful on many levels. Inciting groups to make ethnic or racist jokes against each other and pitting one against the other are hurtful, pernicious acts in very bad taste.

Individuals can hold prejudice against people on the basis of skin color, accent, and cultural or religious practices, for example. One illustration is the gay community. A popular South Korean star concealed his homosexuality for years. Hong Suk Chun admitted his sexual orientation during an interview with a magazine. Henry Chu (2003) reported that "fellow actors shunned him, teenage boys hurled abuse at him in the street, his parents suggested that the [entire] family should commit suicide for the shameful disclosure, and the job offers vanished, leaving Hong to ponder the wreckage of a once successful life" (p. A3). In a country that values traditional Confucian principles, rigid norms about sex-role differentiation make it virtually impossible to be "accepted" if one behaves in a different way. These societal norms and conventional expectations sow the seeds of prejudiced behaviors.

**Snapshot 9.1**
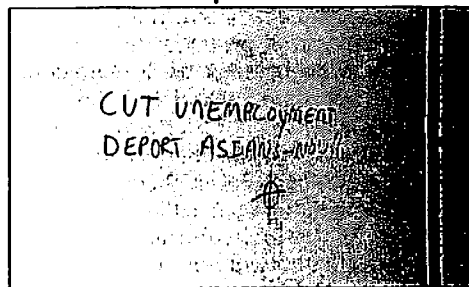
*Mindless graffiti, or intentional racist statement?*

## Prejudice: Explanations and Functions

To understand how the development of prejudice occurs, Schaefer (1990) outlined four explanations:

1. *Exploitation theory* views power as a scarce resource: To maintain higher status and power, one restrains those of lower status to improve one's own group position and security. Many people believe that the "glass ceiling"—meaning no minority has an equal opportunity at high-ranking positions—is an example of exploitation theory.

2. *Scapegoating theory* suggests prejudiced individuals believe that they are the victims of society. If something is not going well in their life, they will blame a minority group instead of accepting the basic responsibility for some other type of failure (e.g., bad economy, lack of skills).

3. *An authoritarian personality approach* emphasizes personality features, including a rigid observance of [or adherence to] conventional norms, complete acceptance of authority, and a high concern for those in power.

4. *A structural approach* to prejudice stresses the climate in one's society whereby institutions promote a "pecking order" among group members. For example, under Japanese law, anyone who was born abroad or whose parents or grandparents were born abroad is considered a foreigner, and foreigners have no voting rights.

Schaefer's set of explanations allows us to understand the development of prejudice by connecting concepts such as power, class, and position. These concepts serve as deep-seated barriers that are usually unpredictable and difficult to overcome.

Prejudice also serves communication functions as well. First, a prejudiced mindset acts as an *ego-defense mechanism*, acting as a shield to protect our fragile egos. For example, individuals can blame outgroup members for a failed event and, thus, protect their long-held values, beliefs, and standard ways of operation. Second, in our chaotic world, we have a need for *regularity*. To maintain this regularity, individuals view their own cultural values, norms, and practices as the proper and civilized ways of thinking and behaving. Some people are disgusted by the idea that Mexican Americans actually eat *menudo* (tripe soup). A comment such as "Why can't the Mexican Americans eat normal soup like us" reflects this function of prejudice.

Another reason why people engage in prejudiced remarks is that they *lack accurate cultural knowledge*. Knowledge takes time and energy to acquire. It is faster to defend the areas of knowledge we have already and ignore the unfamiliar. For example, if our ingroup is profi-

cient in computer programming, we may see outgroup members who have not learned to master computer programming as incompetent and backward. Finally, individuals engage in prejudiced communication to collect ingroup *rewards* and *approval*. Individuals can collect intangible rewards (e.g., approval, laughs) from the ingroup by acting out consensual beliefs.

The examples of these functions of prejudice allow us to understand the nature of the hostile and biased attitudes toward outgroup members. Some persons hold more prejudice than others, and prejudice also operates in conjunction with the context. We typically swing back and forth when dealing with our feelings of prejudice. Some individuals may display favorable attitudes toward one minority group but demonstrate strong racist attitudes against another. Some individuals may harbor no deep resentments against outgroups until their identity status is seriously threatened or challenged by the arrival of other groups.

## Discrimination and Practice

A prejudiced attitude, in any form, is difficult to censure and avoid. Prejudice is a biased mindset. Discrimination, however, refers to the verbal and nonverbal actions that carry out prejudiced attitudes. According to Feagin (1989), four basic types of discriminatory practices exist in a society: (1) isolate discrimination; (2) small-group discrimination; (3) direct institutional discrimination; and (4) indirect institutional discrimination.

When an ingroup member engages in *isolate discrimination*, harmful verbal and nonverbal action is intentionally targeted toward an outgroup member. This discriminatory behavior occurs on an individual basis. It ranges from the use of racist slurs to violent physical action. Read the story about Lee Ann Kim, telling about her first job in Missouri (see Double Take 9.3). What would you have done in her shoes?

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**Double Take 9.3**

A true story—Lee Ann Kim,
Anchor, *Channel 10 News*,
San Diego

In 1995, I got a job offer as the weekend anchor from the NBC station in Springfield, Missouri. At the time, I was working as the main news anchor in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, which was a very small news market lo-
cated an hour outside of Birmingham. While most Asian Americans cringe at the thought of living in the South, frankly, my experience in Alabama was a positive one. There were no burning crosses or men in 🖙

white sheets. The region had already gone through so many lessons of the Civil Rights Era, and since there were many African Americans who lived in the South, people of color weren't as big of a deal.

Little did I know that my employment there would make broadcast history. I was described in Springfield's local newspaper as "the first person of color to ever anchor the news in Springfield." Located an hour north of the Arkansas border, Springfield—or the Ozarks, as it is commonly referred to—[is] nearly 99 percent white, and anyone who was an ethnic minority seemed to be [among] the few immigrant Chinese who ran the drive-through Chinese restaurants.

Race was never made an issue with my coworkers, who welcomed me with open arms. However, out in the community, I was constantly reminded of how I was different. Almost daily, people would ask me, "How did you learn how to speak English so well?" Or "Where do you come from?" "How come your eyebrows are so high above your eyes?" Although these questions may seem ignorant and sometimes offensive, they were asked with genuine curiosity. Simply, this community was not familiar with diversity.

On the second weekend on the job, I was driving into work when I noticed our station's huge, white satellite dishes [had been] vandalized. Overnight, someone had spray painted them with swastikas and the words "F*** you N*****" and "N**** go home." "That's funny," I thought, "there aren't any African Americans around here." As I entered our newsroom, I was surprised to see my news director and general manager there since it was a 🖙

Saturday. They were huddled with other coworkers, and the way they looked at me made it instantly clear that the racist graffiti outside had something to do with me. "Are you okay?" they asked me. "Yeah, I'm fine," I answered. There was a pause. Then the epiphany came.

"Wait. That graffiti outside, that's about me, isn't it?" I exclaimed. My bosses and coworkers stood there, uncomfortably silent, then nodded their heads. It was later explained to me that our proximity to Arkansas and lack of diversity in Springfield made it an active region for the KKK, who considered anyone that was not white and Protestant as the "N" word. Frankly, I wasn't the least bit threatened by the whole incident. "At least we know they're watching," I said to everyone jovially, which managed to break the tension. My colleagues seemed much more offended by the vandalism than I was.

The way I see it, people respond to change in different ways. In this case, someone wanted to scare me because of their own insecurities and ignorance. Instead of scaring me, it gave me motivation to be the best journalist I could be, proving to that community that someone who looks like me can speak perfect English and cover the news as well as any white journalist. And hey, maybe people will eventually see beyond my eyes and think of me as an American. I stayed in Springfield for exactly a year before taking my current job in San Diego. But during that year, I became the unofficial corporate hog farm reporter. It was an experience I will always embrace.

—Lee Ann Kim—1st person story
and real name used
with permission

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When a band of individuals from an ingroup engages in hostile and abusive actions against outgroup members, this is known as **small-**

group discrimination. These actions do not have the normative support of the larger organizational or community network. Activities on the Internet are filled with such examples. A Website created for the World Church of the Creator invited anyone to join racist conversations. This group is dedicated to the "survival, expansion, and advancement of the white race" (Williamson & Pierson, 2003). This "us versus them" mentality is one of the pernicious outcomes of small-group discrimination.

If there is a community-prescribed endorsement of discrimination, we can call this **direct institutional discrimination.** Such practices are not isolated incidents but are carried out routinely by a large number of individuals protected by the laws of a large-scale community. For example, blatant institutional discriminatory practices against Japanese Americans were carried out in World War II. Though we were at war with the Italians, Germans, and Japanese, the Japanese Americans were the only group in the United States to be interned. Over 110,000 Japanese Americans were forced to live in shabby internment camps in California and Oregon.

Let me share a story with you. On May 6, 1882, Congress passed a bill prohibiting Chinese laborers from entering the United States. This was the first major restriction on any immigrant group entering the United States. In 1902, the Chinese Exclusion Act was made permanent. To this day, no other immigrant group has ever been banned from the United States. When the act was lifted in 1943, older and younger Chinese women were finally able to join their families after years of separation. This particular act hits close to home with me (Chung). If this act had not been lifted, my grandmother would never have seen her husband and her son again. The seventeen years my grandmother waited to rejoin and reunite with her husband and son were extremely long, heartbreaking, and painful.

**Indirect institutional discrimination** is a broad practice that indirectly affects group members without intending to. For example, the Standard Aptitude Test (SAT) serves as an indirect discriminatory tool. The tests use a "homogenized" standard—a strong White, middle-class orientation that assesses the mathematical and verbal fluency level of *all* high school seniors—and is, thus, an example of indirect institutional discrimination. Along with high school grades, the SAT is supposed to predict academic performance of first-year college students. Critics have long attacked the SAT as unfair because it tends to favor students who have wealthier families, attend better schools, or have access to test-preparation courses and tutors. From personal experience, we agree.

In my inner-city public school (Chung), we did not have the tools and equipment to prepare seniors to take the test. There was no budget, preparatory class, or strong honors program. The majority of parents were from the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder and did

not have the money or means to pay for test preparation. The unfair advantage and use of such "standardized" instruments in diverse populations in the United States have led to an exclusion of group members seeking better educational and, hence, brighter economic opportunities for their future. Without intending to, an institution has discriminated against these group members on a nonlevel playing field.

### Different Types of Racism

More specifically, the direct effect of discrimination and its very practice is racism. **Racism** can be summarized by the three following principles:

- feelings of superiority based on biological or racial differences, or both,

- strong ingroup preferences and solidarity; rejection of any outgroup that diverges from the customs and beliefs of the ingroup, and

- a doctrine that conveys a special advantage to those in power (Jones, 1997, p. 373).

People have racist attitudes and engage in racist practices because of many factors. One such factor is internal fear. Fear gives rise to our emotional fragility and vulnerability. When individuals worry that their cultural or social habits are being threatened, they want either to pounce or flee. Racism includes not only verbal insults but also what is *unspoken.* There are three basic examples we will discuss: racial profiling, perpetuating stereotypes, and hate crimes.

*Racial Profiling.* Ever since 9/11, complaints about racial profiling have escalated across the globe. For example, Mark Arner of the *San Diego Union Tribune* (2003) reported that for the second time in two years, more African American and Latino drivers in San Diego were pulled over compared with Asian and European American drivers. In San Diego, African Americans make up 7 percent of the population but were stopped by the police 10.4 percent of the time. Hispanics make up 23 percent of the population in San Diego. They were pulled over 27.7 percent of the time. Look at the statistics in Table 9.2.

| Table 9.2 Drivers and Traffic Stops in San Diego | | |
|---|---|---|
| __Ethnic Group__ | __Percentage of Drivers__ | __Percentage of Traffic Stops__ |
| African American | 7 | 10.4 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 15 | 11.7 |
| Hispanic | 23 | 27.7 |
| White | 55 | 50.2 |

Source: Arner, M. (2003, January 14). Study: Blacks, Latino drivers stopped more. *San Diego Union Tribune,* pp. B1, B5.

In another example, in December 2002, the U.S. Immigration Service recommended that all Arab Americans register at the office of immigration. More than 400 people were arrested or detained under suspicion of visa violations but *not* under suspicion of terrorism. Racial profiling is a bias that intentionally or unintentionally promotes unfair treatment. It also hides behind an invisible shield of serving and protecting the community. Until such biased practices are known, discriminatory actions are more difficult to pinpoint.

In another example, Lydia Polgreen (2002) talked about the first U.S. tour of Samyuktha Verma, a huge Bollywood Indian star who is comparable to Julia Roberts. When flying into New York City with her father, mother, and sister, popular singer Biju Narayanan, and comedian Jairaj Kattanellur, another passenger on board became suspicious. The authorities called in two fighter jets to escort the plane to La Guardia Airport. After 17 hours of questioning, the group was released. They had been asked what they were doing in America, whether they had been to Pakistan or Afghanistan, and what religion they practiced. They are all Hindus. Samyuthka Verma claimed she had no hard feelings about being singled out. "At first I thought I would never want to come to America again, I was so scared," she said. "But the police were very nice to us. They made sure we were comfortable and they treated us well." Although Ms. Verma did not feel personally threatened or offended, the actions of these officials are simply unacceptable.

*Perpetuating Stereotypic Images.* Racism is displayed as a "top-down phenomenon" (Jones, 1997). This occurs when members of the majority group present their group in a positive light and the minority in a negative light. The whole process is couched in terms of "protecting the majority group's image of fairness and objectivity, while making disparaging or condescending remarks about those other groups" (Jones, 1997, p. 385).

Let us examine the controversial clothing Abercrombie and Fitch promoted in 2002. In one of the three ads, Abercrombie and Fitch (A and F) pitched a campaign using stereotypical images of Chinese immigrants on their new shirts. Featured are two "Wong" men with slanty eyes, rice caps, and Chinese jackets. They own a laundry service. There is a "Rick Shaw," who sells good meat and quick feet hoagies by foot, and a man who operates a "wok and bowl"—a place to bowl and eat Chinese food (Abercrombie & Fitch, Summer Catalogue, 2000). The caricatures were chosen with historical antecedents in mind. The misleading message is that portraying Asian Americans as coolies, laundrymen, and rickshaw drivers is harmless fun. The Asian Americans, of course, did not find the caricatures amusing—the pictures reminded them of years of historical racism, institutional racism, and personal injury. Because of active protests by diverse Asian American groups, the shirts were pulled—and a formal apology stated that A and F did not intend to offend any Asian groups. Its intention was to design

a line of clothing with a twist of humor and levity added to the new fashion line. Even though A and F's intentions may not have been rooted in racism, its decision to construct these ads was not made mindfully and resulted in the perpetuation of harmful racist images.

*Hate Crimes.* A hate crime is typically motivated by hostility to the victim as a member of a group (e.g., on the basis of ethnicity/race, disability, age, religion, gender, or sexual orientation). These crimes may include such acts as physical assault, assault with a weapon, harassment, vandalism, robbery, rape, verbal harassment, an attack on people's homes or places of worship, various forms of vandalism, and murder. They can occur anywhere: in schools, in the workplace, on the Internet, in public places, and in the home. Unfortunately, proving a hate crime can be difficult because the authorities must show that a victim was purposely selected for the hateful behavior because she or he is a member of a group. Since 9/11, there have been three times the number of cases involving Arab-looking victims (Serrano, 2002). In Dallas, Mark Stroman "killed a clerk from Pakistan and another from India, and he partially blinded a third from Bangladesh" (Serrano, 2002, p. A8) because of their cultural origins and the way they looked.

In addition to racially motivated hate crimes, the threat to one's sexuality and sex role identity can lead to hate crimes, and even death. The Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GPAC) Website reported that two-thirds of the transgendered population said they had been physically or sexually assaulted. The most famous transgendered hate crime is the case of Brandon Teena. In 1993, two men, who found out that *he* was really a *she,* assaulted Brandon Teena. Despite threats of retaliation, Brandon filed charges. The police department and the Richardson County Sheriff did nothing. Three days later, the same young men killed Brandon. In 2002, Eddie "Gwen" Araujo, a young man from Vallejo, California, was beaten to death by three of his friends when they found out that Gwen was really a man. What is more disturbing is that it took two weeks for people who knew details of the crime to come forward. Hate crimes range from small incidents, to racially motivated incidents, to violent death.

Emotional insecurity or fear in the psyche of the perpetrator is one of the major causes of hate crimes. When individuals fear losing power or control, they may lash out aggressively. They may also fear outgroup members, who may bring alternative values, lifestyles, and norms that challenge the comfort zone of the ingroup. For example, a Chicana student told the class,

> In my household, it is seen as wrong to be attracted to someone from the same sex. We have a very traditional Mexican home. I think this has a lot to do with how people respond. Our parents are very religious and see homosexuality as a sin because in their homes it was never talked about. They were never educated about

the issue. I also believe that in the Mexican household, image is everything. Even if a girl were to get pregnant or the son would marry at a young age, the first words [from their family] would be "what are other people going to say?" There are a lot of things that are to be considered, from how people respond and react to how safe the individuals feel when they decide to disclose their truth and their choice.

This primal fear triggers a host of other powerful emotions such as confusion, frustration, hostility, anger, anxiety, and hate. Although some of these feelings may be legitimate and need mindful redirection, others have absolutely no merit.

## Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination

Reducing our own prejudice and discriminatory practice does not have to be difficult. Just by gaining accurate knowledge and being open-minded, we have started walking along an elastic path. Changing the way we feel or confronting our own vulnerable spots has a lot to do with the intentional reframing of how we view ourselves and others. Here are four practical guidelines to observe:

1. Start by being honest with yourself. Question everything you have learned and gained from your socialization process. Do retain the good ideas from your cultural or family socialization process but also confront unchecked biases and ethnocentric attitudes. Ask yourself, Why do I feel this way? Where or from whom did I learn this? Am I totally sure that this is an accurate fact and not a subjective interpretation about an outgroup member's behavior?

2. Check yourself before you evaluate the behavior of an outgroup member. Ask yourself, Am I engaging in overgeneralization? Am I using a well-balanced attribution process? A bias will be created by judging someone too quickly so that the interaction goes in a predictable manner. To engage in effective intercultural communication, taking the time to really know someone—without relying on pre-conceived stereotypes—can save long-term heartaches and headaches.

3. Remember that negative images concerning outgroup members will distort your perceptions. If you harbor any form of prejudice against outgroup members, you have just bought into the principle of ingroup favoritism and outgroup negativism.

4. Communicate your feelings by addressing them in the most comfortable forum. If you observe, read, or hear something

that is remotely unfair, then raise your voice assertively. For example, *Vanity Fair* magazine (February 2003) made an attempt at a humorous answer to a letter, but it backfired. The letter asked "Dame Edna" which language would be the most beneficial to learn. She responded by telling the person to forget about learning Spanish and, on top of that, made other offensive comments directed at Spanish-speaking people. One thousand responses flooded the publisher's e-mail box. As a result, *Vanity Fair* issued an apology for having made tasteless comments and prejudiced remarks.

In essence, we need to continue to dialogue about these culturally sensitive issues. Many times, such discussions can be painful, or even hurtful. But the fact that we are willing and able to express indignation at the pain, humiliation, anguish, frustration, and despair shows that we care. In our partnership dialogue, we need to be sensitive to those who suffer but not be overwhelmed by our emotions to the point of paralysis or inaction. *There is no right way to say the wrong thing.* Listening with an open mind, an open heart, and emotional alertness may help both ingroups and outgroups to connect on a deeper level.

## Intercultural Toolkit: Recaps and Checkpoints

To be more *flexible communicators* during intergroup encounters, we have to understand the basic concepts that form mindset filters, such as ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudice. In this chapter, we talked about key factors that cause us to hold biases against outgroups. These key factors are selective perception, ethnocentrism, and inflexible stereotypes. In addition, we also discussed intergroup attribution biases with many vivid, yet painful, examples. We also explained the underlying reasons why people engage in prejudiced thinking and discriminatory acts. To round off our discussion, we suggested several effective ways to reduce prejudice and racism in an assertive manner. In becoming more flexible intergroup communicators, remember to check the following:

- *Start with a clean slate.* Be flexible with your first best guesses. Look below the surface of the iceberg and remember that appearances or looks more often than not do not represent an individual's multifaceted self. The more you remind yourself with a "clean slate" mentality, the less clutter in terms of flexible communication with dissimilar others.

- *Use your most precious gift: your brain.* You have the ability to think carefully about how you are thinking and how others are thinking and behaving. By being open to multiple perspectives, you can meta-talk with yourself and conclude, "I

don't behave that way. But I will not make any judgment until I understand how this behavior meets the expectations or norms of the other person's culture."

- *Continue learning, reading, and gaining knowledge about those who are around you.* We all come from different paths. Taking this intercultural class is a very good start. Let your teacher and other classmates help you—stay humble in your learning, but do form your own flexible judgments as you cumulate your learning in this class. Be informed and check out the original sources of some of the ideas that have been exchanged in class and stories that you have heard through secondhand sources. Take some quiet time to reflect on your intercultural learning journey.

- *Remember, all of us are works in progress.* Analyzing your ethnocentric tendencies in an honest manner forces you to consider your deep-rooted beliefs, values, and habitual ways of thinking. This type of self-exploration brings to the forefront all of the issues you did not think existed with "you." "Do I have prejudices? Make judgments about others? Speak and behave insensitively? Never!" That is what you used to say. Be committed and be aware of your ethnocentric biases.

- *Monitor inflexible stereotyping of outgroup members.* Know that you cannot *not* stereotype in social interaction. However, in stereotyping outgroup members, you are categorizing the behavior of a large group of individuals under generalized labels or categories. Because stereotyping is an inevitable process, you must monitor your typecasting process of outgroup members and your ingroups. Thus, you have to engage in flexibly "minding" your own social categorization process. ✦

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## Chapter 10

# What Are the Best Ways to Manage Intercultural Conflict?