Communication Studies Faculty Publications

Communication Studies

1997

A Review of the Concept of Intercultural Sensitivity

Guo-Ming Chen
University of Rhode Island, gmchen@uri.edu

William J. Starosta

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/com_facpubs

A Review of the Concept of Intercultural Sensitivity

Creative Commons License

A Review of the Concept of Intercultural Sensitivity

Guo-Ming Chen
Department of Communication Studies
University of Rhode Island, USA
and
William J. Starosta
Department of Communication
Howard University, USA

The development of a "global village" strongly demands the ability of intercultural sensitivity between people for all of us to survive and live meaningfully and productively. Due to the lack of study on the subject, this paper aims

1. to provide a conceptualization of intercultural sensitivity;

2. to specify the role intercultural sensitivity plays in intercultural training programs;

3. to delineate the components of intercultural sensitivity; and

4. to critique and suggest directions for future study in this line of research

As a result, a working definition of intercultural sensitivity is generated. The components of intercultural sensitivity examined include:

1. self-esteem,

2. self-monitoring,

3. open-mindedness,

4. empathy,

5. interaction involvement, and

6. suspending judgment.

In addition, the confusion among intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence is discussed and future directions for research in intercultural sensitivity are suggested.

A Review of the Concept of Intercultural Sensitivity

Chen and Starosta (1996) specify five trends that lead our world into a global society in which intercultural communication competence becomes a required ability for citizens to survive and live meaningfully and productively:

1. the development of communication and transportation technology links people of different cultural backgrounds and every part of the world together,

2. the globalization of world economy requires employees from multinational corporations to communicate with those in other parts of the world in order to be competitive in the global economic system,

3. widespread population migrations across national borders restructure the fabric of modern society so that it becomes much more culturally diverse than it was in the past,

4. the development of multiculturalism affects every aspect of life in the United States in which new workforce comprises persons who are diverse in race, culture, age, gender, and language, and

5. the de-emphasis of nation-state leads nations to form regional alliances and people to reassert ethnic and gender differences within the nation.

Among these trends, widespread population migration and the development of multiculturalism show the most impact on American society. For example, in 1940 seventy percent of immigrants to the United States originated from Europe. Half a century later, fifteen percent come from Europe, thirty-seven percent from Asia, and forty-four percent from Latin America and the Caribbean. The current ethnic breakdown for the United States includes 80 percent White, 12 percent Black, 6.4 percent Hispanic, and 1.6 percent Asian. Given no new exclusionary legislation, by the year 2050 the population of U.S. white ethnics will decrease to 60 percent, while Asians increase to 16 percent, Hispanics triple their numbers to 19.2 percent and African Americans increase their proportion but slightly (Nieto, 1992).

Shifts in the U.S. population structure influence the American educational system and organizational life. Educationally, while about 27 percent of U.S. public school students are persons of color, African American and Latino student populations presently dominate 22 of the 25 largest central-city school districts. Co-culture majority school systems may increase in number by the year 2000.

Meanwhile, the number of U.S. children who are native speakers of a non-English language will increase from 2 million in 1986 to 5 million by 2020 (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990; Vadivieso & David, 1988). The influx of non-native speakers of English requires the educational system to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of recent immigrants and their children, promotes learning, and accommodates differing communication styles of recent immigrants that may not match those of teachers and counselors (Sue, 1994).

Persons of co-cultures within the United States consume more goods and services than do any of America's trading partners, and will constitute 25% of the U.S. economic market by the year 2000 (Astroff, 1988-1989; Foster, Jackson, Cross, Jackson, & Hardiman, 1988). If companies are to attract and retain new workers they must recruit persons of varying heritages and ethnicity. Companies that fail to promote minorities and women to higher levels of management in the organization will lose their competitive edge (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Therefore, companies must begin now the creative planning and the introduction of new workplace configurations in order to make best use of the talents of non-traditional employees (Goldstein & Gilliam, 1990).

It is clear that cultural diversity or multiculturalism has become the norm rather than the exception in American life. The changing cultural character of neighborhoods, schools, and the workplace calls for us all to adapt to the unfamiliar and to learn to work and live together without being adversely influenced by the differences people may bring to an encounter. All these events lead to a strong demand for greater understanding, sensitivity and competency among people from differing cultural backgrounds. It is the purpose of this paper to examine one of the most important abilities that helps us live successfully in the culturally diverse society: intercultural sensitivity. The discussion is separated into five sections:

1. definition of intercultural sensitivity,

2. intercultural sensitivity and training programs,

3. components of intercultural sensitivity,

4. critique and directions for future research, and

5. conclusion.

A Definition of Intercultural Sensitivity

Bronfenbrener, Harding, and Gallwey's study (1958) is one of the early studies dealing with the concept of sensitivity. The authors propose that sensitivity to the generalized other and sensitivity to individual differences (i.e., interpersonal sensitivity) are the two major types of ability in social perception. Sensitivity to the generalized other is a "kind of sensitivity to the social norms of one's own group" (McClelland, 1958, p. 241), and interpersonal sensitivity is the ability to distinguish how others differ in their behavior, perceptions or feelings (Bronfenbrener, et al.,

1958). Bronfenbrener et al.'s interpersonal sensitivity parallels what we consider as intercultural sensitivity.

Hart and Burks (1972) and Hart, Carlson, and Eadie (1980) treat sensitivity as a mind-set that is applied in one's everyday's life. They propose that sensitive persons should be able to accept personal complexity, avoid communication inflexibility, be conscious in interaction, appreciate the ideas exchanged, and tolerate intentional searching. These elements appear to be embedded in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of intercultural interaction.

Based on Gudykunst and Hammer's (1983) three-stage intercultural training model and Hoopes' (1981) intercultural learning model, Bennett (1984) conceives of intercultural sensitivity as a developmental process in which one is able to transform oneself affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally from ethnocentric stages to ethnorelative stages. This transformation process comprises six analytic stages:

1. denial — in which one denies the existence of cultural differences among people;

2. defense — in which one attempts to protect one's world view by countering the perceived threat;

3. minimization — in which one attempts to protect the core of one's world view by concealing differences in the shadow of cultural similarities;

4. acceptance — in which one begins to accept the existence of behavioral differences and underlying cultural differences;

5. adaptation — in which one becomes empathic to cultural differences and becomes bicultural or multicultural, and;

6. integration — in which one is able to apply ethnorelativism to one's own identity and can experience "difference as an essential and joyful aspect of all life" (p. 186).

Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity not only requires the gradual change of affection and cognition, but also the behavioral ability to reach the state of intercultural communication competence. Conceptually, Bennett's perception of intercultural sensitivity seems identical with the concept of intercultural communication competence which has been under investigation by other scholars (Chen, 1989, 1990, 1992, Hammer, 1989; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Hammer, 1989; Ruben, 1976, 1988; Ruben & Kealey, 1979; Spitzberg, 1989; Wiseman & Koester, 1993).

Finally, Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) attempt to develop an instrument for measuring intercultural sensitivity from the perspective of individu-

alism versus collectivism. The authors use the concept of intercultural communication competence to develop intercultural sensitivity measurement based on affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Those elements used by the authors include:

1. understanding the different ways one can behave,

2. open-mindedness concerning the differences one encounters, and

3. the degree of behavioral flexibility one demonstrates in a new culture.

The above review provides a foundation for the conceptualization of intercultural sensitivity. However, two confusions need to be clarified before we can generate a working definition of the concept. First, although intercultural sensitivity is related to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of interactional situation, it mainly deals with affect. It is concerned with emotion. Second, intercultural awareness (cognition) is the foundation of intercultural sensitivity (affect) which, in turn, leads to intercultural competence (behavior). In other words, the three are closely related but separated concepts. Thus, intercultural sensitivity can be conceptualized as "an individual's ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication." This definition considers intercultural sensitivity to be a dynamic concept. It reveals that interculturally sensitive persons must have a desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures, and to produce a positive outcome from intercultural interactions.

Intercultural Sensitivity and Training Programs

The increasing importance of intercultural sensitivity in the global and multicultural society has led many scholars and experts to examine the concept from different perspectives. Practically, the concept has been integrated into intercultural training programs that are initiated to develop the ability of intercultural sensitivity. Those training programs include "T-groups," critical incidents, case studies, role playing, and cultural orientation programs (Brislin, 1981; Cushner & Landis, 1996; Seidel, 1981; Yum, 1989).

Intercultural training commonly aims to develop intercultural sensitivity by increasing awareness of cultural differences and attempts to develop one's communication potential while lessening the likelihood of intercultural misunderstandings (Cargile & Giles, 1996). In other words,

intercultural training programs aim to "develop an appreciation and understanding of cross-cultural differences and to acquire some of the necessary abilities, such as an increased awareness and sensitivity to cultural stimuli and better human relations skills" (Seidel, 1981, p. 184). Morgan and Weigel (1988) point out that the major purpose of the above mentioned training programs is to develop intercultural sensitivity, since intercultural sensitivity is considered a prerequisite for intercultural effectiveness.

As an essential element for positive outcomes in intercultural encounters, the importance of intercultural sensitivity can also be examined from the six general categories of intercultural training programs: affective training, cognitive training, behavioral training, area simulation training, cultural awareness training, and self-awareness training (Brislin, Landis, & Brandt, 1983; Gudykunst, Guzley, & Hammer, 1996; Gudykunst, Hammer, & Wiseman, 1977; Seidel, 1981).

According to Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Wiseman (1991), affective training should increase trainees' motivation and sensitivity to communication with people from other cultures and ethnic groups. Cognitive training promotes understanding of cultural differences and similarities. Behavioral training provides skill training so that participants learn to communicate more effectively with people of other cultures. Area simulation training requires that participants spend a period of time in a cultural or ethnic neighborhood and to interact fully with the residents in order to gain the real experience of intercultural encounters. Cultural awareness training requires participants to understand the aspects of culture that are universal and specific. Finally, self-awareness training helps participants to identify attitudes, opinions, and biases that influence the way they communicate.

Among these training programs affective training, cognitive training, self-awareness training, and cultural awareness training focus on the cognitive and affective understanding of one's own as well as the host culture. Area simulation training and behavioral training focus on the teaching of "specific behaviors" that are used to better adjust to a new culture. Seidel (1981) integrates the purposes of these training programs into a sensitivity approach that clearly defines specific spheres of training in the three areas: appreciation and sensitivity (affective), understanding and awareness (cognitive), and skills (behavioral).

Therefore, with the emphasis on an integrated approach, the search for an appropriate definition of intercultural sensitivity should be grounded in the affective aspect, and extended to include cognitive and behavioral components. Thus, Parker, Valley, & Geary (1986) reason that intercultural sensitivity can be achieved through a combination of cogni-

tive, affective, and behavioral procedures, because the effectiveness of intercultural communication requires interactants to appropriately demonstrate ability in intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence. This is supported by Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) study showing that the problems encountered by people in intercultural interaction are cognitive re-orientation (i.e., cognitive), changes in feelings (i.e., affective), and overt behaviors (i.e., behavioral). Therefore, intercultural sensitivity intercultural training programs concerned with intercultural sensitivity also aim to increase intercultural awareness and develop intercultural competency.

Components of Intercultural Sensitivity

Because intercultural sensitivity focuses on personal emotions that are caused by particular situations, people, and environment (Triandis, 1977), it implies that an interculturally sensitive individual is able to project and receive positive emotional responses before, during, and after intercultural interaction. It especially refers to the attitude of respect (Adler & Towne, 1993). Not knowing how to show respect to others and their cultural differences in the process of intercultural communication usually leads to a lower degree of satisfaction. According to Gudykunst and Kim (1992), a successful integration of affective and cognitive processes can help people achieve an adequate social orientation that enables them to understand their own as well as the feelings and behaviors of others. Thus, in order to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences and eventually promote the ability of intercultural competence, interculturally sensitive persons must possess the following elements: self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and suspending judgment.

Self-Esteem

A culturally sensitive person usually shows higher degrees of self-esteem. Self-esteem is a sense of self-value or self-worth. It is based on one's perception of how well one can develop his or her potential in a social environment (Borden, 1991). A person with high self-esteem usually has an optimistic outlook that instills confidence in interaction with others (Foote & Cottrell, 1955). Hamachek (1982) also concludes that persons with high self-esteem are likely to think well of others and to expect to be accepted by others. In intercultural encounters, where people inevitably meet psychological stresses when trying to complete

their jobs and to establish relationships with others, self-esteem becomes an important variable in the calculation of whether or not they can fulfill their needs. It is self-esteem that enhances the positive emotion towards accurately recognizing and respecting the situational differences in intercultural interactions.

Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring refers to a person's ability to regulate behavior in response to situational constraints and to implement a conversationally competent behavior. Persons with high self-monitoring are particularly sensitive to the appropriateness of their social behaviors and self-presentation in social interaction (Snyder, 1974). Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) indicate that high self-monitors are more attentive, other-oriented, and adaptable to diverse communication situations. In interaction, high self-monitoring persons are more adept in the use of strategies such as compromise, emotional appeals, coercion, ingratiation, and referent influence (Farmer, Fedor, Goodman, & Maslyn, 1993; Smith, Cody, Lovette, & Canary, 1990). Berger and Douglas (1982) also reporte that high self-monitoring helps people to better adapt their behaviors to different situations so that they become more competent in communication. Persons who are high in self-monitoring during intercultural communication are also likely to be more sensitive to the expressions of their counterparts and know how to use situational cues to guide their self-presention (Gudykunst, Yang, & Nishida, 1987). These studies show that self-monitoring equips us with an ability to sensitively monitor situational cues and to further develop a set of appropriate behaviors to fit the situation.

Open-Mindedness

Open-mindedness refers to the willingness of individuals to openly and appropriately explain themselves and to accept other's explanations. This paralleled Adler's (1977) concept of "multicultural [hu]man" who accepts the "life patterns different from his or her own and who has psychologically and socially come to grips with a multiplicity of realities" (p. 25). In other words, interculturally sensitive persons understand that an idea can be rendered in multi-form ways (Hart & Burks, 1972). Bennett (1986) also indicates that interculturally sensitive persons possess an internalized, broadened concept of the world. This means that interculturally sensitive persons are open-minded. Culturally insensitive or narrow-minded persons will not survive their intercultural encounter (Barnlund, 1988).

Ingrained in open-mindedness is the willingness to recognize, accept, and appreciate different views and ideas. Yum (1989) indicates that sensitivity motivates people to understand and acknowledge other people's needs and makes them more adaptive to differences in culturally diverse situations. Smith (1966) also points out that being sensitive means having consideration for others, being receptive to others' needs and differences, and being able to translate emotions into actions. It is a process of mutual validation and confirmation of cultural identities that fosters a favorable impression in intercultural communication (Ting-Toomey, 1989).

Empathy

Empathy has been long recognized as a central element for intercultural sensitivity. Empathy refers to a process of projecting oneself "into another person's point of view so as momentarily to think the same thoughts and feel the same emotions as the other person" (Adler & Towne, 1987, p. 95). Empathy allows us to sense what is inside another's mind or to step into another person's shoes. Others call it "affective sensitivity" (Campbell, Kagan, & Drathwohl, 1971), "telepathic or intuition sensitivity" (Gardner, 1962), or "perspective-taking" (Parks, 1976).

According to Barnlund (1988), interculturally sensitive persons tend to look for communication symbols that let them share another's experiences. Interculturally sensitive persons adopt different roles as required by new situations (Hart, Carlson, & Eadie, 1980). Moreover, empathic persons are also judged to be more selfless and as having more concern for the other interactant's feelings and reactions (Davis, 1983). In other words, they are able to accurately estimate the behaviors or internal states of their communication counterparts (Parks, 1994). As a result, empathy allows us to demonstrate reciprocity of affect displays, active listening, and verbal responses that show understanding. It develops a mutual understanding that leads to the establishment of an intercultural rapport (Barnlund, 1988). This is the reason Coke, Bateson, and McDavis (1978) contend that empathy allows a person to possess a higher degree of feeling of sympathy and concern toward others. Hence, the display of identification, understanding and consideration to others are characteristics of empathy that form the essence of intercultural sensitivity and lead a person to be competent in intercultural communication (Bennett, 1979; Gudykunst, 1993; Yum, 1989).

Interaction Involvement

Interaction involvement is the ability of individuals to perceive the topic and situation that involves their conception of self and self-reward (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). It emphasizes a person's sensitivity ability in interaction. Cegala (1981, 1982, 1984) considers interaction involvement to be fundamental to the human communication process. His research shows that interaction involvement is comprised of responsiveness, perceptiveness, and attentiveness.

Being responsive, perceptive, and attentive enables interculturally sensitive persons to better receive and understand messages, to take appropriate turns, and to initiate and terminate an intercultural interaction fluently and appropriately. In other words, interculturally sensitive persons know how to "handle the procedural aspects of structuring and maintaining a conversation" (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 46).

Suspending Judgment

Suspending judgment refers to an attitude that allows one to sincerely listen to others during intercultural communication. Non-sensitive persons tend to hastily jump to conclusion without having sufficient data from their interaction (Hart & Burks, 1972). Thus, intercultural sensitivity is the avoidance of issuing rash judgments about the inputs of others. Suspending judgment allows the other party to be psychologically satisfied and happy that s/he has been listened to actively.

In intercultural interaction being non-judgmental tends to foster a feeling of enjoyment towards cultural differences. Interculturally sensitive persons not only need to acknowledge and accept cultural differences, but need to establish a sentiment of enjoyment that promotes a satisfactory feeling towards intercultural encountering. Research has considered several types of enjoyment in intercultural interaction for intercultural sensitivity:

1. the enjoyment of interacting with people from different cultures (Randolph, Landis, & Tzeng, 1977),

2. the enjoyment of increasing good working relations with others from different cultures (Fiedler, Mitchell, & Triandis, 1971), and

3. the enjoyment of one's duties in another culture (Gudykunst, Hammer, & Wiseman, 1977).

Critique and Directions for Future Research

Although intercultural sensitivity is treated as one of the necessary elements for a successful communication in intercultural settings and many intercultural training programs aim to increase the ability of intercultural sensitivity, the study of the concept still suffers from conceptual and operational fragmentation and ambiguity. No clear definition of intercultural sensitivity can be found in the existing literature. One of the biggest problems is embedded in the confusion of the concept with intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. As mentioned previously, intercultural scholars and practitioners tend to mingle the three concepts without giving them a clear distinction. Such confusion not only jeopardizes the validity and reliability of research in this line of research, but also affects the outcome of intercultural training programs.

In this paper we suggest that the three concepts are closely related but separate. Intercultural awareness is the cognitive aspect of intercultural communication. It refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how people think and behave. Intercultural awareness requires individuals to understand that, from their own cultural perspective, they are cultural beings. They must then use this understanding as a foundation to further figure out the distinct characteristics of other cultures so that they can effectively interpret others' behaviors in intercultural interactions (Triandis, 1977). Because every culture shows a distinctive thought pattern, misunderstanding reasoning differences often causes serious problems in intercultural communication (Glenn & Glenn, 1981; Oliver, 1962). Thus, to be successful in intercultural interactions we must first show the ability of intercultural awareness by learning the similarities and differences of each other's culture. However, the process of gaining awareness of cultural similarities and differences is enhanced and buffered by intercultural sensitivity. Unless a person shows a positive emotion towards learning, understanding, recognizing, and respecting the cultural similarity and distinctiveness, intercultural awareness is unreachable.

Intercultural competence is the behavioral aspect of intercultural communication. It refers to the ability to behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural interactions (Chen & Starosta, 1996). It concerns ways to get the job done and attain communication goals through verbal and nonverbal behaviors in intercultural interactions. Effectiveness and appropriateness of behavioral performance are regulated by the cognitive understanding and affective sensitivity of cultural similarity and distinctiveness. Thus, intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity are the prerequisites for being competent in intercultural interactions.

In sum, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural competence form the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of intercultural communication. They are three separate but mutually dependent elements that combine to lead individuals to reach a successfully intercultural interaction. Future research needs to take the distinction of the three elements into account before more valuable contributions can be made.

Conclusion

Intercultural sensitivity is a precondition for living harmoniously and meaningfully in an increasingly pluralistic world. Together with intercultural awareness and intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity is a vital element for successful communication in a global village (Barnlund, 1988). Unfortunately, most studies of intercultural sensitivity lack a clear conceptualization and are entangled with intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. This paper first discussed why it is important to attain the ability of intercultural sensitivity in an era of burgeoning multiculturalism and interdependence. We then provided a working definition by conceptualizing intercultural sensitivity.

The relationship between intercultural sensitivity and intercultural training programs is delineated. We continued to specify the components of intercultural sensitivity, which include self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and non-judgment. Finally, the conceptual confusion and ambiguity of intercultural sensitivity research have been critiqued. The differences among intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural competence were clarified. It is urged that the distinction among the three concepts should be taken into account before future research is conducted in this area.

References

Adler, P. (1977). Beyond cultural identity: Reflections upon cultural and multicultural man. In R.W. Brislin (Ed.). *Culture learning concepts, application and research.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1987). *Looking in/looking out.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Adler, R. B., & Towne, N. (1993). *Looking in/looking out.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Astroff, R. (1988-1989). Spanish gold: Stereotypes, ideology, and the construction of a U.S. Latino market. *The Howard Journal of Communications,* 1, 155-173.

Barnlund, D. C. (1988). Communication in a global village. In L. A. Samovar, & R.E. Porter (Eds.). *Intercultural communication:* A reader. CA: Wadsworth.

Bennett, M. J. (1979). Overcoming the golden rule: Sympathy and empathy. In D. Nimmo (Ed.). *Communication Yearbook 3.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Bennett, M. J. (1984). *Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.* Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Council on International Exchange, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Bennett, M. J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 10, 179- 196.

Berger, C. R., & Douglas, W. (1982). Thought and talk: "Excuse me, but have I been talking to myself?" In F.E.X. Dance (Ed.). *Human communication theory: Comparative essays.* NY: Harper & Row.

Bhawuk, D. P. S., & Brislin, R. (1992). The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 16, 413-436.

Borden, G. A. (1991). *Cultural Orientation: An approach to understanding intercultural communication.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Brislin, R. W. (1981). *Cross-cultural encounters: Face to face interaction.* Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.

Brislin, R. W., Landis, D., & Brandt, M. E. (1983). Conceptualizations of intercultural behavior and training. In D. Landis and R. W. Brislin (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training,* Vol. 1. New York: Pergamon, 1-35.

Bronfenbrener, U., Harding, J., & Gallwey, M. (1958). *The measurement of skill in social perception.* In McClelland, D.C. (Ed.). Talent and society. NY: Van Nostrand.

Cargile, A. C., & Giles, H. (1996). Intercultural communication training: Review, critique, and a new theoretical framework. *Communication Yearbook,* 19, 385-423.

Campbell, R. J., Kagan, N., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1971). The development and validation of a scale to measure affective sensitivity (empathy). *Journal of Counseling psychology,* 18, 407-412.

Cegala, D. J. (1981). Interaction involvement: A cognitive dimension of communicative competence. *Communication Education,* 30, 109- 121.

Cegala, D. J. (1982). An examination of the concept of interaction involvement using phenomenological and empirical methods. In J. J. Pilotta (Ed.). *Interpersonal communication: Essays in phenomenology and hermeneutics.* Washington, D.C. and Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America.

Cegala, D. J. (1984). Affective and cognitive manifestations of interaction involvement during unstructured and competitive interactions. *Communication Monographs,* 51, 320 - 338.

Chen, G. M. (1989). Relationships of the dimensions of intercultural communication competence. *Communication Quarterly,* 37, 118-133.

Chen, G. M. (1990). Intercultural communication competence: Some perspectives of research. The *Howard Journal of Communication,* 2, 243 - 261.

Chen, G. M. (1992). A test of intercultural communication competence. *Intercultural Communication Studies,* 2, 62-83.

Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (1996). Intercultural communication competence: A synthesis. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 19,* 353-384.

Cushner, K., & Landis, D. (1996). The intercultural sensitizer. In D. Landis and R. S. Bhagat (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (pp. 185-202). London: Sage.

Coke, J., Bateson, C., & McDavis, K. (1978). Empathetic meditation of helping: A two-stage model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 36, 752 - 766.

Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 44, 113 - 126

Farmer, S. M., Fedor, D. B., Goodman, J. S., & Maslyn, J. M. (1993). *Factors affecting the use of upward influence strategies.* Paper presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Atlanta, Georgia.

Fiedler, F., Mitchell, T., & Triandis, H. (1971). The culture assimilator: An approach to crosscultural training. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 55,* 95-102.

Foote, N. N., & Cottrell, L. S. (1955). *Identity and interpersonal competence.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Foster, B. G., Jackson, G., Cross, W. E., Jackson, B., & Hardiman, R. (1988). Workforce diversity and business. *Training & Development Journal,* April, 15-19.

Gardner, G. H. (1962). Cross-cultural communication. *Journal of Social Psychology, 58,* 241-256.

Glenn, E. S., & Glenn, C. G. (1981). *Man and mankind: Conflict and communication between cultures.* New Jersey: Norwood.

Goldstein, I. L., & Gilliam, P. (1990). Training system issues in the year 2000. *American Psychologist, 45,* 143.

Gudykunst, W. B. (1993). Toward a theory of effective interpersonal and intergroup communication: An anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) perspective. In R. L. Wiseman & J. Koester (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competence.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 33-71.

Gudykunst, W. B., Guzley, R. M., & Hammer, M. R. (1996) (Eds.), Designing intercultural training. In D. Landis and R. S. Bhagat, *Handbook of intercultural training.* London: Sage, 61-80.

Gudykunst, W. B., & Hammer, M. R. (1983). Basic training design: Approaches to intercultural training. In D. Landis and R. W. Brislin (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training,* Vol. 1. New York: Pergamon, 118-154.

Gudykunst, W. B., Hammer, M. R., & Wiseman, R. L. (1977). An analysis of an integrated approach to cross-cultural training. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 2,* 99-110.

Gudykunst, W. B., Kim, Y. Y. (1992). *Communicating with strangers.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gudykunst, W. B., Ting-Toomey, S., & Wiseman, R. (1991). Taming the beast: Designing a course in intercultural communication. *Communication Quarterly, 40,* 272-286.

Gudykunst, W. B., Yang, S. M., & Nishida, T. (1987). Cultural differences in self-consciousness and unself-consciousness. *Communication Research, 14,* 7-36.

Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An extension of the U-curve hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues, 19,* 33 - 47.

Hamachek, D. E. (1982). *Encounters with others: Interpersonal relationships and you.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Hammer, M. R. (1989). Intercultural communication competence. In M. K. Asante and W. B. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Handbook of international and intercultural communication,* Newbury Park: Sage, 247-260.

Hart, R. P., & Burks, D. M. (1972). Rhetorical sensitivity and social interaction. *Speech Monographs, 39,* 75 - 91.

Hart, R. P., Carlson, R. E., & Eadie, W. F. (1980). Attitudes toward communication and the assessment of rhetorical sensitivity. *Communication Monographs, 47,* 1-22.

Hoopes, D. S. (1981). Intercultural communication concepts and the psychology of intercultural experience. In M. D. Pusch (Ed.), *Multicultural education: A cross-cultural training approach.* Chicago: Intercultural Press.

Lustig, M. W., & Koester, J. (1996). *Intercultural competence.* New York: Harper Collins.

Martin, J. N., & Hammer, M. R. (1989). Behavioral categories of intercultural communication competence: Everyday communicators' perceptions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 13,* 303-332.

McClelland, D. C. (1958). Review and prospect. In McClelland, D.C. (Ed.). *Talent and society.* NY: Van Nostrand.

Morgan, E., & Weigel, V. (1988). *Credits and credibility: Educating professionals for cultural sensitivity.* Paper presented at the Conference on Science ahd Technology for International Development, Myrtle Beach, SC.

Morrison, A. M., & Von Glinow, M. A. (1990). Women and minorities in management. *American Psychologist, 45,* 200-207.

Natriello, G., McDill, E. L., & Pallas, A. M. (1990). *Schooling disadvantaged children: Racing against catastrophe.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Nieto, S. (1992). *Affirming diversity.* New York: Longman.

Oliver, R. T. (1962). *Culture and communication: The problem of penetrating national and cultural boundaries.* Springfield, IL: Thomas.

Parks, M. R. (1976, November). *Communication competence.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, California.

Parks, M. R. (1994). Communication competence and interpersonal control. In M. L. Knapp & G. R. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 589-618.

Parker, W. M., Valley, M. M., & Geary, C. A. (1986). Acquiring cultural knowledge for counselors in training: A multi-faceted approach. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 26,* 61 - 71.

Randolph, G., Landis, D., & Tzeng, O. (1977). The effects of time and practice upon Culture Assimilator training. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 1,* 105-119.

Ruben, B. D. (1976). Assessing communication competency for intercultural adaptation. *Group & Organization Studies, 1,* 334-354.

Ruben, R. D. (1977). Guidelines for cross-cultural communication effectiveness. *Group & Organization Studies, 2,* 470-479.

Ruben, B. D. (1988). Human communication and cross-cultural effectiveness. In L.A. Samovar, & R.E. Porter (Eds.). *Intercultural communication: A reader.* CA: Wadsworth.

Ruben, B. D., & Kealey, D. J. (1979). Behavioral assessment of communication competency and the prediction of cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 3,* 15-47.

Seidel, G. (1981). Cross-cultural training procedures: Their theoretical framework and evaluation. In S. Bochner (Ed.). *The mediating person: Bridge between cultures.* Cambridge: Schenkman.

Smith, H. (1966). *Sensitivity to people.* NY: McGraw-Hill.

Smith, S. W., Cody, M. J., Lovette, S., & Canary, D. J. (1990). Self-monitoring, gender and compliance-gaining goals. In M. J. Cody & M. L. McLaughlin (Eds.), *The psychology of tactical communication.* Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 91-134.

Snyder, M. (1974). Self-monitoring of expressive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Psychology, 30,* 528.

Spitzberg, B. H. (1989). Issues in the development of a theory of interpersonal competence in intercultural context. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 13,* 241-268.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (1984). *Interpersonal communication competence.* CA: Sage Publications.

Sue, D. W. (1994). A model for cultural diversity training. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 382-391.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1989). Identity and interpersonal bond. In M. K. Asante & W. B. Gudykunst (Eds), *Handbook of international and intercultural communication.* Newbury Park: Sage, 351-373.

Triandis, H. C. (1977). Theoretical framework for evaluation of cross-cultural training effectiveness. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 1, 195-213.

Valdivieso, R., & David, C. (1988). *Hispanics: Challenging issues for the 1990s.* Washington, D.C.: Population Trends and Public Policy.

Wiseman, R. L., & Koester, J. (1993) (Eds.). *Intercultural communication competence.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Yum, J. 0. (1989). *Communication sensitivity and empathy in culturally diverse organizations.* Paper presented at the 75th Annual Conference of Speech Communication Association, San Francisco.

Retto-kan: Japan's Inferiority Complex with the West in Contemporary Media and Culture

Erika Engstrom
Greenspun School of Communication
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

This article traces the development of the anthropological concept unique to the Japanese culture known as retto-kan, or "inferior class feeling," as it is manifested in that country's media and everyday life. Retto-kan dates back to the historical transformation of Japan from an agrarian to industrial society during the Meiji era. A side-effect of cultural borrowing which occurred during that time, this explanation for Japan's emulation of the West asserts that the Japanese hold feelings of inadequacy in terms of Western culture and physical appearance. Manifestations of this inferiority complex include examples from Japan's recent history, as retto-kan exists in contemporary culture, popular literature, and advertising media. The author offers suggestions for future research into retto-kan in several communicative contexts: societal, corporate, and international.

Retto-kan, which translates to "inferior class feeling" in English, refers to the historical/anthropological explanation for Japan's thirst for things Western. It asserts that over the course of the past century, Japan has developed an inferiority complex in terms of its status compared to the West (Rosenberg & Thompson, 1986; Nakazawa, 1993; Kitahara, 1983).

Studies in intercultural communication, especially those emphasizing the continued borrowing of Western cultural artifacts in Japan's advertising world, do mention retto-kan, but only briefly (Nakazawa, 1993; Miller, 1994). On the other hand, studies which discuss the various manifestations of the phenomenon in detail do not mention the term retto-kan specifically by name (Kitahara, 1987; Ito, 1994).

This article more fully investigates retto-kan as it relates the influence of the West (the United States and Europe) on contemporary Japanese culture and media. Using retto-kan as a theoretical guide, it attempts to explain the popularity of Western culture in Japan by providing a historical account of the beginnings of retto-kan and describing how retto-kan appears in Japanese advertising, popular literature, and everyday life. In doing so, the author hopes gaijin can better understand the unique perspective by which the Japanese view Western cultures and how their culture reflects this phenomenon today.

History of *Retto-kan*

Retto-kan finds its genesis in the *Meiji* Restoration (1868-1912), which saw the restoring of the country's power to a single emperor and its opening to the West. With these changes came the realization that the country needed to equalize itself with the power of the West (Perren,