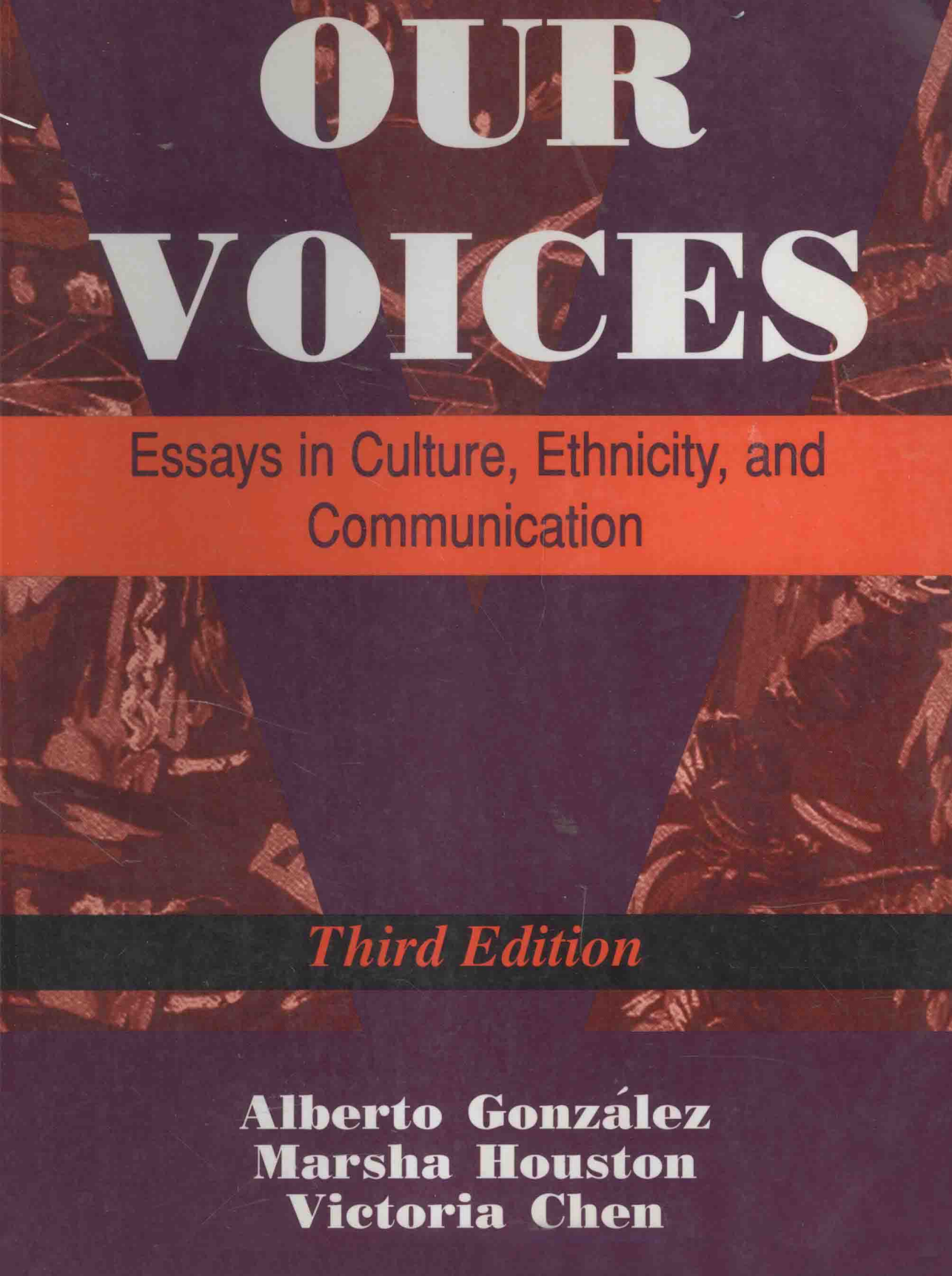
OUR VOICES
Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication
Third Edition
Alberto González
Marsha Houston
Victoria Chen

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Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication

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To those who spoke unheard before us.

Acknowledgments

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Foreword

Orlando L. Taylor

Howard University

One of my favorite stories involves a little boy who loved to hear his mother read tales to him about lions. The boy was simply fascinated with the lion, king of the jungle. A regal and most beautiful animal who never, absolutely never, lost in battle when in combat with another animal.

But one thing was most perplexing to the little boy about these stories. It was the fact that the lion always lost battles in which the opponent was a man.

How could it be, the boy wondered, that this most powerful animal warrior, who never lost a battle when in combat with other animals, would invariably lose when in combat with a man?

One day, the boy asked his mother about this. In all of the stories she read to him, why did the lion always manage to lose against man?

With a slight smile, his mother replied, "Son, that's an easy question to answer. You see, as long as men write the books in which these stories appear, the lion will always lose!"

The book you are about to read, *Our Voices* (Third Edition), reminds me so much of this tale. As long as the story of human communication—whether presented in journal articles, books, or monographs— is written largely from a selective, traditionally privileged viewpoint, those people without such privilege always lose because of limited opportunities for contributing stories in their own voices. All of us who study communication also lose the chance to encounter this multitude of human communicative experiences in our literature.

Since the First Edition's publication in 1994, *Our Voices* has offered publishing access for scholars from groups traditionally unrepresented or marginalized in communication studies. Here, these individuals have the opportunity to tell cultural communication stories from their particular cultural perspectives. Providing such a forum is critical to all of us who desire a deeper and more concrete understanding of cultural diversity and, thereby, of the human condition.

As an African American male born before World War II, I feel enlightened and empowered when I encounter the visions of the gendered, generational, and cultural groups represented in *Our Voices*. The stories, critiques, ideas, and emotions shared by these authors illumine both our common humanity and the immensely diverse range of human cultural communicative experiences. In this latest edition, *Our Voices* remains an important forum through which cultural voices that were muted for far too long are brought to light and celebrated as we begin our journey into a new millennium. ✦

Introduction

We began this project in April, 1991, during a panel titled Cultural Diversity and Communication: Exploring the Curriculum at the Southern States Speech Communication Association Convention. Because the organizers were sensitive to the ways in which speech communication had previously silenced or marginalized the perspectives of ethnic minority scholars, we often found ourselves speaking as the "minority voices" on conference panels. During one panel, a note made its way down the table from Marsha Houston to Alberto González and Victoria Chen. It proposed that we compile our voices and those of others we knew who were not being sufficiently heard—and develop a single book of essays. The book would offer the views of minority groups different from those in volumes already written from the cultural majority perspective. It would also serve as a point of departure for those interested in exploring how the theoretically grounded telling of experience constructs and informs about a culture and its participants. The result was the birth of the first edition of *Our Voices* in 1994.

Since then we have used this book in our classes, consulted instructors who have adopted it for their students, and heard from various people who generously shared their thoughts and comments with us. Some have told us that our work has provided a refreshing, challenging, and useful perspective for studying intercultural communication, and others have suggested different topics for inclusion. We were further delighted and deeply honored that the book won the 1994 Distinguished Scholarship Book Award given by the International and Intercultural Communication Division of the Speech Communication Association. Nothing gratifies us more than knowing that the contributors' and our ideas have been so recognized and valued in our own discipline. Moreover, it has also come to our attention that the perspectives we encouraged in this volume have found their way into other scholars' works. We believe that we have made a difference in how people study and understand intercultural communication.

In the Second Edition, we expanded the range of marginalized cultural voices by adding two new sections: Celebrating Cultures and Living in Bicultural Relationships. The concepts behind these sections stem from the comments of those who read and used the First Edition. The section titled Celebrating Cultures extends beyond those voices critical of the discrimination and injustice experienced by minority groups to emphasize that every culture is something to celebrate. The essays here invite readers to participate in the celebratory activities that are vividly described. The cultural significance of these celebrations changes over time within evolving social and political contexts, transforming and recreating the meaning of communication through their cultural practice. The section titled Living in Bicultural Relationships highlights the complex process of the social and political construction of "race." The authors discuss the possibilities for genuine interracial friendship and the struggles of mixed-race individuals who endeavor to construct and enact coherent cultural identities. Some authors' biracial backgrounds provide them with a unique challenge, especially in a society where there is an ongoing and paradoxical conflict between the value of diversity and the promotion of homogeneity.

In this Third Edition, we have added another new section: Valuing and Contesting Languages. The four new essays in this section recognize the political, emotional, and pragmatic dimensions of language. Three new essays are also included in Part III and Part VII. In Part III, the new essay deals with cultural experiences in

cyberspace. The first new essay in Part VII addresses immigration politics, and the second new essay critically examines the hybrid experiences in a transnational world.

Spurred by the emerging debate on immigration policies and the intensifying interracial conflict in the United States during the late 1990s, the direction of definitions of race and culture is shifting. Some despair over the flux of new immigrants and the heightened visibility of minority groups, but others find cultural diversity emancipating and a unique strength in America, celebrating such changes toward a more colorful and polyphonic society. Because these issues require insightful and passionate interpretation, we have added two new chapters about immigration: Chapter 33, "Traversing Disparate Cultures in a Transnational World: A Bicultural/Hybrid Experience," and Chapter 34, "Women Writing Borders, Borders Writing Women: Immigration, Assimilation, and the Politics of Speaking." Our task for future editions remains challenging. We now feel a sense of responsibility and urgency to provide more space to diverse cultural voices and perspectives.

In this Third Edition, we maintain the same theoretical view that race, culture, gender, class, and ethnicity are not "external" variables but rather inherent features in an ongoing process of constructing how collectively we understand and participate in the larger social, cultural, and political discourse. This in turn continues to shape the way individuals perceive these issues and acknowledge the multiple and historically conflicting narratives that create and recreate what we call American society.

Purposes and Goals of This Anthology

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing well into the 1980s, the mission of intercultural studies was largely to prepare students for travel abroad, which usually meant Europe. Studies of cultural communities in the United States were considered "intracultural," just as America was thought to represent one culture. At best, non-mainstream cultures, like radioactive elements, were assumed to possess a diminishing half-life due to the process of assimilation. At worst, such cultures were deemed non-standard, irrelevant, and inferior.

But today, a different reality challenges the presumption that a passport is required for intercultural experience. A continuous flow of immigration extends to the United States, especially from Asian and Latin American countries; demographic trends indicate that ethnic populations are increasing more rapidly than Euro-American populations; accessible air travel allows first- and second-generation U.S. citizens to visit their ancestral lands with relative ease; racial and ethnic populations, unlike their European predecessors, are reluctant to relinquish cultural origins; and increasingly interdependent and volatile global economies and politics bring awareness of the world's people into our everyday lives. The metaphor of the melting pot has been challenged by a social movement that not only celebrates cultural pluralism but also engages a critique of the assimilationist tradition. *Our Voices* was inspired by this dynamic reality. It is intended as a resource for exploring the relationships between culture and communication.

The resulting essays examine communication in a variety of settings and from a variety of cultural perspectives. *Our Voices* signifies that each contributor is writing from the perspective of his or her cultural experience instead of writing to accommodate the voice that is culturally desirable by the mainstream Anglo standard. This collected work offers an alternative for those interested in learning something about culture, ethnicity, and communication from the viewpoint of ethnic scholars. Our premise is that communication has much to do with specific individuals' perspectives in social interaction, and that one person's unique descriptions and interpretations of his or her experience will contribute to a better understanding of that person's cultural group as a whole.

One purpose of this book is to provide a discussion of the communication styles and practices of cultural groups from these writers' points of view. Currently in American intercultural studies, writers from the dominant culture and some ethnic writers who represent and reproduce the interests of the dominant culture often "speak for" cultural communities to which they are unrelated. Through the privileged form of scientific inquiry, these scholars often display unfamiliarity with the specific practices that lend significance to the general cultural categories or dimensions that are created. Furthermore, we rarely hear any single cultural participant's voice in the abundant intercultural work that has been produced by various researchers. Surely, research by the cultural outsider is legitimate and can be useful, but the literature does not yet reflect a *balance* between the voices of the dominant perspective and our voices—the voices in this volume.

Many of the contributors to this book teach courses in intercultural communication. They report that students and instructors alike complain of one ironic fact: the lack of a truly intercultural perspective in intercultural literature. In a field that has traditionally adopted a Eurocentric theoretical and methodological approach, this book offers the first collection of works by so-called "minority" scholars' who address cultural and intercultural issues in what we hope are accessible, helpful, and intriguing essays.

A second purpose of this volume is to maintain a consistent focus on communication and culture. Each essay applies concepts and ideas from areas of the communication field (such as rhetoric, mass communication, and interpersonal communication) that examine how culture influences the creation and sharing of meaning and how various meanings and symbols constitute what we call cultural reality. Our goal then is to place communication practices within specific cultural contexts. Each essay addresses the question "What is a cultural explanation and interpretation for this communication phenomenon from the ethnic scholar's perspective?"

A third purpose is to invite *experience* into our understanding and studying of cultural communication. Shuter (1990) noted that most intercultural research is essentially directed toward "theory validation" and fails to describe how people actually live and interact. He argued, "The challenge for intercultural communication in the 1990s. . . is to develop a research direction and teaching agenda that returns culture to preeminence . . ." (238). The notion that theory is developed solely through the traditionally defined scientific paradigm is ethnocentric. As Christian (1988) observed, "People of color have always theorized—but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic. . . [O]ur theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddle and proverbs, in the play with language, because dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking" (68). What Marsha Houston wrote of feminist research also applies to intercultural research. She stated that as students of human communication we should be open to "research methods that free communication scholars to emphasize the experiential rather than the experimental, the specific case as much as the general tendency" (Stanback 1989, 190).

Some readers may not recognize this anthology as a product of "typical" intercultural research. It is one of our goals to expand and recreate the notion and scope of "scholarly work," providing an alternative form to learn about cultural practices and to engage in intellectual conversations. We take the anthropologists' idea of "experience-near understanding" very seriously, believing that one can be better enlightened by the rich stories and experiences told and lived by real people than by scientific findings reported by researchers. We also view this experience-driven approach as a complement to theory-driven approaches in intercultural communication research. Part of being human is our capacity to tell stories and to actively interpret social activities and cultural experiences. As Rabinow and Sullivan (1987) stated, "This interpretive turn refocuses attention on the con-

crete varieties of cultural meaning, in their particularity and complex texture . . ." (5–6).

A fourth purpose of this anthology is to demonstrate the vast cultural diversity within any given racial, ethnic, and national category. In much of the intercultural literature, studies of African American, Asian, Asian American, Native American, and Latino/a communication tend to treat these cultures monolithically; that is, they reduce each category to one type. Our premise is that there is not "one" style of any particular ethnic group any more than there is one style of Anglo American communication. Collectively, our essays explore the rich variety of communication practices within a broad cultural spectrum.

Approaching Cultural Intersections: Our Influences

On the whole, we do not turn to the academic world for intellectual emancipation. After centuries of exclusion from and misrepresentation in academic literature, we derive our warrants from sources that we trust and appreciate, knowing that they are perhaps unfamiliar or may not be credible to mainstream interculturalists.

The pressure is great to put aside our cultural selves in order to gain scholarly credibility. We are led to think that the two cannot coexist. In *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black,* bell hooks recounts her experience as a graduate student in English. She concludes that "The academic setting, the academic discourse I work in, is not a known site for truthtelling" (1989, 29). Her professors and peers, women and men alike, required of hooks a transformation out of her cultural self and into someone they recognized. With such recognition came the possibility of control. "Within the educational institutions," she continues, "where we learn to develop and strengthen our writing and analytical skills, we also learn to think, write, and talk in a manner that shifts attention away from personal experience" (77).

Like hooks, many authors in this volume know all too well the struggle to avoid control and the determination to allow the personal experience of culture to inform the study of communication. This is particularly challenging because a number of communication departments in the United States may not even acknowledge what we do as research, given the traditionally privileged form of scholarship.

Inventing Landmarks

Our influences are interdisciplinary, contradictory, and often contentious. They are noted in the supplementary reading lists following each unit in this volume. We do not include them for any purpose other than to indicate those sources that resonate with our own experiences as members of cultural groups. In the field of communication, we invent and celebrate our own landmarks. The early work of Turner (1949), for example, remains a point of reference that exemplifies the merging of scholarship and the exploration of one's own cultural present.

Landmarks also include studies that assume and represent the "naturalness" of our everyday interaction and issues that concern us. Ramos and Ramos (1979) wrote that "the more I read and do research, the more I realize that there is a contradiction between my own self-image and what others have written about how I am supposed to be" (49–50). Therefore, the publication of articles by scholars, such as Sedano (1980), Garner (1983), and Nakagawa (1990), and of such books as *Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America* (Smitherman 1977) and The Afrocentric Idea (Asante 1987) is important because the analyses of communication grew out of a social context we could recognize. What had always been vital and visible to us suddenly became visible to the field of communication as well. The ordinary and extraordinary communicative practices and patterns of meaning among people of color began to inform the field's understanding of human communication.

Thus, the theoretical position of this anthology is couched within a broad social constructionist and interpretive framework. As Berger and Luckmann (1967)

stated, "[T]he sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for 'knowledge' in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such 'knowledge.' And . . . the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that the taken-for-granted 'reality' congeals for the [hu]man in the street" (3). Within this social constructionist approach we see both culture and communication as human creations and as ongoing processes of making history and meanings. The strength of this perspective is that it takes communication to be the primary social process by which we create meanings and engage in cultural practices. We recognize and welcome the reflexive connection between social structure and an individual's action, between communication and culture (Cronen, Chen, and Pearce 1988). Furthermore, the social constructionist approach also highlights the fluid nature of studying communication and culture. It draws our attention to the specificity, uniqueness, and richness of individual cases.

An interpretive framework allows the introduction of the ethnography of communication in our field, which we consider to be akin to our approach to understanding cultural communication. More than two decades ago, Philipsen (1975) concluded his study of the cultural talk of a Chicago neighborhood by stating, "We have barely any information on what groups in the United States view speaking as an effective means of social influence and what alternatives they envision. Such a deficit in the fund of information should be remedied by descriptive and comparative studies of American speech communities" (22). More recently, Carbaugh's (1988a, 1990) work examined various forms of cultural talking with the assumption that communication must be studied in a specifically situated cultural setting. Whereas the ethnography of communication examines shared cultural meanings and rules that render the individual's action intelligible, this book explores personal voices that contribute to shared cultural meanings.

Playing With Conceptualization

A brief introduction of our conceptualization of culture and intercultural communication may be useful to the reader. First, we want to emphasize the importance of regarding culture as a dynamic, communication-based idea. Humans are organizing beings, and culture is an organizing term. Culture is an idea for recognizing and understanding how groups create communities and participate in social activities. Geertz (1973) insisted that "culture is public because meaning is" (12) and noted that "[i]t is through the flow of behavior—or more precisely, social action—that cultural forms find articulation" (17). As an ordering term, *culture* renders coherent the values held and the actions performed in a community. At the same time, cultural participants engage in communication that constantly defines and redefines the community.

We are concerned with the production of cultural knowledge. As Geertz (1983) pointed out in *Local Knowledge,* we often treat our cultural knowledge as common sense, as something "natural" beyond question. We take our acculturation for granted without realizing that our experience is accumulative and always historically based. In the study of cultures, we attempt to learn as much as we can about this natural side to the patterns of everyday life. Culture then can be said to refer to a community of meaning and a shared body of local knowledge rather than a region or a nation. Charmaine Shutiva for example, is Native American, but this does not describe her culturally. Her cultural community is the Acoma of New Mexico. Gwendolyn Gong is Chinese American, and her cultural community is the Chinese of the Mississippi Delta. Both are American citizens, yet their dialogue is intercultural.

Second, we see culture as an idea that is creating and being recreated symbolically. For example, one day, Alberto González had a meeting with Charmaine Shutiva. When the meeting was over, both had to walk to a classroom in a nearby building. During the walk, a thunderstorm began. González offered his umbrella to Shutiva,

but she declined. "We pray for rain in the desert," she said, laughing in the storm. "It's against my teachings to shield myself from something so sacred." As the two walked on, González ignored the glares of passersby who judged him selfish for not sharing his umbrella. Shutiva then turned to him and said, "But that doesn't mean we can't run!"

Langer (1942) wrote that language transforms experience. For the Acoma, the desire for rain in the desert was transformed into solemn prayer. Moving beyond language, for Shutiva the prayer's meaning was transformed into a nonverbal act (i.e., refusing the umbrella and exposing herself to rain). In this episode one cultural belief of the Acomas was enacted and reconstructed through verbal and nonverbal symbols. Access to symbols becomes access to the shared meanings of a people. For Geertz (1973), cultural analysis is "sorting out the structures of signification" (9). And as Carbaugh (1988b) stated, "[I]f one wants to understand the action persons do, from their point of view, one should listen for the terms they use to discuss it" (217). Both statements suggest that cultural meanings are constructed through people's use of symbols, both verbal and nonverbal. Communication then is an ongoing process of reconstructing the meanings of the symbols through social interaction.

Our experience-driven view of intercultural communication allows a reevaluation of previous literature. For example, Hall (1976) wrote, "[T]he natural act of thinking is greatly modified by culture . . . [t]here are many different and legitimate ways of thinking; we in the West value one of these ways above all others—the one we call 'logic,' a linear system that has been with us since Socrates" (9). From our perspective, Hall is only partially right. Western societies *have* privileged logical demonstration and scientific reasoning as "ways of knowing." "The West," however, is not one culture. Hall could not contemplate that various cultural communities exist *within* the West that privilege epistemologies other than logic and linear reasoning. Furthermore, in Hall's influential work, we miss the voices of real cultural participants who narrate their personal stories and cultural experiences to shed light on the ways of knowing as described by the scholar.

A useful conception of culture allows a critique of power in society. We believe communication and social power to be interdependent. Kramerae, Schulz, and O'Barr (1984) noted that "Speech functions in different ways for different cultures as well as for different individuals and groups within a culture" (13). In a hierarchically stratified society, the communication styles and practices of every individual are not accorded equal prestige. Members of privileged social groups have the material resources and social position to define their ways of speaking and acting as "standard" and to define other groups as "deviant," "incompetent," or "powerless."

Yet, as individuals and groups negotiate their relationships with one another, ways of speaking are redefined or recoded according to culture-specific criteria. For example, Marsha Houston remembers an African American woman who had been a top debater at a predominately white high school. During her first year at a traditionally black women's college, this student ran for class president. Her campaign speech, a model of the low-keyed Anglo American rhetorical style taught in her high school public-speaking class, was greeted by her classmates with polite applause. Her opponent's speech, enlivened by the high-keyed Afrocentric delivery style characteristic of such African American orators as Jesse Jackson, received an enthusiastic ovation. The student later confided, "When I heard the audience reaction to my opponent, I knew I'd lost."

The contributors to this volume demonstrate how socially privileged speakers use communication to diminish the voices of those less privileged and how cultural communities are empowered by a recreation and reinvention of historical-traditional communication forms, styles, and strategies. Admittedly, in a North American society that tends to value the universal over the particular, attention to cultural community can be both emancipating and awkward.

Yet if human experiences are indeed characterized by storytelling and the creation of meanings, we offer this volume as an invitation to a form of intercultural communication inquiry in which ethnic scholars create their own research agenda and contribute to a truly polyphonic cultural melody.

The Essays in This Book

Each essay represents what each contributor feels is most significant to share about his or her culture. Some contributors respond to what they perceive as gaps in the knowledge we possess about their cultures. Others acknowledge "the central role that narrative structure plays in the formation of the self and in the construction, transmission, and transformation of cultures" (Witherell and Noddings 1991, 3) and employ narrative to express their cultural knowledge.

As editors, we organized the essays not by approach but by overlapping concerns centering around: (1) examining of the language of self-identification and construction of "others"; (2) exploring the intersection of culture, sexuality, and gender; (3) describing the cultural knowledge imbedded in various communication contexts; (4) relating the affirmation available in cultural celebrations; (5) interpreting the fluid and negotiated uses of language; (6) addressing the complexity of living a biracial identity; and (7) suggesting the experience of crossing in and through multiple cultural systems of meaning.

Part I: Naming Ourselves

Victoria Chen's essay begins with the assumption that the autobiographies of ethnic Americans provide the most captivating and useful sources for learning about the construction of cultural experience. By examining one Chinese American woman's writing, Chen explores the double voice in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior.* She argues that the hyphen commonly used to designate ethnic Americans marginalizes their position.

Thomas Nakayama's essay poses the question: What does being an American mean? As a fourth-generation Japanese American who has never visited Japan, Nakayama is still constructed as the "other" because of his Asian heritage and physical characteristics. He tells us what it is like to be a "perpetual foreigner" in one's native country and asks the reader to redefine Japanese American experience as central, instead of peripheral, to the making of American culture and history.

Sidney A. Ribeau recounts his struggle to unite his personal and intellectual identities as an African American and a communications scholar. He highlights the importance of the articulation of African American experience and its conspicuous absence in intercultural literature. Ribeau uses Afrocentricity as an example of how historically marginalized Americans and ethnic scholars can recreate their identity through communication.

Dolores V. Tanno, echoing Victoria Chen's discussion of double vision for Chinese Americans, provides a response to the central concern of this section: What do we call ourselves as ethnic Americans? She argues that each ethnic self-reference is a rhetorical device insofar as it communicates a particular story. Tanno then offers the possibility of multiple names that allow the historical and cultural continuity of identity.

Part II: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender

Sheryl Perlmutter Bowen reflects on the particular intersection of her Jewish upbringing and the feminism she has adopted as an adult. Yet even her Judaism is specific to her position as a woman because "Jewish women and men have traditionally lived in different worlds." Perlmutter Bowen describes how cultural roles are open to transformation in traditional ways and reinterpreted on the basis of new values and perspectives.

Alberto González and Jennifer L. Willis-Rivera offer a tribute to Selena Quintanilla Perez, the "fallen star" of Tejano music. They use remembrances of the singer's career and their own journey through her hometown as an interpretive framework to understand how Selena's death began a dis-

course that revealed a cultural divide between some Mexican Americans and Euro-Americans.

In two separate essays, Navita Cummings James and Charles I. Nero offer meditations on their personal and gendered communicative lives. James traces her own meanings for blackness and black womanhood, as a "baby boomer, middle-class African American woman who grew up in the integrated North," to the personal narratives of her extended family. Nero charts key moments in his life by interweaving poetry, popular song lyrics, feminist and gay-lesbian theory, and personal experience to probe the meanings of home, family, and community for African American gay men.

Bishetta D. Merritt discusses the persistent illusions beneath the apparent changes in African American female characters on primetime television. She argues that television's portrayal of black women has not advanced far beyond traditional images of "the oversized, sexless mammy [and] the yellow gal of unbridled passion."

Part III: Representing Cultural Knowledge in Interpersonal and Mass Media Contexts

Computer mediated communication is becoming increasingly popular. People may shop online, download music from their favorite performers, view solar eclipses and meteor showers that are continents away, and even listen to politicians who answer questions from internet subscribers. But do these online interactions provide new opportunities for intercultural dialogue and critique, or do they merely reproduce familiar preferences of power elites? Radhika Gajjala probes the ambivalences and paradoxes that pervade information communication technologies (ICTs). How do real life (RL) and virtual life (VL) blend into one another? How do ICTs render her at once a victor and a victim in the struggle to resist domination? How do ICTs allow her to disguise her identity as an Indian woman of the diaspora, and still proclaim that identity? Her essay addresses these issues as she describes her own efforts to establish open discussion websites.

Margarita Gangotena describes Mexican American family communication. Through a review of several critiques of previous social science research on Mexican Americans, she states that research on la familia has been biased, leaning toward an assimilationist agenda. That is, a family is assessed as "normal" only if it conforms to Eurocentric models of family structure and communication. Gangotena argues that the distinctive rhetorical devices Mexican Americans use to show family affiliation should not be seen as rejections of Eurocentric values but as enactments of values informed by Mexican heritage.

Gwendolyn Gong writes about the conversational strategies of the Chinese from the Mississippi Delta, on the basis of her experience growing up in that part of the United States. She presents a unique combination of Chinese Confucianism and Southern Genteelism that influences Mississippi Chinese when they talk. In a personal narrative, Gong provides us with insightful analyses of how these conversational features play out in communication practices. Like Nakayama, she also experienced others' construction of her Chineseness.

Concentrating on the traditional black church, the central institution in most African American communities, Janice D. Hamlet analyzes traditional black preaching as "the careful orchestration of the biblical scriptures interpreted in view of the people's history and experiences." Her study reinforces the notion that, in addition to worshipping, the rhetorical action of preachers powerfully preserves the cultural identity of black communities.

Marsha Houston explores some of the barriers African American women perceive as preventing them from having satisfying conversations with white women. The communication climate is such that "blacks can never take for granted that whites will respect them, treat them with courtesy, judge them fairly, or take them seriously." Houston concludes by describ-

ing attributes of a positive communication environment.

Diana I. Ríos discusses how mass communication functions in two seemingly contradictory ways. Among Mexican Americans in Texas, Ríos argues, media messages serve to acculturate audiences to mainstream values and to preserve and strengthen ethnic identity. Interestingly, the latter is not achieved simply by the existence of Mexican American-owned media outlets or through Spanish language messages. These forms of communication quite often serve the goal of assimilation. Ríos suggests that media outlets open to audience involvement in the development of media content are more directly connected to the function of cultural self-preservation.

Charmaine Shutiva contradicts a popular notion that Native Americans are a "stoic, quiet people." She argues that, as an element of interpersonal talk, humor often functions pedagogically as it is used to maintain traditional values of respect for nature, humility, and care for the group.

Part IV: Celebrating Cultures

Detine L. Bowers describes how her participation in a *Kwanzaa* celebration in Milwaukee reconnected her with her heritage and provided her with a powerful spiritual awareness. As she states, "*Kwanzaa,* a Swahili term for the first fruits of harvest, represents a time. . . to encourage healing through the common bonds that nurture community." Through her rich descriptions of the ceremonies, Bowers invites the reader to share her recollections of the past in the praise of ancestors.

Lynda Dee Dixon relates how her Oklahoma Cherokee family celebrates the memory of Mamaw, their eldest matriarch. Mamaw encouraged her extended family to remain united by willing her house to the family and stipulating that it be used by consensus for reunions and as a safe refuge. Shaver describes how the family's care for the house came to represent Mamaw's care for each member of the family.

Mary Fong's essay focuses on the Cantonese dialect's use of words during the Chinese New Year's celebration. She describes various cultural practices that bring good luck throughout the new year, such as giving red envelopes of money to children or young people. Fong also explores various types of speaking rituals that offer good fortune during this most important Chinese holiday.

Radha S. Hegde writes about Asian Indian celebrations that fortify a sense of affirmation for immigrants and provide an important way to assert a cultural distinctiveness in a pluralistic American society. She argues that ethnicity and identity are not static and that through celebrations a hybridization of cultural form is created and recreated in the Asian Indian community. As Hegde writes, the present becomes "an eclectic production of the past."

Part V: Valuing and Contesting Languages

Dexter B. Gordon argues that through everyday talk, Jamaicans "demonstrate their particular brand of struggle and survival." Through language use, the speaker reveals a knowledge of the colonial presence and an opposition to that presence. Gordon charts the cultural significance of Jamaican Patios.

Mahboub Hashem's essay analyzes the various interpretations of *wastah* (translated as 'mediation'), a culturally significant term in Lebanon. He explains how *wastah* is used with different meanings in various contexts such as religion, kinship, and political leadership. Hashem's discussion emphasizes that the meaning of communication is always in use and that the significance of any cultural term is embedded in the way we use language in our social relationships and practices.

Steven B. Pratt and Merry C. Buchanan describe a language on the verge of extinction. Although the loss of tribal languages is widespread among native peoples, the Osage Nation faces the challenge of recuperating its language among the young. The authors report that tribal governments either are not aware of the centrality of language to cultural vitality, or understandably choose economic development over cultural development. Pratt and Buchanan

conclude by describing a language and culture restoration program that, unfortunately, did not gain approval from the Osage tribal government.

Karla D. Scott's discussion of black English, like Dexter B. Gordon's discussion of Jamaican Patios, argues that judgments about Ebonics, or black English, as a defective form of Standard English are misinformed and culturally biased. Scott describes the efforts to equate black English with stupidity and slang as consistent with a power majority that feels threatened by blackness. Scott concludes by explaining the dangers of language rejection, and the advantages of language-switching, among speakers of black English.

Eric King Watts focuses on a particular language device—use of the *N-word*—in hip-hop culture. Watts locates himself between generational understandings of the term. From this location, he knows that the term can be taken as a "racial slur" that should never be uttered. But, as a hip-hop head, he also takes the term to signify "close friendship, cultural awareness, or fearlessness." Watts argues that the "controversy over the *N-word* is normal and necessary." For Watts, the use of the term is a spoken, sonic summary of "the troubles of living in community with (white and black) others."

Part VI: Living in Bicultural Relationships

Brenda J. Allen, an African American teacher, describes her close friendship with her professional colleague, a white lesbian woman named Anna. Sharing similar experiences as members of traditionally marginalized groups, Brenda and Anna illustrate the possibility for an interracial friendship that is founded on respect, caring, understanding, and reciprocity.

Tina M. Harris celebrates diversity in the complex and often difficult process of constructing a coherent biracial identity. She explores the experiences of biracial individuals and the process by which they search for cultural identity. Harris argues for a fusion of biracial identity rather than the forced dichotomy that is imposed on those with biracial parentage.

Diane M. Kimoto reflects on the role that adoption continues to play in the shaping of her cultural identity, stressing that one's identity makes sense only in relation to others' identities. With her multiracial biological and adoptive background, Kimoto relates to herself as "a living example of the United Nations." Being *hapa* (i.e., from a mixed Asian American background) affirms her power to self-identify in different social contexts.

Richard Morris offers a critical look at the consequences of forcing Native Americans to assimilate into mainstream American society. He argues that requiring "the other" to cast off cultural identity leads to a culturally divided self for Native Americans and that cultural differences cannot be cultivated by creating a unity of singularity.

Part VII: Traversing Cultural Paths

Aimee M. Carrillo Rowe advances "alternative ways of thinking about contemporary immigration. . . . " By taking a "spatial view of cultural politics," Carrillo Rowe addresses the following issues: What are the legitimized and delegitimized histories of movement and mobility? Who moves from here to there (and from there to there), and in what ways? Who has access to, or occupies, particular spaces and what do those spaces mean? How are spaces rewritten? Carrillo Rowe uses cases from migrant labor as well as her own personal history to rethink immigration.

On the assumption that making sense and creating meaning are inherent features of communication, Ling Chen's essay offers a detailed description of how Chinese students in the United States interpret the various facets of American culture. The value of Chen's work lies in the specific, detailed accounts given by native Chinese at different stages of their acculturation into American society. As she points out, things can "go wrong" in intercultural communication if we impose our own cultural knowledge when trying to make sense of interaction that has a totally different logic from another cultural perspective.

Elizabeth Lozano describes "the particular tensions and differences that appear

when the posited 'standard' voice—the Anglo-Saxon American—confronts a 'marginal' voice—such as the Latino— with the consequent noise and mutual inflection of accents." She shows how an entire range of perceptions and behaviors reveals contrasting Latin American and Anglo cultural concepts of "public space." As a bicultural participant observer, Lozano articulates an insider's assumptions in both Anglo and Latin American settings.

Casey Man Kong Lum's essay begins with an anecdote highlighting the fact that various dialects and practices exist and can create confusion and difficulties when two Chinese persons communicate. He examines three dominant groups of Chinese immigrants in New York City and discusses how they maintain their own ethnicity through specific forms of interaction.

Finally, Maria Rogers-Pascual describes her changing relationships to her birth culture (English) and her spirit culture (Spanish). She states: "Learning to operate in both cultural systems at such a young age was the key to my emotional survival." The immigrant, she argues, often adopts a bicultural identity strategically. That is, the creative blend of cultural elements, hybridity, generates a new space for both subversion and resistance to domination. Rogers-Pascual explores this hybrid identity through her work in a multinational non-profit organization.

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Even with the addition of seven new essays in this Third Edition, *Our Voices* only scratches the surface of the social and cultural knowledge that informs one's symbolic creations of and responses to the experience of living in the United States. We hope to emphasize that various cultural worlds are outgrowths of a complex history that has indeed incorporated multiple cultural voices. And we hope that this new edition continues to inspire the reader to explore further and become part of the ongoing conversation about cultural experiences.

As we conclude this introduction, we survey still more sites of cultural conflict: demonstrators in Virginia wave confederate flags in opposition to a statue honoring the late tennis star, Arthur Ashe; the FBI and Egyptian authorities are locked in disagreement over the meaning of a pilot's prayer spoken in Arabic as EgyptAir Flight 990 plunged into the Atlantic; in Hudson, Ohio, a school board rejects teachers' recommendations for a history text because it emphasizes the accomplishments of women and people of color in the United States; a tax assessor in Huntsville, Alabama, refuses to give standard tax exemptions to those who do not speak English very well and is ordered by a court to end this practice.

These events and others ignite rather than perplex us. The struggle to dominate others is as old as society. Understanding domination is an intellectual project, but we are immersed in this project in very real ways. When one of us walks into a restaurant and overhears someone say, "What's *that* doing in here?" We cannot help but respond emotionally as well as intellectually. Yet people often ask us, "Why are you so angry?" To them, we ask our own question. . .

'Why Aren't *You* Angry?'

One of the reactions some students have to the essays in *Our Voices* is to ask, "Why is the author so angry?" or "Why are they (i.e., the members of the ethnic group written about in the essay) so angry?" Struggling to comprehend this response, we keep in mind that most students, regardless of their gender or ethnicity, are unaccustomed to reading texts in which scholars speak frankly about their cultural communicative experiences. We usually respond by saying, "You are mistaking the earnest and sincere tone of the essay for an 'angry' one." Since we know a central belief of the white Western tradition dominating education in the U.S. is that anger is typically unproductive, irrational venting of emotion, we do not want students to mistake the thoughtful, carefully reasoned, reflec-