



## Cross-Cultural Dialogue

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### What is it?

Cross-cultural implies comparison of two or more cultural groups (international, interfaith, interethnic, or interracial); thus cross-cultural dialogue is the study of how members of different cultural groups perceive and/or engage in dialogue. Typically two groups are compared, with some studies examining three (or more). In theory there should be some logic for the choice of groups included in a study beyond convenience. Comparison of more than two groups is harder, but realistic, as it is likely members of three or more groups will interact on many occasions. Those who study cross-cultural dialogue compare different cultural expectations related to the practice of dialogue, frequently pointing out what assumptions do not translate across cultural boundaries.

### Who uses the concept?

Cross-cultural comparisons are typical in anthropology and psychology, and sometimes communication. Some people become expert in describing diverging assumptions between two specific groups coming into more frequent contact, as when consultants prepare employees of a multinational corporation based in the USA for meetings in China. Others emphasize cultural groups in conflict, analyzing their separate practices and assumptions in order to understand difficulties, and develop potential resolutions. Theoretically, understanding differences across multiple groups leads to a clearer picture of the range of human behavior.

### Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Although cross-cultural dialogue occasionally is treated as a synonym for intercultural dialogue, it makes more sense to use the available separate definition. In this case, cross-cultural dialogue is an essential early step in the analysis of intercultural dialogue, for adequate understanding of the assumptions of individual cultures necessarily comes before understanding what happens when members of different cultures interact.

### What work remains?

The ideal in cross-cultural comparisons is description of all existing groups, yet there are many cultural groups whose assumptions about dialogue have not yet been documented. At present, it would be easier to list those cultures already documented rather than the larger list of those awaiting attention. In addition, work by researchers across disciplines could be better integrated.

### Resources

- Carbaugh, D., Nuciforo, E. V., Saito, M., & Shin, D. (2011). "Dialogue" in cross-cultural perspective: Japanese, Korean, and Russian discourses. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 4(2), 87-108.
- Wierzbicka, A. (2006). The concept of 'dialogue' in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective. *Discourse Studies*, 8(5), 675-703.