The global horizons of professional communication: critical theoretical approaches to the discipline’s emerging cultural issues

by

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ABSTRACT

Within the field of intercultural professional communication, the concept of culture has been a professional and ideological cornerstone that has structured the field’s research, practice, and pedagogy. Culture is used to isolate or label the differing communicational assumptions and practices among the world’s diverse audiences, while culture defines the research questions; research sites; and the social, political, economic, and historical aspects of the globalizing world that are considered relevant for examination.

However, the importance given to culture often exceeds the concept’s actual usefulness. Culture tends to eclipse other variables that nevertheless shape an audience’s identities and communicational practices, while culture skews the field’s concept of globalization toward questionable “global village” or “flat world” metaphors that undermine the field’s commitments to promoting effective communication, preparing students for a global economy, and ensuring the field’s global relevance.

I propose that the field consider new disciplinary strategies and perspectives that can better respond to the professional and ideological contingencies of the globalizing world. These strategies include reimagining and deemphasizing the concept of culture, recentering audience analysis around the concrete yet flexible concept of community, and developing a more inclusive perspective on the globalizing world.
CHAPTER 1. GLOBALIZATION, PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION, AND CULTURE

As globalization continues to reconfigure the world’s social structures and institutions, professional communication theory, research, practice, and pedagogy continue to reconsider their fundamental assumptions about “professional” and “communication.” For example, the discipline has reassessed the scope and meaning of communication within global-scale networks (Weiss 1997; DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden 2002; Starke-Meyerring 2005), the impacts of transformative media and global communication technologies (Hawisher and Selfe 2000; St. Amant 2002b), and professional practice within a world-wide service- and information-based economy (Wick 2000; Hart-Davidson 2001; Starke-Meyerring 2005).

Despite this readiness to adapt, however, the discipline of professional communication has not revised its fundamental assumptions underlying intercultural professional communication, the field in which the discipline confronts its globally diverse audiences. Certainly, intercultural professional communication has been a well-researched area within professional communication (Weiss 1998; Lovitt 1999). Conceptual models for understanding cultural issues have been imported from sociology and anthropology (Beamer 2000; Bosley 2001), and these models have been adapted to professional contexts (e.g., Varner 2000). In some instances, disciplinary assumptions have been critiqued and refined (Munshi and McKie 2001; Keshishian 2005; Jameson 2007).
Still, I contend that the discipline’s conceptual frameworks do not adequately respond to the ways the various aspects of globalization have inflected culture, cultural identity, intercultural communication, and ideological issues. The discipline has tended to conceptualize intercultural professional communication as interaction between individuals representing distinct, more-or-less coherent cultural traditions. Culture, moreover, often appears to be an abstracted, autonomous social force that guides communicative interaction. With these notions, the discipline has made great strides in identifying the fact that international audiences can differ fundamentally and that communication strategies must be reconceptualized and adapted to reach diverse audiences.

What’s missing from disciplinary accounts, however, is a clear indication of how globalization, globalization’s ideological structures, and intercultural interaction affect the concept of culture, cultural identity, the discipline’s global audiences, or intercultural communication. In the globalizing world, traditional notions of culture, the notions that the discipline has relied on, have become destabilized and much more fluid. Increased global communication introduces new ideas into previously closed communicative networks, and relatively large migrant populations present different ways of living to previously homogeneous groups. Amidst this social flux, however, culture finds new stability as an ideological or political tool, and culture becomes a cipher in which political grievances, economic concerns, or ideological agendas play out. In other words, intercultural communication does not simply describe a meeting between fundamentally different people; rather, intercultural communication itself is a component of a larger scenario of cultural
destabilization and the political, ideological, and economic forces acting within the
globalizing world.

If professional communication is to remain vital for its global audiences in its
globalizing professional contexts, the discipline must fundamentally reconfigure its
approaches to intercultural professional communication. Not only must new approaches
understand how individuals struggle to maintain social and cultural stability within a world
that circulates cultural ideas rapidly and broadly, but new approaches must understand the
ways culture and cultural identity become social capital. Without an understanding of how
individuals relate to culture, cultural identity, intercultural communication, or globalization
itself, the discipline will lack an understanding of its globally diverse audiences or any
coherent strategy that can address them.

In this dissertation, I will use a critical and broad-based theoretical approach to move
toward this reconfiguration, analyzing and redeveloping the conceptual frameworks that the
discipline relies on to understand intercultural communication. I will focus on the central
organizing term of intercultural communication, culture, and examine the term’s definitions,
discursive functions, and ideological tones within the discipline, as well as the ways
globalization has impacted the shape and ideological uses of culture. With this analysis of the
term culture, the overarching goal is to develop teachable, practical, and ideologically
informed approaches to intercultural professional communication that respond to the
contemporary contingencies of the globalizing world.
Defining Terms

Three terms will be crucial to the discussions that follow: globalization, culture, and intercultural communication. I will develop these terms throughout the dissertation, but as a starting point I offer some broad, initial assumptions that will ground my use of these terms.

Globalization

In the broadest and most innocent terms, globalization describes “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (Waters 2001, p. 3). I begin with this definition to acknowledge globalization as a sociological fact with important ramifications for professional communication. However researchers may differ about the reach and saturation of globalization and its impact on local individuals, it seems clear that the last few decades have seen a marked increase in international commerce, interdependency, and global-scale communication (Jameson 2001; DeVoss, Jasken, Hayden 2002; Starke-Meyerring 2005). I will leave questions about the shape of globalization and its more specific ideological and professional implications for later in this dissertation.

Culture

Defining a term like “culture” is an extremely sensitive process. Raymond Williams (1983) has remarked that “[c]ulture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (p. 87). Not only do different researchers use the term to describe slightly different things; the very use of the term is ideologically charged. I will explore these
arguments in depth later. But here, as a starting point, I can identify at least two features of culture that are consistent across most contemporary scholarship.

First, most contemporary scholarship approaches culture through what Berlin (2003) calls “an anthropological formulation,” rather than a “class-interested notion of culture” that distinguishes high culture from folk or mass culture (p.xix). In the anthropological sense, according to Berlin, “culture is seen as the entire lived experience of humans in response to concrete historical conditions” (p. xix). Culture thus describes patterns of behavior, assumptions, artifacts, rituals, and the like that people use to organize social groups and make sense of their world. The express function of the term “culture” for research is, as Wallerstein (1990) argues, to describe “traits which are neither universal nor idiosyncratic” (p. 31).

The second feature of culture that I will mention here is its role in constituting subjectivity. In addition to the lived experience that responds to concrete historical conditions, culture includes, as Johnson (1987) explains, “the social forms through which human beings ‘live,’ become conscious, sustain themselves subjectively” (p. 45; see also Grossberg 1992, p. 22). The issue of subjectivity will become important later when I take up the role of culture in self-identity and the effects of globalization on local perspectives.

Apart from these two features of culture, I will leave for later any questions concerning culture’s ontological status, operationalizing the term in research, who can lay claim to or belong to a culture, culture’s ideological functions, or what is and is not “culture.”
These and other concerns about the term will be developed in more depth throughout this dissertation.

**Intercultural Communication**

Because I have left open many questions about the term culture, I define intercultural communication in a way that does not make specific claims about what culture is or how to define it. I borrow my definition of intercultural communication from Lustig and Koester (1998), who describe intercultural communication as “a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which the degree of difference between people is large and important enough to create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about what are regarded as competent behaviors that should be used to create shared meanings” (Qtd. in DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden 2002, p. 70). By extension, intercultural professional communication involves intercultural communication in professional contexts, which, Varner (2000) has argued, demand different intercultural skills than non-professional contexts.

With this formulation of intercultural communication, I acknowledge that there are communication situations, made more common by globalization, where the participants’ starting assumptions and expectations diverge greatly. However, for now I leave aside questions about how to define the participants’ differences or when precisely intercultural communication can be said to have taken place.
Background and Justification: Global Contexts of Professional Communication

To begin to develop conceptual frameworks for professional communication’s cultural issues, I will describe the position of professional communication in the globalizing world. In short, professional communicators find themselves at important nodes in global networks of communication and commerce. According to Starke-Meyerring’s (2005) thorough discussion of global professional communication, at least four features of globalization are having significant impacts on the discipline and exacerbating the importance of understanding diverse global audiences.

Global Interdependence

Vast, high-speed communicative networks have emerged to allow rapid, long-distance symbolic exchanges that link the events and fortunes in one part of the world to those of the rest of the world (Waters 2001). Within this setting, organizations that employ professional communicators are increasingly conducting business on a global scale (DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden 2002). As Starke-Meyerring (2005) argues, professional communicators increasingly “work for or provide services to transnational corporations [or other organizations], work in global virtual teams, and communicate in global networks” (p. 469).

As a result, these professionals and their organizations are often “influenced by diverse global, regional, and local policies” (p. 469). Weiss (1997) has argued that, in light of the ways professional communication practice is globalizing, it will be necessary to
“reconceptualize communication in a world in which the movement of people, goods, and information across cultural zones and national borders has dramatically increased” (p. 321).

**Digital Communication Technologies**

Global interdependence depends largely on relatively recent communication technologies, such as satellite networks and the Internet, that allow cheap, instantaneous connections between those who have access to the technologies. These technologies broaden the scope of traditional communication, drawing in diverse audiences, realigning the pathways and modes communication, and, ultimately, reconfiguring traditional ways of interacting with audiences (Appadurai 1996). Professional communicators, who increasingly work for transnational organizations, are enmeshed in these global-scale communication networks (Starke-Meyerring, Hill Duin, and Palvetzian 2007). The general scholarly consensus is that these new modes of communication have the potential to transform professional communication practice and necessitate new kinds of literacies (Hawisher and Selfe 2000; St. Amant 2002).

**Transformation of Economic Interaction**

The development of global-scale communication networks has been driven largely by the economic benefits they bring to transnational organizations. That is, within these networks an organization’s most valuable commodities, the ones best suited for global exchange, tend to be information- or knowledge-based (Appadurai 1996; Waters 2001; Hart-Davidson 2001). This information economy is both a result and cause of what Waters (2001) calls “the progressive ‘culturalization’ of social life” (p.124), or the tendency for experience,
including economic exchange, to be mediated more by symbols than by material products. From a Marxist perspective, Jameson (1991) explains that “exchange value has become generalized to the point at which the very memory of use value is effaced” (p. 18). In other words, something’s value is now more associated with the consumer’s desire for it than what it actually does for the consumer, to the point where, in many cases, symbolic services and the manipulation of text is more lucrative than producing material goods. Though I will discuss below how this international economy of symbols clearly has a material basis, for example, in infrastructure and local material conditions, the capacity for an economy to convert material exchanges into symbolic exchanges broadly influences its global scope.

Professional communicators have benefited from this culturalization of social life. In one sense, Wick (2000) has observed, “knowledge is [now] the focus of business and no longer a mere tool” (p.521): professional communicators increasingly find themselves at important nodes within global economic-symbolic networks, in which their knowledge management and information design skills are at a premium (Hart-Davidson 2001). Moreover, Starke-Meyerring (2005) has noted a “surge in the transnationalization of the service sector” (p.472), in which companies take advantage of the extensive global communication networks to project their symbolic manipulation services into the global arena. This projection makes it more likely that professional communicators will be active players in the globalizing world.
Increased Intercultural Communication

Within a globally interdependent world knitted together by transnational communication networks, traditionally underrepresented populations have become wrapped up in the global economy, diversifying both the audiences of professional communication and the workplaces that employ professional communicators. In this milieu, Starke-Meyerring, Hill Duin, and Palvetzian (2007) observe, “direct engagement with a greater variety of individuals who frequently do not share any cultural contexts becomes the norm rather than only a possibility” (p.145). Professional communication practice is correspondingly transformed, as Starke-Meyerring (2005) summarizes: “The transnationalization of business increases the interaction between professionals from multiple contexts, making the workforce more mobile, accessible, and diverse, resulting in pluralized identities and blurred cultural boundaries” (p.474). In other words, this new global diversity does not only imply that individuals participating in economic exchanges will have significantly different communicative assumptions and practices, but also that traditional notions of culture and identity are becoming less likely to describe these intercultural exchanges.

As a result, professional communicators will still need strategies beyond simple audience adaptation (Weiss 1998) for negotiating intercultural communication, as intercultural communication introduces new variables and constraints into the communication situation. But professional communicators will also need new concepts and frameworks for understanding the ways the notion of culture itself is changing. These skills
are crucial, as the professional communicator must be able to deliver comprehensible messages and ensure good relationships among team members, while the premium placed on knowledge-based products in turn places a premium on the smooth flow of information (St. Amant 2002).

To explain the critical need for intercultural communication competence, I should note here the controversy over globalization’s impact on cultural diversity. Some have argued that globalization is ultimately Americanization or Westernization, and ultimately tends toward global homogenization. The case has merit in some instances, such as Jameson’s (2001) discussion of the European film industry after the GATT treaty, and the nature and extent of the global diversity that many have observed is open to debate (Ching 2005, p. 293).

However, in most instances globalization tends to reinforce or even generate cultural diversity. For example, Appadurai (1996) has argued that even the global growth of characteristically “American” cultural style (e.g., films, music, television) involves local adaptation and appropriation to create new and unique cultural forms. Additionally, in most contemporary cases increased intercultural contact reinforces cultural boundaries, as people struggle to find a stable identity in the face of difference (Appadurai 1996). Ultimately, Waters (2001) argues, “A globalized culture is chaotic rather than orderly” (pp.125-6). Generally, therefore, local cultural diversity is not diminishing as the world becomes more economically integrated, and intercultural communication skills remain necessary in the
globalizing world, especially as traditionally underrepresented people gain more economic clout.

Given the increasing global interdependence, global-scale communication technologies, the importance of smooth communication in the information-based economy, and increasing intercultural interaction, professional communication must have responsive and nuanced conceptual frameworks to remain vital in the globalizing world.

**Explanation of the Critical Approach and Its Role in the Dissertation**

This dissertation will take a critical approach to develop responsive and nuanced conceptual frameworks for understanding intercultural communication. I define a critical approach in Horkheimer’s (2004) terms, as a perspective that rejects the naturalistic approach of traditional anthropology and sociology, in which researchers “see themselves merely as onlookers, passive participants in a mighty process which may be foreseen but not modified” (p. 59). In the traditional approach, such theoretical directions as the ideological implications of conceptual frameworks, explicit judgments about the things observed, or notions of advocacy are off the table. A critical approach, in contrast, more explicitly and actively allows the researcher to advocate changes of strategy, theory, and perspective to meet pragmatic needs and reconsider ideological perspectives. This approach, therefore, interrogates the assumptions that support the discipline’s theoretical frameworks, such as those surrounding culture, communication, audience, intercultural conflict, etc., to consider the ways these assumptions shape disciplinary research, pedagogy, and ideology.
The critical approach, however, does not dictate that the discipline’s conceptual frameworks should disappear entirely. In other words, the critical approach will reflect some assumptions in Foucault’s (2002) landmark work of discursive analysis, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and reject other assumptions. Like Foucault, I hold that “pre-existing forms of continuity” or coherent concepts, such as the idea of culture, “must not be rejected definitively…but the tranquility with which they are accepted must be disturbed” (p. 28). The critical approach, then, “must show that they [conceptual structures] do not come about by themselves, but are always the result of a construction, the rule of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized” (p.28). Unlike Foucault, however, I do not propose that we “rid ourselves of a whole mass of notions” to engage fundamental concepts such as “discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series, and transformation” (p.21). In other words, while I will question fundamental disciplinary assumptions about, for example, culture, ideological influences, or globalization, I contend that the discipline must have some set of articulated assumptions and conceptual frameworks to explore its professional obligations, namely, exploring ways to engage with global audiences. Thus, I believe that a well-vetted framework for intercultural professional communication can be a helpful “crutch” for characterizing and responding to globally diverse audiences, and I believe that distinctions can be made between frameworks that have explanatory power and frameworks that lack certain necessary assumptions or variables.

This dissertation’s critical analysis will explore two primary areas in which the conceptual frameworks of intercultural professional communication operate: professional and
ideological. Before more specifically outlining these two areas, I will explain the importance of conceptual frameworks for the discipline’s professional and ideological concerns.

**Professional Concerns**

Whether implicitly or explicitly, then, the field of intercultural professional communication relies on conceptual frameworks to understand and respond to the diverse audiences of the globalizing world. Critically examining these frameworks is important because the frameworks can often presuppose the findings that cultural research produces. Frameworks that are somehow inadequate or incomplete may fail to help researchers and professional communicators respond to contemporary cultural concerns. For example, Longo (1998) has argued that professional communication research often understands “organizational culture” in terms of discursive practices within a particular organization. With this conceptual framework, cultural research finds the means of effective communication within “the text itself” (p. 55), rather than in broader arrangements between writers, readers, and cultural systems of knowledge legitimation. In the case that Longo describes, a specific conceptual framework for studying organizational culture defines its terms to allow and favor one set of findings rather than another.

Analogously, conceptual frameworks used for intercultural professional communication research can presuppose certain ways of responding to global audiences, ways that may not be particularly effective. For example, conceptualizing intercultural communication as discourse between individuals from two discrete cultural groups suggests that effective communication is a matter of learning varying communication patterns and
finding compatibilities. While none would argue that an individual’s culture is a prediscursive essence that determines communication patterns (e.g., see Bosley 2001 or DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden 2002), framing cultural research in terms of discrete cultural groups lets the crucial phenomena of, for example, cultural hybridity and self-conscious cultural construction fall away (Jameson 2007). Critically examining the conceptual frameworks that intercultural professional communication uses can help redefine culture and intercultural communication in ways that respond more effectively to the contemporary globalizing world.

**Ideological Concerns**

Approaching the discipline’s traditional cultural frameworks critically means, in addition to examining the shape of intercultural communication in the globalizing world, examining how the concept of culture functions to support, emphasize, or reject certain ideological assumptions. That is, the very decision for researchers to conceptualize intercultural communication scholarship in cultural terms, rather than mundanely rhetorical, international, political, or economic terms, represents an ideological choice that presupposes certain findings and ideological leanings rather than others.

In other words, the very ground of intercultural communication—culture itself—is not innocent: culture obscures important forces acting within the globalizing world. With a cultural focus, communication difficulties among individuals from vastly different backgrounds become primarily communicative misunderstandings, rather than various forms of historical, political, or economic conflict. For example, in analyzing the “culture wars”
that have marked U.S. politics since at least the 1980s, Žižek (2006) argues that “culture war is class war in a displaced mode” (p. 360). That is, political strategists attempt to use “traditional values” issues to redefine the political terrain in terms of “family values,” etc., rather than in terms of economic issues, and populists sometimes rely more on cultural concerns than economic concerns to motivate their supporters.

Similarly, intercultural communication research that takes an exclusively cultural focus finds cultural conflict at the root of communication difficulties, when economic or political conflicts may also play a significant role. For example, Keshishian (2005) observes that the stereotypically “American” habit of competitiveness is sometimes described in intercultural communication textbooks as “an innate behavior in Americans” (p. 212). In response, Keshishian argues that competitiveness is a product of American capitalism. Competitiveness, in other words, is not merely something intrinsic to a cultural system, but rather depends on such non-cultural factors as capitalist infrastructure and social Darwinist ideology. Leaving aside for now the problems inherent in describing a single “American culture,” we can appreciate Keshishian’s central claim: that assumptions and practices described as “cultural” often have roots in political, economic, and other factors that are not usually seen as cultural. The decision to frame habits and practices in cultural terms thus represents a particularly ideologically charged use of the term culture. In the case that Keshishian describes, culture allows a researcher to obscure, intentionally or unintentionally, the various factors that create or support competitive behavior: an economic system (capitalism), an ideological system (social Darwinism), and political conditions (regulations,
property laws, etc.). By subsuming these variables under the organizing term culture, these non-cultural systems become characteristic traits that must be negotiated rather than analyzed and perhaps questioned. A critical approach to the use of culture, in contrast, allows an analysis of intercultural communication to explore the economic, ideological, and political edifices that support cultural practices.

**Professional Concerns within Cultural Frameworks**

To characterize the audiences of intercultural professional communication, researchers have tended to rely on the anthropological sense of culture, which allows cultural variables to be operationalized and catalogued. The intercultural professional communication literature has tended to rely on Hofstede’s cultural theories, or similar frameworks, to organize its discussions of culture (Weiss 1998). According to Hofstede (1984), culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one human group from another,” and the controlling analogy is that “[c]ulture is to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual” (p.21). Whether or not Hofstede is cited explicitly, similar definitions have been a characteristic of intercultural professional communication research. For example, Bosley (1993) describes culture as “an established set of values and a way of thinking that is passed from generation to generation” (p.53; see also Thrush, 1993; Warren, 2002). In such definitions, culture is akin to programming, a way of thinking, or a kind of group personality, in other words, a defined set of practices and assumptions that can be characterized and negotiated within communication.
While frameworks such as these have merit for the ways they emphasize the different assumptions and practices involved in intercultural communication, these frameworks overall have limited usefulness in characterizing intercultural communication in today’s globalizing world. Specifically, these frameworks do not account for the ways globalization itself has affected cultural practice at the individual level. That is, as Appadurai (1996) argues, traditional notions of local or homogenous cultural groupings, the notions on which intercultural professional communication research has relied, have been destabilized by two important features of globalization: worldwide communication technologies and increased migrations of significantly large populations (itself stemming from global interdependence). Both of these features have undercut the ability of cultural groups to divide “insiders” from “outsiders” and to maintain clear boundaries between “indigenous” and “foreign” cultural influences. As a result, homogeneous cultural groups are increasingly rare, and maintaining that intercultural communication takes place between various homogeneous, stable cultural groups becomes increasingly difficult.

Within the discipline’s professional concerns, a critical approach identifies two primary impacts of globalization on traditional notions of culture: cultural hybridity and the influence of non-cultural factors on the shape of culture.

**Cultural Hybridity**

Perhaps the most apparent destabilizing effect that globalization has on traditional notions of culture, cultural hybridity describes sets of practices and assumptions that blend local and global influences and, for this reason, cannot be classified according to traditional
cultural groupings. For example, Iyer (1989) describes the varied and enthusiastic ways that the American film *First Blood* was adopted into the cultural milieu of Southeast Asia in the 1980s. In the film, an American veteran of the Vietnam War, John Rambo, battles local police in Washington State. Though, as Kellner (1995) argues, the film allegorized the ways the U.S. attempted to come to terms with the unsatisfactory conclusion of the Vietnam War, Asian audiences received Rambo as an underdog hero and, in some cases, a role model. In this way, American text and Asian context were quickly blended to produce a cultural phenomenon that could not easily be categorized as *either* American or Asian, but rather both and, in some sense, neither.

To help generalize this point about classifying hybridity, we can turn to Bhabha (2002), a leading theorist of cultural hybridity. He locates hybridity in the spaces between the interconnecting parts of the globalizing world, claiming that “[w]hat must be mapped as a new international space of discontinuous historical realities is, in fact, the problem of signifying the interstitial passages and processes of cultural difference that are inscribed in the ‘in-between,’ in the temporal breakup that weaves the ‘global’ text” (p.217). To Bhabha, therefore, hyphenated identities such as “Japanese-American” represent novel cultural spaces that cannot be understood simply by tracing the heritage of either term. These hybrid identities are “not of an ontological cast, where differences are effects of some more totalizing, transcendent identity to be found in the past or future,” but rather “[h]ybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements—the stubborn chunks—as the basis of cultural identifications” (p.219). That is, cultural identity is defined not by clear belonging
in a particular cultural group, but rather by the very incongruence of the different components of identity.

In intercultural professional communication research, authors such as Weiss (1997, “Gods must be crazy”) and Jameson (2007) have begun exploring the ways cultural hybridity affects intercultural communication practice. While this is certainly a step forward, I contend that much theoretical work remains in exploring the ways hybrid identity emerges from the incongruous parts of identity. Additionally, because Hofstede’s cultural theories are deeply entrenched in the discipline, more work remains in exploring how hybridity impacts the notions of culture that the discipline has relied on.

**Influence of Non-cultural Factors on Culture**

While the notion of cultural hybridity can, in part, help illustrate globalization’s impacts on the concept of culture, hybridity alone may not constitute a sufficiently radical break with traditional notions of static culture to characterize contemporary global audiences (see Anthias 2001). Indeed, as Anthias (2001) argues, the concept of cultural hybridity can often preserve culture’s isolation from economic, political, technological, and other social variables that affect intercultural communication.

If the discipline is to more fully explore the ways globalization impacts traditional notions of culture, as this dissertation’s critical approach suggests, the traditional boundaries of what we may study under the term “culture” or “intercultural communication” need to be reexamined. More than 20 years ago, Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988) thus began to expand the boundaries of cultural research by describing a global cultural scene “where
popular culture is often the product of urban, commercial and state interests, where folk
culture is often a response to the competitive cultural policies of today's nation-states, and
where traditional culture is often the result of conscious deliberations or elaboration” (p. 8).
In other words, globalization and its multiple dimensions affect not only the ways cultural
practices interact to create hybridity, but also the role and uses of culture in daily life,
including the ways political, economic, and other factors affect cultural practices as well as
the ways culture serves these non-cultural purposes.

To help the discipline confront the influence of non-cultural factors on culture,
rigorous analyses within the field of cultural studies can serve as a guide. Cultural studies
generally expands the traditional anthropological definition of culture to include all
organized, pattern-based social practices, even those classified as “non-cultural” under
traditional frameworks. Hall (1980) describes culture in this vein of research as “those
patterns of organization, those characteristic forms of human energy which can be discovered
as revealing themselves—in ‘unexpected identities and correspondences’ as well as in
‘discontinuities of an unexpected kind’—within or underlying all social practices” (p.63).
Note here that culture includes “all social practices,” and not only those practices that can be
used to distinguish social groups, as Hofstede’s definition emphasizes. Grossberg (1991)
summarizes the implications of Hall’s position: “much of what one requires to study culture
is not cultural” (p. 21). By making culture subject to and an actor within the social milieu of
the globalizing world, the cultural studies definition opens up new ways to examine the ways
culture functions.
In one sense, including non-cultural contexts in cultural analyses makes cultural identity and cultural practice appear performative and situational rather than expressive and abstract. In the globalizing world, specifically, an expanded notion of culture allows a space to explore how an individual’s cultural practices and assumptions can be emphasized, deemphasized, or adapted during intercultural communication, as well as how communicative norms can be invented ad hoc to accommodate different communication contexts. That is, if “culture” can include all social practice, then individuals do not seem to operate under a special cultural “script” that dictates behavior, but rather cultural practices must interact with and be shaped by other social forces. The shape of cultural identity and practice during intercultural communication, therefore, must depend on a number of complex economic, political, or historical factors that influence the ways cultural identity is performed and received in specific situations.

In addition to making cultural identity appear more situational and performative, an expanded definition of culture allows researchers to explore how cultural identity and practice often depend on conscious construction and justification, or how culture can be used as social capital for political, economic, or religious purposes. For example, Fanon (2004) described the ways culture often served as a rallying point for anti-colonial struggles, as traditional indigenous practices and artifacts were rediscovered and came to symbolize national solidarity and a rejection of European imperialism. But culture can also be used to preserve the privilege and exclusivity of dominant social groups. For example, Giroux (1994) argues that, by the 1990s, culture in the U.S. had become a way to preserve race-based
privilege long after biological concepts of race had been popularly discredited: it was untenable to claim, for instance, that Latino/a students are incapable of learning, but it was more acceptable to claim that Latino/a families do not value education. In both cases, culture is invoked as a political or economic weapon, serving to ossify tradition, sharpen differences between groups, and preserve or challenge privilege.

Perhaps more important for intercultural professional communication, individuals also construct or emphasize cultural identity, depending on the situation, in ways that enhance their social capital or support their ideological biases, whether in the service of political concerns, economic concerns, or similar pragmatic ends. During intercultural communication, for example, an individual who resents the presence of a multinational business may heighten certain cultural behaviors to make the business feel unwelcome. In this sense, the cultural behaviors observed cannot simply be tied to an individual’s social background, but rather represent an interaction between non-cultural contexts and the selective performance of behaviors defined as cultural. While some intercultural professional communication researchers have begun to explore the ways non-cultural contexts influence intercultural interaction (e.g., Munshi and McKee 2001; Elahi 2005), a coherent conceptual framework has yet to emerge.

To account for the impacts that globalization has had on the shape of culture—in cultural hybridity and the non-cultural influences on culture—new conceptual frameworks must therefore be developed to help intercultural professional communication understand its global audiences. Limited concepts of culture that remain entrenched within the discipline do
not serve students or researchers well. In this regard, Berlin (2003) has argued that a “literacy limited to the mastery of atomistic skills renders students incapable of responding to the complex conditions that go into influencing them and the ‘global village,’ to use the current designation, in which they live” (pp.71-72). In this case, the method of learning that individuals differ and then cataloguing these differences obscures the ways globalization has destabilized traditional notions of culture. A more critical cultural framework, by contrast, would solidify the position of globalized cultural theories in the discipline and help researchers, students, and practitioners understand the global dimensions of intercultural communication.

**Ideological Concerns about Cultural Frameworks**

In addition to being unsuited for global professional communication, the discipline’s traditional cultural frameworks implicitly introduce difficult ideological issues into cross-cultural communication research. In part, these include the persistent questions about cultural representation, such as accurately characterizing international audiences, avoiding cultural essentialism and determinism, or distinguishing culture from subculture (Weiss 1998). Ideological issues also began to appear when I noted the influence of non-cultural factors on culture, for example, the ways culture can mobilize populations or serve as social capital, each of which implies an ideological stance that culture serves. A more fundamental ideological issue, though, is the very choice to discuss intercultural communication using the term “culture,” a loaded term that carries a relatively short history but a complex network of ideological assumptions.
I argue in this section that the concept of “culture” serves to classify, organize, and domesticate the global audiences of professional communication, and “culture” nods to a vague sense of diversity while obscuring other types of economic, political, or ideological diversity. As a result, the field of intercultural professional communication is in a poor position to address ideologically-tinged issues such as economic imbalance, social justice, or the exclusion of entire populations from the benefits of globalization, all of which affect and are affected by intercultural professional communication practice.

**How Culture Obscures Ideological Issues**

Intercultural professional communication has had a complicated relationship with ideological concerns, and understanding how ideological concerns emerge in the literature can help explain why critique has been relatively quiet. Though ideological issues are raised intermittently, the field has not formed a coherent way to integrate ideological issues into its traditional cultural frameworks. Rather, as Elahi (2005) shows, ideological concerns tend to be ghettoized in critique articles that fail to penetrate into mainstream research and pedagogy. Elahi convincingly argues that intercultural communication research divides roughly into critique (usually oriented around neo-Marxist tenets) and ideologically neoliberal practice. (I discuss the tenets of liberalism in Chapter 4.) Critique addresses issues such as control of cultural representation, social justice, economic imbalance, and responsibility toward the Other (e.g., Munshi and McKee 2001; Keshishian 2005). Neoliberal practice, in contrast, handles professional concerns about good communication, business etiquette, smooth transactions, and similar topics (e.g., Beamer 2001; Warren 2002).
Because of the complex nature of academic publishing, we may only speculate about the causes of this ghettoizing. In part, ideological critique may be dismissed out of hand as an academic game untethered to the world of real practice. The cause may also lie with the critiques themselves, if the authors do not propose workable, practical applications that sufficiently develop the ideological concerns raised and that can be implemented seamlessly into classrooms or professional situations. The neoliberal practice contingent may find it difficult to implement changes without undercutting their traditional assumptions about “practical” and “professional.”

My contention, however, is that much of the discipline’s conflicted relationship to its ideological critiques stems from the discipline’s limited definition of the term culture. Within intercultural professional communication, the use of the term “culture” tends to reduce political, economic, religious, etc. diversity to value-free descriptions of social practices and communicative assumptions. Ideological concerns about economic justice or inclusiveness, in this regime, fall outside the purview of intercultural professional communication.

Put another way, culture is a convenient way of locating stability and an organizing principle amid incessant flux and multiple levels of diversity, for example, social, economic, or political. The stabilizing and organizing function of culture is not unique to intercultural communication research: Appadurai (1996) notes that even in apparently local, stable, and autonomous cultural situations “locality must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds,” for example, through the discursive construction of barriers, identifications, and exclusions that divide inside from outside (p. 179). For researchers, similarly, Wallerstein
(1990) argues that culture is “the outcome of our collective historical attempts to come to terms with the contradictions, the ambiguities, the complexities of the socio-political realities” of globalization. “Culture” thus becomes “the assertion of unchanging realities amidst a world that is in fact ceaselessly changing” (p.38), whether these realities are asserted by local communities, nations, or researchers.

Culture’s role in providing a locus of stability for conceptualizing global diversity becomes apparent when we examine how the term “culture” is applied differently to different social groupings. Certainly, as I’ve argued, globalization has introduced diverse opinions, assumptions, and social practices into the world-wide public sphere. Moreover, groups classified under different cultures do, in fact, differ considerably; culture is not a purely arbitrary construct, applied against on-the-ground realities. However, the term’s role in constructing stability becomes apparent when we examine the inconsistent way culture is applied. Wallerstein (1990) notes that “culture” is not always applied to describe concrete social groups, but rather applied to pre-supposed groups, usually contiguous with nation-states, in ways that reflect the researcher’s ideological perspective. Appadurai (1996) argues, for example, that the notion of “national culture” has permeated the research on cultural globalization, reflecting researcher biases about the legitimacy of the international system, the appropriateness of nation-state borders, national self-determination of peoples, and the valid actors on the world stage. Jameson (2007) has pointed out that this notion of national culture appears regularly in professional communication research (e.g., Ulijn, Lincke, and Karakaya 2001).
This stabilizing function of culture is symptomatic of the ideological dimensions that are inherent and implicit in the term “culture.” Other uses of culture that reveal these ideological dimensions include researchers’ attempts to distinguish idiosyncratic behaviors from cultural practices or to differentiate culture from subculture. Each of these applications of the term presupposes choices about granting recognition and legitimacy to certain social groups, identifying groups worthy of further study, and so on. As a result of the numerous choices involved in applying the term, Wallerstein (1990) states, “I become skeptical that we can operationalize the concept of culture…in any way that enables us to use it for statements that are more than trivial” (p.34).

The ideological dimensions of culture can be given more light when the function of the term is examined within the multinational capitalist ideology, arguably the dominant conceptual edifice of globalization (see Chapter 4 for more detailed discussion). As “culture” has, in its anthropological usage, become relativized to denote simply a way of life, the term has not been made more innocent as a result. Rather, culture has become a way to channel global social diversity within the multinational ideological edifice. In multinational capitalism, Žižek (1997) argues, “we are no longer dealing with the standard opposition between metropolis and colonized countries; a global company as it were cuts its umbilical cord with its mother-nation and treats its country of origin simply as another territory to be colonized” (p.43). A globalized company, in other words, approaches cosmopolitanism, and the company is equally at home or placeless wherever it happens to operate. For this world system, Žižek (1997) continues, “the ideal form of ideology…is multiculturalism, the attitude
which, from a kind of empty global position, treats each local culture the way the colonizer
treats colonized peoples—as natives whose mores are to be carefully studied and ‘respected’”
(p.44). That is, culture becomes a way of organizing market research on an enormous scale:
the term serves, as Appadurai (1996) argues, to define and mobilize differences, show
deerence to tradition, sell products, and quell the demands of minority or oppressed
populations by showing a superficial respect. Meanwhile, the global capitalist system, with
its vast economic and political diversity, remains firmly entrenched.

For intercultural professional communication, the ways culture serves global
capitalist ideologies are evident in the discipline’s particular emphases and exclusions. In one
respect, cultural frameworks that either presuppose, mention but neglect to challenge, or
remain altogether silent on neoliberal assumptions tend to be prevalent. For example,
Hofstede’s (1984) cultural dimensions and similar theories (e.g., Trompenaars and Hampden
Turner 1998; Hall 1976) have remained at the heart of the discipline’s conceptual
frameworks for decades, through numerous refinements and applications (e.g., Beamer
2001). These frameworks have remained in place, in part, due to their elegance, teachability,
and simplicity, in contrast to their competitors’ relative complexity and lack of coherence.
But the ideological advantage of these frameworks is that they can be grafted onto the
discipline’s pre-existing assumptions about communication and professionalism (Varner
2000). In other words, the discipline’s traditional cultural frameworks can be deployed
without significantly challenging the discipline’s role in multinational capitalism. By
excising political, economic, or social class issues from culture, intercultural communication
can be portrayed strictly as an issue of differing communication styles and assumptions, precisely the kind of audience-analysis puzzle that professional communicators are assigned to handle. In this regard, Munshi and McKee (2001) argue that cultural frameworks tend to limit the context of cross-cultural communication to the “differences that matter” (p. 16), or at least the differences that keep the research focused on a limited notion of culture.

The ideological dimensions of culture are further apparent in the ways the discipline represents the global contexts in which intercultural communication takes place: the discipline tends to deemphasize the economic and political imbalances in the globalizing world, in effect sidelining these issues in intercultural communication. In several sources (e.g., DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden 2002; Sokuvitz and George 2003), globalization emerges as a level playing field, Thomas Friedman’s “flat world,” a “global village,” a “global marketplace,” a “borderless world,” or similar images that depict an economically homogenous world system full of equal actors. Moreover, studies have tended to focus on small population segments who can readily access the global economy (Munshi and McKee 2001), skewing the image of globalization in favor of regions and peoples with economic clout. These metaphors echo what Habermas (2001) describes as “fundamental normative assumptions…of just exchange” (p. 93), the ideological basis of multinational capitalism. Importantly, if exchange seems to be more or less universal and equal, the discipline can concern itself with issues of lifestyle and communicative differences, as though those are the main barriers to economic fairness in the globalizing world.
The Shape of Globalization

In contrast to the flat-world metaphors that appear throughout intercultural professional communication research, it seems evident that economic exchange in globalization is not always equal, the world is not flat, and cultural differences are not the sole or primary form of diversity among global populations. Under the traditional conceptual frameworks used by intercultural professional communication, such ideologically charged issues have been largely irrelevant to understanding intercultural communication. However, I have argued for a broader concept of culture that includes the ways numerous social forces (economic, political, etc.) influence the shape and performance of culture, as well as the ways culture can be used to mobilize populations or generate social capital. Wallerstein (1990) summarizes this sentiment: he calls culture the ideological battleground of the modern world-system. With this latter formulation, ideologically charged economic justice and political issues become a key component for understanding culture in the globalizing world. Including these issues in discussion of culture, I argue, can illuminate the intricacies of the global cultural landscape as well as allow the discipline to come to terms with its ideological issues.

To begin developing the global ideological issues that the discipline must address, we can observe that globalization is a rather complex and largely incomplete process, rather than a homogeneous world system. Sassen (2005) has argued that the phenomena observed under the label “globalization”—global interdependence, world-wide trade and communication networks, etc.—depend heavily on local material infrastructure. That is, even within geographically focused regions like cities, social arrangements that operate on a global time-
frame and in a global scope can exist next to separate social arrangements that operate much more locally and under different time-frames. An economic development zone in the Philippines, for example, may operate in tandem with multinational businesses and on international production schedules, but the personnel who run the factory machinery may operate within an entirely local sphere, determined by the day-to-day routines and struggles of the nearby housing blocks (e.g., see Klein 2000). Moreover, Sassen argues that, while some have portrayed globalization in terms of “hypermobility and the neutralization of difference” (p.262), “[g]lobal processes are often strategically located/constituted in national spaces” (p. 264). He offers the example of global financial networks: bank facilities, office buildings, communication networks, and other material infrastructure, as well as legal edifices and regulations, are often developed nationally, though they are “shaped by global agendas” (p. 264) and oriented globally.

This differentiated (and often uneven) development suggests that many populations throughout the world are excluded from the kind of globalization lauded in the literature (Starke-Meyerring 2005). Some populations may choose to disengage from globalization for ideological, economic, religious, or political reasons (e.g., radical nationalists, religious fundamentalists, WTO and IMF protesters, Pat Buchanan-style isolationists). After all, as Habermas (2001) argues, “The idea that societies are capable of democratic self-control and self-realization has until now been credibly realized only in the context of the nation-state.” As a result, globalization “gives rise to alarmist feelings of enlightened helplessness widely observed in the political arena today” (p. 61).
More often, however, populations are excluded from globalization because of sanctioned gaps in the global economy that exclude large areas of the world, either entire regions (e.g., parts of sub-Saharan Africa or Central America) or zones within economically engaged regions (e.g., the rural and urban poor, places lacking technological infrastructure). In fact, a 2004 report from the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization found rising unemployment rates and increasing economic inequality in most areas of the world, set against a growing GDP in some of these same areas (Stiglitz 2006). In other words, Stiglitz (2006) comments, “globalization might be creating rich countries with poor people” (p. 9). While rising unemployment suggests that globalization often fails to provide universal prosperity, it also indicates globalization’s unequal development: in areas where “official,” countable employment has declined, individuals engage in what the UN Conference on Trade and Development (2009) calls “household-based enterprises (rural or urban)” that rely on “little education and technological capability, rudimentary tools, poor infrastructure, and weak supporting institutions.” Because these unofficial livelihoods lack the technological, institutional, and physical infrastructure to make investment attractive or worthwhile for multinational business, regions where unofficial employment prevails effectively find themselves out of the loop of global-scale development.

Moreover, wide gaps remain between different regions and socio-economic classes in terms of Internet access, a key component in global connectivity. According to a 2005 report about global information and communication technologies (ICT) from the UN Conference on Trade and Development, individuals in high-income countries were at least 22 times more
likely to be regular Internet users than individuals in low-income countries, the secure
Internet servers required for e-commerce were 100 times more common in high-income
countries, and communications technologies were often entirely lacking in rural and poor
urban areas of developed or undeveloped countries (UNCTAD 2006). A report issued four
years later from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 2009) noted that
“[w]ide variations remain in the level of access” (p. 8): around 50% of individuals in the
developed world are regular Internet users, compared to 15% of individuals in developing
countries. Exacerbating this divide is the fact that, relative to income, the cost of Internet
access in poorer nations is 150 times the cost of similar service in high-income countries
(UNCTAD 2006). This cost barrier leads to a “vicious circle” for poorer regions: limited
infrastructure and low demand due to high costs lead to weak investment and still-high costs.
Additionally, high international connectivity costs, relatively low education levels, and
limited online content in local languages and for local uses hinder Internet access in poorer
regions (UNCTAD 2009).

As a result of this uneven development, different populations and regions throughout
the world exist in variegated states of interdependence and relative prosperity, based on
factors such as region and economic class. This fragmented, uneven image of globalization
stands in contrast to the “flat-world” or “global village” hypothesis that depicts globalization
as a general expansion of development and interconnectivity. Thomas Friedman, for
example, made this latter theme the title of his 2005 book *The World Is Flat*. To illustrate his
thesis, Friedman cites the Indian city of Bangalore, the locus of India’s technology boom
through the 1990s and 2000s, where globalization has manifested as “a new milestone in human progress and a great opportunity for India and the world” (p. 7). Using a series of superlatives to outline globalization, Friedman contends that “it is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than at any previous time in the history of the world” (p. 8).

However, examining Bangalore itself suggests that Friedman’s hyperbole may not be warranted. Stiglitz (2006) points out that Friedman is right that there have been dramatic changes in the global economy, in the global landscape; in some directions, the world is much flatter than it has ever been, with those in various parts of the world being more connected than they have ever been, but the world is not flat” (p. 56). Stiglitz adds, “just 10 miles outside Bangalore, and even in parts of the city, poverty can be seen everywhere; for the other 800 million people of India, the economy has not shown brightly at all” (p. 26). Indeed, India as a whole ranked 134th out of 182 countries in the UN Development Program’s 2007 Human Development Index and ranked 134th in terms of adult literacy and education (UNDP 2009a). Additionally, 70% of the economic gains from India’s technology and service exports have gone to higher income groups (UNCTAD 2008), and the broadband connectivity that supports a global technology hub like Bangalore has filtered to less than 1% of the Indian population (UN Economic and Social Council 2009).

Moreover, in contrast to the image presented in “global village” or “borderless world” metaphors, national and other geographic borders are not universally porous or open. A 2009
UN Development Program report indicated that international migrants, as a proportion of world population, have been at a stable 3% over the last 50 years (UNDP 2009b). It should also be noted that border crossings are usually not driven by choice, and cross-cultural encounters are highly selective. Rather, some borders are heavily fortified, some borders simply require a passport, and some require a kickback; some individuals cross borders legally for economic expansion while some cross illegally for basic economic opportunity; and the shape and extent of cross-cultural interaction depends on local economic conditions, xenophobia, access to technology, and similar issues. According to the 2009 UN Development Program report, the poorer segments of the global population are the most constrained, “both by policies that impose barriers to entry and by the resources they have available to enable their move.” At the same time, in the last 100 years “the number of nation states has quadrupled to almost 200, creating more borders to cross, while policy changes have further limited the scale of migration, even as barriers to trade fell” (UNDP 2009b, p. 2).

In one regard, the differences among immigrant groups and the factors driving migration suggest that globalization impacts populations differently in different areas, which systematically limits the segment of the global population that can engage in cross-cultural interaction. That is, each individual does not have the same chance of interacting with someone from a different continent. But the differences among the types of global actors also produce considerably different attitudes toward culture, cultural diversity, and intercultural exchange. That is, some individuals may consider cultural diversity to reflect social richness,
while some may see diversity as threatening a way of life; some may see globalization as presenting opportunities, while some may see globalization as imposing foreign influence. These attitudes, in turn, affect how individuals adopt or reject foreign ideas, perform and relate to their cultural traditions, or mobilize their cultural identities for social capital.

**Summary of Ideological Issues in Intercultural Professional Communication**

The ideological issues underlying intercultural professional communication may appear to be a large and largely tangential undertaking for the discipline. However, as I have argued, these ideological issues are intrinsic to intercultural communication, both because of the ways culture functions for non-cultural purposes and because the choice to use culture as an organizing term already supposes a number of ideological choices. These choices include deciding which populations fall into different cultural groups, choosing the variables to examine during intercultural communication, or developing coherent responses to the discipline’s ideological issues.

Though these ideological issues certainly open new areas for intercultural professional communication, they need not be too radical for or tangential to the globalizing professional communication discipline. In the following chapters of this dissertation, I intend to develop a usable theory and pedagogy that integrates both professional and ideological concerns into a coherent whole.

**Forecast of the Following Chapters**

The remainder of the dissertation is divided into four chapters, roughly two chapters for professional issues and two for ideological issues, though there is some necessary
intermixing. Chapters 2 and 3 critique in more detail the conceptual frameworks that intercultural professional communication has relied on and provide alternative frameworks for grappling with culture in the globalizing world. Chapters 4 and 5 explore in more detail the political, economic, and ideological implications of the discipline’s cultural frameworks. Chapter 5 will also propose alternative avenues of research and theory that can begin to merge the discipline’s professional and ideological concerns.

Chapter 2. Culture and Cultural Identity in Intercultural Technical Communication

Chapter 2 develops the professional concerns introduced in Chapter 1 to critique the notion of intercultural communication as an interaction between two independent, autonomous cultural systems. The chapter examines the destabilizing effects of globalization on the concepts of culture and cultural identity to offer a more complex theoretical image of intercultural communication, in which cultural hybridity, self-conscious and pragmatic uses of culture, and non-cultural contexts figure prominently into the communication situation. To begin mapping out new directions for intercultural professional communication theory and research, the chapter also explores the virtues of the term “community,” rather than culture, for characterizing global audiences as concrete groups that share some ad hoc unity, rather than an abstracted cultural identity.

Chapter 3. Using Global Contexts to Localize Online Content for International Audiences

Chapter 3 further develops the professional concerns introduced in Chapter 1 and the theoretical edifice of Chapter 2. The chapter examines the ways the Internet, as a primary vehicle of globalization, destabilizes and reconfigures cultural identity, community, and
intercultural professional communication. The chapter argues that, to reach broad global audiences, web authors and designers have attempted to localize online content to specific market segments using the idea of an independent, autonomous culture to orient these localization efforts. The chapter, in contrast, suggests that traditional notions of culture are an unreliable guide for web design in global online environments and instead proposes that the Internet as a communication technology has redefined traditional notions of community and cultural identity. The theoretical framework outlined in this chapter offers an alternative account of online localization that explains the various social, political, economic, and technological concerns that contribute to online localization strategies, as well as the impacts that reconfigured notions of community and cultural identity have on intercultural professional communication practice.

Chapter 4. The Ideological Functions of Culture

Chapter 4 turns the dissertation’s focus to ideological issues to develop themes introduced in Chapters 1 and 2 and explore in more depth how the term “culture” has anchored and organized disciplinary discourses about identity, community, and the discipline’s global audiences. The chapter investigates the modern history of the term culture, with a focus on its emergence in the 19th century as a device for scholars to classify, evaluate, and organize diverse social practices. From this basis, the chapter examines how the term culture has maintained its ideological functions in intercultural professional communication research. Specifically, culture relativizes ethical disputes and social justice issues to skirt intractable conflicts; creates a sense of full equality; deemphasizes the
economic, political, and social inequalities of the globalizing world; and perpetuates the theme of the “flat world” or “global village.”

Chapter 5. Revising the Discipline’s Conceptual Frameworks for the Globalizing World

The closing chapter will summarize the critical themes threaded throughout the dissertation and discuss how these themes can be used to develop effective critical approaches to intercultural professional communication research and pedagogy. To consider how such approaches may practically be implemented, the chapter will propose a framework for researching and teaching intercultural professional communication that can operate within a market system but that does not endorse neoliberal ideological tenets. The chapter will first ground the proposed frameworks by helping the discipline reconsider the nature of globalization and outlining foundational critical literacies to help align the discipline’s ideological and professional concerns. With these foundations, the chapter will then outline a practical agenda for intercultural communication theory, research, and pedagogy that includes three components: a smaller, less prominent role for culture than has been previously granted; an understanding of global audiences based on the concept of community rather than culture; and a more globally inclusive perspective for analyzing intercultural professional communication.
CHAPTER 2. CULTURE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN INTERCULTURAL TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

The search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication . . . . Culture becomes less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation.

Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 44

The previous chapter set a broad agenda for this dissertation: to redevelop the conceptual cultural frameworks, in both their professional and ideological dimensions, that intercultural professional communication uses to characterize its diverse global audiences. This redevelopment is necessary, I argued, because the discipline’s entrenched conceptual frameworks have not adequately described the impacts, in either professional or ideological terms, that globalization has had on intercultural communication, audience, the concept of culture, or the discipline’s ideological commitments. Focusing on the discipline’s professional concerns, this chapter sets out to accomplish two tasks: to explore in more detail the limitations inherent in the discipline’s traditional cultural frameworks and to begin exploring new ways of characterizing the global audiences of professional communication.

The shortcomings of traditional approaches to intercultural professional communication are deeply rooted. While a well-documented “explosion of interest in
international professional communication” (Lovitt, 1999, p. 1) has inspired a body of creative scholarship in intercultural technical communication, the theoretical concepts of culture or cultural identity have yet to be examined critically for their impact on our disciplinary exchanges and activities. More importantly, perhaps, the notorious difficulties inherent in discussing the contested field of culture, such as oversimplification, essentialism, or ethnocentrism (see Goby, 1999; E. Weiss, 1998), remain a perennial problem for intercultural research. Such persistent problems and the limited theoretical reflection on the concept of culture, I believe, are interconnected issues: difficulties in studying culture, I argue, stem from a problematic theoretical framework based largely in cultural heuristics and ethnographic descriptions that place too high a value on locating definitive culture. Working in the anthropological and sociological thread of cultural studies, however, we can develop a more critical, flexible way of looking at culture and the cultural.

In this chapter, I draw from the influential work of anthropologist and sociologist Arjun Appadurai to interrogate what I take to be the predominant approaches to researching and teaching intercultural technical communication, using a term I borrow from Linda Beamer (2000), “heuristic” approaches (p. 113). After defining the contours of these approaches, I will describe how their implicit theory of culture and cultural identity structurally encourages teachers and researchers to overlook crucial aspects of cross-cultural communication. I will then offer Appadurai’s theory of culture, cultural identity, and the various political, economic, and other influences on the cultural as an alternative theoretical edifice that allows for more critical exploration of the discipline’s intercultural issues.
Finally, I will examine the term *community* as an alternative to the term *culture* and explore how *community* may offer ways to more concretely characterize and more sufficiently problematize the discipline’s global audiences.

**Heuristic Approaches to Intercultural Communication**

At the outset, this chapter assumes that cultural identity is an important area of study for cross-cultural research and pedagogy. It therefore does not support a culture-free approach to intercultural communication, one that tries to identify “certain communication skills [that] are needed in all cultural settings” (Goby, 1999, p. 181). While the culture-free approach may, in fact, skirt the problematic of culture altogether, it raises its own set of difficulties. Edmond Weiss (1998) argues that universal expectations for various features of communication, such as clarity and persuasiveness, are hard to come by under any circumstances (p. 255); most attempts at universality have ended in ethnocentrism, no matter the intentions behind them. Importantly, too, the culture-free approach provides researchers and students little opportunity to explore the important roles of culture and cultural identity in communication.

If we accept that cultural identity and cultural differences do, in fact, play a significant part in cross-cultural communication, our object of inquiry should be heuristic approaches, which collectively describe the basis of most intercultural research and pedagogy. Working from catalogues of ethnographic data, these approaches identify important dimensions of culture and then rate particular cultural groups for each dimension, with the goal of developing workable descriptions that practitioners might find helpful in
cross-cultural communication. For example, cultures can be classified as individualist or collectivist (a point of difference between North American and East Asian cultures, respectively), or masculine or feminine, and so on (Beamer, 2000). Decisions about the shape of cross-cultural communication are then, ideally, based on these cultural representations.

Beamer (2000) traces heuristic approaches to Edward Hall’s (1976) work in the 1970s and Geert Hofstede’s (1984) work in the 1980s (pp. 111-12). By the early 1990s, Hall especially was being cited to help develop pedagogy specifically for intercultural technical communication (e.g., see Thrush, 1993; Bosley, 1993). By the end of the 1990s, as Weiss (1998) points out, “almost every [technical communication] course include[d] a unit on Edward Hall’s high-context/low-context communication model . . . [and] Hofstede’s dimensions of culture seem[ed] to have become as commonplace” (p. 262). Even without explicit acknowledgement of the heuristic models of Hall, Hofstede, or the others that have appeared since then (e.g., Trompenaars and Hampden Turner’s (1998) *Riding the Waves of Culture*), intercultural technical communication has generally emphasized heuristic approaches to discuss the dimensions of culture (see DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden, 2002; Constantinides, St. Amant, and Kampf, 2001). Now, toward the end of the following decade, heuristic approaches continue to pervade much of the intercultural technical communication research.

Taking their lead from the research, most technical communication textbooks that tackle intercultural communication use heuristic approaches. Some texts focus on Hall’s popular high-context/low-context dimension of culture, such as Mike Markel’s (2001)
Technical Communication or Deborah Andrews’ (2001) Technical Communication in the Global Community. Rebecca Burnett’s (2005) Technical Communication offers a more thorough listing of cultural dimensions in a full-page chart that lists the continuum of cultural characteristics for each dimension (p. 54). Other texts, such as Paul Anderson’s (2003) Technical Communication: A Reader Centered Approach or William Pfeiffer’s (2002) Technical Writing: A Practical Approach, do not refer to Hall or Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, but provide a similar list of cultural variables for the technical communicator to note. All of these textbooks share the assumption that describing particular cultures in terms of a given set of heuristics will help the practitioner communicate effectively across a wide range of cultures.

**Shortcomings of Heuristic Approaches**

Though heuristic approaches have pervaded much intercultural communication research and pedagogy, their limitations have been well-documented. Crystallizing a common complaint, Weiss (1998) notes that a given heuristic approach “treats members of a group as instances of a profile,” an essentializing practice that displaces cultural identity from the concrete individual into a typical instance of the individuals who share a culture (p. 260). Beyond simply typifying cultural identity, heuristic approaches are also prone to misrepresent cultural identity to emphasize what Debashish Munshee and David KcKie (2001) call the “differences that matter,” and flatten culture to the reduced dimensions of the heuristic (p. 16). Reflecting a similar criticism, Beamer (2000) has noted that heuristic approaches, if based on limited research or unrepresentative ethnographic data, can be
misleading, though her purpose in pointing this out was to begin to synthesize a more precise heuristic.

While I agree with these criticisms, I do not believe the way to avoid the problems with heuristic approaches is to develop better researched, more detailed heuristics, as Beamer (2000) suggests. The problems in heuristic approaches run deeper than insufficient research or underdeveloped heuristics; the root difficulty is a problematic theory of culture and cultural identity that underpins heuristic approaches. Culture is commonly treated as a prediscursive, effectively autonomous essence posing as a set of durable habits and practices, and cultural identity is something brought to communication rather than constructed and mobilized during communication. Culture and cultural identity, in other words, are allowed little flexibility and dynamism. For example, much of the intercultural communication research that attempts to define culture describes it as “an established set of values and a way of thinking that is passed from generation to generation” (Bosley, 1993, p. 53; for similar examples from textbooks, see Markel, 2001, p. 127; Burnett, 2005, p. 41; Lay et al., 2000, p. 27), and cultural identity is, similarly, relatively stable; other authors have offered variations on this definition of culture (see, for example, Thrush, 1993; Klein, 1991; Warren, 2002).

Such theory concerning culture and cultural identity did not develop specifically within intercultural technical communication, but rather comes from some of the primary sources of the heuristic approaches: Hall and Hofstede. Although the purpose of studying culture for Hall (1976) was to “gradually free oneself from the grip of unconscious culture” (p. 211), he notes that culture is essentially an “irrational force” (p. 187) and that “deep
cultural undercurrents structure life in subtle but highly consistent ways that are not consciously formulated” (p. 9). Similarly, Hofstede’s (1984) extensive empirical study defines culture as “the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group’s response to its environment. Culture determines the identity of a human group in the same way as personality determines the identity of an individual” (p. 21). Both Hall’s and Hofstede’s definitions imply a theory of culture and cultural identity in which these two things are effectively stable (note the words “structure,” “consistent,” “determines,” and “identity”).

The overarching theoretical problem with which we might begin is the insufficient separation between “culture” and “cultural.” Note, for example, Hofstede’s claim above that “culture determines the identity of a human group.” Here, culture and cultural identity are inextricably linked in a causal relationship, where the latter is merely a manifestation of the former. In intercultural technical communication research specifically, heuristic approaches make little distinction between culture and cultural, attempting to describe cultural identity by defining culture. The difference between the two terms, however, is crucial. As Appadurai (1996) explains, “If culture as a noun seems to carry associations with some sort of substance . . . cultural the adjective moves one into the realm of differences, contrasts, and comparisons” (p. 12). In other words, when researchers fail to separate culture and the cultural, the noun culture implies a thing that can be positively located and described beneath the behaviors of certain identified groups of people, no matter how many hedges a researcher builds up around a cultural description. The result, then, is approaches that describe
individuals in terms of the typified cultural profile that Weiss (1998) refers to in the quotation above. For example, Andrews’ (2001) textbook cites an expert who links the cultural behaviors observed in Japanese, German, and French organizations to respective national cultures, which are then plotted on a “high-trust/low-trust” continuum (pp. 9-10).

Sam Dragga’s (1999) “Ethical Intercultural Communication: Looking through the Lens of Confucian Ethics,” though not referring to a heuristic approach, more clearly illustrates this lack of separation between culture and the cultural. Dragga describes the Chinese system of Confucian ethics that influences Chinese cultural characteristics, briefly outlining Confucius’ central tenets, such as righteousness, goodness, reverence, etc. Dragga also discusses some challenges to Confucian ethics, from the ancient philosophy of Lao Tzu to Maoist thought and some of the more contemporary Western influences. But while he is careful to explain the interactions of Chinese cultural traditions with Western ones, Dragga still restricts Chinese culture to an ancient, specifically Chinese philosophy; influences on culture after 1800, including the 1949 Communist Revolution, are reserved for two paragraphs toward the end of the description (p. 374). I should be clear that Dragga’s discussion of Chinese cultural practices is not misleading, ethnocentric, or inaccurate. In fact, it presents a rather flexible and unique perspective on Chinese culture. My point, rather, is to show that Dragga generally anchors Chinese cultural behavior to a system of ethics specific to the Chinese culture, and thus implies that cultural identity must be tied to a substantive culture.
To their credit, some scholars who rely on heuristic approaches go to great lengths to note that culture and cultural identity are not clear-cut or essential, but fuzzy-edged and incomplete. Such scholars often argue against essentializing or oversimplifying culture or cultural identity when discussing heuristic approaches. Burnett (2005), for example, notes that “binaries tend to treat cultures as monolithic, that is, assuming that all Brazilian citizens are alike, …which can lead to stereotyping extremely diverse national and organizational cultures” (p. 53). The rough edges of cultural identity are made clear in caveats of this type. However, while these hedges are certainly laudable and necessary for providing a fair portrait of cultural practices and identity, they function, in fact, as normative anti-essentialism; admitting grey areas in cultural description mostly serves to assimilate anomalies into a profile, as hedges often justify making rhetorically safe generalizations about culture and cultural identity. For example, Burnett (p. 53) follows the quotation above by saying that heuristic dimensions serve as a “useful starting place” for studying culture.

The discursive effects of the intercultural research, moreover, speak differently than the hedges: culture still acts as a thing, at least within the intercultural communication situation. Even if the researcher acknowledges that cultural identity is tentative, fluid, and nonessential, the effects of tracing cultural identity to a culture are no less real, though the researcher may not be explicitly concerned about the ontological existence of a culture itself. Let me outline at least two ways in which, I believe, the lack of separation between culture and the cultural encourage an essentialist, effectively autonomous understanding of culture.
Lack of Intertextual Connections that Help Shape Cultural Identity

Because cultural identity tends to be traced to culture in heuristic approaches, the intertextual connections between cultural identity and other factors (e.g., economic or political) are often neglected. Cultural identity is instead delimited in a prediscursive, effectively autonomous culture. I should note that the term intertextual does not only refer to the inherent heterogeneity or hybridity of cultures, or culture-culture interaction, which Timothy Weiss (1993) has already done a great service describing in “‘The Gods Must Be Crazy’: The Challenge of the Intercultural.” Rather, intertextual here should imply the connections between cultural identity and non-cultural factors, interactions that have not been well-documented. For example, Deborah Bosley’s (2001) introduction to her collection of intercultural communication case studies identifies “the rapid expansion of corporate interests worldwide” that makes the world a “global village” (p. 1). DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden (2002) similarly justify their study of intercultural communication textbooks by noting that “with the increasing globalization of the marketplace, the United States is becoming more multicultural and active in international business than it has previously been” (p. 69). (Textbooks also note the importance of globalization and multiculturalism: Markel, 2001, p. 107; Anderson, 2003 p. 6; Lay et al., 2000, p. 4; or Burnett, 2005, pp. 38-9). But while intercultural communication research and pedagogy recognizes economic globalization, the concept of cultural identity is not allowed an analogously globalized dimension; cultural identity is still assumed to be effectively autonomous and independent of the dynamism of globalization. In other words, despite the rapid flows of migration and international travel, media, and communication that mark a globalizing world, cultural
identity is commonly understood to be generally self-contained, conspicuously independent of economic, political, or technological influences.

In a different context, Bernadette Longo (1998) has noted the consequences of partitioning cultural research from its contexts: “A view of culture that is limited within the walls of one organization does not allow researchers to question assumptions about technical writing practices because those practices are not placed in relationship to influences outside the organization under study” (p. 55). Analogously, researchers laboring under heuristic approaches may neglect the links between cultural identity and global contexts, the vectors of power, politics, history, and capital that elucidate the ways cultural identity functions in cross-cultural communication.

**Neglect of the Construction/Mobilization of Cultural Identity during Communication**

Secondly, if culture is not clearly distinguished from the cultural, the construction and mobilization of cultural identity during discursive exchange tends to be neglected. That is, if cultural identity is traced to an independent, pre-discursive substance, or culture, heuristic approaches treat cultural identity as something revealed during communication rather than a process mobilized in light of extracultural or contextual aspects of communication. The non-cultural may include contextual factors that have fallen outside the scope of cultural study, such as economic and political infrastructures that circulate capital and power unevenly among a variegated population. In their critique of heuristic approaches, Munshee and KcKie (2001) warn that the approaches’ limited view of cultural identity “ignores the social processes behind the construction of cultural differences” (p. 19), especially, I should add,
the cultural differences constructed or emphasized almost spontaneously during communication. Such differences may include, for example, heightened cultural contrasts, as those occurring when cultural heritage appears to be threatened by so-called foreign influences, or what amount to caricatures of local cultural performances, such as those commonly put on for the participants in the popular reality television show *The Amazing Race*.

Let me take an example of what I consider to be a representative disciplinary discussion of cultural identity from a well-referenced work in intercultural technical communication. Emily Thrush (1993) notes that “by the year 2000, 29% of the [domestic] workforce would be made up of people who had moved here from other countries” (p. 272). This observation supports Thrush’s call for more attention to intercultural technical communication instruction. However, her focus is almost exclusively on workplace culture; the influences that the economic, political, demographic, and social implications that immigration would surely have on the intercultural communication situation are absorbed under the category of cultural differences. Additionally, if we return for a moment to Dragga’s article discussed above, we can note that Chinese cultural identity is not shown to be constructed, but rather seems to be inherited from history. Despite the clear impacts that Western-style market economics has had on Chinese cultural identity in the last three decades, Dragga traces Chinese-ness in part to an ancient Confucian ethics. The ways people mobilize Chinese cultural identity and cultural differences in, say, something like nationalistic pride, are not considered.
In contrast, when cultural identity is considered to be integrally rooted in economic, political, and historical contexts, students and researchers in intercultural technical communication can study the broad intertextual factors that influence the shape of cultural identity. As we will see in the following section, understanding these factors will allow intercultural technical communication research and pedagogy the flexibility to account for the fluidities of the globalizing world.

Sanctioned Ignorance: the Impact of Heuristic Approaches

I have suggested that the theory of culture and cultural identity underlying what I group under the heuristic approaches encourages cultural identity to be represented as effectively autonomous, independent of economic, political, and historical contexts. The resulting lack of attention to cultural intertextuality and the mobilization of cultural identity leads to a significant gap in heuristic approaches: the limited theory of culture and cultural identity produces in intercultural research and pedagogy what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999) terms a “sanctioned ignorance” (x) of the globalizing world. That is, the treatment of cultural identity as intrinsically linked to a substantive culture structures intercultural research and pedagogy to neglect features of the globalizing world that significantly influence cultural identity in communication.

What emerges in the intercultural research and pedagogy is a myopic focus on culture that displaces economic, political, and historical factors that nevertheless affect cross-cultural communication. In place of these factors, intercultural research and pedagogy installs culture as the term around which communication turns; the assumption seems to be that categorizing
and cataloguing cultures and cultural differences will build an adequate model for studying cross-cultural communication. For instance, Markel (2001) subordinates political and economic contexts and relationships under “Cultural Variables” (p. 107).

**Toward an Intertextual Theory of Cultural Identity**

A solution to these structural problems in heuristic approaches, however, should not discount cultural identity or disregard the influences of the cultural on communication, but should look at culture and cultural identity differently. For such an alternative perspective, we turn to the work of Appadurai, whose critical anthropological work constitutes a theoretical intervention into the study of culture. Appadurai (1996) proposes that cultural research focus on the cultural as an active, deterritorialized process rather than attend to culture as a noun referring to a set of passively acquired or inherited traits (p. 12). In this regard, Appadurai reverses the approach to studying culture found in cultural heuristics: rather than trying to identify the ways culture manifests itself in the cultural, Appadurai studies the ways the idea of culture is constructed from the apparently cultural. In other words, it is crucial to understand cultural identity, rather than as a tacit set of reproducible norms and conventions, as what Appadurai calls “an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation” (p. 44) within the dynamics of the globalizing world. This theoretical basis for intercultural research and pedagogy emphasizes the importance of cultural identity in communication, combining such topics as cultural intertextuality and the mobilization of cultural identity, while bracketing any notion of substantive or essentialized culture. The economic, political, and historical elements absent from the heuristic approach become an
integral aspect of Appadurai’s theory of the cultural, and the issues wrapped up in intercultural communication are not displaced solely into the category of culture.

Understanding two important assumptions that underpin Appadurai’s work will help us approach his theory of cultural identity. The first assumption is common to much of the work in cultural studies. As Richard Johnson (1987) writes, “culture is neither an autonomous nor an externally determined field, but a site of social differences and struggles” (p. 39). Culture, that is, is always the site of something beyond simply culture itself. The other assumption, which underpins Appadurai’s work specifically, is that imagination, in the sense of representation and image, is a legitimate and central form of social practice in the globalizing world. Two features of contemporary life have placed imagination at the forefront of much of human experience: advances in media technologies that rapidly disseminate images and symbols around the world; and migratory patterns that rapidly circulate populations, problematizing regional or ethnic determinants of cultural identity (the very fact of intercultural communication as a popular, growing field attests to the grand-scale intermixing of cultures). Appadurai (1996) argues that because increasingly intense media and migration create “a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities” (p. 4), imagination is “central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is a key component of the new global order” (p. 31). This is not to say that cultural identity is entirely unrecognizable or upended in globalization; rather, imagination has become a form of cultural work, a field of negotiation between local experience and dynamic global influences. Highlighting the emphasis that imagination places on representation and textuality in the
study of culture, Appadurai calls his take on cultural studies “the relationship between the word and the world” (p. 51).

From these basic assumptions, Appadurai’s influential theory claims that even apparently autonomous or localized cultural identities (such as those generally described in heuristic approaches) are the result of the intersecting processes of globalization. In globalization, Appadurai (2000) notes “the apparent stabilities that we see,” such as culture or cultural identity, “are, under close examination, usually our devices for handling objects characterized by motion” (p. 5). Cultural identity for Appadurai is thus a confluence of mobile and shifting streams of textuality—of political, ideological, economic, or ethnographic texts. “The new global cultural economy,” he argues, “has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order” (1996, p. 32), characterized not by the interaction of relatively stable entities, such as effectively autonomous cultures, but rather by mobile worldwide currents that move independently of one another to converge and interact in a complex global system.

Appadurai (1996) characterizes five global flows of textuality that make cultural identity irreducibly intertextual and unstable: *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *finanscapes*, and *ideoscapes*, which roughly correspond to movements of people, media, technologies, capital, and political ideologies, respectively. Sociologist Malcolm Waters (1995) added the term *sacriscapes* to describe global flows of sacred values, which, with the rise of various forms of fundamentalism throughout the world, have grown to be important to much cultural interaction. Appadurai (1996) notes that the suffix *-scape* attached to these six
terms demonstrates their “fluid and irregular shapes” (p. 33) and deeply perspectival nature. Individuals and groups in the globalizing world then draw from and respond to these scapes to constantly construct, reconstruct, and mobilize their cultural identities. Importantly, the ways that individuals experience the interactions and forms of these currents in everyday life determines what Appadurai (1996) terms the “imagined worlds” (p. 33) in which people experience stability amidst ceaseless movement. The term imagined worlds evokes the importance of image and representation in shaping cultural identity, as well as the fact that cultural identity must always be “historically situated” among global cultural flows (1996, p. 33).

An example based on the experience of a friend of mine, Lynn, who is from mainland China, can more concretely illustrate the ways these scapes build people’s imagined worlds. Lynn came from China to a large Midwestern public university by tracing finanscapes and ideoscapes to a specifically American image of prestige and prosperity, and then followed a flow of immigration to the U. S. She was well-connected to the Chinese student community on campus, though she also kept a few close American friends; she thus often found herself shifting between different ethnoscapes. Lynn communicated with family and friends in China by using calling cards, Internet calling, e-mail, and a webcam, taking advantage of the technoscapes and mediascapes that provided her contact with her home. Mediascapes, in fact, constituted an important part of her imagined world, as she drew many of her beliefs and expectations about what she understood to be American culture from Chinese-subtitled American movies she had seen in China. For instance, she was sometimes nervous to meet
friends in local bars, since bars tended to be scenes of violence and crime in the American movies she had seen. In the U. S., her relationship with American cultural production expanded into television, and she grew to appreciate sincerely the crassness of daytime talk shows, though she also watched Korean, Taiwanese, and Chinese movies and television shows she located on Chinese Internet message boards. To illustrate the complexity of these collisions of mediascapes and ethnoscapes, I can recall one instance watching a Korean movie with her as she read the Chinese subtitles, translating them into English for me.

Lynn’s imagined world was thus the site of a complex intersection of textual scapes, from which Lynn constructed the cultural identity of a young Chinese woman in the U.S. In other words, she did not simply express a cultural identity that she drew from an inherited, relatively stable Chinese culture, but rather constructed and mobilized a cultural identity performatively. For instance, Chinese-ness for her was at times self-conscious, as when she gave her close American friends traditional Chinese gifts (e.g., a fan, a double-happiness charm) during her first American Christmas celebration; she later explained to me that she was performing Chinese-ness in an American context, as she had never celebrated Christmas before and the Chinese rarely have a need to give each other relatively common Chinese objects. More generally and somewhat ironically, she felt that her Chinese cultural identity was stronger among her American friends, that is, when her perspective of the ethnoscapes, ideoscapes, mediascapes, and sacroscapes shifted significantly among the different groups of people. While her identification with her Chinese cultural identity remained essentially stable
across different situations, her perception of the scapes deeply influenced the shape her cultural identity took in her interactions.

The intertextual construction and mobilization of cultural identity, however, is not limited to immigrant populations or a set of cosmopolitan individuals, but is a basic feature of the production of cultural identity. That is, as Appadurai (1996) notes, even in apparently local, stable, and autonomous cultural situations “locality must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds,” for example, through the discursive construction of barriers, identifications, and exclusions that divide inside from outside (p. 179). As Raymond Williams (1977) has noted, the modern concept of culture itself developed to preserve a sense of stability amidst the chaotic upheavals of the 19th and 20th centuries, and globalization has only exacerbated these social instabilities. Cultural identity thus becomes a process of mobilization that depends to a large extent on extra-cultural factors rather than on a kind of inherent cultural essence. When cultural identity is considered to be constructed, mobilized, and irreducibly intertextual, the intertextual connections that influence cultural identity during communication become significantly more important for understanding cross-cultural communication.

**Implications: Intercultural Theory and Research**

Appadurai’s insights into the intertextual nature of cultural identity suggest a new constellation of problems to consider in intercultural technical communication, opening the field to more critical work in cultural studies to continue the work begun under the heuristic approaches. While I will explore in Chapter 5 the implications of these more critical
disciplinary directions for intercultural research and pedagogy, let me suggest two important areas where a foundation in Appadurai’s theoretical work can inform the discipline’s approach to audience analysis. The first area involves refining the discipline’s understanding of the concept of culture. The second involves de-centering the discipline’s primary unit of analysis for identifying and understanding local audiences, culture, with the more concrete yet flexible term community.

**Refining the Concept of Culture**

While every intercultural communication article does not need to present a fully developed economic and political critique, Appadurai’s insights offer ways of discussing audience and cultural identity to reflect the conflicts and complexities of the globalizing world. I will point out three areas where Appadurai’s cultural theory can begin to shed some light on intercultural professional communication theory and research.

First, the set of issues involved in intercultural research can open to include factors that have fallen outside the study of audience and cultural identity in heuristic approaches; context can broaden to include the political, economic, and social issues surrounding shifting cross-cultural communication situations, expanding the limited focus on culture itself to global contexts. Instead of illustrating, for example, how North American and Japanese notions of power-distance present problems in business relationships, researchers might ask why cultural differences are a problem in the first place: is the problem simply that two cultural systems are incompatible in terms of power-distance, or do other issues—political, economic, or demographic—in some way make cultural differences a site of difficulty? The
study of cultural conflicts such as this would do well to look to factors other than the cultural itself to characterize the communicational difficulty adequately. For this agenda, intercultural theory and research might follow the lead of cultural studies, which, Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg (1992) point out, has a long history of interdisciplinarity and more critical, nuanced treatments of the cultural.

A focus on the cultural also suggests that researchers study the ways cultural issues reflect many of the underlying antagonisms of the globalizing world, because what appear to be cultural issues are often rooted in political or social issues. For example, Žižek (2000) has observed that, “in today’s political discourse, the term ‘worker’ has disappeared, supplanted or obliterated by ‘immigrants’…, [which transforms] the class problematic of workers’ exploitation… [into] the multiculturalist problematic of the ‘intolerance of Otherness’” (p. 10). Similarly, Yudice (2003) has argued that economically and politically motivated free-trade agreements “generated at the transnational level” (p. 216) can often become cultural issues at the local level. For example, free-trade agreements that have upended agricultural production in South and Central America generate waves of immigration, such as Mexicans crossing into the U.S. or Bolivians into Argentina, which “are portrayed as a threat to the national culture” (p. 217). Often, that is, problems stemming from political or economic factors are sometimes articulated in terms of narrowly cultural conflicts. The role of the intercultural researcher, in this case, would be to explore the ways underlying social contexts exacerbate or even shape the cultural conflict, considering issues that may lie outside the cultural.
Second, if cultural stability is something produced and reinforced, as Appadurai argues, the performative role of the intercultural researcher in producing stable, definable cultural systems warrants self-reflexive examination. Noting the active role of the ethnographer in this respect, Appadurai (1996) writes, “The ethnographic project is in a peculiar way isomorphic with the very knowledge it seeks to discover and document, as both the ethnographic project and the social project it seeks to describe have the production of locality as their governing telos” (p. 182). Similarly, Bourdieu (2001) explains that cultural description is essentially performative because describing the social world “aims to produce and impose representations (mental, verbal, visual, or theatrical) of the social world which may be capable of acting on this world by acting on agents’ representation of it” (p. 127). Thus, by creating representations that, if practically useful, are to be enacted, cultural researchers produce the cultural locality and autonomy they intend to describe, producing the object of study in the act of research. A researcher undertaking a self-reflexive inquiry might begin with Herndl’s (1991) “Writing Ethnography,” which explores the rhetoricity of qualitative ethnographic research, and which could readily be applied to the intercultural research problematic. Henry’s (2000) ethnographic study in *Writing Workplace Cultures: An Archaeology of Professional Writing* can also serve as a precedent for the kind of self-critical scholarship I suggest, particularly for those who would study the ways academic textual practices perpetuate certain modes of representing intercultural exchanges in the workplace.

Third, expanding the factors involved in cultural research and identifying the performative role of the researcher suggest that the cultural always harbors ideological
dimensions that researchers would do well to explore. That is, the decision to use the term “culture” or to characterize conflicts as primarily “cultural” implies several ideological presuppositions. For example, characterizing interpersonal conflict as “cultural” can suggest that other economic and political relationships are fair and equitable or that individuals can be said to represent a national or cultural category (an assumption that itself legitimizes national authority). These ideological presuppositions are complex and numerous, and I will devote Chapter 4 to exploring the ideological weight of the term *culture*.

**Focusing on Community Rather than Culture**

As these difficulties in the concept of *culture* suggest, intercultural professional communication research may find it difficult to rely on the concept of *culture* to identify and characterize its various local audiences in the globalizing world. In Appadurai’s (1996) terms, researchers should not expect *culture* to exhibit Euclidean geographic boundaries or to be confined within localized, concrete populations. A more useful avenue for research, he argues, may be to bracket the notion of *culture* and explore the various social forces surrounding cultural conflict or confusion (pp. 46-7), displacing the cultural from its traditionally privileged and autonomous position and placing it alongside the economic, political, or ideological motivations that fuel conflict.

To de-center the concept of *culture* in this way while attempting to give intercultural professional communication researchers a practical means of characterizing their audiences, I suggest that the term *community* may be a more helpful unit of analysis than the term *culture*. I use *community*, in a way that is more concrete and more flexible than *culture*, as a group
that shares common interests, goals, or circumstances, but not necessarily a common
ethnicity or heritage. Williams (1983) identifies the features of the term community that, I
believe, would be most helpful for intercultural professional communication research. Since
the 19th century, he argues, “community was felt to be more immediate than society,” and
“the sense of immediacy or locality was strongly developed in the context of larger and more
complex industrial societies” (p.75). Community was thus a local, concrete population with
some sense of commonality that contrasted itself to the more abstract terms nation or society.
In contemporary usage, community carries two important senses that characterize the term as
I use it: “on the one hand, the sense of direct common concern; on the other hand, the
materialization of various forms of common organization” (p.76).

With this emphasis on concrete populations, direct common concern, and common
organization, the use of community I favor contrasts with a familiar usage of the term within
professional communication, global community (e.g., Andrews 2001). That is, global
community seems more like it generally and abstractly indicates an organized global order
(which is itself a questionable claim) than it describes a specific group with some
commonality. Rather, my use of community could encompass, for example, communities of
practice, a term Wanger (1999) coined to describe a concrete group circumscribed by
“mutual engagement,” “a joint enterprise,” and “a shared repertoire” (p. 73), or professional
communities, whether geographically concentrated or dispersed, though my use of
community can include groups bound in other ways as well. My use of community may also
include the fairly common political or legal sense of the term, which describes a population
bound by a single political jurisdiction or shared set of laws (e.g., Guibernau 2004). But the sense of *community* I favor can also be more broadly defined, because the community in question may extend across political borders or find itself in opposition to or neglected by local political systems.

Some anthropologists have been suspicious of the term *community*, because the term is difficult to define sharply and may appear to run into the same definitional and ideological limitations that plague the term *culture*. Amit and Rapport (2002), for example, have argued that community is often “too vague, too variable in its applications and definitions to be of much utility as an analytical tool” (p. 13). And, like *culture*, *community* often serves as a “convenient conceptual haven, a location from which to safely circumscribe potentially infinite webs of connection” (p. 17).

However, the advantage in the term *community*, I argue, may be in the way it draws attention to the destabilization and hybridization of traditional, local cultural systems and presents a more responsive term than *culture* for characterizing specific local populations in the globalizing world. In other words, using the term *community* reflects the impacts of globalization on cultural anthropology. Anthropology has always, in a sense, made *community* its primary object: Kearny (1995), for example, identifies “cultural anthropology's commitment to study of local communities” (p.549). However, because globalization is both dissolving the traditional, homogenous cultural community and facilitating cross-cultural contact, “it is now difficult to bound a community as a ‘cultural group.’” (p. 557). Therefore, “the binary absoluteness of cultural areas and identities is
giving way to models of holder areas as places of interpenetrating spaces and more complex, nonunitary identities” (p.558).

I contend that the term *community* adequately describes these “holder areas.” Within the concrete population of a community, multiple local and global cultural traditions can exist side by side and contribute to the population’s multifaceted identity, and a complexity of local and global social forces (economic, political, historical, etc.) similarly contribute to the population’s identities, practices, and relationships to the globalizing world. In this sense, the cultural is not the factor that unifies the concrete population, as is sometimes assumed in intercultural professional communication research; rather, the various threads of the cultural together represent one variable among many that shapes the community members’ responses to the social world.

To take an example of the complexity of community in globalization, Canclini (2001) describes the fragmenting of an urban cultural community in Mexico City as the state “ceded its role as the leading cultural agent to private business and transnational corporations” (p. 256) in the later 20th century. With economic and communicational globalization, many segments of the city’s population have developed a more outward, global orientation, with increased international visits (especially in academic and intellectual circles) and information channels. The movie-going public, too, because reduced state budgets have crippled local film production, are offered films from international producers and distributors that are subject to international “commercial criteria” (p. 257) rather than local cultural concerns. The distribution of theaters and media outlets is by no means uniform across the city. As a result,
the urban cultural landscape has become fragmented, oriented differently toward international and local media in different areas. Canclini argues that, in the city’s different regions, “New cultural venues link large sectors of the population, segment by segment, with macrourban experiences and other countries” (p. 259). Ultimately, the idea of a unified local or national culture cannot easily define the social geography of Mexico City, but rather the city consists of a variety of local and global social forces. One of these social forces is culture, but a culture subjected to local and global economic and technological (communicational) influences. Rather than bounding this city by cultural markers, then, researchers may find more benefit in characterizing Mexico City as a series of intersecting communities, each of which is defined by various conflicting or compatible social forces.

In addition to highlighting the complexities of geographically localized populations, the term community may help characterize populations that do not fall within a localized geographical space. A community may thus encompass a deterritorialized population, such as an immigrant community that maintains strong ties to a homeland, a virtual community of interest, or a globalized professional community, that extends across geographical and political boundaries. For example, international aid groups such as Doctors Without Borders often use national legal systems, international conventions and treaties, and global coordination within multiple national jurisdictions to achieve a common goal (Kearny 1995). In terms of global professional communication, Saxenian (2002) describes the emergence of global professional communities. Saxenian explains that a global economic shift is occurring from vertically integrated companies, which produce every component of their products and
thus restrict professional knowledge to intra-company personnel, to companies that rely more on increasingly specialized supply chains, which separately produce very specific components of a company’s product. Within these supply chains, specialized professional communities that cut across multiple geographical, political, linguistic, and cultural spaces allow for knowledge and skill transfer. Though these communities are dispersed, they consist of concrete individuals with a common professional purpose and a sense of immediacy.

The term *community*, in short, can help researchers de-center the term *culture* and focus on the field of variables that affect specific cases of intercultural professional communication. For audiences who happen to share a common cultural heritage, researchers can use the term community to explore an audience’s cultural practices as well as how the audience’s economic, political, or ideological concerns influence expectations, values, and communicative practices. Moreover, researchers can use the term *community* to explore concrete audiences more united by economic or political concerns than by shared cultural heritage or geographical boundaries.

The following chapter will further develop the advantages of the term *community* for intercultural professional communication by examining the ways professional communicators can characterize dispersed and often diverse global online audiences.
CHAPTER 3. USING GLOBAL CONTEXTS TO LOCALIZE ONLINE CONTENT FOR INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

In the previous chapter, I began to examine the professional concerns guiding intercultural professional communication in the globalizing world and argued that culture, traditionally the focus of intercultural research, is only one variable among many shaping the highly context-dependent, performative intercultural communication situation. In that chapter, I ultimately suggested that the term community may be more helpful than the term culture for characterizing multifaceted global audiences. In this chapter, I continue to develop the previous chapter’s conceptual analysis and further explore the advantages of the term community by examining web-based intercultural professional communication. The Internet, a vehicle of globalization and an amorphous and complex medium that tends to shape geographically dispersed and culturally diverse audiences, provides a medium for exploring the usefulness of the new conceptual frameworks that I’ve proposed.

Background

As the Internet develops into a truly world-wide web, audience expectations about the amount, presentation, and type of online content are now often widely divergent, and criteria governing the credibility and usability of content similarly vary (Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Song 2001; St. Amant 2002a; St. Amant 2005b; Yli-Jokipii 2001). Technical communicators and web designers attempt to reach the Internet’s increasingly diverse audiences by developing sophisticated internationalization or globalization strategies. With these strategies, web designers develop online content to be usable and accessible to multiple international
audiences (Cyr and Trevor-Smith 2004) through, for example, making online content available in multiple languages (translation), selecting software and coding protocols to meet international and region-specific standards, and adapting online content for multiple regional target audiences.

This chapter focuses on the latter component, usually called localization, which involves adapting a single set of content differently to “culturally diverse audiences” (Campbell and Ulijn 2001, p. 78) or the “local culture” of a specific target audience (Yli-Jokipii 2001, p. 105). While I contend that the premise of localizing online content is sound and reasonable, I argue in this chapter that technical communicators and designers should be careful not to rely too heavily on the term *culture* to conceptualize, orient, and guide their online localization strategies. Rather, I suggest that understanding the ways international online audiences construct a more general sense of community—in which audiences with some common interest or purpose inflect or even modify their cultural habits in light of such factors as political structures, legal frameworks, historical contexts, economic concerns, or scope of community—is a safer and more pragmatic approach to localizing online content.

As the first two sections of this chapter will clarify, such a shift away from the traditional focus on the term *culture* is necessary because *culture* is an unreliable guide in dynamic, globalized online environments. In such spaces, the intense circulation of radically different values, assumptions, and practices require online users to renegotiate traditional cultural habits, and *culture* tends to function more as a means of maintaining stability than as a description of pre-defined practices and values. To help describe this social environment
and explore localization methods that need not rely on the term *culture*, I will employ the conceptual device of *community*. This term, I argue, can help designers situate *culture* as one variable among others in determining the identities and practices of concrete online audience, whether those audiences are geographically concentrated or dispersed. The latter two sections of this chapter, then, will sketch an approach to localization in which cultural and non-cultural global contexts intersect online to shape a target audience’s constructed sense of community. I will conclude the chapter by offering an analytical tool that may help professional communicators and web designers identify and use these global contexts to localize their online content, including an example application to Philip-Morris Inc.’s localized U.S. and international sites.

**The Function of Culture in Online Localization Research**

To clearly define an online localization strategy that relies on a target audience’s constructed sense of community rather than its culture, let’s begin by considering the ways *culture* has often served as an orienting and guiding term for online localization efforts, as well as the results of this emphasis on *culture*. I call this type of localization strategy the culture-based approach.

*Culture*, I argue, tends to become a guiding term for online localization efforts when it serves to define a target audience and name the audience’s salient perspectives and practices, in other words, when the target audience’s culture is the primary characteristic that web authors and designers rely on to localize online content. For example, Yli-Jokipii (2001) observed that a Finnish company he studied used “cultural stereotypes” (p. 110) to define its
Finnish- and English-speaking audiences and to tailor the online content on their respective sites. He explains that the Finnish-language site contains minimal information, which suggests a cultural system in which “the role of…the information contained in the context is quite significant” (p. 110). The site, moreover, supports the cultural stereotype of the “silent Finn,” who has a relatively “high tolerance of silence” and who expects much information to remain unsaid. The English-language site, by contrast, contains profuse, detailed information, which evokes a cultural system that prefers not to rely on shared tacit knowledge, but rather on explicit information.

More generally, St. Amant (2005b) has suggested that web authors and designers should vary the specific images displayed on a website, the colors used, and persuasive strategies deployed depending on the cultural practices and perspectives of the target audiences (pp. 76–77), and Zahedi, van Pelt, and Song (2001) differentiated target audiences by “national cultures” (p. 85), e.g., German, Swedish, etc., to discuss methods for localizing online content (also see Ulijn, Lincke, and Karakaya 2001, p. 131; St. Amant 2002b, p. 200). Moreover, some researchers have refined or broadened their use of culture by using regional, religious, or ethnic adjectives, such as Islamic cultures (St. Amant 2005b) or Nordic cultures (Yli-Jokipii 2001). The common thread among these examples is that culture carries most of the weight of defining online audiences and localizing content.

When localization efforts thus rely on culture as their guiding term, the result is that traditionally non-cultural contexts of web use (e.g., political, legal, historical, economic, technological) become pushed to the background. In part, this is because several
characteristics that define an audience and its context of web use tend to be grouped under the category of culture. Yli-Jokipii (2001), for instance, describes the differences between a Finnish company’s Finnish- and English-language sites in terms of the target audience’s cultural values and expectations. While the author keenly identifies important divergences between the two versions, and while some of these divergences are certainly cultural, important local characteristics, such as the users’ national contexts or economic purposes, may help account for the sites’ differences more specifically. National contexts, for example, can imply traditionally non-cultural characteristics such as a legal framework and political structures, and Yli-Jokipii (2001) notes that the sites are, in part, localized around economic purposes rather than culture: retail information for Finnish-speaking audiences and investment information for English-speaking audiences. Similarly, St. Amant (2005b) uses an example of wall outlets to demonstrate how seemingly universal images in fact vary by locality (e.g., two flat prongs in the U.S., three prongs in Australia). This knowledge is certainly crucial for localization strategies and helpful for designers, and St. Amant’s (2005b) characterization is by no means misguided, but, while wall outlet shape depends quite a bit on traditionally non-cultural factors such as the audience’s local political jurisdiction and technical regulatory authorities, the author describes the variation in terms of “cultural expectations of what features an item…should possess” (p. 76).

In part, the heavy emphasis on culture also pushes non-cultural contexts into the background because of the way localization researchers define culture. That is, as Hewling (2004) argues, researchers studying culture in online environments tend to draw their
premises and definitions from anthropology and workplace communication studies, and these disciplines have typically treated culture as a relatively stable and static determinant of social behavior, one that often functions with little regard for situational context. In technical communication research, for example, researchers studying online localization strategies have often relied on Geert Hofstede’s (1984) intercultural workplace communication research (e.g., Ulijn and Campbell 2001, p. 78; Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Song 2001, p. 85; St. Amant 2005a, pp. 141-2; Yli-Jokipii 2001, p. 110). Hofstede (1984) described several cultural dimensions to identify specific areas in which cultural systems may vary. For instance, in the dimension of “power-distance,” cultures rank on a continuum from low to high: high indicates strict social hierarchies, while low indicates more egalitarian arrangements. While these dimensions have proven useful for systematizing cultural variation and planning some features of online localization strategies, I have argued elsewhere that codifying a cultural system tends to portray an audience’s practices, preferences, and expectations as abstracted, static, and context-independent (Hunsinger 2006). As a result, important contexts that may influence a target audience’s online behavior (but which fall outside the category of culture) become de-emphasized, and the important negotiation and mobilization of culture in online environments becomes invisible. Instead, with Hofstede’s (1984) image of culture as a starting point for a localization strategy, a target audience’s culture functions as an entity that determines the audience’s online preferences, behaviors, standards, and expectations.
Global Online Communities and Their Challenge to Stable Culture

Were it the case that an audience’s cultural system is stable, static, and context-independent, then localization efforts would have no trouble relying on culture as an orienting term and the culture-based approach would be sufficient. However, culture is often more complex and slippery, which, as we will see below, diminishes culture’s usefulness as a guiding term for online localization strategies and thrusts contextual factors into the foreground. Especially in the dynamism and interactivity of online environments, effective localization strategies must reflect the fragile fluidity of culture and account for individuals’ capacities to question or alter their cultural habits in light of economic, political, or other social forces.

Perhaps most apparent, the constraints of the online communication media themselves contribute to culture’s fragility in web environments, in that online users often must negotiate or reconsider familiar cultural norms in certain cross-cultural online contexts. For example, St. Amant (2002b) has noted that “the plasticity of online identity seems to contradict the communication norms that members of certain cultures use to govern communication practices in terms of how they should behave and to whom they should listen” (p. 202). Elsewhere, St. Amant (2005a) has also observed that “formality breaks down online” (p. 141), explaining that the inherent limitations of non-face-to-face online communication hinder a reliance on familiar cultural norms that may apply in other contexts (also see Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Song 2001). Moreover, because online media often require specific and novel ways of communicating, largely through text and images in blogs,
discussion forums, or email messages, Chase et al. (2002) have noted that ad hoc norms
develop in online environments, including new “rules of formality/informality, flexibility,
[and] interaction style” (Chase et al. 2002, n.p.).

Perhaps less explicitly, however, the very scope of the Internet, as an important
vehicle of globalization, complicates and destabilizes traditional concepts of culture. That is,
as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) explains, global communication technologies such
as the Internet in effect expose culture to the hyperconnectivity of the globalizing world. As
Appadurai (1996) observes, global communications media

    compel the transformation of everyday discourse. [...] They allow scripts for possible
    lives to be imbricated with the glamour of film stars and fantastic film plots and yet
    also be tied to the plausibility of news shows, documentaries, and other black-and-
    white forms of telemediation and printed text. (pp. 3-4)

In other words, “electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social
project” (p. 4), offering a multitude of texts with which individuals can identify, to which
individuals can adapt, or against which individuals can oppose themselves. The result for
culture in online environments is that, as Ulijn and Campbell (2001) observe, “new
communication technologies have pushed culture from its normal tacit state into the
foreground” (p. 78), thrusting culture into individuals’ conscious and intentional social
actions.
Sapienza’s (2001) concept of “translocal communication” (p. 437) more specifically describes some important ways in which individuals in online environments negotiate, draw from, or reject these circulating texts and images to actively construct a social identity. The term “translocal” articulates the ways web designers “may incorporate ideas situated not only across the globe but from the next town, state, or province” (p. 437), taking advantage of the Internet’s hyperconnectivity and global scope. In articulating a theory of translocal communication, the author studied 30 websites designed to help Russian-speaking immigrants in North America adapt to their new social environments and maintain ties to their homeland. These sites offered technical assistance (e.g., information about local events, religious services, advertising, employment listings) and cultural and artistic resources to the sites’ users, which included individuals born or currently living in the U.S., Russia or the former Soviet republics, and other locales.

Sapienza’s (2001) study elucidates at least two important features of the negotiation of online social identity that challenge traditional notions of stable, static culture. First, the study illustrates that the circulating texts and images that Appadurai (1996) described can exist side-by-side, rather than mutually exclusively, to offer multiple possible perspectives for discussing the issues that the immigrant communities may face; in other words, various cultural perspectives and practices are mixed and matched in different situations. Sapienza (2001) explains, “Immigrant websites do not reflect cultural polarization but rather varying degrees of juxtaposition and mixing of local and global” (p. 435), because the sites he observed did not attempt to divide Russian perspectives from non-Russian perspectives by
strictly linking specific practices and perspectives to pre-defined cultures. Rather, the circulating texts and images that reflected traditionally Russian or North American political, legal, religious, economic, etc. identities and frameworks converged within the sites and offered varying perspectives from which to encounter the immigrant experience.

Second, because the perspectives and practices available on the immigrant sites were not mutually exclusive or culturally polarized, the construction of social identity among the sites’ users relied more on conscious negotiation and identification than on pinpointing an “authentic” cultural identity, whether defined geographically or ethnically. Sapienza (2001) explains that “Russian ethnicity [on the sites] seems to be a less important factor in terms of validating a participant’s role in a Russian immigrant community online than it may be in a geographical setting” (p. 437). Instead, the agile negotiation of various perspectives, as well as the content contributors’ familiarity with Russian and non-Russian cultural texts and practices, validated participation. Moreover, Sapienza (2001) describes the emphasis of the sites on negotiating various perspectives, as users experienced “the new culture through the prism of the old, giving them a reprieve from the stress of new surroundings, as well as a homeland context from which to interpret them” (p. 441). That is, the users drew from different experiential frameworks available on the sites and in their lives to define and negotiate an individualistic immigrant identity.

While these “translocal” practices that Sapienza (2001) described are especially vivid on the immigrant websites he studied, we should consider these practices to be a general feature of negotiating identity and usability in online environments. Sapienza (2001) argues
that “[k]nowledge of translocal communicative practices will greatly facilitate document
designers as they…encounter general audiences with greater exposure to global cultures” (p.
446), but this knowledge can prove useful for understanding even apparently culturally
polarized situations. If we return to Yli-Jokipii’s (2001) study, for example, we can observe
that the “cultural stereotypes” the author identifies can be thought in terms of different
interacting perspectives and horizons of experience in the globalizing world. That is, the
site’s English-speaking users may begin to recognize that they are, in fact, visiting a Finnish
site with an identifiable set of perspectives, assumptions, and usability practices, while the
English-speaking users begin to recognize their own practices and usability needs. The
company’s English-language site, then, offers specific texts, images, practices, and
perspectives to help the English-speaking audiences navigate the online content.

Constructing a Sense of Community in Online Localization Strategies

Within these global online environments, which require individuals to negotiate a
multitude of texts, images, practices, and perspectives, web designers cannot easily rely on
traditional concepts of stable and static culture to develop online localization strategies.
However, cultural assumptions and practices do not simply become irrelevant online, and
understanding a target audience’s customs and preferences (traditionally cultural concerns)
remains crucial for effective localization. Rather, cultural concerns must be contextualized as
a specific element among the contexts of the globalizing world; culture thus becomes a
component of an audience’s broader sense of community. As I argue in this section,
understanding online users’ constructed sense of community, which includes cultural
Appadurai (1996) describes an individual’s or group’s sense of community as “a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts” (p. 178). These technologies (which expand or limit the scope of community) and contexts (in which individuals and groups distinguish self from other, inside from outside) form the “social, material, [and] environmental” “ground” against which community is “imagined, produced, and maintained” (p. 184). In other words, a sense of community, rather than simply the result of a given physical environment or concrete population, emerges from the active social work of determining in from out, us from them, or here from there.

It is this social work necessary to produce community that is crucial to understand in global online environments. Online, producing a sense of community involves creating a sense of delimited identity within a broader “ground” or context marked by the global hyperconnectivity of online communication technologies and a vast network of texts, images, interpretive frameworks, and horizons of experience. For instance, designers can create a sense of community in online environments through password protection or site registration, which limits site access and distinguishes in from out; designers may also define relationships to other sites and communities (links and references), which traces an online territory. Similarly, users can develop their own sense of community by selecting sites to
frequent (walking an online territory) and by choosing to interact with certain personae in online discussions (distinguishing “us” from “them”). Generally, these delineations serve to define a specific (if amorphous) group of users, who share similar frames of reference, within a specific territory of connected web pages.

Within these global online environments, the active, symbolic maintenance of community is especially apparent when we consider that individuals may rely more on their familiarity with various images, texts, practices, and perspectives than on traditional markers of geography, ethnicity, or pre-defined cultural identity to circumscribe a community. For example, the online Russian immigrant communities that Sapienza (2001) described define a sense of community by linking to sites with appropriate technical or cultural content, but the selection of links is not based on geography or ethnicity. Sapienza (2001) explains, “The criterion for ‘valid’ linking to Russian-related material…rests on the content of the linked pages, wherever they happen to be located” (p. 441). Establishing online community thus relies heavily on the practices of the community’s participants, rather than on the pre-defined identities or physical locations of the participants.

However, as suggested by the emphasis that the Russian immigrant sites place on the “content” of the linked pages, the idea of a culture or cultural identity still plays an important role in defining community in online environments. That is, as noted above, while the sites that Sapienza (2001) described do not reflect cultural polarization (relying instead on an interplay of cultural perspectives and practices), the idea of culture still exists. It seems clear that, while some content on these sites is deemed appropriate because of its practical value
(e.g., legal information or material that covers immigrant adjustment issues), some criteria exist that allow users to determine the appropriateness of the content that attempts to educate non-immigrant users in “Russian” cultural forms (Sapienza 2001, pp. 440–441). These latter criteria, I contend, seem to rely on the idea of a Russian culture to determine appropriateness. However, the use of a culture as a vetting criterion should be distinguished from the existence of a stable, static culture. That is, as Appadurai (1996) explains, culture in global online environments is becoming less a name for a collection of stable and static perspectives and practices and more “an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation” (p. 44). Culture, in other words, is increasingly a self-conscious rallying point for the mobilization of group identities, a means of stabilizing identity and creating a sense of community within an unimaginably vast social space. In the case of the Russian immigrant communities, “Russian culture” functions more as a distinguishing criterion for certain content than a description of a pre-existing Russian-ness.

For example, as Kitalong and Kitalong (2000) have described, some indigenous inhabitants of Palau, following their independence in 1994, were concerned that “inaccurate materials posted about Palau on the Internet could be construed as the truth about Palau and its culture” (p. 105). Palauan web authors then developed their own online content to describe a national identity that challenged the common Western perceptions of Palau (as either a tourist attraction or a World War II battleground) and a cultural identity that challenged caricatures of the nation’s indigenous peoples (as one-dimensional, tropical exotics). In Appadurai’s (1996) terms, Palauan web authors entered the arena of global
media, which circulated the imagined lives and flat representations of Palau and its people, and self-consciously mobilized Palauan culture online to assert a unique and independent identity. Moreover, the Palauan web authors circumscribed a sense of community, in part, by distinguishing “authentic” from “inauthentic” representations of Palau and its peoples and by dividing self from other: one Palauan politician, for instance, was concerned that Palauan “values could be corroded from exposure to other cultures” (Kitalong and Kitalong 2000, p. 110). But Palauans also developed a unified conceptual map of Palau’s geographical, ethnic, and cultural features (p. 105), all against the innumerable possibilities of Palauan representation circulating in global online environments.

This example from Kitalong and Kitalong (2000) as well as Sapienza’s (2001) description of the Russian immigrant communities also show that understanding the construction of community requires understanding the convergence and interaction of a number of contextual factors (technological, ideological, geographical, economic, etc.). These contexts, which mainly consist of traditionally non-cultural factors, influence an individual’s sense of community and identity online. For example, accelerating waves of Russian immigration to North America constituted the exigency for the Russian immigrant sites, and the sites defined a sense of community against not only the texts and images of global online environments but also against a geographically dispersed network of users; the circulation of stereotypical images of Palauan identity over global communications media moved the Palauan web authors to mobilize the idea of Palauan identity, thus asserting a post-colonial community identity online; and the economic reach of Western tourists and
Western colonial powers created the sense of Western encroachment, against which Palauan identity was mobilized.

Recognizing that stable, static culture does not solely and ultimately describe international online communication, Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Song (2001) developed a framework for characterizing a target audience and some of these contextual factors, using age, gender, economic, and other demographics, as well as users’ experience with information technology and habits of information processing (p. 85). However, Appadurai (1996) offers a more comprehensive framework that can also help identify the systematic patterns and interactions of these various contexts within specific localized communities. He organizes these contextual elements in terms of five “scapes,” or different material and textual fields, flows, and patterns that converge and overlap to form an individual’s sense of community or identity. In the previous chapter, I introduced these scapes to characterize the malleability of cultural identity and the ways individuals mobilize the cultural to serve pragmatic interests. Here I will develop the concept of the scapes to describe the various social-textual elements that shape an individual’s sense of community.

Appadurai (1996) describes the five scapes as follows:

- *Ethnoscapes* describe the “landscapes of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, and other moving groups” (p. 33), all of which bring widely divergent ways of life into close contact with one another. Thus, ethnoscapes also describe what has traditionally been called *culture,*
the embodied practices, preferences, and perspectives that circulating populations carry with them. These movements of peoples and practices occur in patterns that affect different peoples and areas of the globalizing world differently: for instance, while many immigrants today tend to move from south to north, or from developing to industrialized areas, many tourists tend to move in the opposite direction. Such patterns, for example, formed the backdrop against which the Palauan web authors and the Russian immigrant communities developed their online content.

- **Technoscapes** describe “the global [and differential] configuration…of technology” (p. 34). Most salient for understanding online community are information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, that are accessible to different degrees in most areas of the world and that constitute the “technologies of interactivity” (p. 178) that influence the scope of community. For example, the Internet allowed the Russian immigrant sites (Sapienza 2001) to develop a community that included individuals in North American and the former Soviet republics.

- **Finanscapes** describe individuals’ relationships to global capital flows as well as the different economic classes of the world’s nations and peoples. While finanscapes can influence both ethnoscapes (e.g., allowing the privilege of tourism for certain groups or driving immigration) and technoscapes (e.g., differentiating access to technologies), finanscapes also influence the relationships between the members and non-members of a community. For example, the Palauan web authors (Kitalong and Kitalong 2000) challenged the supposed privileges of the West’s global economic
position, which had allowed the West to use Palau as the stage for its South Pacific fantasies.

- **Mediascapes** describe “both the distribution of the economic capabilities to produce and disseminate information” and “the images of the world created by these media” (p. 35), and, like ethnoscapes, mediascapes circulate in patterns influenced by finanscapes and technoscapes. The creation and use of these images are a key component in developing a sense of community online, as they differentiate “home” from “away” and describe the members included in any particular community. For example, while Western media centers developed and circulated images of Palau as an exotic paradise, the Palauan web authors mobilized the media at their disposal to offer a counter-set of Palauan images.

- **Ideoscapes** describe the circulation of images and texts that are “often directly political and [that] frequently have to do with the ideologies of states” (p. 36), including individuals’ relationships to government entities or recognizing the legal legitimacy of certain institutions. In terms of developing a sense of community online, ideoscapes constitute the various political perspectives and legal frameworks that individuals must negotiate to determine the procedures that a community adheres to and the jurisdictions under which it operates. For example, the Russian immigrant sites in North America offered informal legal advice to their members in a way that recognized the U.S. systems as a legitimate authority.
While Appadurai (1996) uses the scapes to describe an individual’s sense of identity or community, I suggest that web authors and designers may also use these scapes to characterize their target audiences. For example, let’s examine Sloane and Johnstone’s (2000) description of the Scottish nationalism prevalent throughout online Scottish news sites. The authors observe, “Critical readers of Scottish newspapers on the Web today are likely to find themselves interacting with online reporting that reveals cross-cultural dynamics of power and national identity as much as it relays the news” (p. 155). In other words, though Scotland is a well-defined geographical entity, Scottish readers must still develop and maintain a sense of Scottish community, for which nationalism has been perhaps the most ostensible banner. The scapes inflect this sense of community:

- **Mediascapes**, when “the Web conveys the signs (and distortions) of Scottish identities” (p. 161) that Scottish readers must negotiate
- **Ideoscapes**, when individuals practice online literacy in the shadow of “an uncomfortable union with a dominant partner in the south (England)” (p. 163)
- **Ethnoscapes**, when individuals identify themselves as “Scottish,” wherever they are around the world, and appear skeptical of “England and English ideas of education, style, literary worth, and critical taste” (pp. 155-156)
- **Finanscapes**, when the editor of the *Scotsman Online Edition* portrays the paper as a nationalistic economic equalizer: “although the majority of visitors will be those that cannot buy the terrestrial product, everybody is welcome” (pp. 166-167)
Technoscapes, when the very scope of Scottish community is challenged, broadened, or made virtual through Internet technologies.

Moreover, even in this situation where a rather clear national identity and delineated cultural traditions are in place, note the fragility of Scottish culture and the influence of traditionally non-cultural contexts on the shape of Scottish identity online. That is, Scottish culture, instead of describing the practices and perspectives of a people who share Scottish-ness, is rather an orienting ideal around which various practices and perspectives develop into a sense of online Scottish community.

**Implications for Online Localization Methodologies**

With this outline of the various dimensions that may influence audience communities, I will devote the remainder of this chapter to describing ways online technical communicators and web designers may begin to apply a community-based approach to develop effective online localization strategies.

As I have argued in this chapter, basing online localization strategies on a concept of static and context-independent *culture*—the culture-based approach—can be problematic because of the complicating influence of online environments: multiple cultural texts, images, perspectives, and practices can exist side by side, rather than mutually exclusively, in online environments; navigating online environments relies more on negotiating different perspectives and practices than on adhering to a single pre-existing set of cultural tenets; and *culture* functions more as a self-conscious mobilizing principle than as a description of pre-existing beliefs and practices. As a result, localization strategies that rely heavily on *culture,*
while they may identify many important characteristics of the target audience, also tend to obscure the contextual factors that shape and inflect a target audience’s practices and perspectives, and the ways individuals negotiate and mobilize cultures become a negligible concern. Thus, the orienting term for localization efforts, whether culture or the audience’s sense of community, makes visible a certain set of web design strategies available for addressing a target audience and conceals other potential strategies.

Moreover, relying on culture to localize online content is especially difficult for web authors who are not members of the target audience or who do not have the resources for a professional localization service. For example, if an online audience does not consider the site’s designer or institution a member of the target audience community, culturally based localization may seem disingenuous or pandering (Cyr and Trevor-Smith 2004). Indeed, a review of several localization services that appear in a Google search indicated that most services pride themselves on their membership in local communities. For example, Webtraduction proclaims that “We only work in the languages of the cultures that we live in” (Webtraduction 2004), and SDL offers customers “fully outsourced localization of all global content” (SDL 2008).

In contrast to relying on the orienting idea of culture, I have argued that understanding the ways individuals develop a sense of community, in light of traditionally non-cultural factors (the scapes), can be more effective for understanding the usability needs of online audiences. To develop specific localization strategies along these lines, a guiding principle is Sapienza’s (2001) “translocal communication.” Sapienza (2001) argues,
“Designers may have to contrive ways to adopt translocal literacies that would enable effective communication strategies that are sensitive to particular cultural values yet are flexible to overlapping and interplay among global ideas” (p. 442). In other words, effective online localization acknowledges the ways audiences inflect or modify their cultural habits and preferences in light of geographies and professed identities (ethnoscapes); political values or relationships to political and legal structures (ideoscapes); economic needs and relationships to global markets and capital flows (finanscapes); access to and habits of using communication technologies (technoscapes); and images of possible lives and horizons of experience (mediascapes). While many online localization services offer to translate content, adapt text and images to local preferences, and configure software and coding for local protocols, the interactions among these factors and the effects of these interactions on audiences’ usability needs and preferences do not seem to be an explicit part of many localization strategies. To take a representative example, Multiling offers localization services it calls “100% Correct—Grammatically and Culturally” (MultiLing 2007). While there is no reason to doubt Multiling’s expertise, claiming to be 100% culturally correct implies a culture-based approach to localization: the claim suggests that content can be adapted to a pre-constituted and strictly circumscribed cultural audience and that audience preferences exist independently of the culturally destabilizing forces of, for example, global political contexts or worldwide communication technologies. In contrast, using the scapes can help designers and researchers identify the “global ideas” circulating online and translate them into a target audience’s coherent local experience in global online spaces.
For practical web design, the scapes can perhaps function most effectively as a planning tool that helps web authors characterize target audiences and target locales. Web authors planning a localization strategy may apply the following analysis method, which involves questions addressing various design considerations:

- **Mediascapes.** What local and global images circulate among the target audience and within the local context? What popular media narratives, or “scripts for possible lives” (Appadurai 1996, p. 3), are deeply ingrained within the local online community? How is the institutional persona that runs the site perceived within the local community? Are the site’s images and texts appropriate for these popular perceptions, images, and narratives, and does the site address issues or controversies specific to the institution and community?

- **Ideoscapes.** What legal and political structures, both local and international, shape the audiences’ lives within the local community? What political narratives shape the audiences’ perceptions of their community and of the world? Do the target audiences perceive these legal structures and political narratives to be reliable, accurate, or trustworthy? How might the site’s images and texts incorporate or skirt certain political narratives and audience attitudes?

- **Ethnoscapes.** Though Hofstede’s (1984) traditional cultural categories (e.g., power distance, uncertainty avoidance) fall under “ethnoscapes,” classifying these cultural categories here emphasizes how cultural habits are shaped by mediascapes, ideoscapes, finanscapes, technoscapes, and demographic factors. Important questions:
How do the site’s audiences identify themselves within the local community, and what ethnic, racial, and cultural divisions are important for the local community? How do audiences perceive and relate to groups outside their local community, with mistrust, respect, derision, or tolerance? Will male and female and younger and older users access the site in equal numbers and in the same manner, or does Internet access skew toward particular audience segments? How might the site appear sensitive to the needs of minority audiences and carefully ensure full audience representation? How might the site meet culturally ingrained usability habits and create a culturally sensitive interactive experience?

- Finanscapes. Will the localized site operate in an area in which internet access is widespread and evenly distributed, or will the audience be limited to a wealthier subset of the local community? Is the local community intensely involved in economic globalization, or is international trade relatively new to the local community? What are audience attitudes toward wealth and privilege: is there emphasis on perceived social equality or is strict economic hierarchy generally accepted?

- Technoscapes. Do global communication networks traffic heavily through the community, or is the technological infrastructure relatively sparse? Can most segments of the local audience access the Internet (and the site), or is Internet access limited to particular subsets of the local audience? What Internet technologies, software protocols, or file types are available or preferred within the community?
Perhaps the clearest way to demonstrate the applicability of the community-based approach is to connect the characteristics of a target audience, organized around the scapes, to specific design elements, in a sense, reverse-engineering a real-world site that appears to rely more on local community than culture to localize its online content. The rest of the chapter will be devoted to this sample application, using a comparison of the localized Philip-Morris USA and Philip-Morris International websites as an example. Both companies are tobacco sales subsidiaries of Altria Group, Inc., which had been named Philip-Morris Companies, Inc. until January 2003, and the salient difference between the companies, for the present purposes, is their respective market areas. With this sample application, I hope to illustrate not only the ways non-cultural factors influence audience usability habits, but also the ways local community can be, in some instances, a more helpful guide for localization efforts than culture.

Generally, while traditionally cultural concerns are evident in both of the Philip-Morris sites’ design strategies, a comparison of the sites suggests that political and legal issues (ideoscapes), as well as public image concerns (mediascapes) have mostly guided the localization efforts. In the U.S. site especially, Philip-Morris goes to great lengths to distance itself from the growing anti-smoking sentiment in the U.S., as well as from the fallout from the Big Tobacco lawsuits of the 1990s. The international site, in contrast, attempts to minimize its use of local images and perspectives (mediascapes, ethnoscapes, ideoscapes) and instead create a sense of cosmopolitan, international community.

For the U.S. site, a designer may outline the scapes as follows:
• Mediascapes. Over the past couple decades, information about individual, class action, state, and federal lawsuits against Big Tobacco, which includes Philip-Morris, has circulated widely, as have anti-smoking campaigns from both public and private sources. Though millions of Americans continue to use Philip-Morris products, the company has suffered a public image crisis.

• Ideoscapes. The U.S. site targets individuals within the U.S. legal framework and political system. Many individuals, whether citizens or documented or undocumented residents, and whether happy or unhappy with the specific state of affairs, tend to accept political/legal structures and services as stable.

• Ethnoscapes. Most of the U.S. audience speaks either English or Spanish as a first or second language, and most individuals consider the U.S. a multicultural, multiracial society. This fact makes it increasingly difficult for public image campaigns to favor any ethnic, religious, or racial group over others. In online environments specifically, formerly underrepresented groups, such as women or the elderly, are achieving parity among U.S. online audiences (CDF 2007).

• Finanscapes. In the U.S., low-income groups tend to use tobacco more than others (Bobak et al. 2000), while Internet use is increasing rapidly among lower income brackets, approaching parity with other economic groups (CDF 2004).

• Technoscapes. The U.S. audience has become well-versed in Internet communications technology: according to UCLA’s Center for the Digital Future (CDF 2007), about 78% of Americans used the Internet regularly by 2007, either at home or at work, for an average of 8.9 hours per week.
As we will see below, the specific community of the audience, including locally circulating images, political/legal jurisdictions, and Internet use demographics, none of which are traditionally cultural concerns, drive the site design. Generally, Philip-Morris USA seems to count itself among a concerned public, aligning itself with prevalent anti-smoking campaigns and siding against itself in the Big Tobacco lawsuits.

The Philip-Morris USA site seems to respond to the popular negative connotations associated with its name and attempts to reconfigure its public image. Most noticeably, the site employs a busy interface, with three navigation bars and five substantive content boxes. In part, the site seems designed for a web-savvy audience capable of navigating the site’s basic features (a response to local technoscapes). But the design also responds to public image concerns (mediascapes) and deemphasizes information that may implicate Philip-Morris USA as a tobacco seller. There are, in fact, only a few mentions of “tobacco” or “cigarettes,” and the site’s subtitle refers to Philip-Morris USA as a “responsible, effective, and respected developer, manufacturer, and marketer of consumer products, especially products intended for adults.” The international site, in contrast, refers to Philip-Morris International as a “leading global tobacco company.”

Rather than a tobacco company, Philip-Morris USA appears to identify itself as a community center offering health-related advice about smoking (responding to mediascape images of amoral Big Tobacco). For example, while the international site offers a link to “Jobs and Careers” at the center-left of its page, emphasized using white space and bold type, the U.S. site offers a tiny link to “Careers” hidden in the lower right-hand corner of the page,
embedded in a list that includes “Community Involvement” and “Youth Smoking Prevention.” That is, rather than joining Philip-Morris USA in its capacity as a tobacco company, the audience is invited to join the company in its capacity as a community center. Moreover, the site noticeably drops its historical company logo in favor of a nondescript sans-serif “PhilipMorrisUSA” in the upper right-hand corner, which distances the company from its traditional tobacco products.

The community theme also seems evident in the images on the site, which draw from U.S.-specific mediascapes and ideoscapes to offer images of family (a smiling Caucasian father and son) and consumer research (a dark-skinned hand in a button-down sleeve reviewing a book containing graphs). The family image suggests a caring community program (mediascapes), while the studying hand suggests a specific relationship between the U.S. audience and its legal system, where consumer research and advocacy can accomplish safety and health goals through proper channels (ideoscapes). These images also evoke ethnoscapes, mirroring the racial diversity specific to the U.S. audience, though all of the images are of men, which may be a remnant of the period when women were grossly underrepresented in online environments.

Moreover, ethnoscapes and technoscapes are evident in the site’s available languages: the U.S. site offers both English- and Spanish-language pages, which reflects the large Hispanic population in the U.S., as well as the shrinking gap between Internet use among minorities and overall Internet use. Additionally, because the translated pages are identical and because most descriptions of South and North American cultures strictly divide the two
groups, it seems evident that cultural concerns did not primarily drive the site design. Rather, population demographics (ethnoscapes) drove the choice to translate the content using an identical site design.

The Philip-Morris International site, in contrast, offers a much more cosmopolitan, international experience than the U.S. site. The site offers translations into all of the world’s major languages, but the site design is identical for each language, and, presumably, for each culturally specific audience. The images on the various international pages also add to this cosmopolitan theme: when a user accesses one of the international pages, the site randomly loads one of about eight nondescript images without regard for local language or cultural specificity. For example, the Korean international page and the French page are identical and draw from the same set of front page images (Figures 1 and 2). The only differences among the international pages are the page’s language and the telephone and email information under the “Press Center” link. All other contact information is routed to Philip Morris International’s New York City offices.
Figure 1. Philip-Morris International homepage, in French
A designer for the international page may outline the scapes as follows:

- **Mediascapes.** Using one “international” site to encompass the non-U.S. world suggests that the audiences likely do not share broad common knowledge or opinions about tobacco-related issues. However, Philip-Morris is an internationally recognized name, and audiences probably have at least some knowledge of smoking/health.
issues, though tobacco use does not always carry the same stigma throughout the world as it sometimes does in the U.S.

- **Ideoscapes.** Because audiences access the site within a number of political jurisdictions and legal frameworks, coherent or unified ideoscapes cannot easily be specified. However, audiences for the site are unified by some concern for this multinational company, which suggests knowledge of international arrangements.

- **Ethnoscapes.** While the audience is irreducibly multicultural, multiethnic, and multinational, usable ethnoscapes begin to emerge in Internet use data. For example, while users in industrialized nations constituted most online audiences a decade ago, St. Amant (2005b) explains that Internet use is growing rapidly in developing nations. Therefore, many cultural and national groups are well-represented online. However, the CDF (2004) estimates that the average online gender gap throughout the world is around 8%, though it is much higher in certain localities, such as Italy or Spain (20% gap).

- **Finanscapes.** Internet use is low among the poorest quarter of the population in places such as Hungary (1.6%) or Britain (24%), though places such as Korea (46%) or Sweden (49%) are closer to economic parity (CDF 2004). However, if we cross this data with other findings that tobacco use is especially prevalent among low-income groups (Bobak et al. 2000), we may assume that audiences may not include large numbers of tobacco users.
Technoscapes. The CDF (2004) estimates that Internet usage rates and habits vary considerably around the world, though it is clear that the audiences live in places that have the technological infrastructure to support Internet use.

Because of the wide variation in audience mediascapes, ideoscapes, and ethnoscapes, the international site seems determined to avoid local specificity, apart from offering the content in several languages (for minimal usability) and press-related contact information. However, avoiding locality is a kind of localization strategy in itself, which draws more from finanscapes and technoscapes than other culture- or region-specific scapes. That is, the international site seems to localize its content for a cosmopolitan, placeless community, and in this way attempts to target a specific audience. The general strategy, then, appears to be to gamble that the audience can accept a sense of cosmopolitan, international community, while Philip-Morris International positions itself as a global aid organization or concerned non-governmental organization (NGO).

As Figures 1 and 2 show, the international site’s minimalist design immediately suggests this cosmopolitan theme, with two blocks of content text, a single navigation bar across the top of the page, a generic landscape image at the center, a drop-down menu linking to other localized pages, and a few other minor features. As a whole, the site includes only the basic elements that identify it as a corporate website, or, in St. Amant’s (2005b) terms, the minimal site “prototype” that audiences can recognize. For example, the site uses short phrases rather than culture-specific icons to indicate links, making the secondary pages more accessible to audiences who may not recognize certain icon conventions. The lack of icons
seems to be part of a broader strategy to minimize imagery. The single central image, devoid of identifiable people and programmed to load randomly from a short list of stored images, attempts to minimize misunderstandings about racial/ethnic tensions, clothing conventions, gender-appropriate dress and behavior, and other culture- or region-specific representations (St. Amant 2007). The scaled-down design, then, leaves little room for culturally specific content, colors, or design features (avoiding specific mediascapes or ethnoscapes) that may make the site unacceptable to the broad, unmanageable set of audiences. The minimal design also ensures the site’s usability in different browser configurations and for audiences that may be relatively new to online environments (based on finanscapes and technoscapes). For example, most of the page is coded in HTML and CSS, with a few lines of Javascript to load the page’s central image. The site thus avoids relying on browser add-ons that may prevent the page from being usable in certain contexts (St. Amant 2007).

The site’s content also suggests sensitivity to the finanscapes that shape the audiences, who appear to be more concerned about Philip-Morris International itself than the products the company sells. The welcome message, for instance, emphasizes the company and the industry rather than the products. Additionally, in contrast to the U.S. site, the international site prominently displays the Philip-Morris International logo in the upper left-hand corner of the page, emphasizing it with its positioning, white space, and the contrast of the logo’s red and burnished bronze against the site’s white field. The site thus draws attention to the company itself, gathering ethos from the brand name or the logo’s generally regal look (mediascapes regarding the specific company or official, traditional emblems).
Moreover, the content text, including the centered message about smoking prevention, appears to portray Philip-Morris International as a health-conscious NGO or international agency. The site does not identify nationally specific policies or legal issues (e.g., settlements or smoking bans), but rather focuses its content on the company’s mission and its community programs, such as its programs to prevent youth smoking. The site thus seems to be targeted to investors rather than customers, and it is thus designed around the audience’s relationships to global capital flows (finanscapes).

Emphasizing the cosmopolitan theme, all of the pages listed in the drop-down menu are identical, apart from the content languages, which appear to be direct translations of each other. Thus, no special consideration is given to any audience, and no distinction is made among ethnoscapes. The drop-down menu itself, emphasized near the center of the page using spot color, white space, and large text, invites the audience to situate itself within an international community: because, as Figure 3 shows, the nations listed in the menu are translated into the page’s language rather than the nations’ native languages (e.g., the French-language page lists nations by their French spellings and the Brazilian page lists nations by their Portuguese spellings), the list seems better suited to display the localities in the international Philip-Morris community than to help users find a specific language. That is, the list does not follow the conventions of usable translation links (Yunker 2002), such as linking to translated content using recognizable national flags or the translated content’s native language (e.g., the link from the French page to the Korean translation would be in Korean rather than French). The U.S. site, in contrast, links to its Spanish-language
translation in Spanish, emphasizing usability over the display of global community. The international site thus plays off the sense of dispersed community made possible by the technoscapes of Internet communication technologies, creating a sense of community reminiscent of a “global village.”

Figure 3. Links to translated content on Philip-Morris International’s French page (http://www.philipmorrisinternational.com/FR/pages/fra/Default.asp)

The site’s central image also evokes cosmopolitanism by offering only generic landscapes and cityscapes (e.g., a well-lit skyline, a tropical mountain range, a line of sunny row houses) that may circulate within the audiences’ mediascapes. Because the images are not specific to any page, they suggest no specific geography, but rather a sense of
“somewhere else.” That is, the images evoke multinational, cosmopolitan mediascapes that seem designed for the audiences not to recognize the places as their own. Moreover, as mentioned above, the site does not depict people to account for the varying prototypical images of “men” or “women” (St. Amant 2005b) and to avoid anchoring the site to a specific place.

**Concluding Notes**

In this application of the scapes to reverse-engineer the respective localization strategies of Philip-Morris USA and Philip-Morris International, we can discern important differences between the culture-based approach to localization and the community-based approach. The culture-based approach focuses on the specific habits, preferences, beliefs, and perspectives of certain defined cultural groups, for example, identifying the connotations that certain colors or images may have for certain peoples, acceptable strategies of persuasion, or the role that Internet technologies themselves play in certain cultural systems. This knowledge is unarguably important for localizing online content for international audiences and should play a significant part in any effective localization strategy. However, the community-based approach can help web authors and designers plan for other contingencies that arise with international web design. For instance, this approach can be helpful when many cultural practices and perspectives seem entangled within a particular target audience, or when a single site design must attempt to accommodate numerous diverse audiences, such as the Philip-Morris International site does. This approach can also help designers plan for the influences that global and local contexts can have on audience habits and preferences,
such as the sense of cosmopolitan community that guided the design of the Philip-Morris International site, the public image crisis that guided the design of the Philip-Morris USA site, or the technological or financial contexts that influence audience behavior in online environments.

Because understanding and designing around a target audience’s sense of community is heavily context-dependent, future research should consider these scapes in light of other localized websites with other purposes and within other contexts. Such studies may further refine the scapes’ specific applicability for online environments or may help identify the horizons and limitations of the community-based approach. Additionally, empirical studies of the effectiveness of this approach may offer designers more specific advice about applying the scapes to localize online content.

While further research into the community-based approach may help wean online localization strategies from traditional notions of culture, the term culture remains entrenched in the theory, research, and pedagogy of the broader discipline of intercultural professional communication. Certainly, culture has demonstrated remarkable staying power within the discipline and has long been the preferred concept for analyzing international audiences, as I have described in previous chapters. However, my contention is that culture’s longevity and disciplinary centrality stems from more than the term’s supposed professional usefulness: culture, that is, has a historical inertia and an ideological usefulness that keeps the term firmly in the center of the discipline. In the following chapter, I will offer a brief history
of the term’s remarkable ideological adaptability and examine the ideological implications of "culture" for the contemporary discipline of intercultural professional communication.
CHAPTER 4. THE IDEOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF CULTURE

In previous chapters, I argued that the discipline of intercultural professional communication has often used the term culture to designate a prediscursive, essential societal character that guides individuals’ identity and behavior during communication. I further argued that the discipline, in doing so, has deemphasized the ways that culture and cultural identity have become deterritorialized and destabilized in the globalizing world. I have suggested that the discipline can characterize global social diversity by looking to economic, political, historical, and other factors that have been eclipsed by the nearly exclusive focus on culture but that nevertheless affect intercultural communication and individuals’ social identities. In these discussions, my argument has tangentially raised ideological issues wrapped up in the uses of culture, such as the ways political or economic concerns can manifest in apparently cultural conflicts, as I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Culture’s ideological dimensions, however, deserve a much closer and more critical look. That is, as I will argue in this chapter, discussions of culture not only brush up against political and economic ideologies, but the concept of culture itself helps structure disciplinary discussions about intercultural professional communication. The sense of ideology that I deploy in this chapter is similar to that proposed by Therborn (1980), who defined the term as “the constitution and patterning of how human beings live their lives as conscious, reflecting initiators of acts in a structured, meaningful world” (p. 15). With this analytical concept in mind, I argue that the concept of culture not only influences the kinds
of research questions and relevant data that guide the discipline, but *culture* also helps maintain the discipline’s implicit endorsement of the dominant economic, political, and ideological dimensions of globalization.

In what follows, I will first draw from cultural studies scholarship to examine how the history of the concept of *culture* has lent the term the ideological functions that still help shape the discipline of intercultural professional communication today. I will then identify these functions of *culture* in contemporary intercultural professional communication research, examine how they have shaped disciplinary research, and explore how they have influenced the discipline’s ideological commitments. I will close the chapter by suggesting how culture’s ideological functions affect the discipline’s professional concerns.

**Historical Development of the Concept of Culture**

The first step toward examining *culture’s* contemporary ideological functions is to recognize that *culture*, beginning from the term’s earliest modern usage in the late 18th century, has always been a key structuring component in various political, economic, or societal ideologies. At the same time, the term’s prevalence, favor, or usage at any historical moment has been shaped by political, economic, and social developments, leading Raymond Williams (1958) to observe that “The development of the word *culture* is a record of the number of important and continuing reactions to [historical] changes in our social, economic and political life” (pp. xvi–xvii). Thus the concept of *culture*, whether as a structuring device or as the subject of political and economic developments, has always been deeply implicated
in its social milieu, and this condition holds for *culture’s* use within intercultural professional communication today.

A review of two historical periods important to *culture’s* development will help draw out the term’s contemporary ideological dimensions. First, during the industrial revolution, the modern usage of *culture* emerged and acquired three important dimensions: *culture* solidified the separation between the social sphere and economic and political concerns, differentiated and consolidated Europe’s nation-state societies, and provided a normative framework for structuring social judgments. More recently, during the shift to late capitalism beginning in earnest during the 1970s, *culture* served to recognize and incorporate burgeoning social diversity and harness the economic revenues of newly important social products.

**Industrial Revolution**

In a historical irony, the term *culture* began as a verb to describe a growth process but, during the industrial revolution, developed into a noun describing the intrinsic spirit of a society. Describing the shift in meaning, Williams (1995 [1981]) cites 18th century instances of *culture* used to describe “cultivation of crops or the rearing and breeding animals” (p. 10). By the end of that century, however, the term’s popular usage was “*culture* as such, a thing in itself” (Williams 1958, p. xvi).

Williams (1958) contends that this societal sense of the term *culture* arose, in large part, as a reaction to the mass urbanization, industrial consolidation, and fundamental social and economic changes brought on by industrialization. “The development of the idea of
culture, Williams explains, was “a criticism of what has been called the bourgeois idea of society” (p. 328), or the reduction of social life to economic relationships. That is, at a time when “a new kind of society was coming to think of man as merely a specialized instrument of production,” contemporary authors, for example Robert Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, found that “[t]he emphasis on a general common humanity was evidently necessary” (p. 42).

Thus deployed in response to the new social order of industrialism, culture acquired three important ideological functions that have remained in some form within the term:

- Separated an artistic, intellectual dimension of life from economics and politics
- Differentiated and consolidated European nation-state societies
- Served as a structuring device for social judgments

Though quite distinct, these three ideological functions have overlapped and fed into each other within the single term culture.

A Separate Sphere of Social Life

An important function of the emerging societal sense of culture, according to Williams (1958), was to allow for “the practical separation of certain moral and intellectual activities from the driven impetus of a new kind of society” (p. xviii). That is, contemporary thinkers came to use culture to encompass the whole of intellectual life and social values as a domain separate from economic pursuits such as the accumulation of capital, the development of an international bourgeoisie, and the conversion of labor into an abstract generator of economic value. For example, Williams observes that Robert Carlyle used


*culture* “as the ground of his attack on Industrialism: that a society, properly so called, is composed of very much more than economic relationships” (p. 83).

This is not to say that social commentators had never before recognized the fact of customs and traditions, that contemporary authors believed *culture* to be entirely independent of other aspects of life, or that *culture* had few practical economic or political functions. Rather, the seminal development in the term *culture* during the industrial era was to encompass several types of intellectual and artistic activity into a single domain unique from—but not necessarily independent of—the political and economic aspects of social life. The term *culture*, that is, emerged as an analytical tool for describing the shape of social life and lending significance to local customs, mores, and the arts. The implications of this emerging use of the term will become clearer as we explore the other industrial-era uses of *culture* in the following sections.

**A Differentiator**

One important implication of this newly circumscribed cultural sphere was that *culture* could be used, descriptively and prescriptively, to differentiate various societies from each other and to rally educators, writers, and social critics to instill common artistic, intellectual, and moral values within national societies.

The differentiating capacity of the term *culture* is most clearly evident in the emergence of the plural form *cultures* at the end of the 18th century (Williams 1995 [1981]). The plural form indicated that *culture* was becoming a means of describing the realm of
social and intellectual life unique to various societies and that each identified society could possess its own cultural identity. *Culture’s* nascent differentiating function is also evident in the relationship between the terms *culture* and *civilization* during the 18th and 19th centuries. While the term *civilization* had been used as late as the 18th century to describe unique societies (as in French civilization or English civilization), the term’s usage was evolving in the 19th century to describe the marked technological and political achievements of the whole set of European nations (as in *civilization* versus *barbarism*). The term *culture*, meanwhile, was taking on *civilization’s* older role of an inter-societal differentiator. The resulting relationship between *culture* and *civilization* was such that, Mulhern (2009) argues, a late 18th century or 19th century European might have claimed that *culture* is “what identifies us [among European nations]; the rest is civilization” (p. 40). In this respect, Mignolo (2001) suggests that “[c]ivilization [could] be carried and expanded all over the planet, but not culture” (p.34). Rather, *culture* had become the intrinsic spirit of a society, whether in Europe or elsewhere.

As *culture* served to differentiate societies from one another, the term was also used to consolidate and instill a national identity within societies. While *culture’s* role in nationalistic indoctrination overlaps somewhat with *culture’s* role in structuring social judgments (described in the following section), the notion that *culture* could help develop a national character indicates that the term was being used to define—and thus differentiate—unique societal identities. The indoctrinating role of *culture* in 19th century British education programs illustrates this differentiating function. For example, Eagleton (2001) argues that
19th century educators, exemplified by Matthew Arnold, promoted English literature to impart “affective values and basic mythologies”—a common cultural experience—to the non-aristocratic classes (p. 21). By introducing these classes to “the best culture of their nation,” educators hoped to guide the increasingly divided social classes toward a common national sensibility (p. 21). That is, in Appadurai’s (1996) more general terms, nationality was less a matter of “language, blood, soil, and race” and more a matter of “a quintessential cultural product, a product of the collective imagination” (p. 161). With 19th century English education, in short, a unique social core could be developed around the rallying concept of culture.

**A Structuring Device for Social Judgments**

Underneath both functions of culture discussed so far—identifying a unique social domain and differentiating one society from the next—has been a palpable normative dimension. Because, according to Williams (1958), the primary impetus to develop the concept of culture was to counterbalance the mechanizing and capitalistic aspects of industrialization, culture became a means to emphasize social virtues independently from economic concerns. As a result, the 19th century authors who discussed culture were, Williams (1961) writes, “unable to think of society as a neutral area,” or even to regard society as “an abstract regulating mechanism” for simply reproducing capitalistic class hierarchies (p. 328). Rather, as Williams (1958) argues, culture served as “a court of human appeal, to be set over the processes of practical social judgment and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative” (p. xviii).
Thus, in *culture’s* normative sense, the ideological function of the concept was to structure the social world in a way that clarified social value judgments. Perhaps the best known example of this function of culture is Matthew Arnold (1869), who famously characterized culture as “a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world” (p. viii). The “the matters which most concern us” include attaining a “perfection which consists in becoming something rather than having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances” (p. 14). And the word “best” is both an aesthetic and a moral judgment that distinguishes artistically valuable materials that instill the appropriate virtues from less worthy and perhaps subversive or unwholesome materials. Within Arnold’s definition of *culture* we see not only that *culture* is distinct from material or economic circumstances (“an inward condition”), but also that *culture* structures a particular vision of a morally pure and aesthetically rich society: becoming “cultured” means striving for a specific kind of transcendent “perfection.”

**Combining All Industrial-Era Uses of Culture into One Term**

In contemporary academic circles, including intercultural professional communication, the normative dimension of culture is usually deemphasized, while culture’s role in identifying a unique social domain and differentiating one society from the next is more often evident. Bennett et al. (2005) describe this contemporary usage as “culture as a way of life” (p. 67). In other words, the term *culture* tends to be used in a descriptive sense, where the cultural sphere is separate from other spheres of social life and *culture* names the
identifying characteristics of any particular society (see also Williams 1995 [1981], p.11).

This sense of culture is more often called the “ethnographic or anthropological definition of culture” (Bennett et al. 2005, p. 67; Berlin 2003). Indeed, Appadurai (1996) notes that “anthropology…has made [this sense of] culture its central concept, defining it as some sort of human substance” (p. 50), and Bennett et al. have argued that the anthropological usage of culture that developed in the early 20th century has been central to the less judgment-oriented, more relativistic uses of culture in the later 20th and 21st centuries.

For most contemporary researchers, in fact, culture’s normative dimension is not a viable option. Bennett et al. (2005) have pointed to “serious challenges to the singular normative view of culture” in the 20th and 21st centuries from groups that “have refused to accept the negative evaluation of their own cultural pursuits that the Arnoldian usage entailed” (p. 66). Other researchers do not appear to consider the normative sense of culture as a viable research option or immediately dismiss the normative sense as unhelpful (e.g., Berlin 2003). Manganaro (2002) has gone so far as to argue that Williams’ emphasis on culture’s normative function “does not stress sufficiently…the role that the emerging discipline of cultural anthropology played in promoting the notion of culture as representative of the whole social fabric versus the notion of culture as the property of the privileged” (p. 128).

However, I would argue that all three of the ideological functions of culture that developed during the industrial era, including the normative function, have remained in contemporary usage. In response to Manganaro, I would argue that Williams explains the
importance of cultural anthropology in a way that emphasizes the historical continuity of 
culture’s normative function. That is, Williams (1958) argues that “the recognition of a 
separate body of moral and intellectual activities, and the offering of a court of human 
appeal…, are joined, and in themselves changed, by the growing assertion of a whole way of 
life, not only as a scale of integrity, but as a mode of interpreting all our common 
experience” (p. xviii). Culture’s role in “interpreting all our common experience” suggests 
that culture has retained a role in structuring how individuals view the social world and the 
connections between the economic, social, and political spheres of life. That is, while the 
ostensibly moralizing sense of culture may have faded, culture is still normatively structural 
in the ideological sense. I will discuss culture’s contemporary normative functions later in 
this chapter.

Culture in Late Capitalism

The anthropological sense of culture as a whole way of life and the more relativistic 
connotations that anthropology and ethnography lent to culture have been central to the 
term’s development after the industrial era, throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. And just 
as culture emerged as a way for writers to conceptualize social life during early 
industrialization, the term remains an important concept for researchers attempting to 
describe social life in what has been called postindustrial, postmodern, or late capitalism.

But where industrialization had consolidated economic production and concentrated 
urban populations, late capitalism has been a triumph of consumerism in which production 
has diversified and mass markets have fragmented. David Harvey (1990) uses the phrase
“flexible accumulation” (p. 147) to describe the late capitalist economic order. In contrast to the “economies of scale” under the mass production model of earlier industrialism, late capitalist production since the 1970s has relied on “an increasing capacity to manufacture a variety of goods cheaply in small batches” (p. 155). To this end, flexible national and international networks of subcontracting and outsourcing have replaced mass production facilities. Meanwhile, product development and consumption cycles have also increased, leading to a sharp decrease in product life-cycles (e.g., clothing, music, television, and film). Drawing a connection between this economic environment and an individual’s experience of social life, Harvey argues that “[t]he relatively stable aesthetic of…modernism has given way to the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms” (p. 156).

Given the centrifugal environment of late capitalism, it seems fitting that the period’s contributions to the contemporary concept of culture deal with diversity. Thus, where early modern writers used culture to describe an independent social sphere, define national character, and distinguish valuable from frivolous intellectual activity, late capitalist writers have lent culture two additional ideological functions:

- Characterized social diversity within a pluralist, multicultural framework
- Harnessed the economic revenues of “immaterial” and “cultural” commodities
A Characterizing Regime for Social Diversity

In late capitalism’s diverse human environment, a central function of the (now anthropological and relativistic) concept of culture is to classify the marked social differences among various populations in terms of a broad pluralistic order. Recognizing culture’s role in conceptualizing diversity, Shuter (2008) has called culture “the single most important global communication issue in the 1990s” (p. 39), and culture’s usage along these lines has persisted into the millennium.

In fact, the concept of culture has become so crucial for characterizing pluralism that the term is overtaking other differentiating devices, such as race or nationality (Usluata and Bal 2007). According to various researchers, this tendency to favor the term culture has emerged because late capitalist global-scale flexible accumulation has undermined nationalistic and small-scale communal identities. Žižek (1997), for example, suggests that in advanced capitalist regions “the ‘abstract’ institution of secondary identification is increasingly experienced as an external, purely formal frame…, so that one is more and more looking for support in ‘primordial,’ usually smaller (ethnic, religious) forms of identification” (p.42; see also Appadurai, p. 160). This cultural turn, Harvey elaborates, results from a pressing “need to discover or manufacture some kind of eternal truth” within the ephemeral, dynamic social environment in late capitalism (p. 292). Culture has thus acquired an appeal for naming a stable, immutable identity, along the lines of the relativistic anthropological sense of culture. That is, just as culture in the early industrial era developed in response to the loss of traditional rural communities, the late capitalist connotations of
Culture are similarly emerging as national and other traditional communities are disintegrating.

The conceptual order that develops around the term *culture is multiculturalism*, though the term *multiculturalism* itself may be less prevalent now than in the 1990s. According to Wieviorka (1998), *multiculturalism* usually refers to a situation of social pluralism in which minority groups (whether defined by race, ethnicity, cultural grouping, linguistic community, or other markers) are recognized and nominally assured social equality with other groups. Wieviorka explains that the term emerged to describe Canadian policy in the 1960s and subsequently entered the U.S. popular imagination during the 1990s. In addition to policy, the term is now used to discuss demographic trends or ideological platforms.

The essential pluralism of multiculturalism has proven to be useful to several, sometimes mutually exclusive, ideological commitments. In one sense, Mulhern (2009) argues, multiculturalism represents “an unprecedented attempt to acknowledge and embrace the historical fact of a multi-racial society. It has been an important, if sometimes ambiguous, favoring condition of the struggle against racism” (p.41), largely because various defined populations and marked social practices receive, at least superficially, equal attention and common respect.

In another sense, however, the appearance of social equality allows multicultural sentiments to serve other agendas that may not contribute to equal recognition. The Chicago
Cultural Studies Group (1992) has observed that “multiculturalism is proving to be fluid enough to describe very different styles of cultural relations” and has argued that “the concept need not have any critical content” (pp.531–532). For example, nation-states often use multicultural sentiment to incorporate and domesticate various minority or oppositional populations. Appadurai (1996) notes that when states are not “flatly claiming perfect coevality between nation and state,” i.e., between the governed and the political institutions that claim to represent the governed, states are “systematically museumizing and representing all the groups within them in a variety of heritage politics that seems remarkably uniform throughout the world” (p. 39). For example, multicultural policy has been implemented to placate the Quebecois in Canada, indigenous peoples in Mexico, Finns and Yugoslavs in Sweden, and other minority groups in other states (Wieviorka 1998).

While the simple recognition of minority groups is not inherently “domestication” or “pacification,” nation-states nevertheless incorporate their minority populations into the state-ordained order “by exercising taxonomic control over difference, by creating various kinds of international spectacle to domesticate difference, and by seducing small groups with the fantasy of self-display on some sort of global or cosmopolitan stage” (Appadurai 1996, p. 39). For instance, Wieviorka (1998) has argued that Australia uses multicultural policies to improve its image among its trading partners and neighbors in the South Pacific. Bennett et al. (2005) call this an “administrative” stance toward culture that has roots in 20th century anthropology and in colonial governments: “the ethnographic concept of culture was integral to the development of colonial systems of rule which aimed to segregate populations along
racial and ethnic lines” (p. 68). For the contemporary equivalent, Peter McLaren (1995) has argued that “multiculturalism has been too often invoked in order to divert attention from the imperial legacy of racism and social injustice” (p. 195).

In addition to reinforcing state power, multiculturalism can support and extend economic power, especially for those multinational businesses that operate in diverse locales around the world (Jameson 2007, p. 205). It is common for corporations and other economic entities to celebrate their embrace of diverse lifestyles and opinions, usually to attract customers, recruit and retain employees, or generally promote the entity’s image (Gordon 1995). For example, CPS Energy in San Antonio, Texas, adopted a multicultural stance and justified it internally using language like, “Our customers want to see or hear from people who can relate to their concerns, and you are only limiting the company if you do not have a workforce that is representative of the community in which you live” (Scott 2007, p.85). The company also noted, “[W]e want to make sure that people are comfortable in the environment in which they are working” (p. 85), though the motives are more nakedly economic: “Through open and honest communication with employees, …the need for a unionized workforce is significantly reduced” (p. 84).

The economic flavor of multiculturalism most clearly shows the concept’s ideological utility, as well as its practical limits. That is, when multiculturalism lends itself to an economic—or political or historical or religious—agenda, that agenda circumscribes the boundaries of diversity. Fish (1997) calls this contained diversity “boutique multiculturalism.” The boutique multiculturalist, Fish argues, “resists the force of the culture
he appreciates at precisely the point at which it matters most to its strongly committed members,” because “he does not see those values as truly ‘core’ but as overlays on a substratum of essential humanity” (p.379). To Žižek (1997), this overlaid culture represents “the folklorist Other deprived of its substance—like the multitude of ethnic cuisines in a contemporary megalopolis.” However, he argues, “the ‘real’ Other is instantly denounced for its ‘fundamentalism’…. [T]he ‘real’ Other is by definition ‘patriarchal,’ ‘violent,’ never the Other of ethereal wisdom and charming customs” (p. 37).

In other words, culture within boutique multiculturalism names a discursive field of “nice,” sanitized social differences, purified from two directions. Either the observed social differences are justified and accepted, or the differences that challenge the field’s order are not cultural but rather political, religious, idiosyncratic, overtly ideological, or something other than cultural. The result is that the explosion of multicultural difference is effectively an elaborate homogeneity. Žižek (1997) argues that “the problematic of multiculturalism… is the form of appearance of its opposite,” in that multiculturalism’s heterogeneity “bears witness to the unprecedented homogenization of the contemporary world” (p. 46), or the capacity to conceptualize the world’s irreducible heterogeneity as an essential order. For Elahi (2005), this capacity to find all culturally marked beliefs and values essentially equivalent is “a cultural relativism that ignores the real imbalances of power around the world and that never really turns the anthropological gaze upon the ‘Western’ self as it looks out onto the world-as-market” (p.575). Thus multiculturalism ultimately functions to impose
an administrative order on an otherwise fundamental and perhaps destabilizing field of sheer social diversity.

**A Commodity and Economic Engine**

In addition to imposing a pluralistic administrative order that may serve an economic agenda, the concept of *culture* in late capitalism can itself function as a commodity or an engine for generating revenue. Though used generally in the anthropological sense to describe the richness and uniqueness of a whole way of life, *culture* can become a commodity because, in the late capitalist social context, cultural heritage and culture-specific forms can be decontextualized and made to function as simulacra, or symbols without referents. That is, shortened product life-cycles have necessitated an economic system in which a product’s exchange value, its value for consumers and markets, is more important than its use-value, a product’s utility as, for example, clothing or nourishment. Jameson (1991) has gone so far as to argue that “exchange value has become generalized to the point at which the very memory of use value is effaced” (p. 18). As a result, Harvey (1990) argues, cultural images can be used in such a way as to “conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labor processes that produced them, or of the social relations implicated in their production” (p. 300). A cultural form’s exchange value, in other words, can function largely independently from its use-value within a local context.

The tourism industry is perhaps the clearest example of the commodification of cultural forms. A geographical region’s cultural heritage can be detached from its historical, political, and economic contexts and sold as a product to tourists seeking an experience of an
exotic and exoticized locale. Kearny (1995) explains, “Like television channel surfing, commercialized tourism promotes the consumption of fleeting images, experiences, and sensations patched together in the collage-like, pastiche effects noted by commentators on postmodern culture” (p. 556). But consumers need not travel abroad to purchase cultural commodities. Ethnic restaurants often promise a similar experience of cultural tradition, for example, establishments in New Orleans that offer “authentic” Cajun or Creole dishes. By claiming that these and other cultural forms are commodified, I do not contend that a locale’s advertised culture is wholly invented in hindsight or that a restaurant’s menu does not reflect historically accurate recipes and traditional local ingredients; for example, a New Orleans chef who makes “authentic” jambalaya may, in fact, be using a 200-year-old family recipe. Rather, I contend that cultural products can be extracted from their context, packaged, and sold to consumers.

In addition to functioning as a commodity, culture in late capitalism can be an engine of economic development. This function for culture is possible because of the increasingly porous boundary between the cultural and economic spheres in late capitalism. The idea of a semi-autonomous cultural sphere, an important feature of culture for writers of the industrial era, has been eroded by what Jameson (1991) calls “the logic of late capitalism” (p.48), or the general tendency for exchange value to supersede use-value.

The economic sphere influences the cultural sphere, on the one hand, as the idea of culture comes to rely on measures of economic utility for its development, production, and preservation. As Yudice (2003) observes, “cultural institutions and funders are increasingly
turning to the measurement of utility because there is no other accepted legitimation for social investment” (p. 16). On the other hand, the cultural sphere influences the economic sphere, as culture becomes a more direct means of economic development. During an October 1999 World Bank conference, for example, the Bank’s president stated, “Physical and expressive culture is an undervalued resource in developing countries. It can earn income, through tourism, crafts, and other cultural enterprises.” In short, “[h]eritage gives value.” With this premise, the president proposed a course of action: “Part of our joint challenge is to analyze the local and national returns on investment which restore and draw value from cultural heritage… such as indigenous music, theater, crafts” (qtd. in Yudice, p. 13). This proposal from the World Bank’s president not only suggests that cultural heritage be commodified and that cultural production be justified in economic terms, but that cultural heritage itself is a resource for economic development. In short, the boundaries between the cultural and the economic, which had seemed clearer to industrial-era writers, have become blurred in late capitalism.

**Culture in Intercultural Professional Communication**

In this chapter, I have summarized five ideological functions of culture that I believe are most relevant for understanding culture’s ideologically structuring role in intercultural professional communication:

1. A Separate Sphere of Social Life
2. A Differentiator
3. A Structuring Device for Social Judgments
4. A Characterizing Regime for Social Diversity

5. A Commodity and Economic Engine

In the following sections, I will illustrate the ways the disciplinary literature demonstrates each ideological function, explicate each function’s role in structuring the discipline, and, where possible, cite research that has illuminated and criticized culture’s ideological functions.

Before I develop my argument, let me issue two caveats. First, various uses of the term *culture* in the literature can illustrate multiple ideological functions, and the different functions can overlap and reinforce each other. For instance, uses of the term *culture* that help differentiate unique societies can also serve to characterize social diversity, in that multicultural classification schemes work by organizing a series of unique cultural groupings into a broad pluralistic order. That said, I have tried to eliminate repetition in what follows, and I will reserve my argument about the relationships among the ideological functions until after I have illustrated each. Second, the examples I cite are meant to illustrate the term culture’s ideological functions, not to make sweeping generalizations about every disciplinary use of *culture* or to condemn the discipline’s use of *culture* wholesale. Rather, I recognize that the literature’s uses of *culture* can vary considerably and that the discipline is not an undifferentiated entity. However, while I will indicate countercurrents when they are evident, I believe that patterns of usage do emerge across multiple publications.

With these caveats in mind, I argue that the five ideological functions I have outlined, while products of culture’s history, structure the ways intercultural professional
communication today engages with the globalizing world, in both the discipline’s professional and ideological commitments. That is, as I indicated earlier, the concept of *culture* shapes both the research questions and relevant data that guide the discipline’s examination of social diversity and the discipline’s implicit endorsement of the dominant economic, political, and ideological dimensions of globalization.

**A Separate Sphere of Social Life**

An early function of *culture* was effectively to carve out a realm of intellectual life and social values separate from economic pursuits and other, more material, aspects of life. Nineteenth century cultural critics recognized various political and social uses for *culture*, e.g., in moral education, and noted that political and economic forces could advance or hinder cultural development. Nevertheless, the identification of a unique cultural sphere allowed writers to approach what they called *culture* on its own terms.

Similarly, while intercultural professional communication deals more in understanding cross-cultural interaction than moral development, much of the literature uses *culture* to distinguish a realm of communicative practices, expectations, and values from political or economic concerns. This function of *culture* is most evident in the heuristic approach to intercultural research and pedagogy, which I described in Chapter 2 (examples include Beamer 2000; Sokuvitz and George 2003; Gerritsen and Verckens 2006). The heuristic model, I argued, tends to use the substantive noun *culture* to describe a set of practices, expectations, and values that communicants bring with them ready-made to communication. As a prediscursive substance, *culture* can thus be explored on its own terms,
independently from the economic, political, and technological influences circulating in global-scale communication networks; learning effective intercultural communication becomes managing the clashing values and expectations of separate cultural systems.

Keshishian (2005) offers an example that illustrates how cultural variables are separated from other spheres of social life. To define “American culture,” she argues, intercultural communication textbooks tend to cite “competitiveness” as a core characteristic, “as if competitiveness were an innate behavior in Americans” (p. 212). In contrast, she contends, competitiveness is more likely a product of the capitalist, consumer-driven economy upon which American life rests. While the economic system in this case has shaped culture, pedagogy has instead approached competitiveness as a cultural value, on the culture’s own terms, separate from other aspects of social life.

Varner (2000) has similarly criticized descriptions of intercultural communication that isolate culture from economic context, though his aim was not to understand how economic systems can influence cultural practices, but rather how business contexts can influence intercultural communication. He argues that “the intercultural communication literature traditionally does not examine the communication in a business context but a more general context” (p.40). His criticism, in other words, is that the literature approaches culture independently from the economic or political contexts of a business situation; culture remains in a special, isolated niche.
A Differentiator

Nineteenth and early twentieth century writers who explored the cultural sphere they had circumscribed used the concept of *culture* to differentiate various societies and characterize a unique identity for each. Given the nationalism of the 19th and 20th centuries, these unique cultural identities were often congruent with nation-state borders.

Intercultural professional communication demonstrates *culture’s* differentiating function in at least two ways. The clearest continuity between early cultural critics and the contemporary discipline is perhaps the concept of national cultures, which Jameson (2007) has noted is prevalent in the literature. Indeed, several studies have specifically used some variation of “national culture,” for example, Auer-Rizzi and Berry (2000), Ulijn, Lincke, and Karakaya (2001), Sokuvitz and George (2003), and Gerritsen and Verckens (2006).

The discipline is certainly not unanimous in embracing the idea of national culture. Keshishian (2005), for one, has criticized the lack of important variables such as economic class, age, or gender, which may illuminate the diversity within national borders. She argues that “it is entirely plausible that the homeless person in the U.S. will have more in common with another person in Guatemala, say, than with the CEO of General Motors” (p. 215). Jameson (2007) has similarly observed that “equating culture with country limits our understanding of business issues, problems, and strategies” (p. 204).

However, studies need not begin from an assumption about “national” cultures to demonstrate *culture’s* differentiating function. A similar differentiating assumption lies behind the very notion of unique, recognizable, and defined cultures. Williams (1995
[1981]), in fact, noted that culture’s differentiating function grew in importance as the plural noun cultures came into use. Within the discipline, for example, Auer-Rizzi and Berry (2000) refer to “each of these cultures” and a “particular culture” (p. 266), suggesting that each unique cultural grouping occupies an independent niche. The authors also indicate that this differentiation plays out on the individual level, as individuals are said to “represent” different cultures (p. 267). Other examples of culture’s differentiating function include phrases such as “two different cultures” (Gerritsen and Verckens 2006, p. 51; see also Varner 2000) or “two or more people from different countries or cultures” (Zhu 2007, p. 44).

The idea of “cultural dimensions,” a concept stemming from Hofstede (1984) and underlying much intercultural research (see Chapter 2), reinforces culture’s differentiating function. Cultural dimensions are universal categories in which particular cultural groups may differ. For example, the dimension of “power-distance” describes the extent to which individuals within a particular cultural system view social power relations: some groups favor strict social hierarchies, while others favor more egalitarian arrangements. A representative example of these dimensions in action is Beamer (2000), who developed a set of eight cultural dimensions to encompass the key areas in which cultures can differ. For a pedagogical tool, Beamer proposed that a cultural system can be represented visually by a set of eight parallel strings, each string carrying one bead, and each beaded string representing one of the eight dimensions. Each dimension-bead can be positioned either toward the left or the right side of the string to represent the values and norms within a particular cultural
system. When several cultural groups have been represented on this bead apparatus, each will have a unique profile that is clearly differentiated from the others.

Some researchers have tried to soften cultural distinctions that have been defined as sharply as colored beads. For example, Bosley (2001) argues that characterizations of “typical patterns of behavior” have given way to more fluid “tendencies” (p. 3; see also Varner 2000; DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden 2002). However, fluid cultural tendencies can still be categorized within discrete cultural groups. For instance, while DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden favor “tendencies” because the concept “allows space for deviations and differences from our expectations of the norm” (p. 80), the authors also refer to “other cultures” (p. 76) and “our own culture” (p. 77).

A Structuring Device for Social Judgments

While the term culture’s roles in circumscribing a sphere of social life and differentiating societies seem rather straightforward, culture’s role in structuring social judgments is often less so. As I argued above, the literature almost universally denounces “hierarchies of accepted behavior” (Bosley 2001, p. 3) and dismisses the antiquated distinction between high and low culture (e.g., Bennett et al. 2005). However, I proposed that the concept of culture nonetheless has a role in “interpreting all our common experience” (Williams 1958, p. xviii) and structuring individuals’ engagements with the social world.

Developing this argument, my contention is that the very decision for the discipline to deploy the term culture implies a social judgment, both in the choice of using the term culture to describe the social landscape and in perpetuating the discursive regime that the
term *culture* anchors. In other words, professional communication researchers who apply the term *culture* must either make or endorse a number of ideologically charged decisions that structure certain judgments about the social world.

In one respect, researchers must choose to apply the term *culture* to an identified population and thus recognize that certain groups constitute a cultural system, some are subcultures within a larger culture, and some are simply groups of individuals defined in some other way. Hofstede (1984), whose work underlies a fair portion of intercultural research (see Chapter 2), admits that defining the collective characteristics that can be called cultural rather than idiosyncratic or universally human can be difficult (pp. 15-16). However, he notes that “the word ‘culture’ is usually reserved for societies (in the modern world we speak of ‘nations’) or for regional or ethnic groups” (p. 21). From a more critical perspective, Wallerstein (1990) agrees that the use of the term *culture* apparently depends on the researcher’s biases, in that the status of *culture* is granted to pre-recognized national groups. In any case, the choice to assign the term *culture* to a group represents the researcher’s judgment about the group’s legitimacy or primacy. Moreover, the method of applying the term *culture* represents an implicit endorsement of the ideological regimes that use *culture* to structure the social world. For example, in Hofstede’s case note that *culture* is applied to national groups, which suggests an endorsement of the system of nation-states and the ideologies of nationalism; *culture* thus helps structure the social world in terms of national ideologies and serves to recognize or reinforce legitimate national entities.
Within the intercultural literature, this choice to apply the term *culture* is sometimes made beforehand, through previous literature or “common-sense” conceptions (as seems to be the case with Hofstede’s endorsement of nation-state ideologies), or is made during a study. For an example of the latter, Hargie, Dickenson, and Nelson’s (2003) study of Catholic and Protestant groups in Northern Ireland workplaces refers to “traditionally disparate subcultural groups coexisting within a work environment” (p. 286). The subcultural groups may have many characteristics traditionally labeled cultural, such as differing expectations, values, prejudices, and perhaps national loyalties, but the groups are called subcultural. Other studies of diverse workplaces have instead applied the term *culture* to distinguish similar points of difference (e.g., see Longo 1998), suggesting a different perception of the groups’ internal coherence and external relationships to other groups.

In another respect, while the term culture can structure social judgments about the classification and legitimacy of certain groups, the term *culture* can also structure judgments about individuals and their behaviors and worldviews. That is, the choice to label an individual’s thoughts and actions as cultural rather than idiosyncratic represents an ideologically charged judgment. To use the term *cultural* to describe an individual’s characteristics is a complex decision driven by the author’s disciplinary background, the particular understanding of the term *culture*, *culture’s* ideological connotations, and other factors. These often implicit decisions that inform uses of the term *culture* are perhaps most evident when different researchers apply *culture* differently. As an example, Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Song (2001) explicitly distinguish “cultural” traits like power-distance, uncertainty
avoidance, or collectivism from “individual” traits like age, gender, and professional knowledge (p. 85). Gibson (2002), in contrast, encompasses all of these variables using the term *culture*, e.g., national culture, gender culture, class culture, etc. (p. 8). These different uses of the term *culture* represent different sets of biases and assumptions that guide the choice to apply the term.

However the choice is made, applying the label *culture* ultimately incorporates an individual’s behavior into *culture*’s discursive regime and structures ways to judge the behavior. For intercultural professional communication, one effect of *culture*’s discursive regime is to structure social judgments in terms of a cultural and moral relativism. *Culture*, in other words, is the label given to behaviors that are acceptable on some level, if not admirable then at least tolerable; anything considered unacceptable is outside the realm of *culture*. That is, if *culture* in the past had been used to distinguish worthy from unworthy intellectual activities, *culture* now serves to make all so-labeled activities seem equally deserving of merit.

In the most general sense of this relativism, authors have typically issued caveats to avoid calling *culture* a barrier or obstacle to good communication (e.g., Miles 1997, p. 181; DeVoss et al. 2002, p. 76). In a more specific sense, culture allows researchers to avoid discussing ethical dilemmas or passing judgment on practices that may be objectionable by Western standards. For example, Shaub (2007) explains that he had been in Cairo for three years and felt he understood many of the local customs when he was “surprised” by his “lack of understanding of other elements of Egyptian culture” (p. 347). The cultural characteristics
he cites include female rape victims being pressured to marry their attackers, male rapists being offered the choice between serving a prison sentence or marrying their victims, and female rape victims being the target of “honor killings.” Shaub expresses his shock at these practices, but he is careful to forego judgment of these “cultural differences” or to classify them as tolerable or intolerable practices. Note that I recognize the dangers of imposing an ethnocentric system of morality on a society that differs greatly from one’s own, and I recognize that Shaub did not have the space in an article on intercultural communication to launch into a moral treatise. However, I can note that culture is used here to relativize any social judgments that Shaub may have had about these practices that are probably alien to many of his readers.

The root of this relativism may lie in the impetus for multicultural tolerance in late capitalist societies, as I argued above (see also Žižek 1997; 1999). Or this relativism may stem from the anthropological sense of culture that I have described, where culture is often considered “the collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede 1984, p. 21), the “rules or norms for action, rituals, symbols, and values” (Wolf, Milburn and Wilkins 2008, p. 172), or, more cynically, “linguistic determinism” (Elahi 2005, p. 575). Whether culture is considered a lifestyle choice to be tolerated or mental programming to be accommodated, the effect of culture in structuring social judgment is the same: anything cultural is, ipso facto, to be tolerated.

Moreover, when cultural tolerance becomes the principle guiding intercultural communication, a touch of condescension surfaces that relies on the ways culture structures
social relationships, judgments, and attitudes. If, on the one hand, culture is considered “mental programming,” then only the researcher has the agency to recognize and accommodate the programming (though researchers such as Goby [1999] have noted that “more cosmopolitan individuals” “may alter their style of communication when dealing with persons of a different cultural background” [p. 180]). If, on the other hand, culture is a lifestyle to be tolerated, then the researcher allows the Other his or her cultural values while remaining above the need for such traditionalist sentiment. In either case, Zotzman (2007) observes, “unequal power relations are a necessary if not sufficient precondition for the idea of tolerance” (p. 264): the Western relativist reserves the capacity to perform actions and control events that the Other cannot.

A Characterizing Regime for Social Diversity

Closely related to culture’s role in structuring social judgments is its function in mapping a socially diverse landscape, a function developed most thoroughly in late capitalist uses of the term. As I have argued, culture helps classify the recognized differences among the globalizing world’s various populations and incorporate those populations into a multicultural conceptual order.

The discipline demonstrates this function first by subsuming most social variables, even those not traditionally regarded as cultural, under the label of culture, which builds culture’s power as an explanatory and conceptualizing device. (I should note, too, that conceptualizing social variables as cultural represents a way to structure social judgments.) The discipline then characterizes the set of all cultural groups as a “global village” or some
similar metaphor, bringing together all of culture’s other ideological connotations (e.g., culture’s separation from the other spheres of life and relativizing of social judgment) to map the social world.

First, though I have noted that intercultural researchers sometimes disagree about what should be labeled cultural, an apparent trend in the literature is to incorporate more and more social variables into the culture label. For example, I argued in Chapter 3 that many culture-based approaches to online localization tend to group several audience characteristics under the term culture. I cited the example of St. Amant (2005b), who noted that audience expectations about the shape of electrical outlets (e.g., two-hole versus three-hole sockets) are “cultural expectations” (p. 76), even though outlet shape depends heavily on traditionally non-cultural factors such as the audience’s local political jurisdiction and regulatory agencies. Other examples abound. For instance, one of Shaub’s (2007) “intercultural learning experiences” (p. 345) involved the response of Polish university faculty to a case of plagiarism. While Shaub thought a student he caught plagiarizing should fail his class, some faculty argued, “How can you have such unreasonable expectations for the students, when our own government leaders plagiarize and cheat?” (p. 346). Several historical, national, and institutional differences between American and Polish universities thus appear to be cultural differences. Groth (2007) similarly cites a linguistic mistranslation in a Latvian airport as a “major cultural shock” when an ATM reported, “Your request has been processing” rather than “Your request is being processed” (p. 206). Perhaps a more subtle example is Gerritsen and Verckens (2006), who observed that one of the unforeseen problems with “intercultural
email projects” (p. 54) included bureaucratic differences among the higher education programs of different European nations, which scheduled their semesters differently. In this case, political and legal issues were described in terms of intercultural research in general, as though the variables of international cooperation were also intercultural.

Indeed, Robertson and Martin (2000) note that culture has become “one of the central, defining contextual features of the contemporary English classroom in the United States” (p. 501). Courses rely heavily on culture to discuss writing voice, symbolic power, diversity, international relations, and “discussions of ‘placing’ the self” (p. 501).

I should point out that this apparent expansion of culture’s domain does not indicate that culture no longer names a unique sphere of social life (as I argued above), nor that culture suddenly incorporates the influence of important economic, legal, historical, technological, or political variables on cultural practices (as I argued in Chapter 2). Rather, the anthropological sense of culture as a “whole way of life” is expanding to include several other social practices, while the non-cultural variables, far from influencing the shape of culture, are becoming culturalized.

In other words, not only does culture subsume all social variables into itself; culture also helps incorporate social diversity into the ideological regime—the “global village”—of late capitalism. Elahi (2005) describes the shape of the conceptual order that the term culture helps organize. He argues that culture, as taught in intercultural professional communication courses and units, is part of an effort to get “the world to buy into Western conceptions of the
individual in culture,” while “state and global institutions and groups (rather than national, class, ethnic, or other solidarities)” are the institutions that “organiz[e] relations between these generally abstract individuals in culture” (p. 575). The term culture, according to Elahi, thus organizes the field of social differences and the institutions that govern it. In this regard, basic political, ideological, economic, and other differences become secondary within an order that “recognizes difference only in order to override it with ‘accommodation.’” This accommodation is possible because the conceptual order rests on “a general notion of culture that derives value from difference, circumscribing real and meaningful political differences within the metaphorical and, ultimately, material purview of finance” (p. 576).

Though the literature does not name its conceptual order in Elahi’s terms, and some may disagree with his assessment, the governing principles are evident in many instances. One example is the practice of online localization, which I discussed in Chapter 3. The dominant culture-based approach to localization not only tends to subsume several types of social differences under culture, as I argued, but also unifies the social diversity it finds into a complex and multi-pronged marketing strategy, an overarching plan for accommodating the social diversity of its potential markets. Thus, a fundamental unity of capitalist interests lies in the nod towards cultural diversity, while the decision to label political, legal, technological, and other variables as cultural helps disarm these variables’ potentially destabilizing influence on the conceptual order that the discipline shapes. In a somewhat more abstract but still illustrative instance, several authors refer to a global cultural order. For example, Bosley (2001) uses the metaphor of the “global village” (p. 1) and DeVoss, Jasken,
and Hayden (2002) refer to a “global marketplace” (p. 69) to describe the global field, while Sokuvitz and George (2003) summarize intercultural communication practice: “global village may be here,” they note, “but navigating the cultures of the village is complex” (p. 100). While some authors have observed that many nations have not enjoyed economic expansion into the global arena (e.g., Munshi and McKie 2001), these critiques are a minority.

The shape of this conceptual order, it can be argued, affects the kind of intercultural training that students receive. As I noted in Chapter 2, Munshee and McKie (2001) claim that researchers tend to focus on the “differences that matter” (p. 16), or the differences that seem to help practitioners negotiate the global public sphere. The authors also argue that culture engenders a sense of Orientalism that helps “us” with the problem of “coping with and controlling” “them” (p. 15). Though the tone may sound conspiratorial, some researchers have noted that intercultural training is necessary because overseas managers sometimes cannot cope with local practices. For example, DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden (2002) explain the importance of intercultural instruction by noting that “more than half of U.S. businesspeople on long overseas assignments return home early because of their inability to adapt to other cultures” (p. 70). While this example says nothing about “controlling” local populations, it does seem to suggest that intercultural training helps employees extend economic diplomacy and integrate themselves into a company’s global agenda.

A Commodity and Economic Engine

I have argued that intercultural professional communication uses the concept of culture, in part, to encompass the globalizing world’s social diversity within what Elahi calls
“the purview of finance,” which helps incorporate various identities and practices into the ideological edifice of multinational capital. I have also argued that, in addition to extending an economic agenda, culture in late capitalist usage can itself become a component of finance, whether as an engine for generating revenue or as a commodity.

Intercultural professional communication reflects this economic instrumentalization of culture in at least two ways. First, cultural knowledge and experience, which rely on intangible, ephemeral traits like empathy and sensitivity, tend to be described and justified in terms of marketable skills. For example, Cruickshank (2007) argues that global business “requires an understanding of intercultural communication and diversity issues in workplaces” (p. 87; DeVoss, Jasken, and Hayden 2002), while Andrews (2001) goes so far as to argue that the professional communicator must be a “global citizen” (p. xv). Within such a context, Bosley (2001) contends that intercultural training is necessary for “students and employees to be effective professional communicators in a world of international readers and users” (p. 1). Ulijn et al. (2000) carry this line of argument further, suggesting that traditional distinctions between innovation, globalization, business strategy, and cultural skills no longer hold the same relevance they once might have.

These and similar justifications for learning intercultural skills are perhaps unavoidable in an academic discipline devoted to professional development; researchers recognize that companies and academic departments must be persuaded—often through bottom-line arguments—to devote limited resources to intercultural or globalization issues. I do not mean to fault the cited authors for ethical ambiguity, crassness, or reductionism, and I
do not contend that economic motivations necessarily make intercultural training ineffective. Nonetheless, these economic justifications are embedded within the literature and indicate the ways culture can become a component of an economic agenda: a professional communicator’s ability to negotiate the cultural can be converted into economic leverage. In Jameson’s (1991) terms, culture’s use value is superseded by its exchange value, or its value in the market.

Gibson (2002) more concretely articulates the ways culture can acquire economic exchange value. He cites a telling statement from Proctor and Gamble, which says, “Because we see diversity as an asset, we will attract and develop talent from the full range of the world’s rich cultural base” (p. 6). The phrases “diversity as an asset” and “cultural base” evoke economic resources and suggest culture’s economic exchange value, while both phrases are juxtaposed uncomfortably with the more economically specific phrase “attract and develop talent.” Scott (2007) expresses a similar sentiment in a diversity statement from CPS Energy: “faced with the challenge of maintaining our competitive edge,” he argues, a company must have “a diverse knowledge base. Any product can be made or copied, the exception being the knowledge and skills that you have in your human capital” (p. 85). Though Scott does not specifically use the term culture, note the equation between “product” and “knowledge and skills,” as well as the term “human capital.”

The discipline also reflects the instrumentalization of culture in certain descriptions of culture and intercultural communication, which often evoke a consumerist marketplace of substantive cultural products. That is, as Keshishian (2005) argues in general terms, “under
capitalism, education and knowledge are increasingly commodified” (p. 208). For example, several critical researchers have characterized the heuristic approach as a kind of consumerist simplification or commodification of culture (e.g., Elahi 2005; Keshishian 2005; Jameson 2007). The concept of a “global village” that I discussed above also suggests a series of discrete, interchangeable, generally equivalent cultural groups that share the global stage. In addition to noting this consumeristic educational structure, Munshi and McKee (2001) have argued that the effect of heuristic-style descriptions of cultural tendencies is to create a “bank of so-called ethnic traits to subsidize the intercultural negotiating skills of Western businesspeople” (p. 18). While intercultural pedagogy and research may thus simplify the cultural to make the complexities of culture teachable and useable, an effect is nevertheless to shield students from challenging intellectual encounters, promote an image of a stable reality, and thus reinforce the reification of culture in late capitalism ideology (Keshishian 2005).

**Effect of Culture’s Ideological Functions for the Discipline**

For analytical and illustrative purposes, I have examined the ways intercultural professional communication demonstrates each of these five ideological functions of culture independently. But each function also contributes to shaping the discipline’s overarching professional and ideological commitments, both in the research questions and relevant data that guide the discipline’s examination of global social diversity and in the discipline’s implicit endorsement of the dominant economic, political, and ideological dimensions of globalization.
My contention is that culture’s ideological functions together structure the discipline’s perspectives and collective actions to portray, and thus research, an economically level world system of equally empowered actors. Culture lends the discipline several assumptions that support such an ideological framework. As I will illustrate below, these include an emphasis on individualism or individual choice, an image of fundamental market fairness, an assumption of strong private property rights, minimal involvement of nation-states or regulatory agencies in transactions, and an emphasis of consumer choice over political participation or agency.

In other words, culture structures the discipline in terms of the ideological edifice of neoliberal, free market, global capital. Harvey (2005) articulates the fundamental features of neoliberal thought, which he describes as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Because markets are assumed to be the best place to ensure fairness, a central neoliberal dictum is “maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions” so that “all human action” falls into “the domain of the market” (p. 3).

Within the discipline, culture invokes these tenets to deemphasize the world’s increasing market homogeneity and sharpening economic stratification.
First, to deemphasize global market homogeneity, culture within the discipline alludes to richly diverse lifestyles, beliefs, and practices while drawing attention away from the incorporation of many populations into the market domain. In this regard, culture’s role in structuring the researcher’s perspective is similar to the structuring effect of culture that Jameson (2001) describes. For those studying globalization, Jameson (2001) argues, an analysis based on culture will likely yield “a postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation” (p.56), where diverse, liberated populations have access to the global public sphere. If an analysis begins from economic terms, however, the observer will more likely report “the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and productive zones into a single sphere, the disappearance of national subsistence…, the forced integration of countries all over the globe into… [a] new global division of labor” (p.57). In other words, while a cultural framework illuminates rich new levels of human diversity, other perspectives may yield a more challenging picture.

Within the discipline, culture similarly illuminates global diversity, and does so in a way that reinforces the neoliberal ideal of individual lifestyle choices at the expense of political, class, or ethnic identities. Culture’s ideological functions explain this claim:

- A fundamental operation for culture is to distinguish a realm of intellectual values and practices from political, economic, or other human activities. Culture thus allows social diversity to be analyzed without serious attention to economic, political, historical, etc. concerns.
• Each recognized society is assigned a cultural system to represent a more-or-less distinct, unique lifestyle identity, and each cultural system serves as an important identification category, both for the society’s members and outsiders.

• *Culture* helps structure judgments regarding the societies that are recognized, the legitimate and tolerable social values and practices, and the ethic of cultural relativism toward conflicting social values. In addition, the term *culture* is absorbing several aspects of life that had not previously been considered cultural, such as political structure or economic practice. The effect is to neutralize not only the intellectual practices and values that threaten to turn harmonious diversity into fundamental conflict, but also to domesticate political or economic differences within this neutral sphere.

• With *culture*, the discipline can incorporate social heterogeneity into a coherent multicultural pattern and, given *culture’s* other ideological functions, create a domain of innocuous, respected diversity free from challenging political or economic concerns or historical conflicts.

In short, the concept of *culture* lends the discipline several assumptions about the proper object of study, the scope of analysis, the researcher’s role, etc. that reinforce neoliberal ideological positions and deemphasize other perspectives on the globalizing world. Any political, economic, historical, or other dimensions of globalization that may challenge the neoliberal perspective effectively fall outside analysis, while the neoliberal assumptions themselves form a tacit yet determinative structure for the discipline’s ideological and
professional commitments. The cultural domain that appears to encompass most human interaction, moreover, promotes a disciplinary image of global diversity that lacks divergent economic classes, significant political intervention, or intractable conflicts. Within this neoliberal disciplinary framework, the concept of culture provides a space through which market principles can extend into most areas of life, as an important ideological function for culture is to help convert social diversity, communication skills, and regional history into commodities or economic assets. In this regard, cultural lifestyles and identifications supersede political participation or class loyalties, and human agency is only exercised within the domain of the free market.

This support that the concept of culture lends to neoliberal ideology is not necessarily a goal of multicultural proponents or those seeking identify with a particular tradition or heritage. But the term culture has certainly lent itself to appropriation. As Žižek (1999) argues, the “struggle for the politicization and assertion of multiple… identities always took place against the background of an invisible yet all the more forbidding barrier: the global capitalist system was able to incorporate the gains of the postmodern politics of identities to the extent that they did not disturb the smooth circulation of capital” (pp. 216-217; see also Zotzman 2007, p. 262). Whatever the intentions, culture serves to channel and subsume difference into a neoliberal ideological structure.

Second, to deemphasize the world’s sharpening economic stratification, the concept of culture within the discipline facilitates the image of a fair and open market while minimizing or justifying the economic stratification that seems endemic to globalization.
That is, while a central neoliberal tenet is that unregulated markets eventually yield the greatest general prosperity, Zotzman (2007) has noted that “differences in socio-economic positioning and hence ‘lifestyles’ are widening” (p. 259) in the globalizing world. I outlined the details of this inequality in more detail in Chapter 1.

To deemphasize the stratifying effect of globalized markets, a key role for the concept of *culture* within intercultural professional communication is to suggest a fundamental economic uniformity or equality beneath global social diversity, whether in terms of individuals’ capitalist desires, material circumstances, or levels of economic agency. *Culture’s* ideological functions contribute to this disciplinary image:

- The concept of *culture* effectively exchanges challenging political and economic diversity and stratification for a more amenable cultural diversity, or a plurality of lifestyle choices. This more innocuous cultural diversity deemphasizes any political, class, or other loyalties that may color economic exchanges, and all communicating parties appear to have similar economically-oriented desires and motivations based on self-interest and economic advantage.

- Similarly, the concept of *culture* relativizes conflicting social values and practices and, at least outwardly, decenters ethnocentric cultural perspectives in favor of a multicultural order. Within this framework that deemphasizes challenging economic, political, historical, and other contingencies, all communicating parties appear to enjoy equal representation and respect from all other parties, and participation in the public marketplace seems dispersed and multilateral.
In other words, the concept of *culture* within the discipline reinforces an idealized neoliberal free market, one of fairness (given an individual’s talents), equal opportunity to participate, and generally beneficial self-interest (see Munshi and McKee 2001, p. 11). And because of this impression of fairness, the concept of *culture* reinforces the neoliberal insistence on strong private property rights and economic deregulation. That is, political or other regulatory intervention and economic redistribution appear unnecessary or excessive because the global marketplace ostensibly allows open participation and opportunity. It may be true, as Zotzman argues, that a globally dispersed capitalist class does indeed reflect this neoliberal ideal of fundamental market fairness, the importance of free international trade, and constructive self-interest. However, it also seems true that this elite class is becoming “ever more disconnected from other classes of the same nationality” (p. 259). Ultimately, *culture’s* silence regarding these challenging economic, political, and historical issues represents a tacit endorsement of the neoliberal worldview.

Moreover, because the concept of *culture* and intercultural communication are increasingly incorporated into the ever-broadening market and justified through economic advantage, any observed economic stratification or cultural exclusions can be chalked up to market principles. For example, if intercultural professional communication research tends to emphasize Europe and East Asia over sub-Saharan Africa or rural India, the unequal attention can be explained in terms of an area’s “relevance” to the global economy or the cost-benefit practicality of investigating a region for a professional audience. Munshi and McKee (2001), in fact, note that intercultural communication textbooks tend to “concentrate
on the cultural norms of people from countries with which the West is doing…business” (pp. 11–12). According to the authors, China and Japan are well-covered, while African nations seldom receive research attention. Despite such exclusions, intercultural professional communication research promotes the impression of market fairness through what Elahi (2005) calls “a strategy of maximum ideological inclusion that allows for…maximum material exclusion” (p. 576). In other words, anyone may participate in this market, but only if s/he can cover the entry fee.

Within this framework of free and fair exchange that culture reinforces, intercultural professional communication can skirt issues of economic stratification and exclusion and instead concern itself with issues of lifestyle and communicative differences, which appear as the main barriers to economic integration in the globalizing world. Intercultural communication is thus not an exploration of the world’s social conflict, inequality, power imbalances, or wealth concentration, but rather a complex audience-analysis puzzle involving disparate communication styles, social values, and expectations.

**Why Culture’s Ideological Functions Matter for the Discipline**

In this chapter, I have outlined five ideological functions of the term culture that have accrued over the term’s modern history, identified these ideological functions in contemporary intercultural professional communication research, and proposed that the concept of culture ultimately lends the discipline a neoliberal perspective on globalization. In other words, through culture’s particular emphases and elisions, the term endorses individualism or individual choice, fundamental market fairness, strong private property
rights, and minimal market oversight. *Culture* thus helps shape the discipline’s professional and ideological commitments.

To close this chapter, let me offer some concluding notes about why such an ideological analysis matters for intercultural professional communication. In other words, I pose the question, What can the discipline gain by understanding its own research and pedagogy as a vehicle for ideology and by understanding culture’s specific ideological functions and structuring effects, as I’ve described them?

In essence, the discipline’s ideological grounding in neoliberal assumptions impedes the discipline’s professional commitments within the globalizing world, which include promoting efficient and constructive communication, preparing students for a global economy, and ensuring the discipline’s relevance.

Perhaps it seems ironic that an ideological regime that largely endorses the deregulated market principles that have led to globalization may ultimately hamstring the discipline’s engagement with the globalizing world. And, in fact, some have argued that rhetorical studies in general do not embrace neoliberal principles enough. For example, Locke Carter (2005) in the edited collection *Market Matters* argues that rhetorical studies are in an excellent position to take advantage of, contribute to, and thrive within a competitive, market-driven environment. In some ways, Carter may be correct about his insistence on the benefits of market principles. Indeed, while global capital has produced exclusions and disenfranchised many communities, as I argued in Chapter 1, at the same time trade, markets,
and the like feature heavily in several proposals to improve general living conditions (e.g., the UN Conference on Trade and Development or Stiglitz 2006, p. 27).

But arguments about the benefits or drawbacks of global trade regimes are largely beside the point: within my argument, the relative merits of international commerce, global markets, private sector development, or globalization itself are not at issue. Rather, my argument is that the assumptions and justifications embedded in the neoliberal approach undermine the discipline’s effectiveness in the globalizing world and impede the development of responsive research, theory, and pedagogy. Advocates of neoliberal principles have, of course, developed ways to rationalize exclusions and can justify free market principles by suggesting rising global living standards (at least before 2008’s financial crisis). However, neoliberalism overall rests on dubious, unproven assumptions about the nature of the globalizing world, the rationality of unregulated markets, and the human impacts of implementing market principles. Carter approvingly cites a quote from Peter Drucker that illustrates these assumptions:

The knowledge society will inevitably become far more competitive than any society we have yet known—for the simple reason that with knowledge being universally accessible, there are no excuses for non-performance. There will be no ‘poor’ countries. There will only be ignorant countries. (p. 1)

For this passage to be justifiable, the author and reader must assume that material circumstances play a minimal role in economic success (“knowledge society”), globalization
is generally even and universal ("knowledge being universally accessible"), those who fail to participate in globalization are largely responsible for their plight ("no excuses for non-performance"), and poverty is a lack of initiative rather than a material condition ("‘poor’ countries” versus “ignorant countries”).

The problem with these assumptions is that they cannot allow the discipline’s ideological and professional commitments to intertwine because the complexities of several ideological issues and global-scale problems are glossed over. That is, these neoliberal assumptions give little space for the fact that global professional communicators, through many of their mundane professional activities, help reinforce, support, or implement corporate and national ideological positions, which are themselves wrapped up in broader economic, political, historical, and other ideological commitments. For example, a copywriter working on a localized marketing campaign outside the U.S. is indirectly involved in trade policies that permit or benefit international commerce, the local political and legal conditions that entail regulations or restrictions, the ethical implications of the company’s international hiring activities and pay scales, and international diplomacy that favors certain trading partners over others. Thus, through participation in economic endeavors and international contact, Starke-Meyerring (2005) explains, professional communicators are exposed to “ideological struggles over the shaping of a global social and economic order. The ideologies of globalization and the accompanying corporate practices are thus reflected in the workplace and in professional communication classrooms” (p. 486).
Cast in these terms, the discipline’s professional commitments are inextricable from its ideological commitments.

But the discipline’s professional commitments also help shape its ideological foundations, in that the ideological concerns guiding the discipline are crucial for its continued relevance in the globalizing world. Within a neoliberal framework, culture’s central advantage is that it can be deployed without challenging the “common sense” of global capitalism, the assumptions about expanding opportunities, the uplifting power of an unregulated global market, the insistence on market fairness, and so on. However, researchers and teachers, many of whom may sympathize with other ideological commitments—e.g., promoting social justice, ensuring representational fairness, extending international cooperation—have little opportunity to shape the discipline’s professional commitments beyond criticizing the expansion of capitalism and the exclusions of global-scale commerce.

My contention is that there are ways to ensure the discipline’s vitality and relevance apart from a tacit endorsement of neoliberal principles, while researchers can analyze, challenge, and shape the discipline’s ideological commitments in ways that are more central to the discipline. The very nature of globalization allows and necessitates this kind of reimagining. As Starke-Meyerring (2005) observes, “the context of globalization radically foregrounds and questions traditional ways of understanding the term culture and increasingly questions the ideologies and politics involved in its use” (p. 478). In the next and final chapter, I will explore ways to more coherently integrate the discipline’s
professional and ideological concerns and thus extend the discipline’s relevance for all the facets of the globalizing world.
CHAPTER 5. WHAT’S TO BE DONE?

In previous chapters, I critically analyzed the conceptual frameworks that structure intercultural professional communication’s engagement with the globalizing world. I emphasized the professional and ideological roles that the term *culture* plays within the discipline. In professional terms, *culture* has helped characterize the discipline’s diverse global audiences and develop effective communication strategies to reach those audiences. However, as I argued in Chapters 2 and 3, the weight given to the term *culture* often exceeds the term’s actual usefulness, and conceptual frameworks organized around the term *culture* tend to downplay global economic, political, ideological, and historical factors that affect communication and identity. Ideologically, the concept of *culture* structures the discipline’s conceptual frameworks in a way that supports, emphasizes, or rejects certain assumptions and perspectives regarding the globalizing world. But the concept of *culture*, as I argued in Chapter 4, has tended to promote neoliberal ideological principles—individualism, fundamental market fairness, strong private property rights, minimal regulation, etc.—that introduce dubious assumptions about the nature of globalization and thus undermine the discipline’s professional commitments.

In short, I have suggested that the discipline’s traditional conceptual frameworks have neglected the ways in which globalization shapes concepts key to the discipline, such as culture, identity, audience, and intercultural communication. Ultimately, my goal in these chapters has been to underscore the need for new disciplinary strategies and perspectives that can better respond to the professional and ideological contingencies of the globalizing world.
This final chapter will examine the implications of these analyses and this critical goal for developing the conceptual frameworks that shape intercultural professional communication research and pedagogy in the globalizing world. The first step will be to reconsider the nature of globalization to more clearly inform the discipline’s conceptual frameworks and to help align the discipline’s ideological and professional concerns. As part of this first step, I will propose a foundation of well-defined critical literacies to help elucidate the various contingencies of the globalizing world. With these foundations, the second task for this chapter will be to outline a practical agenda for intercultural communication theory, research, and pedagogy that can meet the disciplinary goals I have outlined. As I will describe, this agenda includes three components: a smaller, less prominent role for culture than has been previously granted; an understanding/analysis of global audiences based on the concept of community rather than culture; and a more globally inclusive perspective for analyzing intercultural professional communication.

**Conceptual Frameworks for a Globalizing World**

To respond to the disciplinary limitations I have outlined, a practical, responsive framework is required for guiding disciplinary theory, research, and pedagogy in the globalizing world. Such a framework has eluded the discipline because, as I argued in Chapter 1, the discipline’s professional and ideological commitments are seldom articulated simultaneously. Instead, practical professional commitments have primarily been developed on tacit neoliberal ideological foundations, as I argued in Chapter 4, while explicit, critical ideological commitments have typically been articulated from an oppositional neo-Marxist
perspective. As a result, neoliberal ideological commitments have managed to dictate the discipline’s somewhat narrow conception of “practical” and “relevant” research and pedagogy, while critical ideological commitments have remained marginal, whether due to unambiguous rejection (e.g., Moore 2005) or quiet obscurity. Thus, “practical” and “relevant” research for the discipline has often entailed, broadly speaking, cataloging audiences’ values, expectations, practices, and assumptions, while political or economic issues, for example, tend to fall outside the scope of analysis.

Ironically, what the discipline tends to call “practical” and “relevant” threatens to make the discipline impractical and irrelevant in a globalizing world replete with political, ideological, and economic flash points. The discipline needs a new regime for articulating its practicality and relevance in ways that align its professional and ideological commitments; in other words, the discipline must align its need to understand and respond to global audiences and its need to engage with the globalizing world’s difficult ideological, political, historical, and economic contingencies.

I suggest that two components can help develop a basis for the discipline that aligns ideological and professional commitments: a new approach to engaging the globalizing world and a foundation on critical literacies.

**New Approach to Globalization**

Because the discipline’s approach to globalization has been encumbered by the segregation of professional and ideological concerns, devising a new approach to globalization may be the best way to align the discipline’s ideological and professional
aspects. As it stands, the discipline has not developed a comprehensive framework for engaging the globalizing world because, with some exceptions (e.g., Sapienza 2001; Munshi and McKie 2001; Starke-Meyerring 2005; Starke-Meyerring, Hill Duin, and Palvetzian 2007; Jameson 2007) globalization has been implicitly considered through a framework of neoliberal assumptions. In many cases, globalization is cast in somewhat narrow economic or cultural terms (e.g., Miles 1997; T. Weiss 1997; Yli-Jokipii 2001; Ulijn, Lincke, and Karakaya 2001; DeVoss, Jasken, Hayden 2002; St. Amant 2005b; Dauterman 2005; Kuiper 2007). In other instances, globalization has been an implicit backdrop against which intercultural communication is a necessity (e.g., Goby 1999; Auer-Rizzi and Berry 2000; Varner 2000; Beamer 2000; Planken, van Hooft, and Korzilius 2004; Keshishian 2005; Babcock and Babcock 2007). Because the political, ideological, and other dimensions of globalization often remain tacit, critical approaches to the globalizing world have tended to be reserved for ideological critiques. Meanwhile, many invocations of globalization have tended to reinforce the neoliberal principles I discussed in Chapter 4, such as an endorsement of unfettered trade and the assumption that most individuals have some means to engage fully in the globalizing world. At the same time, the challenges of globalization that I outlined in Chapter 1—e.g., the inconsistencies, economic exclusions, and limited access—have not been included in the discipline’s approach to intercultural professional communication.

I suggest that acknowledging the following characteristics of the globalizing world can help the discipline more critically and comprehensively approach globalization:
Globalization is not an innocent or historically inevitable extension of technology and economics. It involves layers of political, economic, historical, and ideological support, as well as conflict and inconsistency, all of which may influence intercultural communication (Jameson 2001; Weiming 2008).

Globalization is an incomplete, variegated, and ongoing process, with certain areas of the world receiving more economic and popular attention than other areas. Different regions experience the dimensions of globalization differently (Sassen 2005), and technological and economic factors are important for understanding international audiences.

Sanctioned gaps in the global economy have excluded many regions and populations from the lauded advantages of globalization, whether due to a region’s lack of infrastructure or development capital or due to weak labor protections and massive income inequality (UNDP; Stiglitz 2006). Populations and regions that have been underrepresented in the discipline are nonetheless affected by and have a stake in the globalizing world (Weiming 2008).

Intercultural professional communication can remain professional, practical, and relevant by engaging the globalizing world in ways that go beyond the traditional neoliberal concerns of multinational business and economic hot spots (Stiglitz 2006). While the discipline need not abandon its commercial foundation, the discipline may explore other areas, including international academic communities (Jameson 2001), non-profit development and training organizations, aid organizations, and other types of global ventures that may challenge neoliberal assumptions.
Later in this chapter I will offer ways for the discipline to incorporate these aspects of globalization into theory, research, and pedagogy.

**Foundation of Well-Defined Critical Literacies**

To help draw out the complex dimensions of the globalizing world and interrogate the discipline’s assumptions, I propose that an agenda for disciplinary theory, research, and pedagogy be guided by critical literacies. I will offer specific critical approaches below, but, according to Starke-Meyerring (2005) critical literacies generally involve analyzing the ideological (i.e., perspective-forming) themes that shape the globalizing world and “understanding what power relations these ideologies and practices produce and reproduce and whom these relations privilege or marginalize” (p. 487). The term “literacies” as used here refers generally to analytical engagement, rather than simply reading and writing skills, and may thus include critical methods and approaches.

Given that critical approaches tend not to be incorporated into the more practice-oriented disciplinary mainstream, as I argued in Chapter 1, I want to carefully circumscribe my agenda for critical literacies in a way that maximizes its usefulness for the discipline. On the one hand, I want to avoid a potential pitfall of some critical approaches: limiting their own usefulness by setting overly ambitious goals for research methods or university-level pedagogies. For example, Scott (2006) outlined a critical pedagogy designed to “enable students to …[find] agency and hope in collective, politically informed action outside of the managerialist philosophies and corporate frameworks that define so much of contemporary life” (p. 230). While Scott’s goals are laudable, and classroom practices may contribute to
these goals, the goals’ broad scope and reach beyond professional communication may create a disconnect between professional practice and Scott’s ideological aims. In other words, researchers may need to concede Elahi’s (2005) point, that “[t]he business-writing classroom will certainly not overturn the massive material and ideological reach of transnationalism” (p.582), or at least classroom practice per se will not.

On the other hand, I want to avoid advocating critical approaches that may be hampered by a somewhat idealistic stance, which, Carter (2005) argues, “tends to be to criticize and resist, not to create.” A critical approach may be “founded on well-defined fundamentals” and insistent on “critical agency,” but it may still be impotent without “the possibility of productive action.” He concludes, “It is a state we might somewhat cynically call enlightened enfeeblement” (p. 36, italics in original). For example, in a skillful and sound criticism of textbooks that neglect to mention economic influences on cultural practices, Keshishian (2005) proposes that pedagogical materials can “illuminate the learned and socialized nature of cultural practice by asking questions that will help students make the connection between, say, consumerism and their daily lives, and the consequences of such a tendency on the environment” (p. 219). Again, while these are worthy goals, Keshishian does not provide a map for achieving them in the classroom. To help critical approaches enter the disciplinary mainstream, practicable goals need to be supported with, for example, case studies or methods.

Though I argue that reining in and specifying the goals of critical approaches may help integrate these approaches into the mainstream of intercultural professional
communication, I recognize that critical approaches will always face resistance on some level. For example, Moore (2005) decries the very basis of critical theory as fundamentally opposed to anything “professional” in professional communication. In Moore’s telling, “critical theorists attack capitalism” itself, while “the democratic cultures that give [critical theorists] the freedom to make their critiques are all high-tech state capitalist cultures” that boast “the most freedoms” as well as “the highest standards of living” (p. 54). Conflating researchers who criticize the complex results of capitalist processes (e.g., exploitation of labor, lack of corporate social responsibility) with radicals who advocate a totalitarian socialist order seems more like a talking point than an argument. But the primary problem of Moore’s attack, for my purposes, is that he does not allow for a middle ground between critical analysis and radical opposition. While setting critical yet practicable research and pedagogical goals may not placate researchers in Moore’s mold, I believe critical approaches are necessary for making intercultural professional communication practical.

In contrast to Moore and to underdeveloped critical approaches, then, I contend that intercultural professional communication can be approached in ways that are both practical and sufficiently critical. While critical analysis may, in fact, suggest ambitious goals, opposition, resistance, or the rejection of certain positions and assumptions, a critical approach does not necessitate a perpetually oppositional stance to a perceived mainstream, and it need not abandon the practical and often commercial foundation of intercultural professional communication. Rather, as I have argued, critical literacies are important for interrogating disciplinary assumptions and approaching the complexities of the globalizing
world. Starke-Meyerring (2005) has argued that, “[w]ithout these [critical] literacies, professional communicators will find it difficult to participate in the complex local-global interactions that shape the emerging global civil society” (p. 487). Aronowitz (2000)—whose book *The Knowledge Factory* rails against the job-training curriculum that he says pervades most universities—agrees that critical approaches are necessarily practical. Uncritical, instrumental, university-grade skills training, he argues, “have failed to prepare students to face relatively new issues such as globalization, immigration, and cultural conflict” (p. 127). Among the instrumental pedagogies we might include heuristic-based approaches to intercultural professional communication, which do not always entail the kind of critical methods I advocate. “Ironically,” Aronowitz notes, “the best preparation for the work of the future might be to cultivate knowledge of the broadest possible kind, to make learning a way of life that in the first place is pleasurable and then rigorously critical” (p. 161).

**Implications for Intercultural Professional Communication**

Keeping in mind the two disciplinary bases I have suggested—a comprehensive approach to globalization and a foundation of critical literacies—I will develop several implications that the previous chapters’ analyses and the dissertation’s goals have for intercultural professional communication. These implications are organized into three broad disciplinary directions, each of which can offer new avenues for practical, productive, and relevant research and pedagogy:
• An approach to *culture* that grants the concept a smaller, de-centered role in audience analysis and that recognizes the political, economic, and other factors that influence cultural performance

• An understanding of global audiences based on the concept of *community* rather than *culture*

• A more globally inclusive perspective for analyzing the audiences and ideological implications of intercultural professional communication

**Smaller, De-centered Role for the Term Culture**

As I argued in Chapter 4, the term *culture* is burdened with ideological connotations that, when disciplinary research emphasizes the term to characterize global audiences, is ultimately counterproductive: the discipline’s professional commitments to effective audience analysis run up against the discipline’s implicit and limiting neoliberal ideological assumptions. However, I suggest that the concept of *culture* remains a useful component for audience analysis, but only if the term is re-imagined according to the more comprehensive approach to globalization and critical literacies.

To help align the discipline’s ideological and professional commitments, I propose that this re-imagined concept of *culture* must have a smaller, de-centered role in audience analysis; leave room for the mobilization and performance of cultural identity; and acknowledge the political, economic, and other factors that influence cultural performance. To meet these goals, I suggest that intercultural research experiment with and develop uses for Appadurai’s (1996) cultural definition. Appadurai summarizes the idea of *culture* as
“situated difference…in relation to something local, embodied, and significant.” Because *culture* is thus situated and relational, he argues that “culture is not usefully regarded as a substance but is better regarded as a dimension of phenomena” (p. 12), in other words, as I discussed in Chapter 2, not *culture* the noun but *cultural* the adjective. The benefit of imagining the cultural as a dimension of social differences is to make *culture* “a heuristic device that we can use to talk about difference” (p. 13). “But,” he adds, “there are many kinds of differences in the world and only some of them are cultural…. I suggest that we regard as cultural only those differences that either express, or set the groundwork for, the mobilization of group identities” (p. 13). The term “mobilization” here may seem to imply that individuals use the concept of *culture* cynically to achieve more fundamental goals, for example, combating assimilation or excluding immigrant communities. However, “mobilization” can simply indicate that group identity is meaningful to individuals, that individuals orient themselves in the social world using the cultural, and that mobilization is not necessarily self-conscious or cynical. “Mobilization” simply marks a group with an identity within a broader social milieu. Appadurai’s clause about the “mobilization of group identities” is ultimately the difference between understanding the cultural in Hofstede’s (1984) sense, as mental programming, and understanding the cultural as a more dynamic and responsive dimension of experience.

In short, the cultural in Appadurai’s formulation emphasizes the ways cultural identity is defined by cultural outsiders as well as insiders, the contextual nature of cultural performance, and the ways individuals may use the cultural to develop meaningful social
identities. In these terms, intercultural researchers may find the cultural in areas that have not been traditionally considered cultural. For example, the political realm may acquire cultural characteristics when European politicians use the idea of an “open society” to contrast Western citizens and Islamist fundamentalists, or the economic realm may assume cultural characteristics when the term “socialism” is used to name something inconsistent with an individualistic “American” identity. In these cases, note that what constitutes the cultural is not a set of practices or mental programming, but the expression and mobilization of a group identity. But the cultural also remains in more traditional disciplinary uses of the term, in terms of assumptions and practices that characterize and identify a group. For example, Dragga (1997) uses cultural to describe the Chinese practices and assumptions that derive from Confucian ethics. To apply the term cultural in the sense I have outlined, we might say that Confucian ethics marks the difference between the American identity of the case study’s protagonist and the identity of his Chinese business partners. For practices or perspectives that do not seem to mobilize a group identity or differentiate one group identity from another, for example, intra-group issues like power-distance, terms like “tradition” or “custom” are available.

The disciplinary implications of Appadurai’s cultural definition are perhaps most relevant for developing new research methods for audience analysis. In explaining the limitations of traditional uses of culture in audience analysis, Poncini (in Zachary 2003) demonstrates the ways Appadurai’s cultural definition may be integrated into practical research. She explains that
. . . cultural values may be less useful [than other audience characteristics] when actual interaction is of interest, especially when individuals from a range of cultures are involved. Furthermore, it may be possible that parties in intercultural settings adapt to each other such that convergence or communication accommodation become possible. Indeed, my own research on multicultural business meetings suggests that attributing difficulties, miscommunications, or communication behavior solely to linguistic and cultural differences, or to an interactant’s membership in a national culture, overlooks social and organizational roles as well as other important situational factors, especially those related to business issues. (p. 76)

While the references to “cultures” and “national culture” may retain some ideological assumptions that can be questioned, Poncini’s outline includes several spaces where Appadurai’s notion of the cultural can be developed. For example, Poncini’s observation that “parties in intercultural settings adapt to each other” suggests that not only is cultural identity malleable and performed, but that performance depends more on situational factors and common goals than on mental programming (see also Jameson 2007). Additionally, Poncini notes that intercultural communication is affected by “social and organizational roles as well as other important situational factors,” implying a multi-dimensional nature for intercultural audience analysis. To help illuminate any relevant ideological issues, researchers might further expand the “situational factors” to include factors beyond those “related to business issues.” In any case, Poncini’s observations indicate that the need for a new notion of the
cultural exists in the limitations of the current research, and my contention is that Appadurai’s definition can meet this need.

Using Appadurai’s cultural definition offers researchers several advantages over traditional approaches to the concept of *culture*. A primary advantage is that the slippery and ideologically loaded term *culture* is de-centered in audience analysis. That is, because the cultural is merely one dimension out of several for audience analysis, and a dimension deeply entangled in the political, economic, and other dimensions, *culture* need not carry alone the burden of characterizing global audiences. Other political, economic, and other aspects of the globalizing world that influence cultural performance and group mobilization thus become more integral to audience analysis, as I will explain below in terms of the community-based approach. Another advantage of using Appadurai’s cultural definition, closely related to the inclusion of other variables, is that the ideological implications of *culture* become more relevant for audience analysis. That is, the way the cultural is used to mobilize group identities depends on contextual (e.g., economic, political, historical) features, any of which can reveal the tensions, conflicts, and ideologies circulating within the globalizing world. A final advantage for Appadurai’s cultural definition is that individuals are given more leeway for mobilizing and performing identity according to the intercultural communication situation. In other words, because Appadurai’s formulation relies on the idea of “situated difference,” the intercultural situation itself becomes part of audience analysis, and intercultural communication becomes enmeshed in the ideological, political, economic, and other issues of the globalizing world. The audience, rather than mechanically executing
mental programming, thus becomes more dynamic and more responsive to situational contingencies.

**Approach to Audience Analysis Based on the Concept of Community**

With the term *culture* given a less central and more specific role in audience analysis, I propose that an analysis method more focused on the term *community* rather than *culture* can help identify the multiple dimensions of the globalizing world that influence intercultural communication. As I argued in Chapters 2 and 3, the term *community* may be more appropriate than *culture* for describing a concrete audience, whether geographically localized or globally dispersed, and the concept of a concrete community suspends conclusions about social and geographical homogeneity implicit in the term *culture*. The term *community* thus embodies the disciplinary bases I described above for reconciling the discipline’s professional and ideological commitments: the comprehensive approach to globalization suggests that multiple inconsistent, conflicting dimensions of the globalizing world are integral to audience analysis, while critical literacies require that assumptions about audiences’ ideological, economic, and cultural homogeneity, as well as intercultural communication, be interrogated. In sum, professional commitments to effective audience analysis depend on reconsidering ideological assumptions about the nature of globalization and its effect on local communities.

For the discipline, this community-based approach to audience analysis can be relevant both for developing research agendas and building pedagogical methods. For research agendas, I suggest that Appadurai’s scapes, introduced and discussed in Chapters 2
and 3, may help develop a conceptual framework that can identify and analyze the various contingencies of the globalizing world in terms of target audiences and locales. As I described in Chapter 2, the scapes include ethnoscapes, ideoscapes, finanscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, and sacriscapes to explore, respectively, movements of people and cultural ideas, political values and ideologies, finance, technologies, media images of possible and actual lives, and sacred beliefs within a given community. In addition to emphasizing the economic variegation, political limitations, and historical contingencies of globalization, the scapes indicate the factors that may influence individuals’ identifications, behaviors, and assumptions during communication.

I suggest that researchers examining target audience communities can explore Appadurai’s scapes using the following possible questions and points of analysis:

- Ethnoscapes, the various cultural identities and culturally-based habits and preferences. How do audiences identify themselves within their community, and what ethnic, racial, and cultural divisions are important for the local community? What kinds of culturally linked practices, preferences, and assumptions circulate within the community? Are there multiple culturally linked practices, and are there conflicts about these practices? Are minority groups well represented or marginalized within the community? Is the community itself a minority group in relation to national or regional communities? How do audiences perceive and relate to groups outside their local community, with mistrust, respect, derision, or affinity? What kind of gender relations are evident within the community?
• Ideoscapes, political values circulating within the community or relationships to political and legal structures. What legal and political structures, both local and international, shape the audiences’ lives within the local community? What political narratives shape the audiences’ perceptions of their community and of the world? Do the target audiences perceive these legal structures and political narratives to be reliable, accurate, and trustworthy?

• Finanscapes, community members’ economic conditions and relationships to global markets and capital flows. Is the local community intensely involved in economic globalization, or is international trade relatively new or distant to the local community? Is there sharp economic stratification within the community, or is the community relatively economically homogeneous? Is the community as a whole relatively wealthy or economically disadvantaged by international standards? What are audience attitudes toward wealth and privilege: is there emphasis on perceived social equality or does strict economic hierarchy seem acceptable?

• Technoscapes, community members’ access to communication technologies and the roles these play in maintaining the community’s scope and shape. Do global communication networks traffic heavily through the community, or is the technological infrastructure relatively sparse? Can most segments of the local audience access the Internet and other global communication technologies, or is access limited to particular subsets of the community? What Internet technologies, software protocols, or technological standards are available or preferred within the community?
• Mediascapes, the images of possible and actual lives circulating within the community and the community’s horizon of experience. What local and global images circulate among the target audience and within the local context? What popular media narratives, or “scripts for possible lives” (Appadurai 1996, p. 3), are deeply ingrained within the local community? What role do these media images play within the local community, e.g., are the images confirmation of the community’s prosperity, alien to the community members, or a source of aspiration or emulation?

• Sacriscapes, the sacred beliefs, ideologies, practices, and conflicts circulating within the community. What kinds of sacred or religious institutions are prevalent within the community, and what kinds of practices and beliefs stem from these institutions? What roles do these institutions play in individuals’ lives? Are there religious conflicts within the community or between the target audience community and other communities? How are minority or oppositional opinions concerning sacred matters received, and is the target community a minority religious group within a larger population?

To emphasize the perspectival nature of these scapes, I have included questions regarding the ways these dimensions might affect audiences’ perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Indeed, for any analysis starting from these questions, the effects of these extensive and perhaps somewhat abstract dimensions of the globalizing world must focus on the ways these global dimensions are felt at the local audience level. I will offer an example of a way to use these scapes below.
In addition to helping guide intercultural professional communication research, the
scapes that structure audience analysis for the community-based approach can be used to
develop pedagogical methods that demonstrate to students the ways multiple global
dimensions shape intercultural communication. These methods can supplement professional
communication textbooks, which, I argued in Chapter 2, retain many of the disciplinary
assumptions about the globalizing world, global audiences, and intercultural communication
that I have outlined throughout this dissertation. This is not to say that textbooks, which have
been a rich if sometimes unfair target of much criticism (Miles, 1997), have ultimately failed
to address intercultural communication. Rather, the textbooks’ perspective on intercultural
communication should be one such view offered in the classroom to teach a community-
based approach to audience analysis.

To foster sufficiently critical and globally comprehensive learning, students can be
presented with different, often conflicting perspectives on globalization, local communities,
and intercultural interaction. For instance, in an intercultural pedagogy designed to
interrogate Western biases in intercultural communication course materials, Munshee and
McKie (2001) have students read selections from critical journalists and scholars who offer a
perspective on globalization and intercultural exchange different from that often found in
professional communication materials. To explore some of the political, historical, economic,
and ideological issues in the globalizing world, students might read selections from Edward
Said’s (1978) *Orientalism* to learn how Western scholars have studied non-Western cultures
to better administer European colonies. For this exercise to be effective, students could be
encouraged to explore parallels between imperialistic Orientalist scholarship and intercultural communication research, thus drawing out the multiple factors underlying intercultural exchange, as well as the effects of political and economic power imbalances among different communities.

Films, such as Werner Volkmer’s (1994) *The Bomb under the World*, can similarly be used to illustrate alternative perspectives on globalization and its dimensions and to focus on the effects of these dimensions on specific, local communities. Films may also perhaps prove more accessible to students. In Volkmer’s film, for instance, a rural Indian community that had been removed from the dynamics of the globalizing world suddenly finds itself a target audience for new advertising campaigns (mediascapes, finanscapes, and technoscapes) designed to introduce and sell a specifically Western way of living (ethnoscapes, ideoscapes, and perhaps sacriscapes). Students might explore the multiple dimensions of globalization that influence the marketing campaign and the community’s response, as well as the ethical and ideological implications that globalized commerce has in terms of this small local community.

The point of these pedagogical methods is to examine the globalizing world in its various inequalities, imbalances, and asymmetrical economic, political, and technological relationships within local communities and among specific audiences. In short, these methods can supplement what the culture-based approach to audience analysis tends to overlook. In terms of Appadurai’s theory, critical materials and discussions can supply impressions of ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes, finanscapes, and
sacriscapes that instructors and students might draw from to develop a multi-dimensional image of the globalizing world, with its inconsistencies, differences, and conflicts.

**Example: Understanding the Intricacies of Global Audiences**

At this point, let me illustrate the two disciplinary implications I have discussed—a revised role for *culture* and community-based audience analysis—with an example drawn from a technical communication textbook.

In a section of Markel’s (2001) *Technical Communication* titled “Ethics and Multicultural Communication,” Markel presents a case study to model the ethical dilemmas professionals might confront when interacting with international clients (pp. 39–40). In the case study, McNeil Informatics is considering submitting a proposal to Crescent Petroleum, a Saudi Arabian oil refining corporation, to develop a company intranet. At a briefing in New York, Denise McNeil is struck by what she sees as sexist Saudi business practices: the all-male Crescent representatives seem “uncomfortable” with McNeil and do not socialize with her during a break. Identifying the Saudi company as “traditional,” McNeil decides to submit a proposal anyway, but conceal that she had founded the company and that she and another woman hold the president and CFO spots. Anticipating possible anti-Semitism, she also considers hiding the lead engineer’s name, “Feldman.” Students are then asked how they might respond to this situation.

Perhaps more important than the students’ responses to this case, however, is the way the case study represents Saudi practices. The structure of the dilemma is an us-versus-them
scenario, in which the student’s role is to deal with odd, foreign, and (from a liberal Western perspective) negative customs. McNeil appears to be an open-minded, multicultural, flexible Western business person, while the Saudis are sites of prejudiced mental programming and stubborn, inherited traditions. This is not to say that the case study’s situation is implausible, or that the Saudis are necessarily demonized or depicted inaccurately. The point is that the description of “traditional” Saudi practices traces these characteristics to an inaccessible tradition beyond critical examination, in other words, to a substantive and pre-programmed culture.

Here the cultural is not a fluid description of mobilized difference, and the global dimensions that may influence the Saudis’ practices, which might help dissolve the us-versus-them opposition, are not considered. In a pedagogical context, an article from the New York Times Magazine can supplement the textbook’s material to draw out some of these dimensions and elucidate the factors involved in this instance of cultural performance. In “The Jihadi Who Kept Asking Why,” Elizabeth Rubin (2004) claims that the treatment of women under Islamic law, which roughly correlates to the Saudis’ sexist treatment of McNeil in the case study, is a reactionary cultural practice, a feature of the radically conservative revolution brought on by Wahhabi clerics in response to the Westernizing oil boom of the 1970s (pp. 41–43). In Appadurai’s terms, ideoscapes and sacriscapes (fundamentalist politics) have converged with finanscapes and mediascapes (oil money and Western customs) to shape Saudi practices into the ones depicted in the case study. The traditional, in large part, has been shaped within the broader context of these global dimensions.
Moreover, understanding these global dimensions may shed some light on how Saudi cultural identity might be performed and mobilized during communication. For instance, the popular opposition to the second Iraq war across most of the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, may encourage the case study’s Saudi businessmen to accentuate their traditional cultural identity in a minor act of resistance or even in the solidarity with increasingly influential fundamentalist clerics; sacriscapes and ideoscapes may thus intersect in the New York briefing. Finanscapes might also come into play, as the heavy U.S. reliance on Middle Eastern oil and investment can allow the Saudis to be more brazen with cultural practices that Westerners tend to find offensive.

Were this Saudi case study a research site, the analysis might begin from the revised concept of the cultural and the community-based approach to audience analysis and explore the ultimate effects of the globalizing world’s multiple dimensions on intercultural communication. That is, by recognizing the fluidity and situational nature of cultural performance, the researcher can examine how the various identified scapes operating within these concrete communities and this specific context may affect this site of intercultural interaction. Were this case study used as a pedagogical method, the case study alone—which focuses on Munshi and McKee’s (2001) “differences that matter” and traces these differences to an effectively autonomous, supposedly traditional culture—does not provide the opportunity for critical inquiry into the cultural conflict it describes, leaving students with a static culture-based representation. To interrogate the ways cultural practices are constructed and mobilized during communication, the textbook description can be supplemented, as I
have begun to model here. I should emphasize that the students and instructor need not come
to a consensus about the correct course of action or the proper systematic approach to this
and similar cases. Rather, the role of classroom discussion should be to draw out the multiple
issues informing the case study and to examine their possible effects on intercultural
interaction.

**More Inclusive Perspective for the Globalizing World**

While the two disciplinary directions I have suggested—a revised role for culture and
a community-based perspective on global audiences—can help align the discipline’s
professional and ideological issues and develop more responsive frameworks for global
audience analysis, the discipline’s conceptual frameworks can be further developed with a
more inclusive approach to the globalizing world. For a more inclusive approach,
disciplinary research and pedagogy can highlight traditionally underrepresented audiences
and perspectives and make an effort to build a largely comprehensive perspective on the
globalizing world. Currently, disciplinary literature largely focuses on international
commerce (e.g., Dragga 1997; Cruichshank 2007) or overseas teaching assignments (e.g.,
Auer-Rizzi and Berry 2000; Dauterman 2005; Bathurst 2007; Daleby 2007) from the
perspective of Western researchers and teachers (Munshi and McKee 2001). While research
at these sites is certainly important for analyzing the discipline’s engagement with
globalization, the studies either tacitly support the discipline’s neoliberal ideological
assumptions or do not provide sufficient opportunities to examine multiple layers of the
globalizing world’s political, economic, ideological, and other dimensions. Moreover,
limiting research sites to regions and audiences deeply engaged with global capital may
overshadow various opportunities for professional communicators to engage globalization
apart from multinational commerce. In contrast, including underrepresented sites, peoples,
and perspectives can help the discipline critically analyze its ideological assumptions about
how globalization affects individuals and the multiple dimensions and conflicts endemic to
the globalizing world.

Because the discipline lacks a significant body of concrete studies that develop an
inclusive approach to globalization (an exception is Briam 2007, who describes a teaching
experience in West Africa), the first broad step the discipline can take to develop this
approach would be to study alternative sites, peoples, and perspectives in light of the other
disciplinary directions I described above—the reconsidered concept of culture and the multi-
dimensional community-based approach to the globalizing world. But the classroom
eventually can also develop a more inclusive approach to globalization, perhaps in the form
of case studies and expanded opportunities for professional communicators to engage in
international work.

Let me illustrate in more detail the ways including underrepresented peoples and
perspectives can help the discipline examine its neoliberal ideological assumptions and
develop a more inclusive approach to globalization. An excellent example, which does not
address intercultural communication per se but examines many of the issues I have outlined,
is Hull (1999). In a study largely concerned with workplace skills, Hull examined the
workplace literacies of (for the most part) Korean immigrants in a Silicon Valley circuit
board factory. The study documents the U.S.-native factory managers’ and immigrant floor workers’ differing accounts of a problem with mislabeled circuit boards, including the causes of and responsibility for the problem. Hull’s analysis offers multiple perspectives of the intercultural complexities surrounding disadvantaged immigrant labor in the U.S. and provides several contextual notes that tie the local, specific manufacturing problem to broader global factors. To emphasize the case’s multi-dimensional global contexts and the contexts’ effects on local perceptions, the case can be recast using the scapes:

- **Finanscapes and technoscapes.** U.S. consumer electronics manufacturers no longer build all the components of their products in-house, but rather farm out the manufacturing work to highly specialized U.S. and international companies that often pay less, offer fewer benefits, and rely on immigrant and non-U.S. labor. In addition, manufacturing companies can maximize their profits by pushing workers to make higher quality products more quickly, while electronics manufacturing becomes very sophisticated and leaves little room for error.

- ** Ethnoscapes and mediascapes.** Managers’ and floor workers’ perceptions differ regarding the desires and motivations of immigrant labor: managers believe the immigrants do not want to learn English and resist engagement with U.S. communities, while the immigrants themselves attend English classes on their own time.

- **Ethnoscapes and ideoscapes.** Managers and engineers perceive a fairly strict class division in the factory between the U.S. supervisors and the mostly immigrant blue-
collar workers, which guides the different employees’ roles in the process. Additionally, immigrant workers have their own perspectives on workplace authority and status. As a result of both these issues, floor workers have circumscribed very specific job duties for themselves that allow minimal flexibility in workflows and responsibilities.

In addition to outlining the global dimensions involved in the local problem, Hull’s study is valuable for the ways it critically analyzes assumptions about the pressures of international finance and high technology on workers, neoliberal assumptions about the wide-spread opportunities of the globalizing world and the various roles in which individuals can participate, the multiple causes and effects of the different kinds of international immigration and movement, and the multi-dimensional conflicts of globalization. Perhaps more important, Hull includes both the supervisors’ and immigrant workers’ perspectives on the specific circuit board labeling problem. In doing so, Hull provides the traditionally underrepresented voice of the immigrant floor workers and complicates ideas of responsibility and local production problems.

Overseas research sites can similarly foster a more inclusive approach to globalization and help researchers critically examine neoliberal assumptions about economic exclusion, access to the global marketplace, and the relevance of underdeveloped regions. Perhaps most valuable for these goals are research sites focusing on nonprofit, international aid, or volunteer organizations that require professional communication practitioners and
instructors, such as Fulbright faculty exchanges or Peace Corps business development and teaching programs (Dauterman 2005).

An example site may be Kufunda Village (http://www.kufunda.org/), a nonprofit adult education community near Harare, Zimbabwe, that offers participants practical learning for their future professional and social roles. Broadly, the organization states that its purpose is “to inspire the co-creation of strong life affirming communities in Zimbabwe and beyond by living and sharing the wisdom, practices, and social systems that are required for such communities.” Volunteer positions are typically created ad hoc based on volunteers’ interests and skills, but the village often hosts a native English speaker to teach business communication. An important feature of this community is that it is situated in a country with recent and well-publicized economic and humanitarian disasters and on a continent traditionally underrepresented in the professional communication literature. Therefore, Kufunda Village qua research site can provide a unique perspective on the dimensions of globalization and the local impacts of global economic and political developments, as the business communication methods and material constraints are likely to be much different than in more frequented research sites. For this site, the scapes may be outlined as follows:

- Ideoscapes and ethnoscapes. Zimbabwe has been controlled for 30 years by Robert Mugabe, who frequently cites the nation’s former colonial and white settler governments to reinforce his regime and justify Zimbabwe’s international isolation. However, white and black Zimbabweans, other black Africans, and white Europeans cooperate within Kufunda Village, and the organization’s director is of Danish and
Zimbabwean descent. Business communication students have typically had several years of formal education based on British models.

- Ideoscapes and finanscapes. A highly planned yet mismanaged economy has led to massive unemployment, minimal foreign investment, and runaway inflation (though Zimbabwe has recently pegged its currency to the U.S. dollar). The official economy thus cannot support a large professional class, so Kufunda Village participants likely use their business communication skills in home-based businesses or outside Zimbabwe.

- Technoscapes and mediascapes. The state-run electric and other utilities are prone to failures, especially in rural areas. Television is therefore unavailable, but wireless Internet is widespread, often accessed in thatch-roofed huts. Local media is mostly independent, but overly critical reporting may attract government scrutiny. Kufunda volunteers and participants communicate outside of the village largely using Skype, email, and cell phones. Teaching electronic communication to participants is quite limited, but the larger businesses in Zimbabwe and the surrounding nations have some kind of Internet access.

With its delineation through the scapes, this description of Kufunda Village highlights, in part, the ways global historical, political, and economic dimensions influence local perceptions and material circumstances and emphasizes the limited and variegated nature of global connectivity and participation. But the site is perhaps most valuable for the way it broadens the discipline’s global scope and reinforces the inclusive notion that
seemingly isolated or underdeveloped regions are nevertheless subject to global forces and participate in globalization. That is, while Kufunda Village is not a global hub, researchers can nonetheless note that a colonial legacy, post-colonial politics, economic misrule, and yet technology diffusion make this site relevant to the globalizing world and to the discipline. In addition, this research site may broaden the opportunities for professional communication practitioners and instructors to engage the globalizing world in off-the-path places.

Future research in intercultural professional communication might similarly explore underrepresented peoples and perspectives, investigate the implications of this research on the discipline’s engagement with the globalizing world, and highlight opportunities to practice intercultural professional communication skills in ways other than multinational commerce. For any of these studies, researchers should be certain to elucidate the global economic, political, historical, ideological, and other factors that inform the site and the subjects’ responses to it, to each other, and to the intercultural situation.

**Concluding Notes**

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the noun *culture* cannot serve as the master signifier that describes every point of difference arising in intercultural professional communication. *Culture* both limits the discipline’s understanding of its global audiences (i.e., professional scope) and carries more than a century of ideological weight that burdens the discipline’s professional concerns with unhelpful assumptions about globalization and the world’s people. For the discipline to remain relevant, practical, and productive, its
engagement with the globalizing world must instead be critical, multi-dimensional, and inclusive in the ways I’ve described.

I have begun to trace paths for the discipline in this chapter, but these paths need to be supported with empirical research and further developed and refined to help those working in intercultural professional communication interact flexibly and effectively on the global scene. The critical, community-based approach to intercultural professional communication suggests that, as a first step, researchers should initially revisit the discipline’s traditional intercultural study sites, largely international business ventures, and complicate the narrative of cross-cultural encounter. An approach may be to develop a thick description of the situation, even the apparently mundane economic details, and explore the intersections between the local scenario, personal relationships among the communicants, and global-scale dimensions. In other words, I suggest that researchers should not approach the site with the intention of marking cultural differences, but should instead examine the relative impact of the cultural as one dimension among many.

Then, to develop a more inclusive and ideologically transparent conception of the globalizing world, researchers should identify and examine paid and volunteer professional communication roles that engage the regions and peoples the discipline has tended to neglect. My comments regarding this inclusive approach to conceptualizing globalization have been exploratory and limited, but I suggest that, with further development, this kind of research would expand the discipline’s notion of “professional” and map out various non-traditional but plausible options for professional communicators. These options may include, for
example, communications roles in socially responsible businesses, international aid work, or organizations that assist immigrants or refugees. My contention is that such research would broaden the discipline’s global scope, illuminating the often simultaneous benefits and problems that globalization introduces into local communities and foregrounding the advantages that a multi-dimensional analysis of the globalizing world can offer the discipline.

As researchers revise the frameworks and methods that shape the discipline’s approach to the globalizing world, instructors could begin to implement the revised concepts I have outlined into the classroom. My discussion of the term community in Chapters 2 and 3 and the term culture in Chapter 4 suggests that instructors would need to confront several fundamental assumptions prevalent in professional communication textbooks and other pedagogical materials, such as assumptions surrounding culture, intercultural communication, context, and audience. Instructors should instead develop a more flexible and comprehensive method for teaching intercultural professional communication, what I have called the community-based approach. I have begun to outline broadly the questions that the community-based approach entails, but further pedagogical research should explore ways to develop the approach’s global dimensions into a teachable framework similar in some ways to the set of cultural dimensions at the heart of many current pedagogical approaches. Additionally, case studies should be developed, ideally based on real-world situations, that apply, demonstrate, and refine the community-based framework. For these case studies, instructors would find it useful to explore not only the flashpoints and conflicts
that cross-cultural contact makes apparent, but also instances where the communicants’ perspectives on economic or political issues align and the impact of interpersonal rapport on communication. That is, the communicant’s ideological assumptions do not always surface when values conflict, but rather sometimes when the communicants are in tacit agreement about the nature of globalization and the shape of international commerce. Such exhaustively examined case studies would help instructors convey the multi-dimensional complexity of professional intercultural interaction.

In the ways I have described here, the discipline’s engagement with globalization must be continuously interrogated, and researchers and instructors must analyze the professional and ideological issues that influence the discipline and shape its impacts. The conceptual frameworks for intercultural professional communication that I have developed throughout this dissertation should be enriched, developed, and specified to keep the discipline relevant, ideologically conscious, and effective within our globalizing world.
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