

An Introduction to Intercultural Communication Identities in a Global Community, 6th edition

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Reviewed by Katrin Volt at diversophy.com

This course book has the following four main Parts:

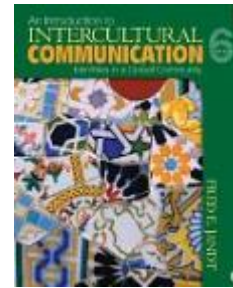
- Part 1 Culture as Context for Communication,
- Part 2: Communication Variables,
- Part 3: Cultural Values,
- Part 4: Cultures within Cultures.

Each Part of the book has pictures and questions relevant to the topics covered in that Part. The Chapters include key terms, definitions, figures, pictures, stories, vignettes, case studies, a focus on theory boxes and boxes on environmental sustainability issues as well as further reading lists at the end of Chapters.

Chapters begin with “What You Can Learn from This Chapter” boxes. Students are asked to reflect on and think critically of what they learnt with discussion questions after each Chapter.

The book addresses the most important topics from the area of intercultural communication. However, the Chapter on cultural values touches upon the same theories as do most intercultural communication books so nothing new there. As to Hofstede’s value dimensions, the author has included the critics of Hofstede’s work on page 185. I don’t think classifying cultures as being ‘individualist’ or ‘collectivist’ or listing cultures according to different dimensions helps much. Also, there are other tools that could be mentioned for understanding culture and how we behave as a result of our values besides the “academically acclaimed works”, such as the Cultural Detective®.

I found the Chapter on contact between cultures most useful and relevant. I like the caption on page 301, “Who is a native and who is an immigrant may simply be a matter of who arrived first. American Indians objected to the immigration of many whose descendants later



claimed the right to deport illegal immigrants.” An image of an American Indian, holding a banner “Deport Illegal Immigrants” is above the caption.

As to the culture shock model developed by K. Oberg that the author mentions, I would like to add that this has now become general and not so reliable. Culture shock starts with excitement or fear at the beginning, moving to the person’s skill at opening up or shutting to him-or herself and blaming others for discomfort.

I would also like to mention Chapter 10: Women, Families, and Children which included the following: Japanese men have a saying: “To have the best of all worlds is to have an American house, eat Chinese food, and have a Japanese wife. To have the worst of all worlds is to have a Japanese house, eat British food, and have an American wife.” P. 252

I felt Chapter 10 should have also talked about the culture of men and women and include men separately as well. It’s not only women who are the victims of violence. As to subjugation of women and rules rooted in patriarchy, I believe this is culture-based and that’s how that culture functions.

The author’s approach is to promote the skills of intercultural communication competence by developing an understanding of how individuals perceive and react to cultural rules. It should have more focus on what is important to us and how we act it out in words and behaviour.

The book is for introductory courses in culture and communication for US audiences. I also feel that the book has a lot of information so the facilitator should select appropriate material carefully. The glossary at the end of the book helps quickly understand key terms used in the book.

There is also a companion study site with quizzes, flash cards and internet exercises that complement the learning, as well as audio and video clips to listen to or websites to explore. This can be found at www.sagepub.com/jandt6estudy

The passing score for the quizzes is 80%, but the formulation of questions might not always be easy to grasp for second language learners.