

New book explores how people build good relationships across cultural boundaries

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In a new book launched this week, Professor Helen Spencer-Oatey of the University of Warwick Department of Applied Linguistics and her co-author Professor Dániel Z. Kádár of the Hungarian Research Institute for Linguistics (NYTI) explore how people relate across cultural boundaries, a topic which is increasingly important in our interconnected world.

Should you apologize for a mistake that wasn't your fault? Is it correct to clear your plate when a dinner guest, or should you leave a small amount to show you were served enough? Can research colleagues disagree without falling out?

Drawing on a wealth of real-life examples, from accidental offense at business introductions to altercations between strangers on a train, "[Intercultural Politeness: Managing Relations across Cultures](#)" combines politeness theory, [intercultural communication](#), and cross-cultural psychology to set out a new framework for analyzing and understanding intercultural encounters.

Commenting on the importance of good [intercultural](#) communication, Professor Spencer-Oatey said:

"The current pandemic has demonstrated our interconnections with people around the world, and the vaccine developments have illustrated the huge benefits that come from international collaboration.

"At the same time, we have seen nations, regions and individuals drawing boundaries between 'them and us,' which ultimately will be detrimental to us all.

"There is a great need, therefore, to understand the processes of managing relations across all types of cultural boundaries.

"In this book, we have focused on explaining and illustrating two main things: how we evaluate and make judgements of others, and strategies for managing relations, especially after an offense or disagreement. We argue that in both these aspects we tend to draw on our own personal expectations and behavioral patterns which, if they differ significantly from those of others, can lead to relational issues."

The book introduces the issues from both a theoretical and practical perspective. The authors hope it will be of interest not only to academics but to anyone working in or with international or multicultural teams.

Professor Kádár said: "In writing the book, we've drawn on our own experiences of living and working in many different contexts, as well as our multi-disciplinary backgrounds. We very much hope that our book will help others taste for themselves the richness of working with people from all backgrounds."

More information: Helen Spencer-Oatey, University of Warwick, Dániel Z. Kádár, Dalian University of Foreign Languages, and Hungarian Research Institute for Linguistics (NYTI). DOI:

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