effectively, and adaptively (→ Interpersonal Communication). In a direct empirical test of the theory (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey 2003), the research program uncovered that self-face concern was associated positively with dominating style and other-face concern was associated positively with avoiding and integrating styles. The research also found significant differences between subjects from different countries (→ International Communication).

Current face-negotiation theory effort has been directed to testing the intricate relationship among face, emotional facets, and conflict styles in different cultures. Further effort has also extended the face-negotiation theory to the realm of intergroup (i.e., different social identity membership issues such as intergenerational family conflicts) face-threatening and face-honoring situations, and examining the shifting values of face in diaspora communities.

See also: ▶ Encoding–Decoding ▶ Intercultural and Intergroup Communication ▶ International Communication ▶ Interpersonal Communication ▶ Language and Social Interaction

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


Intercultural and Intergroup Communication

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Social groups, such as adolescents and ethnic groups, very often have their own distinctive cultures that include specialized foods, customs and rituals, literature, music, while other intergroup situations (e.g., artificially constructed laboratory groups) constitute social categories that cannot claim such cultural artifacts. This entry compares two parallel traditions of theorizing communication between such groups: Intercultural communication (ICC; Gudykunst 2002) and Intergroup communication (IGC; Giles 2012).

Origins of the Theories

ICC has been studied for over 50 years (see Leeds-Hurwitz 1990) and developed to focus on how different cultures are distinguished from one another through their management of behaviors such as personal space and gestures. Particular attention has been devoted to understanding the cultural values that underpin different cultures’ communicative practices, including individualism–collectivism, high–low contexts, and so forth (Watson 2012). From the ICC perspective, when an individual recognizes that he is engaged in an intercultural interaction, the focus remains on competent interpersonal communication (→ Intercultural Conflict Styles and Facework).

In contrast to ICC, the IGC approach came out of social identity theory (SIT: Tajfel 1978) which states that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups and have a need to compare themselves with others, as a way of attaining a positive self-concept. We seek to favor our own groups (ingroups) compared to groups to which
we do not belong (outgroups) and, communica-
tively act in accord with these social identities
(Giles & Giles 2012). To join an outgroup, as, for
instance, with immigrants wishing to acculturate
into a host community, we communicate with
members in ways akin to them so that we may gain
membership to that group (Giles et al. 2012). SIT is
not a communication theory but, rather, represents
a theory of intergroup behavior and cognitions.
Communication theories such as → communica-
tion accommodation theory explain how and why
individuals engage in specific communication
strategies when they interact with representatives
of salient ingroups and outgroups.

Applications
Wiseman (2002) detailed the applications of ICC
competence to assist individuals from differing
cultures to communicate effectively with one
another (→ Culture: Definition and Concepts).
The ICC literature embraces a skills training
approach, the premises of which are that individ-
uals must have knowledge of the culture with
which they engage, the motivation to effectively
communicate (including intercultural sensitivity
and empathy), and appropriate communication
skills. Interactions are viewed as activities that
occur at the interpersonal level.

In contrast, the main focus in IGC is on interact-
ants implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) taking on
the role of being representatives of their respective
cultures. This explicit acknowledgment that at
times our intergroup identities take precedence
has important implications for any interaction.
Individuals who perceive that their personal
identity is salient may engage in different commu-
nications strategies from those who believe they are
representative of a particular group. Whether indi-
vidual or group identities, or both, are made salient
will shape the communication process in different
ways which, in turn, can reconstruct the very nature
of those identities (Dragojevic & Giles in press).

The way a group or culture expresses its
unique identity through a dialect, specialized
jargon, or nonverbal demeanor (→ Nonverbal Com-
munication and Culture), is fundamental to a
healthy social identity, and to one (under differing
conditions) that group members can vigorously
and creatively sustain and proliferate. Intercultural
communication is not subsumed under, or even a
special case of, intergroup communication, but
rather the two are parallel traditions capable of
significant coalescence (Gudykunst 2002).

Assumptions of Both Theories
There are assumptions within ICC theories that
are not held in IGC (Brabant et al. 2007). These
are: that strangers to a new culture will take on an
ethno-relativist position; they need to be edu-
cated in the new culture's values and norms; and
when strangers possess knowledge of the culture
and use expedient communication skills, effective
communication will prevail. However, there is
no extension within ICC theories to predict and
explain when misunderstanding could in some
cases be inevitable, despite any one individual's
excellent skills and cultural knowledge. Socio-
psychological theories that emphasize the inter-
group nature of intercultural communication,
rather than only its interpersonal aspects, directly
address miscommunication and related issues
of prejudice and intercultural tensions.

IGC is highly cognizant of how status and
power differentials impact communication behav-
or. Power is, arguably, not a key consideration in
ICC and the implicit overarching assumption is
that competent communication is the main com-
munication goal (→ Power in Intergroup
Settings). However, when two individuals from
different cultures with a history of power differen-
tials and consequent perceived injustices come
together, effective and competent communication
may not be their mutual goal. A training and skills
focus on achieving effective communication does
not take account of the fact that culturally-salient
power differentials may dictate what is appropri-
ate communication for any particular encounter.

ICC as well as IGC – beyond the study of
national and ethnic groups – can truly embrace
an array of different categories including older
people, homosexuals, bisexuals, or academicians
from different disciplines, as well as those embed-
ded in for example, religious, or organizational
cultures (Giles 2012). Importantly, their members
may view themselves as belonging to a group that
owns specific characteristics and traits that set
them apart from others. IGC theories distinguish
between “me” in an interaction as an individual
and “us” as a virtual representative of a group. While intercultural as well as intergroup perspectives have sometimes been infused into studies in such contexts, there is much more room for invoking each other’s positions. The challenge is to move toward bringing these two theoretical viewpoints together in order to explain and predict the variables that determine effective and ineffective interactions (Kim, forthcoming).

See also: Communication Accommodation Theory ▶  Cultural Patterns and Communication ▶  Culture: Definitions and Concepts ▶  Ethnographic Perspectives on Intercultural Conflict Styles and Facework ▶  Intergroup Communication and Discursive Psychology ▶  Intergroup Contact and Communication ▶  Media and Group Representations ▶  Nonverbal Communication and Culture ▶  Power in Intergroup Settings ▶  Prejudiced and Discriminatory Communication ▶  Social Stereotyping and Communication

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS


Intergenerational Communication

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The term ‘intergenerational communication’ applies to interactions involving individuals who are from different age cohorts or age groups. Families provide ready examples of individuals whose communication would be classified as intergenerational: parent and child or grandparent and grandchild. These interactions stand in contrast to intragenerational communication or communication between individuals from the same generation or age cohort, such as siblings. Intergenerational communication occurs outside the family context as well. Any interaction between a child and an adult, a young person and one who is middle-aged or older, or a middle-aged person and an older person fits the definition of intergenerational communication. As a result, much communication in daily life – in the workplace, social settings, and the home – is intergenerational in nature.

Although common, intergenerational communication carries a strong potential for miscommunication and unsatisfying interpersonal interactions. This occurs not only because people from different age cohorts vary in their life experiences, but also because people at different points in the life-span vary in their communication goals, needs, and behaviors. Other challenges...