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Intercultural Competence: An Emerging Focus in International Higher Education

Darla K. Deardorff and Elspeth Jones

Why do postsecondary institutions engage in international education? Why is international education considered to be “essential to our future?” (Association of International Education Administrators, 2010). Numerous chapters ([Chapters 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, 23](#)) in this volume respond to these questions, with responses range from furthering research, to strengthening the institution's reputation, to launching new revenue streams. Another response to these questions is that at the core of postsecondary institutions' missions, institutions are preparing “global-ready” graduates in the 21st century who will be able to address global challenges and live in an increasingly interconnected society (Deardorff & Hunter, 2006; Caruana, 2010). Yet, in *Our Underachieving Colleges*, Bok (2006) laments the poor job post-secondary institutions are doing in this regard. Several studies have indicated that universities are failing to maximize the opportunities presented by international and intercultural diversity on campus (Harrison & Peacock, 2010a, 2010b; Leask, 2009; Montgomery, 2010; Summers & Volet, 2008; Thom, 2010; Volet & Ang, 1998).

Other scholars have likewise noted that the central responsibility of today's institutions of higher education is to educate students to function more effectively in an integrated world system (Cole, Barber & Graubard, 1994). This brings intercultural competence and diversity to the fore as one of the key reasons for engaging in internationalization at all. One study concluded that “the intensity of globalization in recent years has brought intercultural competence acquisition studies back to the center stage” (Kuada, 2004, p. 10). With the rising interest in the development of global perspectives through internationalization (Clifford & Montgomery, 2011) and in intercultural education for the multicultural society (Caruana & Ploner, 2010), intercultural competence development is emerging as a central focus—and outcome—of many internationalization efforts. This chapter explores definitions and frameworks of intercultural competence, highlights some practices and lessons learned in the development of intercultural competence at higher education institutions, and concludes with strategies that can be implemented in higher education institutions related to this central paradigm.

Summary of Key Literature/Studies/Theoretical Frameworks

In any work on intercultural competence and cross-cultural communication and conflict, there are obvious variations within cultures,¹ and any generalized statements about cultures should be understood as descriptions of patterns found within and among various cultures. Such general descriptions are not meant to obscure or simplify the complexities of cultural diversity but, rather, to serve as a starting point for further discussion. It is also important to explore underlying assumptions and existing biases about culture and about the way(s) in which one approaches the concept of intercultural competence.

Definitions, Terminology, and Approaches

So what is meant by the term *intercultural competence*, and what terms are used in different professional and cultural contexts, and indeed in different countries around the world, to refer to this concept? Much scholarly effort has been invested, particularly in western cultures, in defining intercultural competence; what follows is a brief discussion of some of that work. (For

a more comprehensive discussion, see Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, and Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). In fact, the concept of *intercultural* was discussed by Comenius in the 1600s when he suggested “pedagogical universalism,” or a multiplicity of perspectives, as a foundation on which to build an education and to encourage mutual understanding (Piaget, 1957; Sadler 1969). More recently, and perhaps more simply, Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), adapting Žegarac's cognitive perspective, describe an intercultural situation as “one in which the cultural distance between the participants is significant enough to have an effect on interaction/communication that is noticeable to at least one of the parties” (p. 3). Meanwhile, various anthropological frameworks such as Hall's (1976) three dimensions of cultural difference have sought to explain some of the difficulties involved in cross-cultural interaction.

Scholars in the United States have been working on this concept for 50 years, and yet there is little consensus on terminology either in the United States or elsewhere. Varying by discipline and approach, terminology includes *intercultural competence*, *intercultural communicative competence*, *global competence*, *global citizenship*, *multicultural competence*, *cultural fluency*, *communicative competence*, *cultural competence*, *intercultural sensitivity*, *cross-cultural awareness*, *cultural intelligence*, *cultural literacy*, *cross-cultural capability*, and so on (see Fantini, 2009, for a longer list of terms). Much of the competence literature suggests that *competence* is comprised of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Others, such as Killick (1997), have argued that the term *competence* is in itself flawed in that it suggests completion of the learning process and relatively low-level skills (p. 284); terms such as *development*, *awareness*, *understanding*, *maturity*, or *capability* would be considered more representative of the processes involved. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this chapter, *intercultural competence* is used for ease of reference, in part because that term is used frequently in the literature and is viewed as being applicable in any intercultural situation, not just ones that occur abroad.

Initially, intercultural competence research and literature in the United States were focused primarily on the identification of predictor variables for success as people were selected and trained to serve in foreign settings. Thus, a discussion of intercultural competence has usually involved a list of dimensions or components. Depending on the background of the researcher (i.e., communication, education, psychology, anthropology, business, languages), different approaches were taken in developing lists of components/predictors. For example, Lustig and Koester (1993) identified at least four different approaches to researching intercultural competence: trait approach (i.e., personality), perceptual approach (i.e., attitudes, perceptions), behavioral approach, and culture-specific approach. Collier (1989) also identified different approaches to intercultural competence including cross-cultural attitude approaches, behavioral skills approaches, ethnographic approach, and cultural identity approach, concluding that research can benefit from the “clarification of conceptualizations” (p. 298). Chen and Starosta (1996) note the confusion and ambiguity that exist in the literature regarding the distinctions between the various components of intercultural competence. Wiseman (2001) cites numerous scholars who stress different behaviors related to intercultural competence, including interaction behaviors and management, identity maintenance, relationship skills, and uncertainty reduction strategies. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) discuss a range of *etic* and *emic* approaches to cultural difference in a variety of disciplines, from sociology through linguistics to business, and in several social, professional, and religious contexts.

Scholars prioritize various components as being central to intercultural competence. Kim (2002), in utilizing a systems-theory approach to examine intercultural communication competence, sees adaptability at the heart of intercultural communication competence and

defines adaptability as

the individual's capacity to suspend or modify some of the old cultural ways, and learn and accommodate some of the new cultural ways, and creatively find ways to manage the dynamics of cultural difference/unfamiliarity, intergroup posture, and the accompanying stress. (p. 377)

Further, Kim (2002) advocates separating intercultural communication competence from cultural communication competence since the content of cultural communication competence is culture-specific and varies from culture to culture, whereas the content of intercultural communication competence “should remain constant across all intercultural situations regardless of specific cultures involved” (p. 373).

Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) concur with Kim on the role of adaptability as a critical competence that is context-independent. They note that adaptability “implies that different behaviors and skills are applied in different contexts and situations” (p. 90). Hofstede (1997) focuses on the need to understand cultural difference through underlying cultural values, while Bennett (1993) presents an intercultural sensitivity model in which one's response to cultural difference, developmental in nature, underscores one's degree of intercultural competence. Magala (2005), on the other hand, stresses identity as central to intercultural competence. This point is reinforced throughout the literature emphasizing the importance of greater understanding of one's own identity as a crucial element of the development of intercultural competence. Alred, Byram, and Fleming (2003) talk of “the discovery of self through the discovery of otherness” (p. 109). Indeed, this can be seen as a growth spiral in that the process of learning to understand cultural otherness leads to enhanced self-understanding, which supports greater understanding of cultural others.

Different fields and professions also use a variety of terminology and definitions when exploring this concept. For example, the engineering field in the United States uses the term *global competence* (Grandin & Hedderich, 2009), while the field of social work often uses *cultural competence* (Fong, 2009). The health care field, where this can become a life or death matter, uses both *interculturally competent care* and *cultural humility* (Anand & Lahiri, 2009, Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) cite a wide range of work on intercultural competence in different fields, while also listing work on intercultural competence designed for specific contexts (p. 3). Many other fields have addressed the concept of inter-cultural competence, including linguistics, cultural anthropology, psychology, sociology, business, tourism and hospitality, military, international development, public administration, police/security, and even religious organizations (Yancey, 2009). As Moosmueller and Schoenhuth (2009) note, “the discourse on intercultural competence is multifaceted and often considered confusing” (p. 209). And as Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) point out, while “there is obviously no shortage of feasible approaches or models guiding conceptualizations ... of inter-cultural competence,” there are some common categories, including motivation, knowledge, higher order skills, macro-level skills, interpersonal skills (categorized under subcategories of attentiveness, composure, coordination, expressiveness), contextual competencies (including identity), and outcomes. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) found that adaptability was part of nearly all models of intercultural competence in the scholarly literature in the United States, and given that there has been little concrete research to date focused specifically on adaptability, these scholars call for further research on this concept. Unresolved issues in current conceptualizations of intercultural competence include the absence of emotional aspects, the ethnocentricity found in these conceptualizations (i.e., the Western emphasis on the individual and the focus at the

individual level), and research on the various definitions and models themselves, including criteria for identifying quality model(s) (and who set them).

One particular discipline in which intercultural competence development has become a significant feature is languages. As illustrated by Byram (1997) and Killick and Parry (1999), Parker (2002) argues that the discipline “has to some extent reinvented itself, focusing not on language skills, but on intercultural communication,” and several studies note the incorporation of ethnographic methods into study abroad for language learning (Weber-Bosley 2010). Byram, Alred, and others (Alred et al., 2003, 2006; Byram, 1997, 2006; Dearsdorff, 2009b), contend that intercultural competence must be taught in addition to the language and that speaking another language does not automatically give rise to intercultural competence.

Byram and Zaraté (1994), posited four, and Byram (1997) later extended this to five *savoirs* for teaching and assessing what they term *inter-cultural communicative competence*. Although initially emerging from the discipline of languages, these concepts are applicable beyond that field:

Knowing (*Savoir*)—knowledge of aspects of culture, beliefs, and reference points that are familiar to cultural natives

Being or empathizing (*Savoir-être*)—understanding and dealing with cultural difference with curiosity and openness and without ethnocentrism

Learning (*Savoir apprendre*)—interpreting how others live, think, feel, and communicate

Understanding (*Savoir comprendre*)—gaining insight into cultural meanings, beliefs, and practices in comparison with one's own culture

Engaging (*Savoir s'engager*)—making informed critical evaluations of aspects of one's own and other cultures

In adding the fifth *savoir*, Byram (1997) asserts that “the inclusion in Intercultural Communicative Competence of *savoir s'engager*/critical cultural awareness as an educational aim for foreign language teaching is crucial” (p 113). However, Scarino (2007) argues that “the model of *savoirs* does not elaborate on the important ways in which language affects culture and culture affects language, and what this means to the learner as an interactant or performer in communication” (p. 3).

Kraeva (n.d.) asserts that language is “an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights” and outlines a curriculum at Moscow State Linguistic University that is designed to promote intercultural awareness and competence as a general educational goal. Kraeva argues that the cultural component of language teaching and learning should be strengthened to facilitate deeper understanding of other cultures. “Languages should not be simple exercises but opportunities to reflect on other ways of life, other literatures, other customs” (p. 3).

Yet, it is important to be mindful that while understanding or speaking another language does not automatically result in the development of intercultural competence, language fluency can provide unique access to deep cultural knowledge that cannot be achieved in any other way.

A measure of intercultural competence can be achieved without higher order language fluency, but higher order intercultural competence assumes both deep cultural knowledge and the ability for interlocutors to communicate with one another in ways that incorporate the nuances of the culture. This would necessarily mean that the interculturally competent party would have fluency in the language of the other party. The optimal situation would clearly be combining language fluency with the array of other skills, knowledge, attitudes, and outcomes that are most frequently associated with competence as further discussed in this chapter.

Research-Based Model of Intercultural Competence

The first research study to document consensus among leading intercultural scholars from a variety of disciplines and primarily based in the United States was conducted by Deardorff (2006, 2009b). From this national study conducted in the United States, the consensus definition on which these leading intercultural scholars agreed was broadly defined as “effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2009b, p. 33). The researcher categorized these specific agreed-upon elements into attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal/external outcomes and placed these in a visual framework. This study serves as one way to view a more foundational framework on intercultural competence, one that is based on a grounded research approach. This framework, which has found resonance in different cultural contexts, is meant to serve as a basis of further discussion for purposes of this chapter.

Attitudes

Based on the Deardorff (2009b) study, key attitudes emerged: respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery. Openness and curiosity imply a willingness to risk and to move outside one's comfort zone. Furthermore, curiosity sets a foundation for more creative ways to turn differences into opportunities while openness allows the possibility of seeing from more than one perspective, which is invaluable when negotiating and mediating cultural difference (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006). As LeBaron and Pillay (2006) note, “dialogue with genuine curiosity is a precondition for ... addressing cultural conflicts” (p. 94).

Knowledge

In the United States, there is some debate as to what *global knowledge* is needed for intercultural competence. In that regard, intercultural scholars concurred on the following: (1) cultural self-awareness (meaning the ways in which one's culture has influenced one's identity and worldview), (2) culture-specific knowledge,² deep cultural knowledge including understanding other world-views, and (3) sociolinguistic awareness. The one element all the intercultural scholars in the study agreed on was the importance of understanding the world from others' perspectives.

Skills

The skills that emerged from this study were ones that addressed the acquisition and processing of knowledge: observation, listening, evaluating, analyzing, interpreting, and relating. This concurs with an observation by Bok (2006) of the importance of “thinking interculturally.”

Knowledge is not static, and given the exponential change occurring in the 21st century, it

becomes critical that individuals develop the skills necessary not only to acquire knowledge but, more important, to make meaning of the knowledge and then apply that knowledge in specific ways to concrete problems.

Internal Outcomes

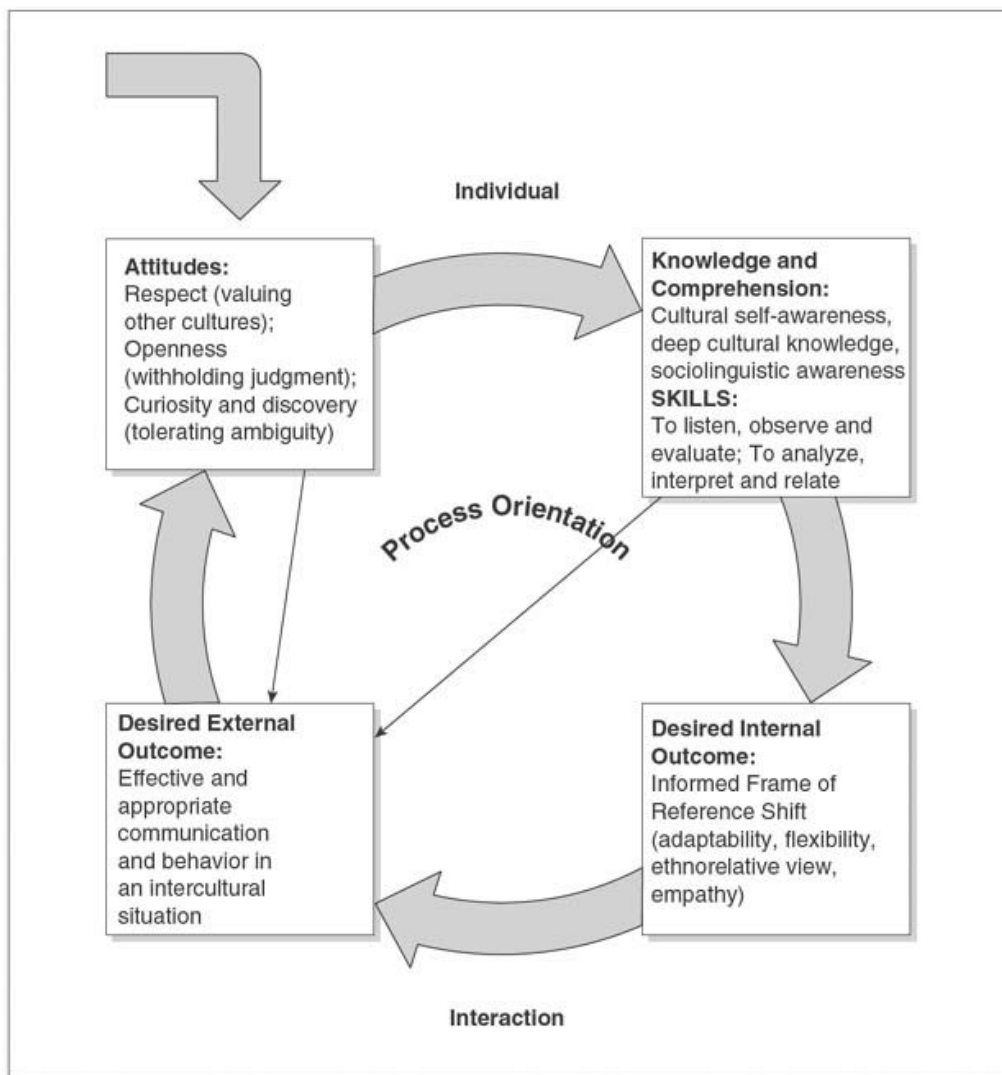
The attitudes, knowledge, and skills outlined in this framework ideally lead to an internal outcome that consists of flexibility (LeBaron & Pillay, 2006), adaptability, an ethnorelative perspective and empathy. These are aspects that occur *within* the individual as a result of the acquired attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for intercultural competence. At this point, individuals are ideally able to see from others' perspectives and to respond to others according to the way in which the other person desires to be treated, thus demonstrating empathy (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). Individuals may reach these internal outcomes with varying degrees of success, depending on the attitudes, skills, and knowledge acquired within this framework.

External Outcomes

The summation of the attitudes, knowledge, and skills, as well as the internal outcomes, is demonstrated through the behavior and communication of the individual. How effective and appropriate is this person in intercultural interactions? Behavior and communication become the visible external outcomes of intercultural competence. This then becomes the agreed upon definition of the intercultural scholars in this study, that intercultural competence is the effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations. However, it is important to understand that this definition is predicated on particular requisite elements of intercultural competence. It is also important to understand the implications of *effective* and *appropriate* behavior and communication. *Effectiveness* can be determined by the interlocutor, but the *appropriateness* can be determined only by the other person—with appropriateness being directly related to language fluency, cultural sensitivity, and the adherence to cultural norms of that person.

These five overall elements of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and internal and external outcomes comprise this research-based intercultural competence model (see [Figure 16.1](#)), thereby providing a framework to further guide efforts in developing—and assessing—individuals' intercultural competence. These elements are placed within the context of intercultural interactions, with an emphasis on the process involved in the development of one's intercultural competence. It is important to note that the development of inter-cultural competence is a lifelong process and that there is no point at which one becomes fully inter-culturally competent. Furthermore, the *process* of development becomes crucial through self-reflection and mindfulness. Knowledge alone, such as learning a language, is not sufficient for intercultural competence but must be combined with other elements such as the requisite attitudes of openness, curiosity, and respect.

Figure 16.1 Intercultural Competence Model (Deardorff, 2006)



In the ever-evolving literature on intercultural competence, the term *cultural humility* is entering the discussion; it focuses more on respect combined with cultural self-awareness, with cultural self-awareness, with less emphasis placed on knowledge and more on fostering cultural self-awareness, interpersonal sensitivity, and an attitude of respect and learning (Tervalon, & Murray-García, 1998). This particular model lends itself well to the focus on cultural humility when interacting with others. It is also important to recognize this or other frameworks of intercultural competence occur within a much larger global context and that intercultural competence becomes a requisite component to successful engagement and relationship building.

There are practical implications of this framework within areas of the international education field, including curriculum development, faculty development (see [Chapters 14 & 15](#), this volume, for further elaboration), assessment, and program improvement; those will be discussed in subsequent chapter sections (for further discussion on assessment, please see [Chapter 10](#), this volume). For example, this model, while culture-general in nature, can be tailored to specific contextual situations, whether domestic or cross-border in nature, by using the elements to develop context-specific outcomes. One final note: This model is not meant to be used alone but rather in juxtaposition and combination with other frames, including ones that address more specifically the developmental, psychological, ethical, interpersonal, and

engagement dimensions of human interactions.

Limitations of this research-based model are somewhat obvious, including that this is a U.S.-centric model of intercultural competence, albeit one that has resonated in other cultures. Given that understanding other worldviews was the one aspect agreed upon by all the intercultural scholars in the study, one can ask: What are other cultural perspectives on this concept of intercultural competence? For example, from an Indian perspective, intercultural competence manifests itself as “unity within diversity” (Manian & Naidu, 2009). From a Chinese perspective, there is a strong focus on harmony and relational aspects (Chen & An, 2009). See [Box 16.1](#) for a brief history of Chinese scholarship on intercultural communicative competence.

BOX 16.1 Reviewing Developments in Teaching and Research in China on Intercultural Communication

Steve J. Kulich Executive director, Intercultural Institute (SII), Shanghai International Studies University (China)

Ada YanniMeng Graduate research assistant, SII (China)

SII team Shanghai International Studies University (China)

As China opened up in the 1980s, the revival of foreign language teaching led to the beginnings of intercultural communication (IC), first introduced in 1983 through Daokuan He (Shenzhen University). A number of other English instructors sent abroad started by first including culture in foreign language teaching; as time went on, they emphasized communicative competence, cultural awareness, and then intercultural competence. Wenzhong Hu (Beijing Foreign Studies University, BFSU) coedited some of the first IC guidebooks in the early 1990s. Other returnees wrote the early Chinese IC textbooks and launched the first IC courses in the mid-1990s, notably Shijie Guan (Peking University), Gao Yihong (Peking University), Yuxin Jia (Harbin Institute of Technology, HIT), Hongying Wang (Nankai University), Dajin Lin (Fuzhou Normal University), and Lisheng Xu (Zhejiang University).

Doctoral dissertations with an IC focus started appearing in the late 1990s, and some of the earliest were directed by Zhaoxiong He, Shuzhong Hu, and Weidong Dai at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), where Steve Kulich and Hongling Zhang were pioneering IC coursework. Courses, research papers, and books also appeared from scholars like Jiazuo Gu and Linnell Davis (Nanjing Normal University), Ruiqing Du and Benxian Li (Xi'an Foreign Language University), and Degen Tang (Xiangtan University). Most of the institutions mentioned here have now become established as some of the leading IC programs in the country, and the presses of BFSU and SISU have provided a wide range of textbooks for the field.

The first truly international IC conference was held in Harbin at HIT in 1995; the Chinese Association for Intercultural Communication (CAFIC) was established on this occasion (cf. Guan, 2007; Kulich & Chi, 2009) with continuing support from the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies and the Center for Intercultural Dialogue. With an official name for the field, an association that meets every 2 years, and a growing palette of texts, the field grew rapidly. IC research or educational articles exceeded 1,000 by 1997 (Hu, 1999) then 2,000 in the next 5 years

(Hu, 2006). In 1999, the Chinese Ministry of Education revised the FLT curriculum and syllabus to include IC awareness and competence in the teaching of foreign languages.

Concurrently, the need to move the IC field “beyond language” was emphasized (Kulich, 2003) and the scope expanded, with intercultural communication competence (ICC) becoming a key focus (cf. Xu, 2006a). Scholars like Hongling Zhang (2001, 2007), Yihong Gao (2002), Lisheng Xu (2006b, 2011), and Li Song (2004) have been key proponents for developing the conceptualization and implementation of ICC. Competence is increasingly integrated as a core component in IC courses and research projects, like those of Wei Weifan and Hua Zhong (Huazhong University of Science and Technology, HUST) and Yi'an Wang (Hangzhou Electrical Technology University). As an example, ICC was a primary goal of the undergraduate and graduate courses started in 1999 at SISU (initially called “IC Theory and Practice”). These continue to use experiential exercises from Linell Davis's *Doing Culture* (1999) and have added Myron Lustig and Jolene Koester's IC textbook (2007). In 2010, the course was renamed “Intercultural Communication Competence.”

Conceptually, scholars have been grappling with appropriate ways to adapt ICC to Chinese contexts (e.g., Gao's “going across” and “going beyond” article, 2002). Wen (2004) addresses the inadequacies in China's models of foreign language teaching and argues that languages should be taught with a focus on intercultural competence. Wen proposes a two-component ICC model to measure students' second-language proficiency and puts forward suggestions for teaching English as a second language. Her two components are (1) communicative competence, which involves linguistic, pragmatic, and strategic competence; and (2) intercultural competence, which involves sensitivity to, tolerance of, and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences. She further suggests that (a) all language-teaching programs offer a course on IC that combines the daily teaching of cultural knowledge with promoting the students' ICC, and beyond language courses, (b) ICC should be part of general education to help students develop a competitive edge in a world where “globalization has become a reality.”

Some of these concerns have been addressed. Jiang (2011) notes that college English teachers now affirm the promotion of communicative competence, but methods for integrating ICC are the primary issue, some of the best being discussion/debate, role-plays, presentations, intercultural scenarios, and critical incidents. There are also larger conceptual concerns, as Xu (2011) notes. In revisiting the construction of ICC in China, he critiques the Western traditions that have long dominated communication studies; highlights the prevailing tendencies in this research toward reductionism, fragmentation, pragmatism (a preoccupation with the effectiveness), and non-cross-cultural orientations; and makes suggestions to develop true cross-cultural paradigms to further the field.

In the last decade, about 20 universities (nearly every institution listed here) have developed IC centers to advance IC teaching, comparative research, and ICC training. Among these, the centers at SISU, HIT, BFSU, and HUST in Wuhan are multistaffed and particularly influential. Li Song of HIT has national research funding to focus on the teacher's cognition of ICC in the Chinese context in foreign language teaching (primarily English). The HUST team have projects including the use of film as an interactive component in ICC teaching and assessment of the effects of ICC training. In the last 5 to 10 years, colleges of business and organizational training firms are also

increasingly focusing on ICC training in international work and management contexts (e.g., Kulich et al., 2006). With such a rapidly growing market and acknowledged need, ICC research and applications in China have bright prospects.

Within some African cultures, the theme of identity emerges within intercultural competence through the concept of *Ubuntu*: “I am, therefore we are; we are, therefore, I am” (Nwosu, 2009). This relational aspect finds resonance in other cultural perspectives on intercultural competence, including some Arab perspectives (Zaharna, 2009) and the Latin American context (Medina-Lopez-Portillo & Sinnigen, 2009). Imahori and Lanigan (1989) developed a model of intercultural communication competence where the focus is on both people in the inter-cultural action, not just the individual, which is unique to many other definitions and models. The outcome thus becomes a relational outcome between the two participants in the intercultural interaction, which aligns with numerous non-Western conceptualizations of intercultural competence.

Some common themes emerge in this more global review that can be incorporated into practice. The first theme is the role and impact of colonialism on intercultural contact within and between societies, especially those in African, Asian, and Latin American contexts. The importance of understanding these historical, political, and social contexts of societies is crucial in the development of greater individual and societal intercultural competence. In fact, numerous scholars emphasize the importance of context in intercultural competence and while Western definitions and models of this concept tend to view this construct in a vacuum—devoid of context—work from Latin American, Arab, and Asian perspectives of intercultural competence note how crucial it is to consider the specific contexts of intercultural competence practice. For example, Medina-Lopez-Portillo and Sinnigen (2009), in writing about Latin American perspectives on intercultural competence, raise key questions about the role of equality and power in intercultural interaction, as well as the impact of such historical contexts as colonialism and its subsequent influence on indigenous cultures. This focus on context points to the importance of knowledge and awareness in intercultural competence development.

Another key theme that emerges from the literature is that of the importance of relationship within competence. Such a priority on relationship building has significant implications for trust building, interpersonal communication skills, conflict resolution, and other issues. The discussions on relationship also lead to the focus on interconnectedness and on global citizenship. To that end, Ashwill and Duong (2009), in discussing the U.S. American and Vietnamese conceptualizations of intercultural competence within global citizenship, point out the interconnectedness of multidimensional global citizens: “Global citizens think and feel themselves as part of something much grander and all-inclusive than one culture or nationality” (p. 155).

This leads to another theme, that of identity. Given the human tendency to identify oneself through in-group or out-group categorizations, what role does identity play in intercultural communication? Is it possible to transcend one's cultural identity to embrace the larger identity of global citizen? Moreover, what role does national identity play? For example, Ashwill and Duong (2009) discuss intercultural competence within the larger national identity, including the impact of Vietnamese insecurity around identity. In this age of globalization, which often leads to politicized cultural identities, transcending one's identity implies moving

beyond the traditional dichotomous in/out group mentality to one that embraces and respects others' differences and focuses on the relational goals of engagement. Education abroad, service learning, and experiential learning opportunities, when combined with critical self-reflection assignments, help students to explore identity as a first step in transcending identities. From various perspectives and models of intercultural competence, this chapter now turns to the broader context in which higher education institutions around the world attempt to incorporate inter-cultural competence (with varied terminology) into their missions and practice.

University Implementation of Intercultural Competence

Working with theoretical models and operating in concrete contexts, how do institutions of higher education incorporate intercultural competence development into their internationalization projects? In the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, the concept of intercultural competence is increasingly linked to notions of global citizenship and multiculturalism discussed here. In Australia, for example, many universities are explicit about their expectations that graduates will have acquired certain "graduate attributes." It is common for these lists to include notions of global citizenship, multicultural perspectives, and other dimensions of intercultural competence.

The University of South Australia (UniSA), for example, lists a range of indicators in its expectation that "a graduate ... demonstrates international perspectives as a professional and as a citizen" (University of South Australia, n.d.). These include:

Display an ability to think globally and consider issues from a variety of perspectives

Demonstrate an awareness of their own culture and its perspectives and other cultures and their perspectives

Recognize intercultural issues relevant to their professional practice

Appreciate the importance of multicultural diversity to professional practice and citizenship

Appreciate the complex and interacting factors that contribute to notions of culture and cultural relationships

Value diversity of language and culture

Demonstrate awareness of the implications of local decisions and actions for international communities and of international decisions and actions for local communities.

For another example from an Australian university, see [Box 16.2](#).

BOX 16.2 Intercultural Competence at Macquarie University

SabineKrajewski Lecturer, Intercultural Communication, Macquarie University (Australia)

Macquarie University is the fourth-largest university in Sydney, Australia. Its diverse community comprises about 37,000 students and 2,500 academic and professional staff. Around 30% of its students are international students from more than 70 countries. Macquarie was one of the first universities to develop a research-based definition of intercultural competence tailored specifically to the university, grounded in literature (e.g., Deardorff, Schroeder), and using a Delphi-methodology to arrive at the definition (Krajewski, 2011). The following examples are cornerstones of Macquarie University's activities around building intercultural competence, which is a vital part of all policies, procedures, and guidelines of Macquarie University.

At Macquarie, the term *cultural diversity* is defined broadly to include language use, cultural background, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexuality, Indigenous Australian identity, age, attendance pattern, family and carer responsibility, geographical location, socioeconomic status, religion, and disability. The Cultural Diversity & Inclusive Language Resource (http://www.mq.edu.au/socialinclusion/cultural_diversity/cultural_diversity.html) is designed to assist academic staff, general staff, and students in creating welcoming, supportive, and culturally competent environments in which cultural diversity is acknowledged, affirmed, and celebrated.

A research team led by scholars from Macquarie University and including scholars from the University of Newcastle and the University of Queensland focused on postgraduate research supervision in a cross-cultural context and what institutions can do to support candidates and supervisors. The team developed online resources to enhance skills in higher degree research supervision in an intercultural context that are freely available for use by both candidates and supervisors:

Ten short video clips with supporting transcripts; 17 written scenarios with key ideas and suggested discussion questions; three documents outlining strategies; a checklist to determine departmental and faculty readiness; and an annotated bibliography with over 100 entries. (http://www.mq.edu.au/lrc/altc/cross_cultural_supervision_project/)

There are numerous MQ Equity & Diversity Groups working together with faculties and offices to embed principles of inclusion, equity, and diversity in university practices. They develop equity frameworks such as the Multicultural Services and Programs Plan, and case-manage equity-related grievances (discrimination/harassment on the basis of gender, race, sexuality, disability, age, family/carer's responsibilities, political affiliation).

In 2010, the Equity & Diversity Unit (Social Inclusion) instigated a series of "Courageous Conversations about Race" workshops for staff and students, which will be followed by more themed workshops to strengthen cultural competency in the university community.

LEAP (Learning Education Aspiration Participation)

In 2010, Macquarie University introduced an innovative new undergraduate curriculum, which includes *people*, *planet* and *participation* units. These units encourage cross-cultural understanding by providing global perspectives and directly impacting students' local and international connectedness.

The Macquarie Global Leadership Program provides a structured 30-hour program for students to develop cross-cultural understanding through a range of elective workshops and seminars, think tanks, lectures by distinguished speakers, and internationally focused activities and internship opportunities.

The Building Inclusive Communities Awards are a joint initiative of the Ethnic Communities' Council of New South Wales and Macquarie University (Social Inclusion). The Awards recognize and showcase individuals and groups in New South Wales whose work promotes harmony and understanding of others, and makes a significant contribution in helping to build a diverse and tolerant Australia. Macquarie's first Multicultural Policies & Services Program Plan is currently being developed by Social Inclusion staff. It will provide a framework for developing and expanding cultural competence in planning and policy, learning, teaching and research, access and equity (students and staff), and community engagement.

PACE (Participation and Community Engagement) has been developed over the last 3 years to further the capabilities of Macquarie students and staff to actively contribute to the well-being of people and the planet. This is an exciting experiential learning experience program offering a range of opportunities to apply academic learning to real world situations. PACE sets out to transform the learning, teaching, and research experience at Macquarie to enable enhanced contributions to a socially inclusive and sustainable society.

Similar examples are to be found in the United Kingdom. At the University of Sheffield (n.d.), "We want all of our students to be engaged with the communities they are living in and to have opportunities to appreciate cultures that are new to them." The British experience in this regard may be contrasted with more assimilationist approaches to multiculturalism in, for example, the United States and France. For an example from a Mexican university, see [Box 16.3](#).

BOX 16.3 Universidad de Monterrey (UDEM)'s Journey in Intercultural Competence

Brenda GarciaPortillo
Coordinator of Internationalization Projects, Universidad de Monterrey (Mexico)

Universidad de Monterrey (UDEM) is a private institution that stands out in the context of Mexican higher education for its model of liberal arts education. Founded in 1969, UDEM believes that education should go beyond fostering the acquisition of knowledge to promoting the comprehensive and holistic development of the human being. As part of its international accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, UDEM chose Internationalization as its Quality Enhancement Plan. Also, in 2007, UDEM developed the Internationalization Strategic Plan, which was awarded the Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education in 2009.

As part of UDEM's Strategic Plan, UDEM is addressing the development of intercultural

competence (ICC). UDEM is well aware of the importance accomplishing this and is committed to providing its students with the following direct and indirect activities.

Compared international contexts course. This course is part of the general curriculum and is mandatory for all students. It focuses on developing specific cultural knowledge and activities and also encourages the students to discuss global issues and dilemmas.

Co-curricular courses. The formative model of UDEM requires that all students take co-curricular courses in different fields, such as sports, cultural affairs, service learning, pastoral, and leadership. In this area, UDEM enriched the model by developing a set of courses, Intercultural Competences I, II, and III, that address ICC in a more systematic and direct way. These courses are based on the theories of Kolb, Mezirow, Bennett, Paige, Hunter, and Deardorff, among others.

In the fall term 2011, UDEM ran its first pilot course called Intercultural Competences I. This course is offered, in its first phase, to all students who want to study abroad. In its second phase, it engages the entire student body, including international students. This course became mandatory for all students in Fall 2012. Within its curricula, the course includes modules in cultural knowledge, intercultural communication, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural adaptation among others.

Intercultural Competence II is an online course for students who are abroad. The purpose of this course is to provide students with a space for reflection on their experience while they are overseas. The students apply the knowledge acquired in the first course to their current experience.

Intercultural Competence III is a seminar in which students will reflect on how to keep developing ICC in the future, since it is an ongoing process.

Global classroom. This is an online project, and UDEM is participating with different universities around the world. Students from UDEM join a virtual class with students from different parts of the world and work together on activities that prompt them to develop intercultural communication skills.

The I-Fair and the I-Link program. These are two specific activities aimed to promote the interaction with other cultures. They create an international platform in which Mexican and international students relate and collaborate together. During the I-Fair, international students have the opportunity to share their culture with all the university community: students, professors, and collaborators. The I-Link program allows a Mexican student to accompany an international student through his or her journey in the country, the city, and UDEM. These activities encourage respect, empathy, curiosity and communication with individuals of other cultures.

Foreign language proficiency requirement. To graduate, all UDEM students must obtain a 550 score in their TOEFL.

The Challenges

Faculty and staff. UDEM'S next challenge is to develop ICC in faculty and staff since most of the initial efforts have been intended only for students through activities and courses. Training faculty is a main challenge, but having identified the importance of

this, the university has revised its hiring process to hire staff with ICC.

Assessment is also a challenge that needs to be addressed and one that the university continues to tackle.

This notion of global citizenship has become part of the internationalization discourse in higher education around the world (Bourn, 2010; Bourn, McKenzie, & Shiel, 2006; Fielden, 2007; Fielden, Middlehurst, & Woodfield, 2007; Lewin, 2009; McKenzie et al. 2003; Otter, 2007; Shiel, 2006) and is increasingly the focus of doctoral research and scholarly work (such as Killick 2010). On the one hand, this has emerged through disciplines such as politics, international relations, and development studies and, on the other, through languages, particularly in Byram's work on intercultural citizenship (Byram, 1997; Byram, 2006; see also Alred et al., 2003, 2006) and by Phipps (2006) on "languaging" to strengthen intercultural dialogue.

Fielden et al. (2007) argue that employers are looking for graduates with firsthand experience of living and working in other cultures and that this requirement matches the increasing desire of universities to develop global citizens. Alred et al. (2003) argue for the notion of intercultural citizenship, proposing that a fundamental purpose of education is to promote "a sense of interculturality, an intercultural competence, which is fundamental to education, perhaps always has been so, but is all the more significant in the contemporary world" (p. 6). Viewing this from the student perspective, Bourn (2010) goes so far as to suggest that "there is clear evidence from around the world that more and more students wish to have a greater sense of global connectedness" (p. 27). Fielden (2007) notes that those skills that are necessary "to operate effectively as a global citizen ... also help achieve social cohesion in a multi-cultural society" (p. 23). This reinforcement of the link between internationalization and multiculturalism is finding increasing resonance within UK higher education: the intercultural competence required to operate globally is recognized as equally significant for living within a diverse population (Caruana & Ploner, 2010). This is true within the U.S. context, as well, particularly through the American Council on Education's work in the "At Home in the World" project (Olson, Evans, & Schoenberg, 2007), in which institutions have come together to explore the intersections of international education and multiculturalism, one of which is shared learning outcomes

In this sense, the development of intercultural competence, while not necessarily articulated in this way outside the United States, has become established within the internationalization agenda. It is encompassed, for example, within the Internationalization at Home movement (Crowther et al. 2000). This movement recognized that the vast majority of students do not go abroad for study or placements, and it seeks to create a learning environment so they can acquire intercultural competence both through the formal and nonformal curricula (Beelen, 2007). Leask, Sanderson, Ridings, and Caruana (2006) consider the extent to which having cultural diversity in the student and staff population can help to develop such intercultural competence at home. And Deardorff (2009a) points out the ways in which international students, scholars, and faculty are often an underutilized resource within institutions.

The wide-ranging initiatives to internationalize university curricula (see, e.g., Jones & Killick, 2007; Leask, 2009, 2010) also incorporate notions of intercultural competence, albeit not always explicitly. More U.S. institutions, however, are explicitly setting intercultural competence development as a key goal, and national organizations are addressing this

through global learning projects. For example, the American Council on Education worked with several institutions around the United States to develop specific outcomes related to global learning. This “Global Learning for All” project (see also [Chapter 17](#), this volume) was grounded in the belief that global learning is for all students, not just those who have the opportunity to study abroad, and that global learning should be integrated throughout all degree programs. A starting point was engaging key campus stakeholders in dialogues that led to the clear articulation of these global learning outcomes for the institution.

Another national organization that has done extensive work on global learning is the American Association of Colleges and Universities, which developed a rubric on intercultural competence in 2010–2011 through working with faculty from across the United States over an 18-month period (<http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/>). This rubric was based on the intercultural frameworks of Bennett (1993) and Deardorff (2006) and has been used to assess students’ work in various disciplines. (For further discussion, see [Chapter 14](#), this volume, on internationalizing the curriculum, as well as [Chapter 15](#) on internationalizing teaching and learning and [Chapter 10](#) on outcomes assessment.)

The importance of study abroad in developing intercultural competence has long been recognized. Indeed, De Jong and Teekens (2003) go so far as to suggest that the internationalization agenda is really one of interculturalization:

The cultural impact of a period spent abroad comes mainly from the way it increases people's understanding of their own culture or subculture and their ability to deal with cultural differences in a nonjudgmental way within their own direct environment as well as in international contexts. (p. 48)

The literature includes examples of study abroad being less beneficial (e.g., Caruana & Hanstock 2008; Coleman, 1999) and shows the danger that it can reinforce “a stronger sense of the rightness of one's own nationality and cultural identity” (Alred et al., 2003, p. 118). However, this serves to reinforce the importance of appropriate support for the development of intercultural competence in preparation for the study abroad experience. Coleman's (1997) study indicated negative results for poorly prepared language undergraduates studying abroad, leading to increased stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and prejudice. This led to a number of projects that supported UK universities in introducing elements such as ethnography and intercultural communication into university teaching as preparation for the study abroad experience (FDTL, 1997–2000a, 1997–2000b, 1997–2000c).

Authors in other countries also report on ethnographic approaches that prepare students for study abroad (Jackson, 2005, 2008, Weber-Bosley 2010), but similar techniques are also being used for faculty-led study tours and other kinds of international experiences (e.g., Russell & Vallade, 2010). Jackson's (2005) work with students in Hong Kong shows how their ethnographic writing skills can be developed to encourage reflection. Her research demonstrates “the importance of carefully planned preparation for the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of intercultural adjustment,” through self-analysis and reflection (Jackson, 2008, pp. 222, 232).

Another aspect of significant intercultural competence research relates to the experience of international students at institutions around the world. Leask (2009) and Deardorff (2009a) argue the need for better integration of international and domestic students, whereas Killick (2010) suggests rather that “universities need to be devoting energies to integrating the *home* student to the *university as an international/multicultural community*, rather than focusing so

exclusively upon integrating the *international* student into an Anglo-centric community” (p. 256, his italics). Montgomery (2010) suggests that domestic students may miss out on the development of intercultural competence by failing to take advantage of the social and cultural diversity being created by internationalization in higher education (p. 18). Other scholars, such as Harrison and Peacock (2010b), focus on the difficulties associated with intercultural groupwork, a context that should be beneficial to the development of intercultural competence. They find that many domestic students perceive a high level of risk associated with intercultural communication, combined with a significant amount of effort required to understand, be understood, and not offend. Leask (2009) concludes that the development of intercultural competencies in students is a key outcome of an internationalized curriculum and requires a campus culture that motivates and rewards interaction between domestic and international students, both in and out of the classroom. While arguing that interventions to enhance intercultural engagement between domestic and international students contributes to the breaking down of stereotypes, Thom (2010) notes the increasing rarity in universities of safe opportunities for genuine engagement with other academic cultures, styles, and forms of knowledge.

While the preponderance of international education research studies in the U.S. focus on the intercultural learning of American students abroad, United Kingdom and Australian studies emphasize research that considers intercultural competence and the international student experience. Both countries have aggressively marketed themselves to students wishing to study in another country, resulting in large numbers of international students enrolled in university programs. The experience of those students is recognized as crucial, to ensure that quality and thus reputation remains high; both countries also understand that word-of-mouth marketing is the most effective way to attract more students. As an increasing number of countries promote themselves as student destinations, resulting research is giving rise to interesting reports from elsewhere. In a case study from the Philippines, Abayao (n.d.), for example, outlines an intercultural program offering a “culture sensitive” educational experience envisioned as a part of the university's extension program to enhance the relationship of the university to the surrounding communities.

Practice in Western countries can also represent non-Western approaches in the home context. Haigh (2009) invites domestic learners to take part in an exercise assessing the emotional impacts of their habitat using Smkhya's three modes of nature: self-awareness, self-realization, and self-improvement. Haigh finds that students become uncomfortable with the emphasis on personal introspection this approach requires and argues that students find it easier to deal with the international or intercultural elements of their curriculum if this is delivered by pedagogical approaches with which they are familiar. Adjusting to a curriculum constructed on different cultural foundations and pedagogy, while also being challenged in terms of cultural content, made students uneasy. However, this kind of experiment, which questions world-views and presuppositions underpinning Western educational structures, can be a benefit both to learners and teachers through critical self-analysis.

Discussion on Implications: Strategies

In the discussion on ways in which intercultural competence is viewed and addressed in various postsecondary institutions around the world, several themes emerge that have practical implications. Intercultural competence development is often a crucial part of broader institutional goals such as global citizenship and engagement. This development occurs on campus through the curriculum, through intersections of international and domestic student interaction in meaningful ways, through faculty development (Deardorff, 2011; Cushner &

Mahon, 2009), and through intercultural opportunities in the local community. This development also occurs through inter-cultural experiences abroad, albeit with the recognition that simply sending students abroad does not result in interculturally competent students. In fact, as noted earlier in this chapter, some research has shown that students may return more ethnocentric and close-minded, depending on a number of factors, including how the experience was constructed, what support mechanisms were in place, and the degree of intercultural learning interventions to further students' development.

Implementation Strategies

What are the first practical steps for an institution in addressing intercultural competence as a student learning outcome? Given the discussion in this chapter, it is important first for institutions to define intercultural competence, based on the literature and their institutional mission, before developing plans to address and assess intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009b). Too often institutions fail to recognize the wealth of scholarly work on this concept when defining intercultural competence within a particular institutional context. Once intercultural competence is defined and related learning outcomes have been explicitly stated, strategies can be targeted based on the institutional context. Some of these strategies have been highlighted below, and others are discussed in [Chapters 14](#), [15](#), and [17](#) of this volume.

Strategies for developing intercultural competence at postsecondary institutions include:

- Explicitly state intercultural competence-related learning outcomes as part of the curriculum, particularly in less obvious courses such as those in math, science, or even music—developed through dialogue with key institutional stakeholders.
- Utilize course materials from multiple cultural perspectives (including innovative use of technology to incorporate different perspectives) and ensure that courses go beyond knowledge transmission related to intercultural materials (i.e., a few “international readings” added in) to address actual skill development
- Articulate an institutional list of graduate attributes and indicators related to intercultural competence and global citizenship
- Introduce elements such as ethnography, intercultural communication, self-analysis, experiential learning, service learning, intercultural groupwork, and critical reflection into university teaching, especially as preparation for experiences abroad and intercultural interactions in the local community. Provide feedback to students on their intercultural development.
- Intentionally create meaningful, safe ways for international and domestic students to interact substantively together outside the classroom (i.e., living arrangements, community service projects, intramural sports programs, pairing programs, etc.), which means also finding ways to motivate and reward students for these efforts
- Develop programs that intentionally connect students with the local community (i.e., service learning opportunities, volunteer projects, internships), especially immigrant populations within the community
- Provide opportunities (such as symposia, workshops, and dialogues) for faculty to explore intercultural competence frameworks and ways in which those frameworks translate into specific intercultural learning outcomes within curricula and courses (see Deardorff, 2012, for more on this)
- Implement intercultural skills training programs to help prepare staff to model and guide students' intercultural competence development
- Provide experiential learning and professional development opportunities for alumni to continue their own intercultural competence development and engagement, given that this

is a lifelong process

- Develop language-across-the-curriculum initiatives that connect language skills and intercultural learning in a variety of disciplines
- Bring in a variety of guest speakers from other cultures to the institution to provide multiple viewpoints for students, staff, and faculty
- Intentionally integrate returning students' experiences abroad into courses and programs at the institution

As institutions implement strategies, both in and out of the classroom, to help develop students' intercultural competence, international educators should recognize that this is a lifelong process. (For discussion on developing intercultural competence, see Bennett, 2009). Furthermore, there are developmental aspects related to this process, and it is important to align strategies with students' own developmental level (see Bennett, 1993). Thus, it is often helpful for institutional leaders to consult with intercultural experts at their institutions to ensure appropriate alignment of strategies and learning interventions.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted various definitions and conceptions around intercultural competence, discussed some current institutional practices around the development of intercultural competence, and highlighted some strategies that can be considered by institutions. The discourse on intercultural competence has intensified in recent years, although further research and work is needed in this area. In terms of emerging issues within intercultural competence research, there remains much to discuss and explore. For example, what specifically is meant by adaptation? Who adapts to whom and to what degree? Or is it more a question of gleaning the best from various cultures and developing a new global culture to which all adapt? Moreover, what is the impact of globalization on culture and on identity? Are the frames and theories used to analyze cultures still relevant in the increasingly globalized societies of the 21st century? What does it mean to situate intercultural competence within various contexts to more fully understand the true complexity of intercultural competence?

Within higher education, there is movement toward incorporating intercultural competence within broader institutional goals of engagement, 21st-century skills, and global citizenship. In looking to the future, the preparation of "global-ready" graduates appears to be key in the design and development of future curricula and programs. (See [Chapter 25](#), this volume, for further discussion.) As higher education institutions increasingly highlight intercultural competence development as core to achieving their mission and goals, students will not only be more prepared for the globalized workplace of the 21st century but be better equipped to take on the global challenges that confront humanity to day.

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Notes

1 There are many definitions that have been used for the word “culture.” For purposes of this discussion, “culture” is defined as values, beliefs and norms shared by a group of people and is not limited to national culture

- competence
- intercultural communication
- intercultural communication competence
- foreign students
- cultural competence
- study abroad
- communicative competence

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