

Intercultural Contact in the Digital Age: How Cyberspace is Changing Acculturation



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23 May 2024 (Thur)



B4-LP-05



Meeting ID: 971 8099 3566



11:00am - 12:00nn

Abstract

Traditionally intercultural contact has been constrained by physical proximity but increased access to and use of digital technologies has broken down these barriers and resulted in cultural experience being increasingly digitally mediated. Importantly, technology has fundamentally altered the experience of migrants who are able to maintain contact with their home country in a near synchronous manner regardless of their location. But research on how technology disrupts traditional models of acculturation is limited. While there is growing literature on the effects of social media on cultural adaptation and increasing explorations of digital diasporas (geographically disparate cultural communities that connect online), there is a need to re-examine frameworks of cultural adaptation which were developed when cultural contact was still largely physical. The presentation discusses recent research on how digital technology, and social media in particular, is changing how individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact, learn about and from one another, adapt to new cultural environments, and connect with their communities (both geographically near and far). The need for updated acculturation frameworks that incorporate the widespread influences of digital technology for all groups in intercultural contact are highlighted.

About the Speaker

Dr. Jaimee Stuart is a Senior Researcher and Team Lead at the United Nations University Institute in Macau (UNU Macau). She is an applied cultural and developmental psychologist specialising in digital health and well-being. Her work focuses on computer-human interaction, examining a broad range of issues related to social justice, peace, and development in the context of digital transformation. Jaimee's research has explored topics such as gendered influences on cybersecurity and AI, cyberbullying, social media literacies, digital competencies, parenting and technology, online disinhibition, and the impact of emerging technologies on mental health. Her work aims to support the creation of safe and secure online spaces. Jaimee has over 70 publications in interdisciplinary journals such as Computers and Human Behavior, Social Science and Medicine, and the Journal of Research on Adolescence. She is currently the Chair of the EQUALS consortium Steering Committee for gender equality in STEM and acted as Associate Editor for the International Journal of Intercultural Relations from 2017 – 2022 inclusive.

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