Introducing
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
Global Cultures and Contexts
Shuang Liu, Zala Volčič & Cindy Gallois
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ONLINE RESOURCES

Introducing Intercultural Communication is supported by a wealth of online resources for instructors to support learning, studying and teaching.

They are available at https://study.sagepub.com/liu4e

FOR INSTRUCTORS

• **Discussion questions** and **activities** to help structure seminars and group work.
• **Instructor notes** to aid the integration of each chapter’s learning objectives with classroom sessions.
• **PowerPoint slides** to help structure lectures in line with the book.
• **Multiple-choice questions and answers** to help inspire ideas for assessments.
• **Further readings** to broaden or deepen understanding of the chapter content.
AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Shuang Liu is Professor in the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland, Australia. She is an internationally recognized intercultural communication expert, specializing in the areas of immigration, acculturation and identity negotiation, particularly in relation to older migrants ageing in a foreign land.

Zala Volčič is Senior Lecturer in the School of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University, Australia. She is an expert in researching in media, digital cultures, nationalism, class and gender. She has taught at different universities around the world, including Franklin University, Switzerland and Pomona College, USA.

Cindy Gallois is Emeritus Professor in the School of Psychology at The University of Queensland, Australia. She is an internationally renowned senior researcher in intercultural communication, with a special focus on intergroup communication in health contexts, the impact of communication on quality of care, health service delivery and health promotion.
PREFACE

This fourth edition of *Introducing Intercultural Communication: Global Cultures and Contexts* continues to live up to its reputation as an introduction to intercultural communication from a global perspective. This global perspective made the previous three editions stand out among other competitors in the market. The realization that the three editions of this book have been so well received by scholars, colleagues, instructors, and more importantly, students across the world in the past ten years has left us with a sense of achievement. We interpret this success to mean that an intercultural communication textbook with global perspectives has resonated with an international audience. We sincerely appreciate the positive feedback we have received from instructors across the world, who recognize that this book is helpful to students not only in applying theories, but also in fostering critical thinking about the influence of their own culture on communication. The clarity and scope of the book were highly praised, as was the diversity of content. Instructors who adopted the book recognized the learning features as both pedagogically helpful and visually appealing, making complex materials more accessible yet retaining the book’s academic rigour to take students further in the field of intercultural communication. In this fourth edition of the book, we embrace the opportunity to refine and improve on the content and features that have proven successful in the third edition, while also updating and expanding the book to keep abreast of current theories and research in the field.

New content has been added to the fourth edition of the book in relation to theories, concepts, applications and case studies, which take students into some new territory, empower them in active learning and encourage critical thinking. We have updated the content of each chapter to reflect the state-of-the-art knowledge and current research in the field. Special attention has been paid to include relevant theories and practices of teaching and learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have replaced six of the 13 case studies from the third edition and updated the remaining seven case studies with new material. Further, more examples – including examples in the business context from a diverse set of cultures including the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Kosovo, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Finland, USA, the Middle East and the Asia Pacific region – have been added to broaden the book’s coverage of cultures in practice even further. A new chapter on business and culture has been added too. Theoretical debates throughout the book give students opportunities to exercise their potential. This new edition has a stronger emphasis on the application of knowledge and
skills in diverse contexts including business contexts. In response to the reviews, we have also streamlined the presentation of various topics and expanded the coverage of theories. At every point in the new edition, we have tried to put ourselves in the students’ place, drawing upon the learning experiences of hundreds of culturally diverse students whom we have been privileged to teach.

FEATURES NEW TO THE FOURTH EDITION

- Updated content. Various new sections and content have been added throughout the book to fill in the gaps identified in the reviews and to reflect current developments in the field. New and updated content includes culture and behaviour during a pandemic, virtual communication in business contexts, social media, fake news, culture jamming and communication technologies. These are just some examples.

- New chapter. A new chapter on business and culture (Chapter 9) has been added. The chapter concentrates on intercultural issues in workplaces, including management of diversity in workplaces, conflict negotiation in the business contexts and virtual business communication in workgroups and teams.

- New and updated case studies. All reviewers and our own students embraced and endorsed the case studies. To build on the success of this feature, we have replaced six case studies from the third edition with completely new ones and updated the other seven case studies with new material. These case studies cover a range of topics and cultures, ranging from communication during a pandemic, food culture in Slovenia, the 12 Zodiac signs in China, Japanese business culture, to values and environmental behaviours and culture jamming and memes.

FEATURES RETAINED FROM THE THIRD EDITION

- Theory Corner. The Theory Corner section in the third edition combines Theory Corner with Theory in Practice from the second edition to achieve a clearer layout. This feature is retained in the fourth edition. New theories have been added, and the remaining ones have been updated with new content to reflect current practice in the field.

- Chapter summaries. The summary of each chapter highlights the key points covered. In response to the reviews, the chapter summaries in this new edition have been updated in accordance with the updated content, but we have retained the format of bullet points, as is in the third edition, to make them concise and easier to follow.
• **Pictures.** The illustrative pictures were praised by reviewers and students as original and interesting. We have retained this feature in the fourth edition and replaced many of the pictures to align with the revised content and enhance their illustrative power.

• **Glossary.** The glossary, containing brief definitions of key terms used in the text, is retained to give users a quick reference to the key concepts covered. We have retained this feature but updated the glossary to reflect the new content in this fourth edition.

**FEATURES UPDATED IN ONLINE RESOURCES**

• Activities including *Join the Debate, Do It* and *Further Readings* that were within the textbook in the third edition have been moved to the Online Resources in the fourth edition. All online resources have been updated to align with the new content. However, the original sections have been retained: lecture notes, PowerPoints, further readings, exercises and activities, and multiple-choice questions.

**FEATURES REMOVED FROM THE THIRD EDITION**

• **Links to Sage video sources.** A URL link to a video clip at the end of each chapter in the third edition has been removed from this fourth edition because very few instructors or students utilized them in the third edition.

This new edition continues our commitment to presenting intercultural communication theories and applications through a global prism and in a lively, interesting, relevant and accessible writing style. At the same time, it maintains the high standard of intellectual depth and rigour in scholarly discussions about theories and applications. We aim to equip students with the capacity to apply knowledge and skills to resolve practical problems, to engage in scholarly debates in the field of intercultural communication, and to empower them to ask further critical questions. By reading, thinking, debating, questioning and reflecting, your journey to become a competent intercultural communicator starts here!
1

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the origin of the study of intercultural communication.
- Identify contributors to cultural diversity in different contexts.
- Recognize challenges for virtual intercultural communication.
- Appreciate intercultural communication knowledge and skills as an integral part of life in a global community.
INTRODUCTION

Our early ancestors lived in small villages; most of them rarely ventured far from their own communities. They lived and died close to where they were born, and much of their information sharing was done through face-to-face communication with people who were much like themselves. Over the years, modern transport facilities, international business, pursuit of education, human migration and communication technologies have brought strangers from different parts of the world into contact, either face to face or through mediated platforms such as the internet. The term global village, coined by Canadian media culture analyst Marshall McLuhan almost six decades ago (1964) to describe a world in which communication technology brings news and information to the most remote parts of the world, is no longer an abstract idea. It is now the very place we live in. We can exchange ideas as easily and quickly with people across the world as our ancestors did within the confines of their village. We encounter people from different cultures in business, at school, in public places, in neighbourhoods and in virtual space. We may wear clothes made in China, purchase seafood from Thailand, dine out with friends in an Italian restaurant, work at a computer made in the USA or drive a car manufactured in Japan – the list goes on. Each encounter with new food, clothing, languages, products, services or practices teaches us something new. Indeed, more than ever before, we realize that our lives are intertwined with people, places, practices and events outside our ‘village’ culture.

This chapter highlights the necessity of equipping ourselves with knowledge and skills in intercultural communication so that we can live harmoniously and function effectively as citizens of this global community. We begin by showing that cultural transmission has permeated human history, and we discuss the origins of intercultural communication study. Next, the chapter identifies various contributors to cultural diversity in our global community, such as immigration, cross-border business, international education and digital technology-enabled virtual communication. Given that intercultural encounters bring opportunities for understanding between people as well as possibilities of misunderstanding, the final section of the chapter identifies some challenges that cultural diversity brings to us as citizens of the global community. This first chapter paves the ground for us to appreciate the necessity of developing intercultural knowledge and skills to confidently and competently address the many challenges we face living in the global community.

ORIGINS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION STUDY

Since ancient times, visible and invisible borders have always existed between countries, states, cities, regions, villages, and even houses. Natural and artificial boundaries – rivers, oceans, mountains, walls, fences and signs – all separate country from country, region from region, and people from people. However, the transmission of culture has never been
confined to these borders. For example, as early as the 15th century CE, *Aesop’s Fables* were translated from Greek, the language in which they were originally written, into English, thus making them accessible to entirely new cultural, national and geographical audiences. The fables, available in many languages across the world today, have permeated many cultures as myths and legends, providing entertainment and moral truisms for children and adults alike. Regardless of where we live, the colour of our skin or what language we speak, it is likely we have at some time encountered many of the morals or adages of *Aesop’s Fables* – for instance, ‘Slow and steady wins the race’ from the tale of the tortoise and the hare. While we might not know whether those stories were in fact written by Aesop, exactly when they were written or how many languages they have been translated into, the tales still teach us universal virtues like honesty, perseverance, modesty and mutual respect. Other cultural and material products are also spread beyond borders, including tools, technology, clothing, food, furniture, electric appliances, music, customs and rituals. Thanks to ever-advancing digital communication technology and devices, we find our lives intertwined with people we have never met, places we have never visited and events we have never participated in. Indeed, we have become neighbours in this global community.

This does not mean that the whole world has been subsumed into one culture. Contact between cultures may identify similarities as well as accentuate differences between peoples, because culture unites members within a cultural group, as well as marks the boundary for non-members. The word ‘culture’ is derived from the Latin root ‘to cultivate’. Our language, customs, expectations, behaviours, habits – our thinking, doing and being – have and continue to be formed over a long period of cultivation within the specific physical environments and social contexts in which we were born, with which we grew up and in which we presently live. During the process of learning and adapting to the environment, different groups of people have learned distinctive ways to organize their world. A group’s unique ways of doing and thinking become their beliefs, values, worldviews, norms, rituals, customs and their communication patterns – ultimately, their cultural traditions. Cultural traditions go through a process of development and are passed on from generation to generation. Central to this entire process of cultural change and maintenance is human communication. The word ‘communication’ is derived from the Latin root ‘to make common’, as in sharing thoughts, hopes and fears. The successive historical breakthroughs of print, telephone, broadcasting, television and the internet have progressively expanded the domain of communication beyond any community’s immediate cultural and geographic borders. The frequency and necessity of communicating effectively and appropriately with people whose cultures are different from our own was the ground for the development of intercultural communication as a field of study.

The origin of the study of intercultural communication can be traced to the Chicago School, known for pioneering empirical investigations based on the theories of German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918; Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). Simmel studied at the University of Berlin and taught at the University of Strasbourg in the late 19th and early 20th century.
Simmel was the son of Jewish parents, and the antisemitism he experienced in Germany undoubtedly influenced his development of the concept of *der Fremde* or ‘stranger’ (Simmel, 1950), who is a member of a system but not strongly attached to it or accepted by other members of the system. The key scholar in translating and applying Simmel’s concept of the stranger was Robert E. Park, a former newspaper reporter who earned his PhD degree in Germany. Inspired by Simmel’s notion of the stranger, Park developed the concept of social distance, which he defined as the degree to which an individual perceives a lack of intimacy with individuals different in ethnicity, race, religion, occupation or other variables (Park, 1924). Park studied the children of European immigrants in the United States, who typically rejected the European culture and language of their parents but did not consider themselves to be true North Americans either. Based on his research, Park developed the concept of ‘marginal man’ to refer to an individual who lives on the margin of two cultures which never completely fuse. Park’s concept was later extended to ‘the sojourner’, an individual who visits another culture for a period, but who retains his or her original culture. The experience of sojourning or visiting often gives individuals a unique perspective for viewing both the host and home cultures.

Although the concepts of stranger, social distance and marginal man are among those at the heart of intercultural communication, this discipline did not really develop until after World War II. At that time, the United States had emerged as a leading world power. With the advent of the United Nations, several new programmes like the World Health Organization, the United Nations’ assistance programmes and the World Bank were initiated to assist developing nations. However well-intended, not all development programmes were successful, largely because of the failure of the people who led them to comprehend the multifaceted and interrelated nature of culture. In Thailand, for example, where obtaining pure water was identified as the highest-priority problem, most of the hand-pump wells drilled in hundreds of villages by American development workers were broken within six months (Niehoff, 1964). An investigation into the problem showed that no local person was responsible for the maintenance of the pumps. When a well was dug on Buddhist temple grounds, the monks would look after the pump; other wells were neglected. The well-drilling project had not considered the important role that Buddhist monasteries played in Thai culture, and the vital contribution they could make to the success of the project. It was clear that cultural issues had to be considered, along with economic, political and technical dimensions.

In addition, US diplomats also experienced cultural frustrations. They were often poorly trained and lacking in cultural awareness and intercultural communication insight. They usually lived and worked in a small circle of English-speaking expatriates, seldom venturing outside the capital city of their posting. In 1946, the US Congress passed an act to provide training to American diplomats and technical assistance workers in the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). Edward T. Hall, a leading anthropologist and teacher at FSI, and his colleagues initially taught the participants the language and anthropological concepts of the nation to
which they were assigned. The language programme was successful, but participants reported to Hall that they needed to communicate across cultures and thus wanted to understand intercultural differences, rather than simply gaining an understanding of the single culture in which they were to work. In response to these requests, Hall and his colleagues created a new approach that he called ‘intercultural communication’. The publication of his famous book *The Silent Language* (1959) signals the birth of intercultural communication study. As teaching and research in intercultural communication as an independent disciplinary area developed, the meaning of ‘culture’ in intercultural communication broadened from national culture to cultures within culture or sometimes called *subcultures*: cultures defined by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientations, or even lifestyle. This broader definition of the field is reflected in intercultural communication study today.

**CONTRIBUTORS TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

The world we live in today is much more culturally diverse than it was six decades ago when the study of intercultural communication was formalized. Living in a culturally diverse society is no longer a choice for us, but a compelling reality, thanks to *globalization*, defined as the process of increasing interconnectedness between societies and people at economic, political and cultural levels. As one of the leading intercultural communication researchers, Young Yun Kim, put it, ‘We are all migrants now’ (2015, p. 430), living simultaneously within a particular culture and between different cultures. For example, like 30 per cent of our compatriots, all three authors of this book are immigrants to the country we now call home; we come from three different parts of the world. Different contributors to cultural diversity have changed the world to the global community we live in today.

**Advances in communication technology**

Communication technology is a key contributor to cultural diversity because it is central to connecting people from different parts of the globe. However, connection between cultures and peoples is as old as humankind. The Silk Road, for example, began during the Han Dynasty (207 BCE to 220 BCE) and lasted till the 15th century CE. It was an ancient network of trade routes that connected the East with the West, stretching from Central Asia, South Asia and the coast of the Arabian Peninsula to the Mediterranean Sea. In addition to traders, the routes were travelled by explorers, missionaries, philosophers, warriors and foreign emissaries, spreading products, philosophy, religion, ideas and innovation in all directions and among people from different cultures. Similarly, the Ottoman Empire was founded at the end of the 13th century in north-western Anatolia by the Oghuz Turkish tribal leader Osman. After the 14th century, the Ottomans crossed into Europe, and the empire was transformed into a transcontinental one. During the 16th and 17th centuries, it was a multinational,
multilingual empire controlling much of Southeast Europe, parts of Central Europe, Western Asia, the Caucasus, North Africa and the Horn of Africa. These examples show that connection between cultures and peoples has a long history; the advent of communication technologies has just accelerated and transformed the process (McDaniel & Samovar, 2015).

Since the advent of the printing press in China before 1000 CE and in Europe in the 15th century CE, technology has had a profound influence on the way we communicate, both within and across cultures. Through advances like the telephone and telegraph, along with broadcast media in the last century, global connections have proliferated. Now, with the advent of the new communication technologies, **social media** (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) are global phenomena, allowing people to communicate with other users across the world. If we want a more personal visual exchange, Zoom, Skype, or Microsoft Teams can bring a person on the other side of the globe onto the computer screen or smartphone right in front of us, greatly enhancing the telephone communication that was previously available. Many new services for videoconferencing have emerged since the late 1990s: Cisco Webex, Google Hangouts, FaceTime, WhatsApp, and, in 2016, Houseparty, which allows participants to join their friends’ private chats if granted permission. These communication technologies are used as tools for education purposes as well. Founded in 2011, by Eric S. Yuan, a Chinese-born engineer living in the USA and the company’s CEO, Zoom has been on the market since 2013. Since the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Zoom has been adopted as a major platform for conducting lectures, tutorials and examinations in universities worldwide. In addition, Zoom has also become the fastest-growing videoconferencing service in the world.

Advanced communication technologies affect how people form relationships with others as the choices of media to connect with other people are multiplying. In ancient times, social relationships were typically circumscribed by how far one could walk...
Intercultural Communication in a Global Community

The internet has not only expanded social relationships manyfold but also led to new ways of socializing that seem attractive, especially to young people. Social media have greatly increased the potential for para-social relationships (Liebers & Schramm, 2019), where people feel that they know – and love – others whom they have only ‘met’ on television, in the movies, or more recently as social media influencers. It is impossible to overestimate the influence of these people, who often come from cultures that are very distant from their followers, on every aspect of social life.

Online platforms have become participatory spaces. We gather news, share stories, comments on others’ posts, make purchases, sell products, advocate political views, provide support to others, participate in conferences and organize meetings, all online. Communication technology has also changed the rules of participation and relationships with others in practically all areas of our lives. As such, it is a key contributor to the cultural diversity in the communities in which we live. For example, Zoom, Skype and similar platforms are not only professional online spaces for virtual communication, but also a cultural way of life by which people meet, relate and connect with each other. Further, social media are increasingly used for business purposes such as marketing, business negotiation and recruitment, and even for political purposes. Data posted on an online marketing blog in April 2021 (www.backlinko.com) show that 40 per cent of all internet users worldwide utilize social media for work purposes. In addition, businesses use social media as a key means in marketing and public relations to reach target audiences. Indeed, online technologies and the social and communicative possibilities that these technologies afford offer new opportunities as well as challenges for intercultural communication.

THEORY CORNER

Virtual Engagement Theory

Engagement can either be a process such as communicating with someone or an outcome such as a contribution to a certain organization or a worthy cause. Central to the concept is participation and connection. In her theoretical model, Chewning (2018) defines virtual engagement as the social enactment of information and communication technology in a relational context where users connect with social information and resource networks for the purpose of instigating change, co-creating relationships, and contributing to a particular goal. While virtual engagement can occur in conjunction with other types of offline engagement such as participating in social activities, the interaction between user and technology is what makes it virtual engagement.

(Continued)
Key components of virtual engagement in Chewning’s model are categorized into personal, technological and contextual dimensions. The personal dimension contains individual goals, motivations and capabilities. The technological dimension, also called technological attributes, consists of network ties, communication content and interaction processes. The contextual dimension is at both individual and social levels. The process of virtual engagement involves interaction between the user and technology, and this interaction is always situated in a context. During virtual interaction, technological features facilitate network building and exchange of communication content. While the attributes and functions of internet platforms, such as search, storage, hashtags and hyperlinks, might be similar, the use of communication technology can vary depending on the specific user group, the goal of communication, the motivation of communication, user capabilities, and the context in which the communication takes place. In one study on social media use in organizations, Chewning (2016) found that posters on the organization’s Facebook page expanded both individual and organizational networks through repeat posts to the organization, conversation with other posters and sharing hyperlinks. Moreover, during the process of virtual communication users can enable social support and knowledge sharing through their virtual network ties. Information sharing in turn can facilitate the flourishing of social networks and provide building blocks for individual users to engage in interactions and achieve their goals.

Understanding different components of virtual engagement and their interrelations can enable managers to identify communication problems in their organization and better understand how and why users are motivated (or otherwise) to participate in virtual engagement. This understanding can inform managers when developing strategies to facilitate the engagement process. Understanding this process can help researchers and practitioners to design platforms and content that will allow for optional engagement suited to individual preferences, leading to collaboration and productivity. Similarly, civic virtual engagement can foster a sense of connection and identification with the community among individuals, encouraging community services, collective action, political involvement and social change to achieve a common goal.

References

Chewning, L. V. (2016). Moving beyond corporate social responsibility to community and citizenry: Galvanizing social, reputational and sociotechnical capital for change. Proceedings of the 19th annual international public relations research conference, Miami, FL, USA.

Our reliance on virtual communication has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made many people work from home. The necessity to adhere to physical distancing measures to help prevent spread of the virus has also encouraged people to shift from face-to-face communication to online. Although lockdowns may have been lifted across many countries and regions since the availability of vaccines in 2021, the ongoing pandemic has continued to drive significant increases in digital and virtual communication. Data from the Global Web Index (2020) show that we are still spending considerably more time using digital platforms than we were at the start of 2020. Along with transferring from a physical to a digital working mode, business meetings have moved to virtual mode during the pandemic. However, the influence of culture on communication which affects offline communication equally affects virtual communication. For example, Asians place a high value on relationships among group members. They are unlikely to openly express their individual thoughts unless their ideas are already approved by others in their group. Conversely, in many Western cultures, expressing individual opinions at a meeting is an accepted norm; disagreement with someone is not necessarily interpreted as an attack on the person. In virtual communication involving people from different cultures, care must be taken to create a communication climate in which different participants have opportunities and feel comfortable to express their thoughts. Again, it is important to point out that with fewer nonverbal cues during virtual communication, compared to face-to-face interactions, it is crucial to ensure that the influence of culture is considered to achieve effective virtual communication outcomes.

**International migrants and refugees**

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ International Migration 2020 Highlights (UN, 2020) estimates that the closing of national borders and international travel bans globally due to COVID-19 may have slowed the growth in international migrants by around two million by mid-2020, 27 per cent less than the growth expected since mid-2019. Nevertheless, international migration remains the most significant contributor to the culturally diverse societies we live in today. According to the UN report (UN, 2020), growth in the number of international migrants has been robust over the last two decades, reaching 281 million people living outside their country of origin in 2020, up from 173 million in 2000 and 221 million in 2010. Currently, international migrants represent about 3.6 per cent of the world’s population. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of international migrants increased by 48 million globally, with another 60 million added between 2010 and 2020. Much of this increase is due to labour or family migration. Humanitarian crises in many parts of the world also contributed, with an increase of 17 million in the number of refugees and asylum seekers between 2000 and 2020.

Many migrants move from low- and middle-income countries to high-income countries. The UN report shows that two thirds of all international migrants live in 20 countries,
with nearly two thirds of all international migrants living in high-income countries. Only 31 per cent of migrants live in middle-income countries, with around 4 per cent in low-income countries. Among the major regions of the world, the largest number of international migrants in 2020 (87 million) reside in Europe. Northern America hosts the second largest number of migrants, with almost 59 million. Northern Africa and Western Asia follow, with a total of nearly 50 million. India topped the list of source countries in 2020, with 18 million persons from India living outside of their country of birth. Other countries with a large transnational community included Mexico and the Russian Federation (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million). Table 1.1 outlines the top five destination countries for international migrants in 2020.

Table 1.1 Top Five Destination Countries for International Migrants (2020)

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<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Number of migrants (millions)</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
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Between 2000 and 2020, the number of refugees worldwide stood at 34 million, double the number in 2000. The UN report observes that refugees account for 12 per cent of all international migrants in 2020, up from 9.5 per cent in 2000, as forced displacements across national borders have continued to rise faster than voluntary migration. In terms of country of residence, refugees comprise around 3 per cent of all international migrants in high-income countries, 25 per cent in middle-income countries and 50 per cent in low-income countries. One in five or nearly 6.7 million of all internationally displaced persons because of conflict or persecution were born in the Syrian Arab Republic. The second largest number of refugees and asylum seekers globally came from Palestine (5.7 million). The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was the origin of the third largest number of internationally displaced persons, with 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad (UNHCR, 2020).

International migration increases diversity in the composition of populations in destination countries. Cultural diversity brings many opportunities, particularly in the economic realm, and helps to make our society the cosmopolitan, dynamic and exciting place it is today. In Australia, for example, immigration has always been a central part of nation building. Since
the end of World War II, more than seven million migrants have come to Australia. In the immediate post-war period, however, only 10 per cent of Australia’s population was born overseas (Marden & Mercer, 1998); the percentage has risen steadily since then. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of East Asians in Australia rose by 17 per cent (from approximately 850,000 to 1 million). In comparison, the total Australian population grew only by approximately 5 per cent (from 19.4 million to 20.3 million) during the same period (ABS, 2005). Today, nearly 25 per cent of the 25 million Australian population were born overseas (including all three authors of this book), and approximately 300 languages are spoken in the country. Walking along a street in Sydney, for example, one would have no difficulty in finding an Indian restaurant, a Chinese takeaway shop, a Vietnamese greengrocery store, an Italian deli, a Japanese sushi bar – the list goes on.

International migrants contribute to social and economic development in both their countries of origin and destination. Businesses take advantage of the diversity in their workforces to expand into world markets. Multinational corporations are increasingly moving their operations overseas to take advantage of lower labour costs, a trend that has far-reaching implications. There is a global trend for multinational corporations to shift businesses from developed economies in the West to emerging markets in the East. In the year 2000, 95 per cent of the largest international companies had their headquarters in developed countries, but it is estimated that by 2025 nearly half of companies with revenues of $1 billion or above will be based in emerging markets such as Asia (Dobbs et al., 2015). Having a multicultural workforce allows organizations to make use of scarce resources and thus increase their competitive advantage. As a result of such economic and cultural shifts, people with diverse cultural backgrounds are working side by side in many countries, creating a culturally diverse workplace.
Ethnic diversity within workplaces is continually changing the organizational composition of most parts of the world. For example, during the middle of the 20th century, the finding of oil reserves in Saudi Arabia led to rapid industrialization and a great demand for skilled labour not present in Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia’s population of foreign workers increased significantly over the next few decades, with a particularly significant increase of 38 per cent between 1975 and 2000. This population grew dramatically again in 2004, when there were approximately 12.5 million foreign workers in the country, making up 65 per cent of the entire labour force (Looney, 2004). Similar trends were found in Europe, where the number of migrants joining the European workforce from Africa, Asia and the Middle East increases each year. Hence, one of the biggest economic and social challenges facing the global community is how to maximize the benefits of diversity.

### THEORY CORNER

**Diversity Perspectives**

Managing diversity in organizations is becoming more and more important, with increasing globalization of business and international migration. Diversity can be defined by gender, age, ethnicity, culture, nationality, socioeconomic status and geographical regions. In workplaces, employee diversity can give the organization an advantage when dealing with diverse clients and international markets. Within the organization, individuals from diverse backgrounds bring in different solutions to problems, enhancing creativity and performance. On the other hand, diversity in workplaces can lead to competition, lack of trust between employees, potential conflicts due to different ways of doing things, and perceived inequality by minority groups. Different perspectives about the advantages and disadvantages of diversity in an organization will lead to different approaches to managing diversity in the organization.

Based on their research in three culturally diverse organizations in the USA, Ely and Thomas (2001) identified three different perspectives on workforce diversity. The first is the *integration-and-learning perspective*, which suggests that diversity creates a learning environment from which both the organization and its employees can benefit. The second, the *access-and-legitimacy perspective*, views diversity as a business strategy that provides access to a diverse customer base and international markets as well as reflecting the demographics of an organization's external environment. The third, the *discrimination-and-fairness perspective*, is divided into colour-blindness and cultural fairness. This perspective posits that people should be treated equally no matter where they are from, because cultural background is not the priority nor does it need to
be specifically managed. This is not because potential inequalities are ignored, but because the organization has moved beyond distinguishing between different cultural groups to acknowledging each individual’s valuable contribution. Both colour-blindness and fairness place importance on equal and fair treatment and avoiding discriminatory practices. The perspective on diversity held by a workgroup can influence how people express and manage tensions related to differences in views, whether all employees in the organization feel respected and valued by their colleagues, and how people interpret the meaning of their cultural identity at work. These in turn can influence how well the workgroup functions together.

However, subsequent research has re-examined the work by Ely and Thomas (2001) and suggested another perspective, reinforcing homogeneity (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013). Organizations adopting this perspective were found not only to ignore potential cultural differences but to reject cultural diversity in favour of a homogeneous workforce. For example, the organization used recruitment and promotion criteria to hire only people from the dominant cultural group in a country. Criteria that exclude immigrant workers may include requirements for local business knowledge, access to local networks and local experiences, all of which can raise barriers to employment for candidates from minority groups. Since diversity perspectives represent an organization’s beliefs, values and expectations about cultural diversity. Understanding diversity perspectives can help explain the relationship between cultural diversity in workforces and workplace outcomes in particular organizations.

References


Cross-border movements of workers have vastly increased both the amount and the importance of intercultural communication in workplaces. Communication problems can be exacerbated when people interact with those whose communication behaviour is guided by a different set of beliefs and values (Guirdham & Guirdham, 2017). Not just face-to-face communication, but also mediated communication, affects and is affected by cultural differences. The internet revolution, particularly since around 1990, means that a very high proportion of work-related communication takes place via email, instant messaging, Zoom, Skype, webinar and social media. For example, work-related activities such as recruitment
interviewing, decision making meetings and business negotiations are routinely conducted through mediated, rather than face-to-face, communication. The pervasive reliance on the internet for work communication, along with the increasingly diverse ethnic composition of the workforce, makes businesses realize the importance of intercultural understanding in workplaces where people from different ethnic backgrounds work side by side.

**CHALLENGES FROM CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

All over the world, nations are trying to come to terms with the growing diversity of their populations. Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, expatriates, international students and transnational businesspeople bring their heritage culture with them. We see more diaspora communities, which have long been formed by migrants in their settlement countries to maintain their ethnic and cultural heritage and promote the survival of their languages. On the other hand, while maximizing the benefits of cultural diversity, destination countries are aware of some potential threats to the uniqueness of their mainstream culture. Some host nationals have expressed concerns over the threat that different ethnic cultures may pose to their mainstream cultural values, the political and economic power structure, and the distribution of employment opportunities. Some countries are addressing these concerns by trying to control diversity through tighter entry requirements. Other countries are developing government policies concerning the rights of migrants to preserve their ethnic culture within the settlement country, and still others are developing policies that reinforce the cultural values and perspectives of their original communities.

There are many examples in history to show that maintenance of nationalism and protecting the mainstream culture have been key challenges facing migrant receiving countries. Historically, in Germany, immigrants were considered ‘Ausländer’ (foreigners). Their naturalization was only possible if they agreed to renounce their original citizenship and demonstrated loyalty to their ‘adoptive’ country (these laws were slightly relaxed when the Social Democrats gained power in the 1990s). France has built its nation-state since the 19th century on the premise that all regional and cultural differences should be eliminated. French citizens must show loyalty to a powerful, centralized, secular nation-state, and adhere to national political values. Linguistic as well as cultural diversity within France has always been seen as a sign of regression and a hindrance to achieving national unity. Interestingly, English (and the use of English words in French speech) has increasing prominence in France, despite attempts to maintain the purity of the French language. This restriction of citizenship opportunities is also evident elsewhere. In Australia during the 19th century, there were no restrictions on anyone entering what was then a set of colonies, if they were not convicts serving out their time. Consequently, free settlers moved in from Great Britain, Germany, America, Scandinavia and Asia. However, since 2007 a citizenship test has been in place to check migrants’ knowledge of the English language and Australian moral principles and history, as well as national and Aboriginal symbols. The test is available in English only,
and a migrant applicant for citizenship must pass the test before an application for citizenship can be lodged.

With the opening of national borders within the European Union, European nations have been granting social rights, although no real political rights, to migrants (Soysal, 1994). This change has increased the perception of competition on the part of the native population. For example, there is a large North African presence in Europe. Reaching five million today, North Africans began arriving in Europe as early as the 1940s to help rebuild fledgling European economies severely weakened by the war (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2022).

This migration accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s to meet the high demand for low-skilled workers in factories and mines, and to compensate for slow demographic growth in Western Europe. For many years, North African migrants were considered temporary residents (guest workers) and had no share in the social, political and cultural life of the host societies. It was only after the 1974 policies of family reunion that migrants, their families, traditions and religions became visible in everyday life. France, for example, is home to the largest number of North African immigrants (because of its long colonial involvement in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), followed by Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Germany. Different citizenship and immigration laws, as well as the socio-political climate of each settlement country, determine to a large extent how North Africans have engaged with the mainstream culture. Thus, understanding the cultural tensions created by cultural diversity is a challenge we face in the global community.

**THEORY CORNER**

**Cultural Home**

The concept of cultural home refers to an individual’s sense of belonging to an ethnic, racial or geographic community with shared traditions and practices (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). A cultural home provides its members with emotional attachments to a cultural group, and communicates a sense of identity and belonging to its members who share a common history and culture, and even similar physical features. Cultural home is often used together with the term ethnic enclave, which describes an area where relatively large numbers of people from the same ethnic or racial background live in their settlement country. Although a cultural home may be geographically defined (e.g., an area densely populated by migrants from the same cultural heritage), a stable location is not always an essential defining feature of a cultural home. For example, Gypsies are nomadic people; they move geographically all the time, but their cultural home travels with them. They own

(Continued)
The fundamental question yet to be answered is how we can increase the possibilities for peace, tolerance and social cohesion by building relationships in our global community. Increasing mobility and technology make our ‘village’ more global and diverse. However, the physical and psychological borders between countries and people continue to exist. Brown (2011) observes that ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall, there has been a paradoxical increase in wall-building, to separate people. It is not simply that there is a resurgence in the construction of physical walls, like the Israeli West Bank barrier, the

no territory, but each community sustains a cultural identity through their language, traditions, rituals, dresses, social structure and way of communication; all these characteristics distinguish them from other cultural groups. Thus, the boundaries of cultural home can be symbolic.

Globalization and increasing cross-border movements of people raise the question of whether we need a cultural home in a multicultural society. The answer to this question is yes, but as Bennett (1993, p. 110) writes, this cultural home is ‘in the middle of many cultures’. Cultural home forms the basis for the development of identity and nurtures a feeling of belonging, although the belief in a single cultural identity that is defined by a nation, culture, religion and way of life is changing. Just as our geographical home is located in our local community, so too is our cultural home located within the global community. Yet, citizens of this global community identify themselves not by the global community as a whole but oftentimes by various ethnic or subcultural groups that are constituent parts of the global community.

References


Photo 1.3  US–Mexican border at Friendship Park in San Diego. Copyright ©Shuang Liu. Used with permission.
US–Mexico border fence, or similar barriers on the edges of the European Union or the borders of India and Saudi Arabia, or the non-physical boundaries in maritime countries like Australia, there is also an increase in attempts at enclosure, as if nations could wrap themselves safely behind walls. Think of the town of Michalovce in Slovakia, where residents built a cement barrier to separate themselves from the town’s majority Roma population. This wall has nothing to do with sovereignty or security, but with aversion and xenophobia. Thus, while communication technology has facilitated contact between peoples, it may have also accentuated awareness of the differences between peoples and psychological borders. Breaking down the cultural and psychological walls is a challenge we face today, living in a global community.

NECESSITY AND BENEFITS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

As citizens of the global community, we face the task of promoting intercultural understanding, to reap the benefits of cultural diversity and reduce intercultural tensions between cultural groups. Intercultural scholars such as Anthony J. Marsella (2017), who is known internationally for his work on peace, development and social responsibility, use the word ‘fractionation’ to describe the divisive separation of people, societies and nations. Brexit, Trumpism, Putinism, and scores of similar populist movements across the world lead to intense nativist–alien competitions for power. Widespread fears, anger and rage are endemic in populist movements, and globalization is blamed for causing tensions and problems. Governments, corporations and military power sources in many places seek homogenization, because uniformity will assist them in controlling the population. The issue of respect, tolerance and affording a social and cultural space for a diverse population is much more than just a matter of recognizing and celebrating cultural diversity. Recognition is an essential first step, but unless it is translated into practice in everyday lives, there will not be understanding. The key to building the necessary understanding between cultural groups is effective intercultural communication.

Building intercultural understanding

Understanding is the first step towards acceptance. The biggest benefit of accepting cultural differences is that cultural diversity enriches each of us. Throughout history, people around the world have accumulated a rich stock of cultural traditions and customs, but we are often not aware of the cultural rules governing our own behaviour until we encounter behaviours different from our own. Local laws and customs vary from country to country; if you are unaware of them and act according to your own customs in the new country, you may very well end up in prison! For example, it is illegal in Egypt to take photographs of bridges and...
canals (including the Suez Canal), as well as military personnel, buildings and equipment. In India, maiming or killing a cow is an offence which can result in a punishment of up to five years’ imprisonment. In Thailand, lengthy prison terms of up to 15 years can be imposed for insulting the monarchy; this includes destroying bank notes bearing the king’s image. Simple actions such as showing the soles of your feet or touching the top of a person’s head are also likely to cause grave offence in Thailand. In Saudi Arabia, women are legally required to wear the abaya, a long black coat that conceals their body shape, in all public places, while men must avoid wearing shorts, short-sleeved or unbuttoned shirts. These examples show that behaviours which are considered perfectly appropriate and acceptable in one culture may be offensive, even illegal, in another.

The key to appreciating cultural differences is to acquire intercultural knowledge and develop intercultural skills. Intercultural knowledge opens doors to the treasure house of human experience. It reveals myriad ways of experiencing, sensing, feeling and knowing. It helps us to start questioning our own stance on issues that we may have once taken for granted. It widens our vision to include an alternative perspective of valuing and relating. By understanding the beliefs, values and worldviews that influence alternative communication approaches, we can understand the logic that motivates the actions or behaviours of others who are culturally different to ourselves. Culturally sensitive communication can increase relational closeness and deepen cultural self-awareness. The more that people from different cultures get to know each other, the more they can appreciate the differences and perceive the deep commonalities amongst them. Intercultural communication can help us to build our knowledge of other people and their cultures, as well as consolidating our knowledge about our own culture. The result is invariably greater intercultural understanding.

**Promoting intercultural cooperation in the workplace**

Managing diversity in the workplace is an essential competence that managers need to have in the 21st century (Guirdham & Guirdham, 2017). When money and jobs cross borders, there are challenges and opportunities facing individuals of different backgrounds who live and work together. In a multinational organization, for instance, Malay employees may heavily emphasize the values of family togetherness, harmony in relationships, and respect for seniority, whereas North American employees may value individuality and personal achievement more highly. A workgroup consisting of members from different cultural backgrounds is more likely to experience difficulty in communication or to experience miscommunication, conflict and turnover, if group members are not interculturally competent. A study compared management styles of four Nordic countries (Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden) with that of Latin countries (Belgium and France) and one Eastern European country (Hungary). The findings showed that Latin management behaviour was strongest in task orientation, compared with both Hungarian and Nordic behaviour, thereby supporting an authoritarian decision making style.
On the other hand, Nordic managers showed the highest levels of employee orientation, indicating reliance on their subordinates in decision making (Lindell & Arvonen, 1996). Constructive management of the diversity in workplaces has the potential to bolster employee morale, create an inclusive climate in organizations, and spark creative innovation.

Communicating between cultures does not simply mean switching between languages. It is also about understanding the thinking behind the words. To understand the significance of a message from someone, you need to understand that person’s view of the world. Guanxi, for example, is a special type of Chinese relationship which contains trust, favour, dependence and adaptation. It constitutes a highly differentiated and intricate system of formal and informal social subsets, which are governed by the unwritten law of reciprocity. Chinese people place great emphasis on cultivating a good relationship with their business partners prior to any business transaction. While economic factors are important to the Chinese, those factors alone cannot sustain long-term business relations. In fact, non-economic factors such as acceptance, face-giving, complementary social reciprocity and trust may play a bigger role in influencing decision making. The emphasis on developing guanxi is reflected in business negotiations with Chinese partners, which tend to be much lengthier than those with a Westerner. A good understanding of cultural differences can promote mutually productive and successful intercultural business collaborations. To achieve this goal, business leaders need to understand how diversity and inclusion go hand in hand (Roberson, 2020). While a diverse workforce is important to success in a global market, inclusion in the workplace, where employees feel their cultural knowledge is valued, is equally important.

**Facilitating cross-cultural adjustment**

Intercultural encounters provide opportunities for understanding between people, as well as the potential for misunderstanding. Cross-cultural adjustment is not a process that is unique to migrants; host nationals also have to experience cultural adjustments when their society is joined by culturally different others. The tension between migrants and host nationals often centres on the extent to which migrants can maintain their heritage culture in the host country. The host society plays an important role in providing an environment in which migrants feel welcome to maintain their ethnic culture and at the same time participate in the mainstream society. In migrant receiving countries, ethnically different populations can become perceived threats to collective identity, the dominance of cultural beliefs and values of the mainstream culture and the standard of living of the host nationals. For migrant groups, however, multiculturalism offers the possibility of maintaining their own culture and still integrating into the host society. Thus, policies of multiculturalism that highlight the importance of recognizing cultural diversity within a common framework and equal societal participation can also lead to distinction between ethnic groups and threaten social cohesion. It can be difficult to get this balance right, particularly when ethnic identity has the great importance and centrality to people that it does in many countries today.
The extent to which host nationals allow members of migrant groups to maintain their own culture and partake in relationships with the dominant cultural group plays an important role in the construction of a truly multicultural society. Promoting intercultural understanding facilitates cultural adjustment by both migrants and host nationals, and intercultural communication is central to promoting inter-ethnic understanding. Interacting with migrants is often difficult for host nationals, because of differences in language and cultural values, and this adds anxiety to intercultural interactions. To reduce anxiety of this nature, we must equip ourselves with knowledge about other cultures, and with knowledge about how cultures differ and ways of navigating these differences. Intercultural knowledge reduces anxiety and uncertainty, making the communication process smoother and more successful. Intercultural communication knowledge and skills do not come naturally; they must be acquired through conscious learning. In this book, our goal is to equip you with this knowledge and these skills.

**SUMMARY**

- Transmission of cultures across geographic borders occurred long before the study of intercultural communication was formalized as a field.
- Advances in communication technologies, the global economy, business and international migration are major contributors to cultural diversity in our societies.
- Virtual intercultural communication is an integral part of life in the global community, creating opportunities to connect anywhere and anytime, but creating challenges as well.
- While the geographic borders that used to separate people from people and country from country are receding, issues arising from cultural diversity and multiculturalism, such as protecting the uniqueness of the mainstream culture, remain.
- Intercultural communication equips us with the necessary knowledge and skills to interact with culturally different people effectively and appropriately.

**CASE STUDY**

From the first news of a novel coronavirus in December 2019, defined as coronavirus disease 2019 (SARS-CoV2 or COVID-19) by the World Health Organization in February 2020, the pandemic was at the top of the agenda of media reports and government policies of all countries, exerting a significant impact on human communication both across and within cultural boundaries. During the pandemic, constantly communicating vital health information has been crucial. However, the COVID-19 pandemic also elicited conspiracy theories, fake news
and misinformation. Social networks of family and friends have accelerated transmission of harmful as well as helpful information about the pandemic. Given the proliferation of information sources during outbreaks, knowledge about source credibility perceived by different cultural groups is crucial for government and health officials to effectively reach and support them, because sources perceived as credible and trustworthy are more persuasive. Ensuring anticipated behavioural responses to government messages and measures during outbreaks is vital to protect the health and well-being of the public.

Effective use of a local community leader as a credible voice to relate government messages to the cultural group can enhance the cultural appropriateness of the messages and support community adoption. In some cultures, government messages communicated by religious leaders may be more effective. During the Western African Ebola crisis, for example, religious leaders across faiths in Sierra Leone proved effective in advocating for practices such as hand washing and safe burials (Greyling et al., 2016). Research shows that trust in health officials also contributed to adopting preventative measures such as Ebola vaccinations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Vinck et al., 2019). While measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, such as isolation and social distancing, are similar worldwide, people from different cultural backgrounds may interpret and respond to such measures very differently because behavioural responses are shaped by cultural context. A lack of culture-based understanding of behavioural drivers among different cultural groups during outbreaks can undermine the effectiveness of government messages and measures in achieving the anticipated outcomes, which in turn can incur health, economic and social costs to individuals, communities and society.

Individual behaviours are rooted in beliefs and values and the behaviours people believe others expect of them (Bavel et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic requires government and health officials to persuade the public to make various changes, sometimes drastic, in their routines and behaviours, to contain the pandemic. However, the extent to which people adhere closely to rules or look for opportunities to violate rules can vary across cultural groups. Tighter cultures are more likely to accept behavioural constraints, whereas looser cultures accustomed to prioritizing freedom may have more difficulty coordinating collective actions in the face of a pandemic (Wolf et al., 2020). Research shows that tight cultures such as Singapore, Japan and China tend to have strong social norms and punishments for deviance, while loose cultures such as the USA, Italy and Brazil have weaker social constraints and are more permissive (Bavel et al., 2020). Western European and North American cultures consider individuals as independent, whereas Asian cultures view them as interdependent. Consequently, we see that health priorities
are more easily given to the collective in Asian societies, in which individuals are willing to sacrifice personal interest for the sake of the group. In contrast, social norms in North America and much of Western Europe tend to value individual freedom of expression and make compliance trickier; people may need to see benefit to themselves to comply with new rules. However, the difference between more collectivistic and more individualistic cultures in adherence to public health measures may be an oversimplification. For example, in Australia and New Zealand, compliance with border closures and other barrier measures in the COVID-19 pandemic has been very high, even though these are highly individualistic cultures where individual freedom and autonomy are highly valued. It may be that the health beliefs in these societies interact with other aspects of the culture to produce more trust in public health messages. Understanding the cultural processes underpinning health behaviours can inform the design of culturally appropriate communication strategies to bring about expected behavioural changes among different cultural groups.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 and the need to wait for effective treatments or vaccines underscored the importance of effective health communication strategies to enable changes in human behaviour to contain the pandemic. Media reports tended to sensationalise all aspects of the pandemic, and thus to add to a climate of fear and hostility. As many scholars have noted, it is in stressful times like these that social and cultural identities can become much more influential. Furthermore, media stories have questioned the place, policies and people assumed to be responsible for the spread of the virus, and these perceptions of the pandemic have greatly challenged intercultural relations, giving rise to racism and discrimination. Closure of national borders has only intensified divisions between countries and cultural groups. Intercultural communication can be a cure for the division, created by fear and hostility between cultural groups and nations, that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. As we adhere to health measures such as social distancing in an effort to prevent the spread of the virus, it is more important than ever to understand both the inner workings of specific cultures and the interactions between cultures. This pandemic is a historical moment that will have a lasting effect on the ways in which people and different communities relate to one another.


1. What information do people need during outbreaks of a pandemic and where do they obtain the needed information?

2. What factors contribute to the criteria people use to evaluate the trustworthiness of information sources during outbreaks of a pandemic such as COVID-19?

3. Could you provide an example to show how cultural context influences people’s behavioural responses to government measures during outbreaks of a pandemic?

4. How might the present pandemic impact our sense of identity and belonging to nations or cultural groups?

5. How has the outbreak changed the way we relate to people who are different from us, as we distance from each other in adherence to measures to prevent the spread of the virus?