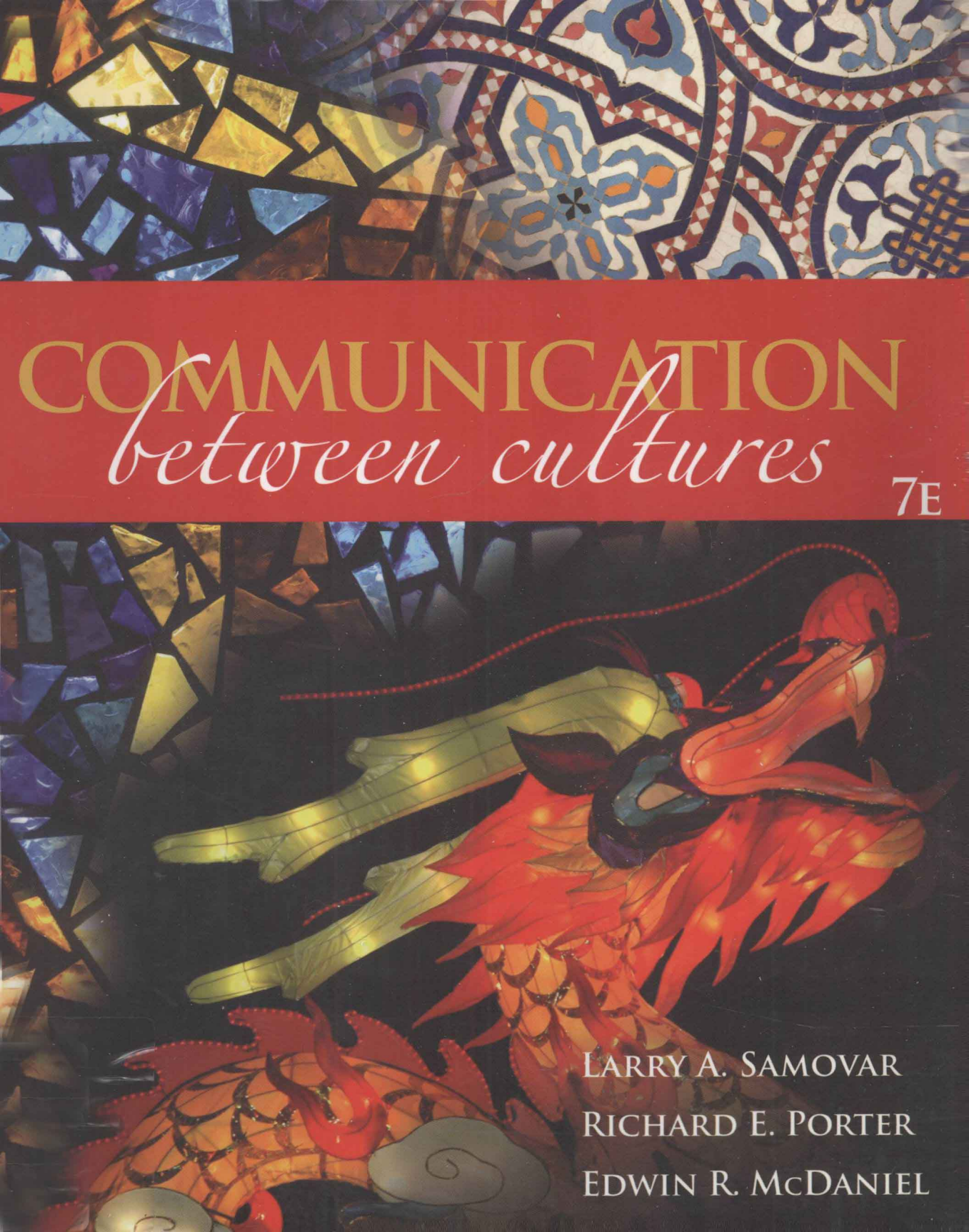

COMMUNICATION between cultures

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RICHARD E. PORTER
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SEVENTH EDITION

Communication Between CULTURES

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Preface

If one finger is sore, the whole hand will hurt.

CHINESE PROVERB

Our lives are all different and yet the same.

ANNE FRANK

We approached the occasion of a seventh edition with three very different reactions: pleasure, excitement, and caution. Our pleasure was great when we realized that our previous efforts were successful enough to warrant this new edition. It means that during the last thirty-eight years, our message regarding the importance of intercultural communication appears to have had merit—and an audience. Our excitement centered on the realization that we were once again going to be able to tinker with what we had done in six earlier editions. We knew, however, that we needed to be cautious and prudent when advancing additional perspectives and material. We did not want to abandon the orientation that contributed to the book's popularity. We believe that we have been able to fuse the past, present, and future of intercultural communication into this new edition. We have retained the core of the field, added current thinking and research, and staked out some new territory.

This book is still about the unique relationship between communication and culture. More specifically, it is about what happens when people from different cultures come together to share ideas, feelings, and information. Knowing that communication and culture work in tandem, we have tried to incorporate the basic principles from both topics throughout this book. Intercultural interaction is a daily occurrence for a growing number of people, so we have designed this text for individuals whose professional or private life brings them into contact with people from cultures or co-cultures different from their own. We, therefore, treat communication between international cultures as well as communication between domestic co-cultures in the United States.

Rationale

Worldwide interest in intercultural communication grows out of two interrelated premises. First, you live in an age when changes in technology, travel, economic and political systems, immigration patterns, and population density have created a world in which you may regularly interact with people from different cultures. Whether or not you welcome those changes, they will continue to grow in both frequency and intensity. Huston Smith said much the same thing when, in *The World's Religions*, he wrote,

"When historians look back on [the twentieth] century they may remember it most, not for space travel or the release of nuclear energy, but as the time when the peoples of the world first came to take one another seriously." Second, people are now sensitive to the truism that culture affects communication in subtle and profound ways. Your cultural background and experiences help determine how the world appears to you and how you interact with that world.

Approach

Fundamental to our approach is the belief that all forms of human communication involve action. Put in slightly different terms, communication is an activity that affects you as well as the recipients of your actions. Whether you are generating or receiving words or movements, you are creating and producing messages that are received and responded to by other people. Any study of communication must include information about the choices you make in selecting your messages, as well as a discussion of the consequences of those choices. Hence, this book takes the view that engaging in intercultural communication is pragmatic (you do something), philosophical (you make choices), and ethical (your selected actions have a consequence).

Philosophy

A dual philosophy has guided us in the preparation of this book. First, it is to the advantage of the nearly seven billion of us who share the planet's limited resources to improve our intercultural communication skills. The world has grown so small that now we must all depend on each other—whether we want to or not. As simplistic as it sounds, what happens in one place in the world now can affect people in many, many other places. Second, many of the obstacles to understanding can be reduced by motivation, knowledge, and an appreciation of cultural diversity. We hope to supply you with all three. Culture and communication, we have come to believe, involve personal matters, and as scholars, we have developed a mutual philosophy about intercultural interaction. It is our contention that the first commandment of any civilized society must be: *Allow people to be different as long as those dissimilarities do not create hardships for others*. At times, you will observe that we have openly stated our own positions, and we make no apologies for them. We have also made a conscious effort to hold our own ethnocentrism in check, but for those instances in which it has accidentally surfaced, we apologize.

New Features

The seventh edition of *Communication Between Cultures* brings a number of significant changes and a host of new features. We should point out that some of the new content has been guided by the excellent feedback provided by our readers and reviewers. For example, a number of reviewers suggested two major changes for the seventh edition, and we have incorporated them both. First, they recommended that the material on stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism be moved from the last chapter of the book to a much earlier chapter. Hence, we updated the material on those four key

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concepts and moved them from Chapter 11 to Chapter 4, where we examine them as part of our discussion of how a misguided and overzealous cultural identity can create problems. Second, some of the reviewers asked that we expand our treatment of interpersonal communication. We have responded to that suggestion by complementing what we already had in Chapter 1 with a more detailed analysis of the basic components of interpersonal communication. There are, of course, many other alterations that are worth noting.

- The first change you might detect is a visual one. We have included interactive prompts in the form of "boxes" scattered throughout the book. The purpose of these interactive boxes is to engage the readers, and we have provided three kinds of boxes. Boxes marked "Remember This" highlight an important point within the chapter and ask readers to pause for a moment and carefully think about the concept highlighted in the box. Boxes with the heading "Imagine This" offer intercultural scenarios intended to call readers' attention to an intercultural communication problem involving people from two or more different cultures. The third series of boxes, called "Consider This," is intended to present an idea or issue that raises a question for readers to answer.
- Since the publication of our last edition, the influence of globalization on the world community has greatly increased, and it now affects a variety of contexts and a large number of institutions. Therefore, we begin Chapter 1 with an examination of how globalization is creating more and more intercultural interactions across an array of different contexts, which in turn are provoking an increased requirement for intercultural communication skills. Later in the book, we look at the impact of globalization on the family, the business arena, education, and the health care setting.
- Because of India's large population and new prominence as an economic superpower, we have added the topic of Indian history to Chapter 2. It is in this chapter that we look at the link between history, perception, and communication.
- Our treatment of the influence of information technology and mass media has been greatly expanded. In Chapter 4, we look at how cyber or fantasy identities can influence communication. Later we also examine how technology and media are altering family structures throughout the world.
- It is apparent that the topic of religion and worldview is an important one in today's world. Because of its importance, we have made some significant additions to the chapter on religion. For each of the six religious traditions examined, we added a discussion of that tradition's notions about death and/or the afterlife. Our rationale was a simple one: the way people conceive of death and an afterlife influences how they behave in this life. We also added material on spirituality and humanism. While these two worldviews are not traditional "religions," each holds sway over how millions of people see the world and take part in that world. Finally, because of all the attention and confusion surrounding Islam, we included new material in that portion of Chapter 3 so readers can better understand this important and complex religion.
- A globalized economy, the growth and importance of international organizations such as the European Union, transnational cooperation to combat the war on terrorism, and many other factors have created a demand for foreign language knowledge. A completely new Chapter 6 examines the symbiotic relationship between language and culture. The chapter contains information about and examples of how language reflects cultural values, and specific advice on how you can adapt your language usage to promote understanding during intercultural interactions.
- Because technology now influences lives around the globe, we have included an overview of language on the Internet in Chapter 6.

- Due to the increased interest in intercultural contexts, all three chapters dealing with intercultural settings have been completely revised. Much of the new material is aimed at improving your communication skills in the intercultural environments of business, education, and health care.
- The importance of education in a multicultural society is discussed in Chapter 9. This chapter offers new material about the learning preferences of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. It also gives advice on how to create classrooms that reflect the various ethnicities of the surrounding community so culturally different students can feel welcome and comfortable. In addition, we have added more material on intercultural communication competence in the educational setting and have advanced a number of useful communication strategies that apply to the multicultural classroom.
- In a multicultural society, health care providers must be not only competent in their health care specialty, but also competent in their communications with patients and co-workers from diverse cultures. We have added material to help health care providers develop multicultural sensitivity and improve their ability to communicate with culturally diverse patients. We have also introduced a section on death and dying that helps explain cultural diversity in how individuals and families deal with terminal illness.
- As we have shown throughout the book, there are increasing numbers of people who will be moving into different cultures because of work in multinational businesses or because of having to resettle as refugees. In Chapter 11, we have added a completely new section on venturing into a new culture. In this chapter, we provide information on how to develop intercultural communication competence in preparation for arriving in a new culture. We also discuss the psychological and emotional problems of settling in a new culture by examining culture shock and the problems associated with adapting to life in a new culture. We end our discussion with a review of the ethics associated with intercultural interaction.
- As we have done in prior editions, we have integrated fresh examples throughout the book, along with hundreds of new references.

Acknowledgements

No book is the sole domain of the authors. Many people contributed to this new edition, and we would like to acknowledge them. We begin by thanking our editors. First, we thank Monica Eckman, Executive Editor, who continuously encouraged us and give us the freedom to advance new ideas. Second, we are grateful to the numerous contributions to this new edition provided by Kimberly Gengler, Developmental Editor. Kim always managed to make made us believe our book was the only project she was shepherding through production—which of course was not the case. We will miss her. We are also especially pleased with our long affiliation with Wadsworth Publishing Company—now a part of Cengage. While we have experienced and survived numerous changes in ownership, editors, and management, and even corporate name changes, the basic integrity of the company has remained intact.

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We are grateful to our manuscript reviewers for their many helpful suggestions.

Finally, we express our appreciation to the tens of thousands of students and the many instructors who have used past editions. They have enabled us to "talk to them" about intercultural communication, and, by finding something useful in our exchange, they have allowed us to produce yet another edition of *Communication Between Cultures*.

Larry A. Samovar
Richard E. Porter
Edwin R. McDaniel

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CHAPTER 1

Communication and Culture: The Challenge of the Future

Human beings draw close to one another by their common nature, but habits and customs keep them apart.

CONFUCIUS

Lack of communication has given rise to differences in language, in thinking, in systems of belief and culture generally. These differences have made hostility among societies endemic and seemingly eternal.

ISAAC ASIMOV

We begin this book by stating two interrelated assumptions that serve to anchor everything we do from the start of the book to its conclusion. First, you share this planet with over 6.6 billion[1] other people who belong to thousands of cultural groups and speak thousands of different languages. Second, you currently live in an age when almost every person on the earth, regardless of his or her location, language, or culture, is or can be interconnected with everyone else. Many of those connections will be obvious as you walk across your campus and hear students speaking a language other than English or interact with coworkers from different ethnic groups. Others may not be so obvious until an event like the U.S. home mortgage crisis impacts world financial markets or an earthquake in Taiwan halts microchip production at two plants and the world electronics industry comes to a temporary standstill.[2] Now, more than at any other time in history, what happens in one part of the world touches all parts of the world. This book is about your adapting, adjusting, and taking part in this "new world." It is our belief that because most significant values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are rooted in culture, it behooves you to understand how cultural experiences help explain the way people perceive the world and carry out the business of daily living. Specifically, this book seeks to answer some of the following questions:

- Why are you often uncomfortable when encountering people who are different from yourself?
- Why do people from different cultures behave in ways that seem strange to you?

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