

Culture, Ethnicity, and Race

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about some further audience characteristics. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Culture, Race, and Ethnicity
2. Culture
3. Race and Ethnicity
4. Tips for Speaker— Becoming Aware of Ethnocentrism and Prejudice

1. Culture, Race, and Ethnicity

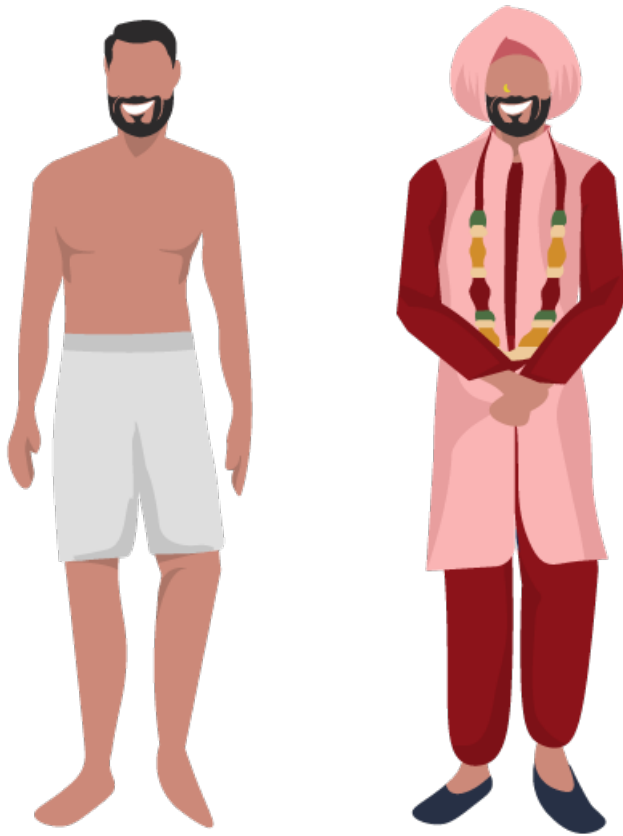
In addition to considering the attitudes of the audience toward different cultures, races or ethnic groups, it is also important to consider how a diverse group will respond to certain parts of your message.

Before considering the role of culture, race and ethnicity in audience analysis it is useful to distinguish among the terms.

2. Culture

Culture is the non-biological or social aspects of human life; basically anything that is learned by humans is part of culture.

Let's look at the two avatars shown below to help illustrate the concept of culture. The avatar wearing nothing but shorts comes close to representing nothing but nature. The avatar wearing the colorful vest and pants stands in stark contrast to the other avatar. This second avatar is reflective of a particular culture.



Culture is more than the object or behavior. Culture also includes, norms, values, beliefs, or expressive symbols.

3. Race and Ethnicity

A **race** is a human population that is believed to be distinct in some way from other humans based on real or imagined physical differences. An individual is usually externally classified (meaning someone else makes the classification) but individual may also self-identify with a particular racial group.

Ethnicity, while related to race, refers not to physical characteristics but to social traits that are shared by a human population. Some of the social traits often used for ethnic classification include:

- Nationality
- Tribe
- Religious faith
- Shared language
- Shared culture
- Shared traditions



TERMS TO KNOW

Race

A large group of people distinguished from others on the basis of common physical characteristics, such as skin color or hair type.

Ethnicity

4. Tips for Speaker— Becoming Aware of Ethnocentrism and Prejudice

In order to adapt the message to the audience it is important to become aware of your own **ethnocentrism** and to avoid prejudice and racism.

When you judge another culture solely by the values and standards of your own culture you miss significant aspects of the other culture of the members of your audience. Racism or racial discrimination operates in a similar way.

Racism can refer to any or all of the following beliefs and behaviors:

- Race is the primary determinant of human capacities (prejudice or bias)
- A certain race is inherently superior or inferior to others (prejudice or bias)
- Individuals should be treated differently according to their racial classification (prejudice or bias)
- Actually treating individuals differently based on their racial classification (discrimination)

In order for the speaker to collect objective knowledge about other cultures, racial or ethnic groups it is important to avoid prejudice. Prejudice involves coming to a judgment on a subject before learning where the preponderance of evidence actually lies. Alternatively, prejudice can refer to the formation of a judgment without direct or actual experience.

When looking at another culture or ethnic group in order to compensate for ethnocentrism as a speaker, try to look at the other group through the eyes of the members of that particular ethnic or cultural group.

As our society becomes more diverse, the speaker will find it desirable to put aside ethnocentrism and prejudice to learn more about the cultures, races and ethnic groups that will be an increasing part of the local and global audience.



TERM TO KNOW

Ethnocentrism

Judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the simplest way to think about **culture** is to think about the distinction between nature (our biology and genetics) and nurture (our environment and surroundings that also shape our identities). In terms of **race**, an individual is usually externally classified (meaning someone else makes the classification), but individuals may also self-identify with a particular racial group. Unlike race, **ethnicity** is not usually externally assigned by other individuals; rather, it focuses more upon a group's connection to a perceived shared past and culture. The **cultural, racial and ethnic** makeup of the United States is becoming more diversified, and audiences will reflect that diversity as

the population continues to shift. In order to adapt the message to the audience, an important **tip for speakers is to become aware of their own ethnocentrism** and to avoid prejudice and racism.

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TERMS TO KNOW

Ethnicity

Characteristics of a group of people thought to have common ancestry who share a distinctive culture.

Ethnocentrism

Judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture.

Race

A large group of people distinguished from others on the basis of common physical characteristics, such as skin color or hair type.