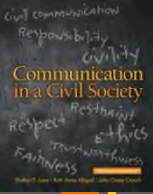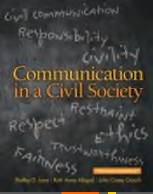# Chapter 2
Perceiving the Self and Others

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- preparation of any derivative work, including the extraction, in whole or in part, of any images;
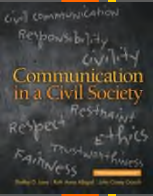- any rental, lease, or lending of the program.

Chapter Objectives

- 2.1 Define *perception* and *self-concept.*
- 2.2 Describe the relationship among perception, self-concept, and civility.
- 2.3 Identify the three stages that make up the perception process.
- 2.4 Explain two theoretical perspectives about perception.
- 2.5 Describe two characteristics of the self-concept – self-image and self-esteem – and explain the importance of several environmental influences.
- 2.6 Use the skill of perception-checking to improve your civil communication.
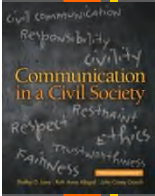
Why It Matters

- We communicate with people who hold different perceptions than we do

- We sometimes disagree about the nature of "reality"

- Perspective-taking allows us to communicate with restraint, respect, and responsibility

3

Definition of Perception and Self-Concept

- Perception: process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory information

- Self-concept: how we perceive ourselves
  - Formed, sustained, and changed by interactions with others
  - Healthy self-concept results in realistic view of one's strengths and weaknesses
  - Unhealthy self-concept results in exaggerated and unrealistic perceptions

Perception, Self-Concept, and Civility

- There is a relationship between words used to describe oneself and civil communication
- When the focus is on one's own rights, civil communication is compromised
- People without self-control engage in uncivil communication as well as other uncivil acts
- Self-control is not giving up self-expression; it is choosing to express some things and not others
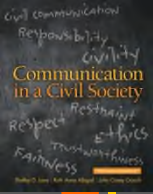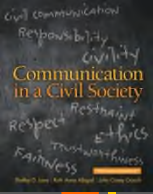
Stages in the Perception Process

- Selection—choosing stimuli from the environment
  - Salience—we select stimuli because of their interest, use, and meaning to us
  - Vividness—we select stimuli because they are noticeable
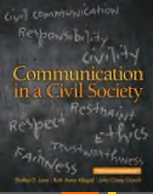
Stages in the Perception Process

- Organization—when we categorize selected stimuli to make sense of it
  - Schemas—mental templates used to categorize
    - Stereotypes arise when we ignore possibility of individual differences within our schema
  - Figure-ground organization—when a portion of the stimuli is the focal point of our attention (figure) and the rest is placed in the background (ground)
  - Proximity—when we group stimuli based on their physical closeness to one another
  - Similarity—when we group elements together based on characteristics they share
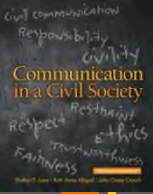
Stages in the Perception Process

- Interpretation
  - Expectancy—we become accustomed to seeing stimuli a particular way and fail to perceive alternatives
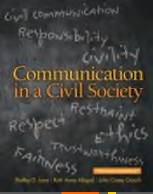 - Familiarity—the level of experience we have with stimuli

Stages in the Perception Process

- Differences in Perception
  - Boys and men tend to perceive communication as a means to an end
    - Negotiating power
    - Asserting identity
    - Solving problems
    - Argue a point of view
  - Girls and women tend to perceive communication as an end in itself
    - Social connection
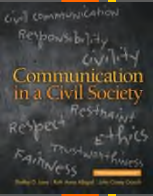   - Establishing and maintaining relationships

Stages in the Perception Process

- Differences in Perception
  - Affected by one's career focus
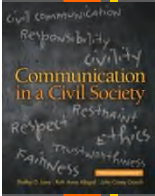 - Affected by position in organizational hierarchy

Discussion Point

- Is it ethical for me to do things that will affect the perceptions others have of me? What's the line between trying to look my best and manipulating others? (p. 35)
  - Is there a difference between these two actions?
  - Where do you draw the line?
 - Is it okay to embellish a resume?

Theoretical Perspectives about Perception

- Attribution Theory
  - Fundamental attribution error—over-emphasize personality characteristics and underemphasize situational characteristics when explaining another's behavior
  - Self-serving bias—attribute successful performances to our personalities and unsuccessful performances to our situations

Theoretical Perspectives about Perception

- Implicit Personality Theory—the belief that particular personality characteristics cluster together
  - If a person has one characteristic, we expect others
  - Halo effect—we perceive a person has many positive characteristics when we perceive a few
  - Our expectations may lead to incorrect perceptions
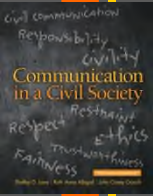
Theoretical Perspectives about Perception

- ## Cultural Influences on Perception
  - Culture creates characteristic behaviors based on shared beliefs, values, and assumptions
  - Cultural patterns—the particular beliefs and values associated with our specific culture
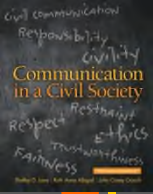
Theoretical Perspectives about Perception

Table 2.1 Individualist and Collectivist Cultures

Individualism and collectivism are two ends of a continuum that describe powerful cultural differences.
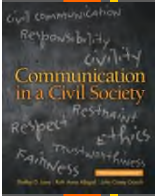
Individualist Cultures	Collectivist Cultures
• Individual needs come before group needs.	• Group needs come before individual needs.
• Individuals are expected to take care of themselves.	• Groups are expected to take care of their members.
• Individuals are self-reliant and competitive.	• Group opinion (e.g., opinions of significant others) is more important than individual opinion.
• Individuals are rewarded for personal achievement or blamed for personal failure.	• Group contributions are rewarded, and credit and blame are shared.
• Friendships may be short term and are based on shared activities and interests.	• Friendships are long-lasting and are maintained regardless of shared activities and interests.
• Individuals belong to a variety of groups, and membership is flexible.	• Group membership is limited and long-lasting.

Although both the individualist and collectivist cultural patterns exist in all cultures, one pattern usually dominates.
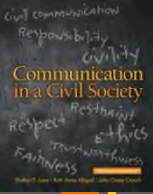
Theoretical Perspectives about Perception

- Cultural Influences on Perception
  - Individualist cultures
    - Tend to be self-reliant and competitive
    - Friends based on shared activities
    - Believe in reward for personal success and blame for personal failure
    - Individuals are responsible for their own lives and outcomes of decisions
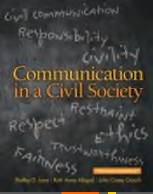   - Belief in individual identities

Theoretical Perspectives about Perception

- Cultural Influences on Perception
  - Collectivist cultures
    - Group is expected to take care of members
    - Long-lasting friendships not necessarily based on interests
    - Belong to fewer groups
    - Typically believe life is determined by forces outside our control
    - Don't typically blame a person for choices and actions that result in undesirable outcomes

Theoretical Perspectives about Perception

- ## Cultural Influences on Perception
  - Co-cultures and perception
    - Co-culture is a group within a larger dominant culture that has its own values and beliefs
    - Co-cultures are based on ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender, class, ability, and age
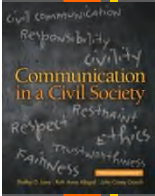
Discussion Point

- Assessing Your Ability to Self-Monitor (p. 39)
  - As a part of your self-image, do you believe that you can easily adapt to various social situations and the people with whom you interact?
  - Do you think that others see you as someone who effectively manages how you are perceived in social situations?
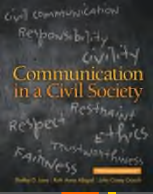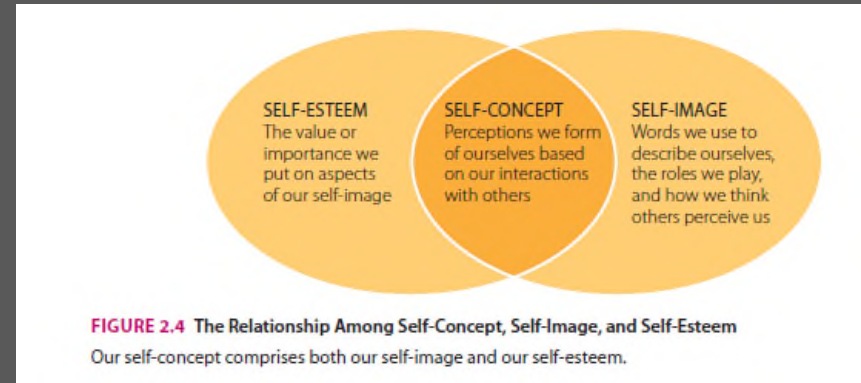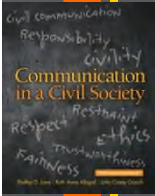
Discussion Point

- Perception, Self-Concept, and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) (p. 40)
  - What type of information, fonts, colors, and/or photos that illustrate facets of your personality do you have on your website, Facebook profile page, etc.? What would you include?
  - How would compare a private space (such as a bedroom) you have decorated to one of your social networking site pages in terms of its ability to say something about you? Which do you think is more accurate? Why?
  - Have you been accepted as a Facebook "friend" by one of your instructors? Have your instructor's posts influenced your perceptions of her or him?
  - Might there be other ways of enhancing our self-esteem that don't involve reviewing and editing information on our Facebook profile?

Characteristics of the Self-Concept
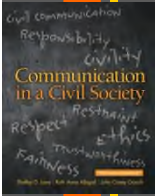
- Self-concept—
  perceptions we have of
  ourselves

  – Self-image—the
    characteristics we
    believe we possess

  – Self-esteem—what we
    perceive to be valuable
    about aspects of our
    self-image

SELF-ESTEEM
The value or importance we put on aspects of our self-image

SELF-CONCEPT
Perceptions we form of ourselves based on our interactions with others

SELF-IMAGE
Words we use to describe ourselves, the roles we play, and how we think others perceive us

FIGURE 2.4 The Relationship Among Self-Concept, Self-Image, and Self-Esteem
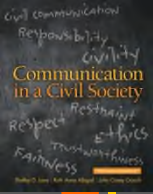Our self-concept comprises both our self-image and our self-esteem.

Characteristics of the Self-Concept

- The Influence of Others on the Self-Concept
  - Our view of self is shaped by communication with others
  - Pygmalion effect—people important to us influence our self-concept through expectations
  - Social comparison—we respond negatively when others do better than us on an important task, even if we received positive feedback on our performance
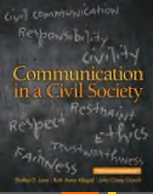
Characteristics of the Self-Concept

- The Influence of Culture on Self-Concept
  - Individualistic cultures make "I" statements that emphasize autonomy
  - Collectivist cultures make "I" statements that emphasize connections to others

Characteristics of the Self-Concept

- The Influence of the Workplace on Self-Concept
  - People at work influence feelings of self-efficacy, or belief in ability to manage different situations
  - Affects our choice of career
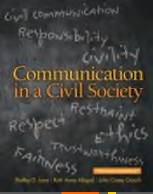 - Role models can increase feelings of self-efficacy

Characteristics of the Self-Concept

- The Influence of Gender on Self-Concept
  - Women focus on care and concern for others when describing self
  - Women are also more concerned about body image and physical appearance
  - Men tend to describe themselves in terms of ambition, energy, power, and control
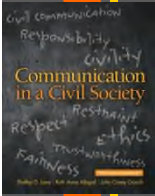
Discussion Point

- "I'm a Loser" (p. 43)
  - Do you believe the "I'm a loser" sentences are an ethical way to motivate students to complete their homework?
  - Do you believe that writing loser sentences effectively influences self-concept and behavior?
  - Is it acceptable for students to call each other "loser" but not acceptable for teachers to apply this term to their pupils?

Improving Our Ability to Communicate Civilly and Effectively about Our Perceptions

- Perception check
  - Description of sense data
    - Fact—independently verifiable
    - Inference—interpretation based on fact
  - Offer interpretation in tentative manner
  - Request for feedback—asking others if our interpretations are correct