



Transcultural communication

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What is it?

Intercultural communication implies a duality – typically two people who interact despite different cultural backgrounds. *Transcultural communication* moves beyond traditional cultural borders in a display of fluidity. Thus, it describes people jointly interacting through the use of multiple sets of cultural assumptions. It creatively uses cultural differences rather than stopping to discuss them.

Transcultural communication happens when interactants move through and across cultural and linguistic boundaries – borders become blurred, transgressed, and transcended. Transcultural communication involves not only crossing cultural boundaries but transcending them. People in diaspora are often transculturally adept, as are many social media platforms which help people to connect while ignoring national borders.

Who uses the concept?

Transcultural communication is used in business (by multinational companies, referring to employee skills), health care (especially nursing, referring to interactions with patients), and language training (for English teaching around the world). Within communication, it has mostly been used in studies of international and/or global media. To date, the term has been widely used in Europe and Australia, but only rarely in the USA. Establishing the EU required considerable transcultural communication as well as resulting in the establishment of a transcultural identity for EU citizens.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Transcultural communication can be a tool to encourage intercultural dialogue. Those who are most skilled at drawing upon multiple cultural backgrounds simultaneously and using them effectively are those who are most likely to be able to organize and sustain intercultural dialogues. Looking specifically at media (and social media), since media products can so easily cross national borders, it is easy to forget that those managing them need some skill in intercultural dialogue and transcultural communication if they are to do so well.

What work remains?

There is an urgent call for the creation of a media and communications policy for transcultural communication: a transcultural 'world order' is needed to govern the production of media. Practically, cultural intermediaries would mediate between cultural products and target audiences.

Resources

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