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Experiencing Intercultural Communication 7e

AN INTRODUCTION

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Judith N. Martin | Thomas K. Nakayama

Experiencing
Intercultural
Communication

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Experiencing Intercultural Communication

An Introduction

Seventh Edition

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**Mc
Graw
Hill**



EXPERIENCING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Preface

Recent events have highlighted, once again, the global interconnectedness of nations and people and underscored the need for intercultural communication knowledge and skills. For example, the worldwide spread of the COVID-19 virus disrupted the movement of people and goods and caused many countries to tighten their borders: the European Union “close[d] off a region encompassing at least 26 countries and more than 400 million people,”¹ and heightened intercultural tensions—as leaders of the two most powerful countries, China and the United States, traded insults and blamed each other for the social and economic devastation.

We start with this focus on the coronavirus as you may have been impacted by it. Your university or college may have moved classes online in the Spring of 2020 and you may know someone who has contracted it. Our cultures shape how we respond to these crisis situations. Do we follow the directives of the government officials? Or do we do what we want? Do we think about others? Or is it everyone for him/herself? After being asked to stay home and avoid contact with others, Katie Williams tweeted “I just went to a crowded Red Robin...It was delicious, and I took my sweet time eating my meal. Because this is America. And I’ll do what I want.”² In contrast, South Koreans and Chinese tended to follow their governments’ instructions, implemented by location tracking that measured and enforced stay-at-home directives.

Do these cultural differences help explain why some countries experienced more fatalities and infections from the virus than others? As we work our way through this pandemic and the many more that will follow over the course of your lifetime, think about how cultural differences influence how different cultures respond to these crises.

The virus has also accelerated calls for reducing globalization. Although the United States has already withdrawn from some trade agreements and renegotiated others, the need for medical equipment intensified calls for more manufacturing in the U.S. What will happen to globalization? Will we move more toward closing borders or will we reach out and be more engaged with the world?

Natural disasters may also affect intercultural communication. Climate change may bring about significant changes that require us to work with others around the world. Droughts, earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, tsunamis, and other natural disasters may increase the need for intercultural cooperation to help those in need.

Social media presents other intercultural challenges. The 2020 video of another unarmed Black man, George Floyd, killed by a white Minneapolis policeman went viral, leading to days of national and worldwide protests against racial inequality and some hope for change. On the other hand, social media have also been used to foment

division and dissension. Thus, our use of social media can build bridges to other cultures or reinforce walls between them.

How can we use our intercultural skills to help enrich our lives and the lives of those around us? As the world changes, how important is it for us to understand the past? Should we focus on culture-specific information? Or should we strive to develop more universal rules? How can anyone understand every culture around the world? Or every language? We wrote this book to shed light on these and many other questions about intercultural communication.

As in our earlier books, we have tried to use information from a variety of approaches, drawing from social psychological approaches as well as from ethnographic studies and more recent critical media studies. However, the emphasis in this book is on the practical, experiential nature of intercultural communication. We still acknowledge that there are no easy answers to many intercultural situations. However, we attempt to give solid, practical guidelines, while noting the complexity of the task facing the student of intercultural communication.

Stavis-Gredneff, M. & HYPERLINK "<https://www.nytimes.com/by/richard-perez-pena>" Pérez-Peña, R. (2020, March 17). Europe barricaded borders to slow Coronavirus. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/world/europe/EU-closes-borders-virus.html>).

White, M. D. (2020, March 15). Individualism doesn't justify endangering the lives of others. (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/maybe-its-just-me/202003/individualism-doesnt-justify-endangering-the-lives-others>).

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

This book addresses the core issues and concerns of intercultural communication by introducing a group of general skills in Chapter 1 and emphasizing the concepts and the skills of communicating interculturally throughout the text. This textbook

- Includes a balanced treatment of skills and theory. The skills focus is framed by the presentation of the conceptual aspects of culture and communication. Each chapter has a section called "Building Intercultural Skills" that provides guidelines for improving the reader's intercultural communication.
- Provides a framework for understanding intercultural communication, focusing on four building blocks (culture, communication, context, and power) and four barriers (ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination).
- Focuses on personal experiences by including students' narratives and the authors' personal experiences highlighted throughout the text.
- Presents the material in a student-friendly way. There are four types of thoughtful and fun bits of information in the margin provided for students' interest. This edition contains new updated examples and websites:



“What Do You Think?” includes information and questions that challenge students to think about their own culture and communication styles.



“Surf’s Up!” suggests websites that students can visit for more information about culture and communication.



“Pop Culture Spotlight” presents examples of culture and communication from today’s popular culture.



“Info Bites” provides fun facts and figures that illustrate issues related to intercultural communication.

- Includes separate chapters on history and identity, with sections on Whiteness and assisting European American students in exploring their own cultural issues.
- Focuses on popular culture, both in a separate chapter and in examples woven throughout the book.
- Discusses important role of communication technologies in intercultural encounters in various contexts.
- Applies concepts to real-life contexts; the book includes four chapters on how intercultural communication works in everyday settings in tourism, business, education, and health.

NEW TO THE SEVENTH EDITION

This edition includes updated material addressing recent challenges of intercultural communication, including increased worldwide religious and ethnic conflict, the enormous numbers of migrants fleeing intercultural conflict and economic challenges, the impact of political context on intercultural encounters, and environmental challenges. For example, Chapter 1 features a new seventh imperative for studying intercultural communication, environmental issues and their impact on migration and the increasing numbers of environmental refugees and increased intercultural conflict. In Chapter 8, we extended our discussion of ongoing religious and racial tensions in the United States and overseas, and updated discussion of conflict involving immigrants and between police and communities of color.

We also recognize the continuing importance of political issues in intercultural contexts. For example, Chapter 9 includes a discussion of how anti-LGBTQ attitudes and legislation affects intercultural relationships and similarly in Chapter 11, discussions of their impacts on intercultural business encounters; in Chapter 4, Canada’s welcoming stance to refugees, as part of its national identity; and in Chapter 13, the impact of various communication strategies about the coronavirus.

To continue to recognize the increasing role technology plays in intercultural communication, in Chapter 1 we acknowledge the increasing role, both negative and positive, of social media in intercultural encounters. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of generational differences in social media communication and in Chapter 6 we

explore how racial and ethnic groups view cultural spaces of social media differently. Chapters 10 and 11 include new material on the role of social media in tourist and business contexts, and social media examples are interwoven throughout the other chapters.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The first chapter focuses on the changing dynamics of social life and global conditions that provide a rationale for the study of intercultural communication, suggesting that intercultural learning is not just transformative for the individual, but also benefits the larger society and other cultural groups in our increasingly interdependent world. In this edition, we have updated statistics and examples as well as added a seventh imperative for studying intercultural communication, identifying environmental issues that impact intercultural encounters and call for cultural understanding and cooperation beyond our national borders.

Chapter 2 outlines a framework for the book and identifies four building blocks of intercultural communication—culture, communication, context, and power, as well as four attitudinal and behavioral barriers to effective intercultural communication: ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. In this edition, we provide updated examples of anti-immigrant prejudice and discrimination and expanded discussion on changing ethnic/racial stereotypes in popular films and television.

Chapter 3 focuses on helping students see the importance of history in understanding contemporary intercultural communication issues and a discussion of how postcolonial histories intertwine with today's practices of outsourcing and global business. This edition provides updated examples of the use of history for contemporary situations and underscores the ways that intercultural relationships can be impacted.

Chapter 4 discusses issues of identity and intercultural communication. In this chapter we address a number of identities (gender, age, race, and ethnicity [including white identity], physical ability, religion, class, national and regional identity). We also discuss issues of multicultural identity—people who live on the borders—and issues of crossing borders and cultural shock and adaptation. This edition includes a discussion of Confederate statues and their relation to identities.

Chapter 5 addresses verbal issues in intercultural communication, describing cultural variations in language and communication style, attitudes toward speaking, writing and silences, as well as issues of power and language. This edition includes an expanded discussion of how social media influences cultural differences in communication style, as well as a discussion of generational differences in social media communication.

Chapter 6 focuses on the role of nonverbal behavior in intercultural interaction, describing universal and culture-specific aspects of nonverbal communication, and the ways nonverbal behavior can provide a basis for stereotyping and prejudice. This chapter also addresses cultural space and its dynamic, changing nature, and a discussion of how racial and ethnic groups view cultural spaces of social media. This edition

includes recent research on Facial Recognition technology and its implications for intercultural communication both domestically and internationally.

Chapter 7 addresses popular culture and intercultural communication. We define pop culture and discuss the ways in which pop culture forms our images of culture groups and the ways in which we consume (or resist) popular culture products. This edition includes updated popular culture examples, as well as the impact of the Coronavirus on popular culture consumption as more people stayed at home.

Chapter 8 discusses the role of culture and conflict. The chapter identifies characteristics of intercultural conflict, describes both personal and social/political aspects of conflict, and examines the role of religion in intercultural conflict and the ways conflict management varies from culture to culture. This edition includes updated discussions of the role economic conditions and social inequities play in intercultural conflict involving immigrants and between police and communities of color.

Chapter 9 focuses on intercultural relationships in everyday life. It identifies the challenges and benefits of intercultural relationships, both online and face to face, examining how relationships may differ across cultures and exploring a variety of relationship types: friendship, dating, and marriage relationships. In this edition, we incorporated material on LGBTQ relationships throughout entire chapter.

Chapters 10 through 13 focus on intercultural communication in specific contexts. Chapter 10 addresses issues of intercultural communication in the tourism industry, exploring various ways in which hosts and tourists may interact, the ways varying cultural norms may affect tourist encounters, language issues and communication style, and the sometimes-complex attitudes of hosts toward tourists. In this edition, we include discussions of the impacts of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as well as updated discussions of the impacts of terrorist attacks, and environmental disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes) on touristic encounters, and new material on the role of social media on tourism.

Chapter 11 focuses on intercultural communication in business contexts, identifying several communication challenges (work-related values, differences in management styles, language issues, and affirmative action) in both domestic and international contexts, and the social and political contexts of business. We also provide a discussion of how power relations affect intercultural business encounters—both interpersonal relationships and larger system impacts. This edition includes new material on workplace diversity issues as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, immigration, terrorist attacks, and anti-LGBTQ attitudes and legislation on intercultural communication in business contexts.

Chapter 12 explores intercultural communication and education, discussing different kinds of educational experiences (e.g., study abroad, culture-specific settings) and communication challenges (e.g., varying roles for teachers and students, grading, and power); addressing social concerns and the role of culture in admissions, affirmative action, and standardized tests; and examining the challenges of educating immigrants. We also explore minority serving institutions as well as gender issues, including recent changes made by the federal government on how colleges should handle sexual assault cases.

Chapter 13 addresses intercultural communication and health care, focusing on intercultural barriers to effective health care, the historical treatment of cultural groups, and the ways power dynamics, religious beliefs, and language barriers influence communication in health care settings. It also includes a discussion on alternative and complementary medicine as other ways of thinking about health care. This edition provides information on the communication strategies in response to the Coronavirus as well as cultural issues that influenced how we responded to the pandemic.



The seventh edition of Experiencing Intercultural Communication: An Introduction is now available online with Connect, McGraw-Hill Education's integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect also offers SmartBook for the new edition, which is the first adaptive reading experience proven to improve grades and help students study more effectively. All of the title's website and ancillary content is also available through Connect, including:

- *A full Test Bank of multiple choice questions that test students on central concepts and ideas in each chapter.*
- *An Instructor's Manual for each chapter with full chapter outlines, sample test questions, and discussion topics.*
- *Lecture Slides for instructor use in class.*

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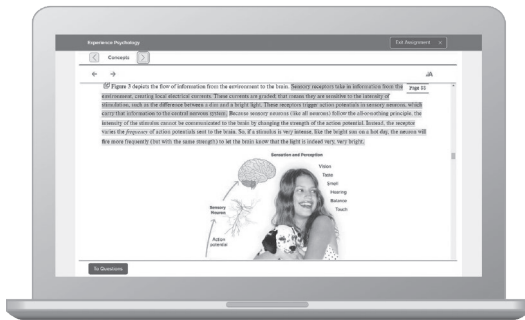
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About the Authors

Judith Martin grew up in Mennonite communities, primarily in Delaware and Pennsylvania. She studied at the Université de Grenoble in France and has taught high school English for several years in the Kabylie region of Algeria. She received her doctorate from the Pennsylvania State University. By background and training, she is a social scientist who has focused on intercultural communication on an interpersonal level and has studied how people's communication is affected as they move or sojourn between international locations. More recently, she has studied how people's cultural backgrounds influence their online communication. She has taught at the State University of New York at Oswego, the University of Minnesota, the University of New Mexico, and Arizona State University. She enjoys gardening, watching Netflix, traveling, and hanging out with her large extended family.

Tom Nakayama grew up mainly in Georgia, at a time when the Asian American presence was much less than it is now. He has studied at the Université de Paris and various universities in the United States. He received his doctorate from the University of Iowa. By background and training, he is a critical rhetorician who views intercultural communication in a social context. Prior to Northeastern University, he has taught at California State University at San Bernardino, Arizona State University, the University of Iowa, and the Université de Mons-Hainaut (now the Université de Mons). He has guest lectured at many institutions, including the University of Maine, Centre Universitaire (Luxembourg), University of Southern California, University of Georgia, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris), and the École des hautes études commerciales du nord (Lille). He loves the changes of seasons in New England, traveling, and playing trivia.



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CHAPTER ONE

Studying Intercultural Communication

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Peace Imperative

The Economic Imperative

The Workplace

The Global Economy

The Technological Imperative

Technology and Human Communication

The Environmental Imperative

The Demographic Imperative

Changing U.S. Demographics

Changing Immigration Patterns

The Self-Awareness Imperative

The Ethical Imperative

Ethical Judgments and Cultural Values

Becoming an Ethical Student of Culture

Summary

Building Intercultural Skills

Activities

Endnotes

STUDY OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the peace imperative for studying intercultural communication.
2. Identify and describe the economic and technological imperatives for studying intercultural communication.
3. Identify ways in which environmental changes can affect intercultural encounters.
4. Describe how the changing demographics in the United States and the changing worldwide immigration patterns affect intercultural communication.
5. Explain how studying intercultural communication can lead to increased self-understanding.
6. Understand the difference between a universalistic and relativist approach to the study of ethics and intercultural communication.
7. Identify and describe characteristics of an ethical student of culture.

KEY TERMS

assimilable

class structure

cosmopolitans

cross-cultural trainers

demographics

diversity

enclaves

ethics

globalization

heterogeneous

immigration

maquiladoras

melting pot metaphor

relativist position

self-awareness

self-reflexivity

universalist position

A child born today will be faced as an adult, almost daily, with problems of a global interdependent nature, be it peace, food, the quality of life, inflation, or scarcity of resources. He/she will be both an actor and a beneficiary or a victim in the total world fabric, and may rightly ask: “Why was I not warned? Why was I not better educated? Why did my teachers not tell me about these problems and indicate my behavior as a member of an interdependent human race?”

—Robert Muller¹

This quote from Robert Muller, known as “the father of global education” is as relevant today as it was 30 years ago and underscores the importance of learning about our interdependent world. In addition to peace, food, the economy, and the quality of life identified by Muller, nothing underscores the importance of global connectedness like the coronavirus pandemic of 2020. In addition to global health and medical concerns, climate change, terrorism, conflicts around the globe require working across cultural differences to find solutions to these complex problems. For example, in addition to the severe worldwide economic concerns as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, continuing religious and ethnic conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, territorial tensions in Asia over strategic island claimed by more than one country (China, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea) as well as the worldwide refugee problem with millions of migrants streaming into Europe into already fragile economies, for example, Greece and Eastern European countries. The personal impact of this global interconnectedness has been extensive. As a result of the downturn in the worldwide (and United States) economy, the promises of the American Dream seem illusive for many—particularly for minority households whose financial resources remain at a fraction of white households. Perhaps your education was suspended, or you or your parents or someone you know lost their jobs. Perhaps you worry about how you’ll pay off your college debt or whether you’ll ever be able to own a home or achieve economic independence. Let’s consider how the economic conditions and world tensions affect intercultural relations. Let’s start at home, in the United States where some adult children, many saddled with large college debt, are confronting economic challenges. As one college student described her and her friends’ situations as the pandemic hit, “One of my friends, a recent graduate, excited for his first day on the job, got his start date postponed as his company shifted to work-from-home. A friend of a friend found out that all of her job interviews had been canceled. . . . I don’t think we have the luxury to have dreams anymore.”²

For some young people (and even older individuals), the economic downturn means sharing living spaces with parents or relatives or friends. This intergenerational

living arrangement, common in many parts of the world, presents challenges to independent minded children (and parents) in the United States and requires (intercultural) communication skills—listening to each other openly and respectfully. Some even say it's a good thing—that parents and children get to spend extra time with each other that they wouldn't be able to do in other circumstances.

The global economic slowdown has had enormous consequences for intercultural relations. For example, the blame game ramped up between the United States and China, each blaming the other for starting the virus and hiding it from the international community, and the Trump administration angered the Chinese by referring to the virus as “the Chinese virus.”³ Tensions also fueled old stereotypes. In Australia, Andy Miao, told a reporter about the disapproving stares from other passengers when he took the train to work and how he knew it's because of one reason: his ethnic Chinese heritage. “It makes people like me who are very Australian, feel like outsiders. It's definitely invoking a lot of past racial stereotypes.”⁴

The challenges of increased immigration add additional intercultural challenges. For example, President Trump suspended the entry of immigrants from six Muslim countries, initiated other measures that restrict immigration, suspended the DACA program, and also drastically cut the number of refugees accepted into the United States.⁵ While some feel that these are reasonable attitudes and policies that protect the U.S. security and economy, others feel that it paves the way for increased prejudice and discrimination against foreigners, particularly those from the Middle East and Latin America.

So what does all this mean for intercultural communication? These global economic and political connections point to the large numbers of people who communicate every day with people from around the world. Some of this communication is face-to-face with international students, business travelers, tourists, migrants, and others. Increasingly, this communication is online and mobile, including texting, social media, blogs, and so on.

There are many reasons that people come into intercultural contact. Wars or other violent conflicts drive some people to leave their homelands to seek a safer place to live. Natural disasters can drive people to other areas where they can rebuild their lives. Some people seek a better life somewhere else, or are driven by their own curiosity to seek out and visit other parts of the world. People often fall in love and build families in another country. Can you think of other reasons that drive people to interact across cultural differences?

What do you as a student of intercultural communication need to learn to understand the complexities of intercultural interaction? And how can learning about intercultural communication benefit you?

It is easy to become overwhelmed by that complexity. However, not knowing everything that you would like to know is very much a part of the learning process, and this inability to know everything is what makes intercultural communication experiences so exciting. Rather than being discouraged by everything that you cannot know, think of all the things you can learn from intercultural communication experiences. This book will introduce you to some of the basic concepts and guidelines

for thinking about intercultural interaction. You can also learn a lot of intercultural communication by listening to other people's experiences, but intercultural communication is a lifelong project and we hope you will continue your journey long after you read this textbook.

Why is it important to focus on intercultural communication and to strive to become better at this complex form of interaction? There are many reasons why you might want to learn more about intercultural communication. Perhaps you want to better serve a diverse clientele in your chosen occupation; perhaps members of your extended family are from different races or religions, or have physical abilities that you would like to understand better. Perhaps you want to better understand the culturally diverse colleagues in your workplace. Or perhaps you want to learn more about the people you come into contact with face to face or online, or to learn more about the countries and cultures that are in the daily news: Syria, Yemen, racial tensions, hate crimes in cities large and small. In this chapter, we discuss the following imperatives—reasons to study intercultural communication: peace, economic, technological, environmental, demographic, self-awareness, and ethical. Perhaps one or more will apply to your situation.

THE PEACE IMPERATIVE

The key issue is this: Can individuals of different genders, ages, ethnicities, races, languages, and religions peacefully coexist on the planet? According to the Center for Systemic Peace, while conflict between national powers has decreased, societal wars (conflict between groups within a country) have increased. The current trend is toward longer, more intra-national protracted conflicts where military or material support is supplied by foreign powers—fighting “proxy wars”—to warring groups.⁶ For example, the terrible conflict in Yemen, where the Saudi backed government is fighting Iranian backed Houthi rebels or the continuing religious strife between Shia and Sunni Muslims throughout the Middle East, and the various Islamic State groups causing conflict in Africa, as well as the conflicts between the government and various drug cartels in Mexico.

Some of the conflicts have roots in past foreign policies. The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has been linked to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the strength of the Taliban related to the U.S. policies in twice promising to help Afghanistan people (against Soviet aggression in the late 1980s and against the Taliban in 2003 and then withdrawing military and infrastructure building support, several times leaving Afghan people at the mercy of the Taliban.

Some conflicts have to do with economic disparities and legacies of oppression, seen in the racial and ethnic tensions in U.S. neighborhoods and continuing conflicts between law enforcement and some Black communities.⁷ There are also tensions regarding what some people perceive as racist symbolism of the Cleveland Indians, a U.S. major league baseball team, and the Washington Redskins, a U.S. professional football team, as well as conflicts surrounding the retention or removal of memorials/statues celebrating Confederate civil war leaders on campuses and cities.⁸



What Do You Think?

A group of prominent Canadian international figures have called for a “Department of Peace” or “Ministries of Peace” that would promote and utilize nonviolent methods of resolving conflicts around the world. What do you think would be the major functions of a Department of Peace? What kind of person is capable of becoming a Minister of Peace?



Abid Katib/Getty Images

People are often caught in devastating consequences of conflicts they neither started nor chose. In this photo, victims of the Gaza conflict search through the rubble of buildings destroyed by war. While communication skills cannot solve all political conflicts, they are vital in dealing with intercultural strife.

Communication scholar Benjamin Broome has worked with many conflict areas, including in Cyprus with Greeks and Turk Cypriots (once the most heavily fortified border in the world) and also Native American groups in the United States. He emphasizes that one cannot focus only on the interpersonal level or the societal level, but all levels. He proposes an approach of peacebuilding which is not just the absence of conflict, but an effort to stop all forms of violence and promote transformative ways to deal with conflict, including strategies that address personal, relational, and structural (organizational, economic conditions, etc.) elements of conflict. According to Broome, communication, especially facilitated dialogue, plays a key role in the peacebuilding process.⁹ We need to remember that individuals often are born into and are caught up in conflicts that they neither started nor chose and are impacted by larger societal forces. We will explore further approaches to dealing with conflict in Chapter 8.

THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

You may want to know more about intercultural communication because you see tremendous changes in the workplace in the coming years. This is one important reason to know about other cultures and communication patterns. In addition, knowing about intercultural communication is strategically important for U.S. businesses in the global economy. As noted by writer Carol Hymowitz of the *Wall Street Journal*, “If companies are going to sell products and services globally,



Surf's Up!

How global is the news you get each day? Think about the lead stories in the newspapers that you read, the news stories in the blogs and Internet sites you visit, the news programs you watch, and the news stories you hear on the radio. Is the news primarily about local or international events? For daily news on international events, check <https://twitter.com/BBCWorld> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world> and compare the stories to other U.S. news sites.

then they will need a rich mix of employees with varied perspectives and experiences. They will need top executives who understand different countries and cultures.”¹⁰

The Workplace

Given the growing cultural diversity in the United States, businesses necessarily must be more attentive to diversity issues. As the workforce becomes more diverse, many businesses are seeking to capitalize on these differences: “Once organizations learn to adopt an inclusive orientation in dealing with their members, this will also have a positive impact on how they look at their customer base, how they develop products and assess business opportunities, and how they relate to their communities.”¹¹ Benefiting from cultural differences in the workplace involves not only working with diverse employees and employers but also seeing new business markets, developing new products for differing cultural contexts, and marketing products in culturally appropriate and effective ways. From this perspective, diversity is a potentially powerful economic tool for business organizations. We will discuss diversity issues further in Chapter 11.



Surf's Up!

Do you know the proper procedure for exchanging business cards in Japan? Did you know that even though meetings run late in Brazil, it is considered rude to exit before the gathering ends? Did you know you should never give a clock as gift to a Chinese, it represents death? Business practices vary from country to country. Check out <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/250546> for good suggestions for how to be successful in international business contexts.

The Global Economy

Globalization and the interconnectedness of the global economy was dramatically seen in the disruption to the global supply chain caused by the 2020 pandemic. Many U.S. businesses ground to a halt initially because the U.S. companies were unable to get shipments from China, in the grip of the pandemic virus.

As the virus spread worldwide, the United States and other countries were pushed into a recession¹² and policymakers in the United States, Europe, and Asia “desperately tried to stabilise economies hit by quarantined consumers, broken supply chains, and paralysed businesses.”¹³

While some jobs and industries have suffered due to the pandemic and globalization, many jobs worldwide are lost as a result of enormous economic “disruptions”: automation, digitization, and climate change. For example, ride-sharing and self-driving cars and trucks mean fewer trucks and taxi/Lyft/Uber drivers; online shopping and fast food digital ordering means fewer sales people, etc. Climate change has also disrupted economies; for example, the loss of the coal industry and millions of jobs in the search for low-carbon economy.¹⁴ What are the implications for intercultural communication? The most successful businesses and workers in this global economy are adaptable and resourceful.

The point is that to compete effectively in this sometimes volatile global market, Americans must understand how business is conducted in other countries, especially the second largest world economy—China—and how to negotiate deals that are advantageous to the U.S. economy. For example, while business leaders admit that they have an uneven playing field in China (accused of copyright infringement, and unfair business agreements), they still want to capture the huge and lucrative China market—a billion customers.¹⁵ However, they are not always willing to take the time and effort to do this. eBay, the successful American e-commerce giant copied its American model



Pixtal/AGE Fotostock

Multicultural work environments are becoming increasingly common in the twenty-first century. In many of these situations, working in small groups is especially important. Given this trend, workers need to learn to deal with cultural differences.

to China and got completely destroyed by local competitor *Taobao*. Why? Because *Taobao* understood that in China, shopping was a social experience and people like talking and even haggling with sellers and building relationships with them. *Taobao* had a chat feature that allowed customers to easily talk to sellers.¹⁶ Stories abound of U.S. marketing slogans that were inaccurately translated, like Pepsi's "Come alive with Pepsi Generation" (which was translated into Chinese as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave"), or General Motors marketing the Nova in South America (*no va* is Spanish for "no go").¹⁷ In contrast, Starbucks' decision to change its logo when it entered the Asian markets seems to be successful. Starbucks decided to drop the Starbucks name and the word "coffee" from its logo, giving it a more rounded appearance, which seems to appeal to collectivist consumers—found in China and other Asian countries.¹⁸

In addition, there are other considerations in understanding the global market. Moving operations overseas to take advantage of lower labor costs has far-reaching implications for corporations. One example is the *maquiladoras*—foreign-owned plants that use domestic labor—just across the U.S.–Mexican border. The U.S. companies that relocate their plants there benefit from lower labor costs and lack of environmental and other business regulations, while Mexican laborers benefit from the jobs. But there is a cost in terms of environmental hazards. Because Mexico has less stringent air and water pollution regulations than the United States, many of these *maquiladoras* have a negative environmental impact on the Mexican side of the border. Because the two nations are economically and environmentally interdependent, they share the

International trade is one of the driving forces in interactions between cultures. However, as shown by these people protesting at the G-20 meeting in Brisbane, Australia, in November 2014, there is some concern that growing poverty and inequality resulting from globalization may lead to increased intercultural conflict.



Daniel Munoz/Getty Images

economic and environmental impact. Thus, these contexts present intercultural challenges for Mexicans and Americans alike.

To help bridge the cultural gap, many companies employ **cross-cultural trainers**, who assist people going abroad by giving them information about and strategies for dealing with cultural differences; such trainers report that Japanese and other business personnel often spend years in the United States studying English and learning about the country before they decide to build a factory or invest money here. By contrast, many U.S. companies provide little or no training before sending their workers overseas and expect business deals to be completed very quickly. They seem to have little regard for cultural idiosyncrasies, which can cause ill will and mistrust, enhance negative stereotypes, and result in lost business opportunities.

In the future, global economic development will continue to create demand for intercultural communication. Economic exchanges will drive intercultural interactions. This development will create not only more jobs but also more consumers to purchase goods from around the world—and to travel in that world.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

Communication technology is a constant. We are linked by technology to events in the most remote parts of the world and also to people that we may never meet face-to-face. It's possible not only to communicate with other people but also to develop complex relationships with them through such technology. How does communication technology affect intercultural encounters?

Technology and Human Communication

According to a recent report, there are now almost 4 billion social media users around the world and the average user has an account on more than 8 different social media platforms. The global reach is staggering. WhatsApp serves more than 2 billion people in over 180 countries, with over 500 million daily active users, and of the top 10 social media platforms, 5 are Chinese (WeChat/Weixin, TikTok/Douyin, QQ, QZone and Sina Weibo),¹⁹ and it is important to understand that these technologies can have positive and negative impacts on intercultural encounters. For example, using social media, people can connect quickly with friends and family anywhere in the world during natural disasters like hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, and also in dealing with terrorist attacks. Social media can draw attention to global problems, e.g., Greta Thunberg's tremendous global impact started with and continues with social media coverage.²⁰

On the other hand, you may feel like you're too dependent on social media and suffer from FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), as experts estimate the average user touches their smartphone about 2000 times a day.²¹ An even worse impact of social media is the vicious trolls and nasty posts. For example, there was a multitude of vicious racist tweets posted in reaction to the crowning of the first Indian American as Miss America.²² Consider the role social media has played in copycat terrorist attacks, attacks on minority Rohingya in Myanmar, and in India, people were viciously beaten to death after false info about them was posted on WhatsApp—shared by 200 million Indian users.²³ And now social media sites Facebook, Twitter, etc., are grappling with challenges presented by deep fake videos and potential interference by foreign governments on domestic politics.

Some media experts worry that all the connectivity has not necessarily strengthened our relationships. Sometimes, in face-to-face encounters, we are not really present because we are focused on our phones. One expert terms this the “absent presence.”²⁴ Another suggests that technology gives us control over our relationships and makes it easy for us to communicate when and how we wish, so that we often choose technologies, like texting that can actually distance us from each other.²⁵

That said, more and more people around the world are using technology to communicate with each other. What does this have to do with intercultural communication? Through technology, we come into contact with people who are very different from ourselves, often in ways we don't understand. The people we encounter online may speak languages different from our own, come from different countries, be of different ethnic backgrounds, and have had many different life experiences.

Translation apps like iTranslate 3 (voice to voice), Say hi (voice to text) and Textgrabber (reads signs and menus and translates) can facilitate communication for travelers and business people and others in everyday intercultural encounters. Of course, the use of some languages is privileged over others on the Internet. As experts note, if you want to do business online, it's more than likely going to be in English, the FIGS languages (French, Italian, German, Spanish), the CJK languages (Chinese, Japanese, Korean), and “the main languages of former colonial empires” (Dutch, Russian, Portuguese).



Surf's Up!

Social media is not just for socializing. Remember the poignant photo of the little three-year-old Syrian boy whose body (still dressed in his red shirt, blue shorts, and velcro shoes) washed up on a Turkish beach? His family was fleeing the Syrian civil war and their boat capsized. The photo went viral on social media when a Human Rights Watch staff member shared it on Twitter. It is just one example of the tremendous power of social media in drawing world attention to human events (and tragedies) in faraway places. Read more about the impact of this photo on <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/photo-dead-syrian-refugee-boy-puts-face-crisis-rooted-numbers/>.