venture further into this area, he would do well to consider the volatility of this technology and its characteristics.

*Alternative Media* draws upon a wide range of social and cultural theory and research, as well as original case studies, to posit a framework for understanding what makes media alternative and how they create and sustain alternative public spheres. The strength of this approach is its broad reach. It can encompass quirky zine publishing and personal web pages along with radical environmental and advocacy newspapers. Throughout his wide-ranging case studies, Atton throws a spotlight on the democratic practices enmeshed in alternative media production. The book highlights the function of alternative media as spheres for knowledge production, identity formation, creative action, the articulation of experience, critical discussion, and a host of other activities rightly understood as democratic.

Although Atton's framework points out some of the intrinsically democratic qualities of alternative production practices, his view of empowerment raises some questions. Is self-expression inevitably a source of power? Are all non-mainstream media practices equally empowering? What does such a broad, production-based theory overlook in its understanding of the role and function of alternative media? Since Atton focuses on production practices over content, he does not evaluate the differences between such disparate activities as personal online publishing that merely mimic mainstream tastes and opinions and anarchist presses that advocate radical social change. Under a theory that views all non-professional, non-institutional and non-capitalized media as empowering, the concepts of 'empowerment' and 'alternative media' can become so encompassing as to risk losing their meaning. Atton may want to expand his theory in a way that begins to distinguish between different types of messages, different kinds of alternative practice, and different levels of empowerment generated by alternative media.

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In *Asian American Ethnicity and Communication*, William Gudykunst aims to summarize the state of existing research on the similarities and differences in communication among the five large Asian American eth-

nic groups in the United States; i. e., Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, and Vietnamese Americans. Additionally, Gudykunst examines how European Americans' communication is similar to and/or different from Asian Americans' communication in general and communication in specific Asian American ethnic groups. The focus of the book, however, is on communication within Asian American ethnic groups, not on interethnic communication, such as Vietnamese Americans' communication with European or with Filipino Americans. The major reason for this is that there is insufficient research on Asian Americans' interethnic communication.

The book is divided in six chapters. In an Appendix Gudykunst accounts for the methods and statistical tests used in his survey of Asian American Communication. Data from this survey are used throughout the book when relevant.

The first introductory chapter, *Communication and ethnicity*, gives a general overview of the most important factors that influence Asian Americans' communication. After a brief outline of what he means when using the terms communication and culture, Gudykunst discusses the factors ethnicity, generation, language abilities, and strength and content of ethnic and cultural identities. Ethnic identities involve peoples' views of themselves as members of their specific ethnic groups, e. g., Chinese Americans, while cultural identities involve peoples' views of themselves as members of the mainstream United States culture. Asian Americans also may have pan-ethnic identities associated with being Asian Americans as opposed to, for instance specifically being Korean Americans. Pan-ethnicity is largely a product of imposed categorization, i. e., many European Americans have treated Asian Americans as a pan-ethnic group, as one homogeneous group without recognizing differences among the various groups.

Chapter 2, *Cultural characteristics of Asian cultures*, focuses on dimensions of cultural variability to describe Asian cultures. This description provides a framework for explaining Asian Americans' communication and their behavior. Gudykunst discusses Hofstede's four dimensions, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity-femininity, and Confucianism. Each dimension is described at the cultural level, culture-specific level, and on the individual level. All Asian cultures appear to be collectivistic, but Asian cultures differ somewhat with respect to cultural-level uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity-femininity. To illustrate, high power distance in the Philippines leads Filipino Americans to view individuals as unequal, while low power distance in Taiwan, in contrast, leads Chinese Americans who trace their heritage to Taiwan to view individuals as equals. The differences in the cultural heritages among the Asian American ethnic groups

can lead to differences in their communication styles in the United States.

The specific experiences of the Asian American ethnic groups in the United States, however, also must be taken into consideration, and form the topic of chapter 3, *Asian American ethnic groups*. This chapter starts with a general overview of Asian American immigration to the United States, followed by an examination of the immigration patterns, institutional support, and family patterns for Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, and Vietnamese Americans, respectively. Chapter 3 is concluded by looking at the individualistic and collectivistic tendencies for members of the five ethnic groups.

Just because Asian Americans trace their heritages back to specific Asian American ethnic groups does not mean they will think or act as members of those ethnic groups. In contrast, Asian Americans' ethnic identities might influence their behavior in some situations, their cultural identities might influence their behavior in other situations, and their pan-ethnic identities might influence their behavior in still other situations. To account for these complicated issues of Asian Americans' ethnic and cultural identities, Gudykunst discusses ethnicity and ethnic identity, and Asian American pan-ethnicity in chapter 4, *Ethnic and cultural identities*. Next, he examines four (sets of) models that have been proposed to explain Asian Americans' ethnic and cultural identities. The models discussed are the components model, typological models, the orthogonal model, and developmental models. Gudykunst concludes that the orthogonal model assuming that individuals have separate ethnic and cultural identities that can be activated in different situations, is supported better than the other models when Asian Americans' individualistic and collectivistic tendencies (e. g., independent self construals versus interdependent self construals respectively), language usage, and shared networks are analyzed. Chapter 4 concludes with a discussion of how ethnic and cultural identities are related to issues of generation in the United States and ethnic language abilities.

In chapter 5, *Asian American communication patterns*, Gudykunst summarizes research on communication patterns across Asian American ethnic groups. First, expectations for communication are examined. The expectations that Asian Americans have for how they are supposed to communicate influence their actual communication behavior. Secondly, Gudykunst reviews studies of Asian Americans' communication styles, communication tendencies that are used consistently over time and across situations. The research to date suggests that there are no systematic differences in communication among the five ethnic groups studied. However, strength of ethnic and cultural identities appears to predict

clear patterns of communication. Strength of ethnic identities is related to communication associated with Asian Americans' cultural heritages (e. g., high-context communication). Strength of cultural identities, in contrast, is associated with direct, low-context communication associated with the mainstream U.S. culture. Consistent with these findings is the conclusion that Asian Americans' independent and interdependent self construals influence their communication and appear to be better predictors of communication expectations and styles than ethnicity or cultural differences.

The last chapter, *Communication and acculturation*, examines the role of communication in the acculturation of Asian immigrants to the United States by reviewing the general process of adaptation of Asian immigrants to the United States, examining Asian immigrants' communication acculturation to the U.S., and, finally, by discussing Asian Americans' interethnic dating and marriage. The latter is included because Asian Americans' interethnic marriage with European Americans is one indicator of immigrants' assimilation to the U.S. culture. Gudykunst's discussion of communication acculturation follows the framework of Kim's general theory of communication acculturation which argues that immigrants' acculturation is influenced by their personal communication, their social communication, their adaptive predispositions, and the host environmental conditions.

Immigration to the Western world remains a current issue, in the USA as well as in Europe. Against this background Gudykunst's book can be read as an important contribution to the discussion on processes of immigration and on what factors contribute to the success or failure of the acculturation process in individual immigrants, especially when these immigrants are raised in collectivistic cultures, but are living in an individualistic culture. Furthermore, in describing and discussing the similarities as well as the differences across five major Asian American ethnic groups Gudykunst avoids gross generalizations. Dimensions of cultural variability, for example, have to be studied at three levels, the cultural level (e. g., horizontal collectivism versus vertical collectivism), the culture specific level (e. g., Korean versus Vietnamese collectivism), and the individual level (e. g., strong versus weak ethnic identity). Such a differentiation seems to be all the more important when non-western immigrants are involved who by a process of 'outsider racialization' tend to be seen as one ethnic group (i. e., Asian) by the mainstream culture.

The goal of the book is to summarize what is known about communication among five Asian American ethnic groups, and, indeed, that is exactly what the book does: presenting and summarizing a tremendous amount of research results, conclusions and insights from a great variety of publications. The author does not explicitly present research evalua-

tions, outlines for future research activities, and/or possible conse-quences for implementing, for instance, new acculturation policies in education. Illustrative in this respect is that the book abruptly ends after chapter 6, without a general reflection or review. Unfortunately, this focus on presenting and summarizing research results sometimes appears to lead to unclear or ambiguous passages (see page 79), or to a mere listing of facts (see pages 98 and 182).

Possibly, the summarizing approach has also hindered a critical dis-cussion of remarkable findings in some cases. To illustrate, the absolute scores for independent as well as interdependent self-construals, and for individualistic as well as collectivistic values are quite high in all five Asian American ethnic groups studied without large differences between the five groups, and independent from the strength of ethnic and cultural identities (tables 3.3, 4.3). One might wonder if or to what extent this is due to the operationalization of independent-interdependent self con-struals and individualistic-collectivistic values. Thus, one can wonder why 'pleasure' or 'social recognition' should be exclusively individualis-tic, and why 'honoring parents' should be typically collectivistic (cf. 198). Probably, this problem of operationalization can also account for the remarkable finding that strong cultural identity, i.e., a strong identifica-tion with the mainstream U.S. culture, leads to a higher score for collec-tivistic values than weak cultural identity (table 4.3: 116).

Finally, it can be remarked that *Asian American Ethnicity and Com-munication* is not about the process of communication, i.e., the processes of interaction in which individuals negotiate about and construe com-munication situations via verbal and non-verbal means. Thus, Gudy-kunst discusses, for example, "concern for clarity" as a conversational constraint (136), but not how 'clarity' is realized in real everyday com-munication situations nor what linguistic and para-linguistic means cor-relate with "concern for clarity".

To conclude, *Asian American Ethnicity and Communication* is an in-spiring and useful book due to its impressive amount of information, its overview of existing research and research methods, and, last but not least, its relevance for the ongoing debate on current issues of immigra-tion and acculturation.

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