



Critical Intercultural Communication

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What is it?

A critical intercultural communication perspective provides a comprehensive and dialogic view of intercultural communication, culture, and identity. It offers a glimpse of the ways in which structures and contexts of power impact our lives and experiences, including the taken-for-granted shapers of intercultural relations: the media, government, economy, history, global markets, and popular culture. The common element threaded throughout these dimensions is *power*, the constraining force by which dominant structures, groups and individuals are able to gain position and achieve their aims and interests over the will of others. Whether we notice or not, these invisible dimensions of power, constitute and frame our intercultural communication encounters, relationships, and everyday experiences with culture in terms of identity, language, and communication styles and practices.

From this perspective, intercultural communication is much more than in-person, face-to-face contact between two or more persons. It comes to include all of the multi-layered dimensions of power that reside in specific contexts and operate beneath the surface of intercultural communication, hidden from our sight and awareness.

Who uses the concept?

Critical intercultural communication as a perspective, method, and theoretical framework is most often adopted by intercultural communication scholars, critical cultural studies scholars, and/or critical linguistic scholars.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

This perspective can help elucidate the larger discursive framings of issues, cultures, and historical events that shape and often contain dialogues across cultural groups. By applying a critical intercultural communication focus to intercultural dialogue – either before or after it occurs – participants can reflect on how different power structures and interests have framed conversations across groups in ways that benefit those very interests. In this way, the challenge becomes how to reshape a dialogue so that greater understanding and connection can occur across those involved and impacted.

What work remains?

The important work of critical intercultural communication needs to now amass empirical work and demonstrative analyses that showcase its unique methods, theoretical explanations, and justified insights about power forces in the creation and management of culture. Moreover, the connections among various projects need to be foregrounded so they are understood jointly.

Resources

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