



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

ASIA SAVVY

NEW ZEALAND ASIA SYMPOSIUM 2020

Building cross-cultural competencies

19 September 2020

The University of Auckland Business School
12 Grafton Road, Auckland



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND ASIA
INSTITUTE

Building cross-cultural competencies



Contents

Symposium theme	4
Presentation summaries	6
Student essays	14
New Zealand Asia Institute	24
Acknowledgements	25
Contact information	26

Conference theme

Building cross-cultural competencies New Zealand Asia Symposium 2020

The 2020 Asia Savvy Symposium recognised this year as the tenth anniversary of the Asia Savvy initiative. Since 2011, over 1,000 tertiary students have attended our conference and networking events to learn about, discuss and debate a variety of topics relating to the potential Asia holds for their futures.

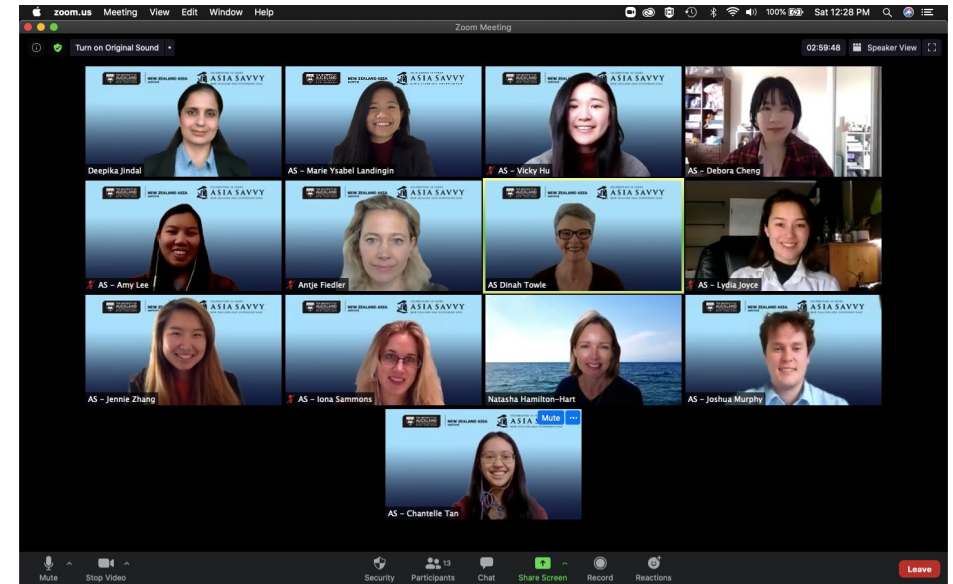
Despite COVID-19 lockdown restrictions cutting short our signature high energy in-person networking event, we were able to offer a condensed engaging event suitable for a digital platform. This year's theme focused on understanding the meaning of cross-cultural competencies and the value these competencies offer for engaging in a multi-cultural environment, both in work and social life.

Four panellists from industry relayed their own career stories, providing examples and insights of cross-cultural experiences along with skills they developed living across difficult cultures. The speakers encouraged students to embrace different cultures and see them as an opportunity to open up to new understanding about the world to make it a better place for everyone; to be open-minded and curious; and genuinely get to know people different from themselves.

During the workshop on Cross-cultural Intelligence, examples were given on how personal biases or preconceptions can affect assumptions about different cultures. To be 'cross-culturally savvy', it is important to know our own biases; to be open and curious to learning new ways; and to be non-judgmental. Simply said, the key motivator to demonstrating cross-cultural intelligence to others is showing 'good intent' along with emotional, physical and experimental learnings.

The workshop was followed by breakout sessions where small groups were encouraged to share examples of their own cross-cultural experiences, learning from one and other first-hand. This also gave them the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences using their new learnings gleaned from the panel discussion and workshop.

To participate in the conference, students were required to submit essays explaining their views on the value of developing cross-cultural competencies and opportunities for developing such competencies in New Zealand. Judges then reviewed the students' essays, awarding prizes to the top writers. The best essay prizes included an iPad and an opportunity for a one-on-one session with alumni experts from three chosen industries.



Presentation summaries

Building cross-cultural competence: Opening Address

Natasha Hamilton-Hart, Director of the New Zealand Asia Institute, welcomed everyone to the Asia Savvy 2020 virtual Symposium comprising students from the Auckland University of Technology, Victoria University of Wellington, University of Adelaide, University of Otago and the University of Auckland.

Natasha noted Asia Savvy's purpose: to provide opportunities for tertiary students to learn from expert speakers and connect with other students who share a common interest in fostering a belonging to Asia, a region important to us. She noted that we could look forward to hearing excellent speakers share reflections on

their own experiences of engaging directly with Asia throughout their careers. Their insights speak to this year's Symposium theme of Building Cross-Cultural Competencies.

Natasha urged the audience to make the most of the opportunity, not just to learn, but also to join in and participate particularly with the chat and breakout sessions. Finally, she invited attendees to stay connected for upcoming Asia Savvy Alumni networking events.



Introduction

Marie Landingin, lead for the Asia Savvy student committee acknowledged this being a milestone event as the 10th anniversary of Asia Savvy and thanked this year's sponsors – Asia New Zealand Foundation, Confucius Institute, Gong Cha, the University of Auckland Business School and UBIQ. She congratulated the committee members and ambassadors on their strong team spirit during such a roller-coaster of a year.

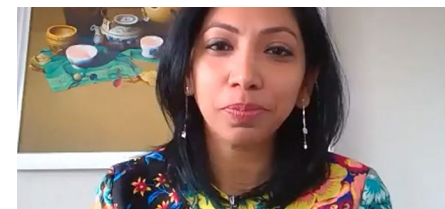
Marie described this year's conference theme, Building Cross-Cultural Competencies, as a particularly fitting for our own community of people interested in Asia and living in a

multi-cultural society, adding the Symposium coincided with Māori Language Week and the upcoming Chinese Language Week.

Before introducing the first panel, Marie shared a saying from the Philippines she found relevant to the conference theme roughly translating to 'He who does not know how to look back at where he came from will never get to his destination'. This was a relevant reminder for everyone to embrace their own cultural backgrounds together with building cross-cultural competencies around other cultures in order to grow.

Panel Discussion: Showcasing success stories

The panel was composed of Ziena Jalil, independent director, strategic consultant, and diversity and inclusion advocate; Olivia Shen, Marketing Manager – Asia, Triumph and Disaster Ltd; Jerry Clode, Founder, The Solution; and BoBae Wilson, Project Coordinator - Internships, Asia New Zealand Foundation. The panel was introduced by Debora Cheng and moderated by Deepika Jindal.



Ziena Jalil talked about 'being open to the new: new opportunities, new cultures and a new world'. She emphasised that we live in a changing world and it's important for us to adapt. She moved from Fiji to New Zealand as a University student 20 years ago. Her first degree

was in communication and then she studied international trade. Most recently, she has done a Master's in Politics and International Relations from the University of Auckland.

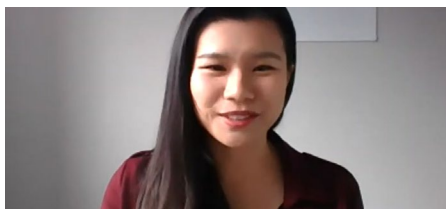
In Ziena's roles with NZTE and ENZ, she was a key member of the team which opened New Zealand Focus - New Zealand's first retail and information centre in Hong Kong and New Zealand Central - first business-to-business centre in Shanghai. Ziena mentioned that for her personally, the biggest highlights were leading the international communications and media leveraging for the historic New Zealand-China

Free Trade Agreement, supporting New Zealand businesses to grow in Singapore in her role as New Zealand Trade Commissioner, and sharing the value of a New Zealand education with potential students across Asia.

Ziena is passionate about Asia, governance, diversity and inclusion. She stated that cultural competency has been critical in all her roles. Diversity has been a big part of her life. Pointing out the diversity statistics of New Zealand, Ziena said that if you want to develop cultural competencies, you can develop them right here in New Zealand. And, given how much New Zealand is changing, and the fact that we will always rely on the rest of the world for trade and investment, it's imperative that we have these competencies.

Ziena mentioned that she has learnt some valuable lessons in her journey so far. Firstly, while we are all different, there are values that we hold in common such as respect. Additionally, it is important to learn about different cultures, practices and protocols - she provided multiple examples. Secondly learning about what 'works' in other markets based on their customer preferences, rather than what works for you in your own culture. Additionally, what works in one market may not necessarily work in another. Thirdly, being mindful of cultural values and appreciating that each individual is unique, hence assumptions about individuals, based on their cultural identities, may be wrong.

She ended her presentation with the advice to 'genuinely get to know people different from you and be open to the new'.



Olivia Shen started her presentation by asking the participants questions such as whether they had been to China and whether they had arrived in New Zealand with the intention of studying or working in China in the future. Thereafter, she invited one of the participants to share his experience. Olivia's presentation focused on 'how to navigate in Asia'. She identified herself as one quarter Kiwi as she has spent 25% of her time living in New Zealand. She is 100% Asian Foodie and has 7 years of cross-cultural professional experience. After moving to New Zealand, she worked in the banking, telecommunications and FMCG industries.

Before sharing her life story, Olivia talked about Hofstede's cultural dimensions as a theoretical lens to understand different cultures. She provided interesting insights as well as examples on the six cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long term vs short term orientation, and indulgence vs restraint. She talked about various stereotypes that people hold when they think about any culture and she brought in examples from Russia, China, South Korea and Japan.

Olivia shared her personal example of when she was in China and worked as a sales representative for Russia, how she had to get past the stereotypes that she had heard to discover the true facts for herself. She ended her presentation with a message to students 'to be prepared is half the victory. For the other half, stay open-minded and curious'.



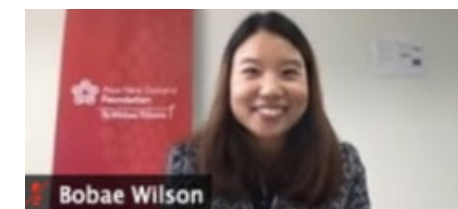
Jerry Clode grew up in Matura, a bi-lingual environment in Southland. He shared how he was always obsessed with China because two of his school teachers went on tours to China, where they could not use their currency, and tourists were given tokens so that government could see what they were spending their money on.

When he went to Otago University, he was lucky to be in the very first Chinese language course in 1997 and was fascinated by the language. Thereafter, he received a PhD scholarship to Australia, and they sent him to do an undergraduate degree in Nanchang, China. He was the only foreigner in the Jiangxi province at that time and had a full cultural immersion. After his academic career, Jerry went on to pursue his passion in consumer insights. He was offered an opportunity to be a moderator for Chinese customers. He found success in conducting interviews as his Kiwi character of being at ease and not being 'judgy' meant the Chinese customers were more comfortable in his company.

With his reputation of being an 'honest guy', Jerry could get frank insights into the tensions that were affecting people's lives, especially 'supermoms', and that provided an opportunity for brands to understand and be able to provide a solution. He was integral to the launch of Disneyland in China and that involved talking to many young families and understanding the impact Disney had, particularly in terms of education and social outcomes. He loves coffee and was involved when Starbucks launched in China. As part of that, he went

around China, drinking a lot of coffee with a lot of people, talking about many different things. The idea was to understand the role of coffee in the lives of Chinese consumers. As part of an ethnography study, he worked with Unilever investigating how families are thinking about Chinese New Year and stayed with two families for a period of a few weeks.

Jerry talked about the world having a narrow and stereotyped understanding of the Asian region and how his personal experiences in China helped breaking some of those stereotypes. He loves languages and shared that for each of the five languages he speaks, his name represents a different personality. For example, in China he feels he has a 'formal' personality and when back in New Zealand, he is a 'laid-back nature guy'. He ended his presentation with a note that 'culture should never define you or anyone else. It is best seen as multiple ways to make the world a better place'.



Bobae Wilson runs the business internship programme at Asia New Zealand Foundation. She grew up in South Korea and when she was in the University, she always had two questions in her mind. First, what does she like to do for work? Second, what is her passion? She felt that experiences will help her grow and find the answers. Always having that interest in culture, she applied for various exchange programmes in her University. She went to China as part of one such programme and then went to Uganda for an internship.

Following her passion, Bobae became an International Project Coordinator in South Korea. In that role, she worked with a lot of stakeholders in Asia. It helped her to manage the programme and at the same time, it was also a good opportunity to help students grow cultural competencies. She met her husband in one of these overseas roles.

Bobae gave an overview of the Asia New Zealand Foundation and shared the various wonderful opportunities that are offered by the Foundation. She shared a personal story about the initial period when she started working in New Zealand. Although she felt quite confident in

working in a different culture, she soon realised that she needed to learn the 'New Zealand' way, when one of her earlier communications did not go well with the recipients. She provided an interesting lesson about giving feedback when dealing with a different culture: there is no right or wrong, it is just different. She suggested four things that could help in building cultural competencies: observing your colleagues, living and working offshore, learning a different language and networking.

Workshop: Cross-cultural intelligence



The workshop was on cross-cultural intelligence and was delivered by Antje Fiedler, Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Management in the University of Auckland Business School. Firstly Antje remarked on learnings from the panel discussion about culture is very much about story-telling - learning from and reflecting on experiences. Therefore, the breakout sessions are a good opportunity for everyone to meet and talk with new people.



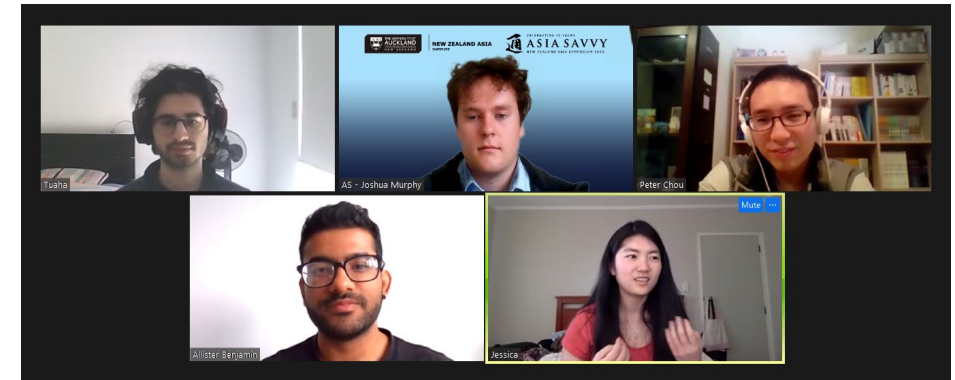
She started her presentation by asking the students to imagine they were in a pre-historic setting, sitting in a cave with a group of people,

around a fire. Suddenly someone stands up, picks up a charcoal and draws pictures of animals on the wall of the cave. Antje then asked how many of the participants would have imagined a female artist? She further emphasised that it's important to understand from this example that we learn different cultural stories, we all have biases or preconceptions.

If we want to learn cultural intelligence, it's important to be aware of your own biases, reflect and change your assumptions. She shared a video on how cultures are different across different contexts. Antje shared a framework on how we can develop our own cultural intelligence. The framework has three dimensions: cognitive (learning, understanding, interpretation), emotional (confidence, adaptive, empathy), and physical (mimic/speech, gestures, body language).



Breakout session: Cross-cultural storytelling



The workshop was followed by optional breakout sessions on cross-cultural storytelling. These sessions were made up of small groups providing an opportunity for students to share their own stories with their peers to learn from each other. A range of lively stories from different cultural experiences were shared as final takeaways from the Symposium.

Examples:

- An immigrant settled in New Zealand experienced reverse culture shock when they returned to their own 'home' country or origin and having a sense of not quite fitting or understanding recent cultural changes.
- Different types of local hospitality while travelling ranging from very formal to very informal. In some countries offering food during social gatherings is more important than in others.
- Varying expectations by employers in different cultures around expected work hours. A student working in Japan felt it was very common to work overtime. Another explained that in Japan, it was also acceptable to have a short nap during work hours in the office.
- Different ways of greeting people. For example, some culture, it is common to kiss strangers on the cheek, while others prefer handshakes.
- Indirect communication, like a vague response, used in other countries as a way of saying 'no' in order to be polite. This can create misunderstandings, and it is important to be aware of subtle cues used in language.
- Adjusting to different ideas on the distance for personal space.

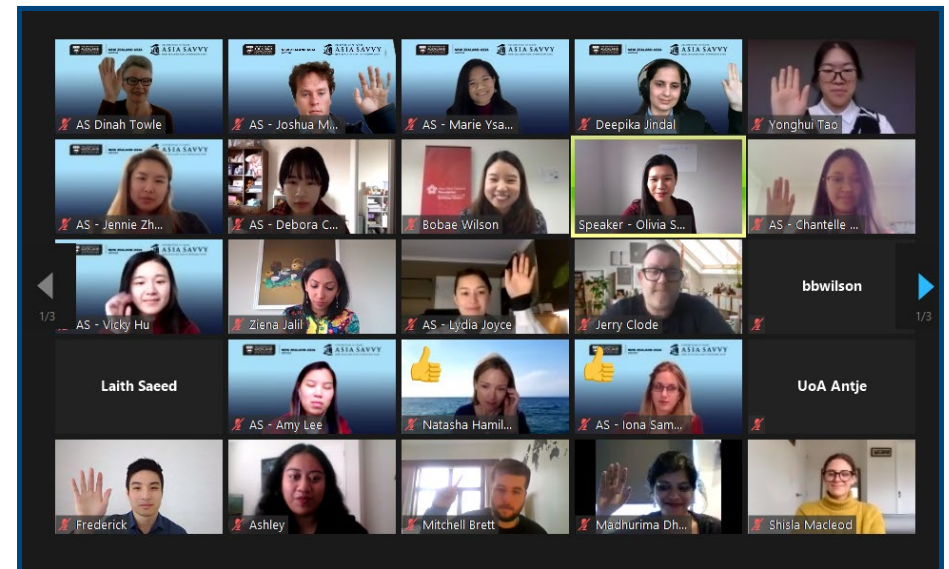
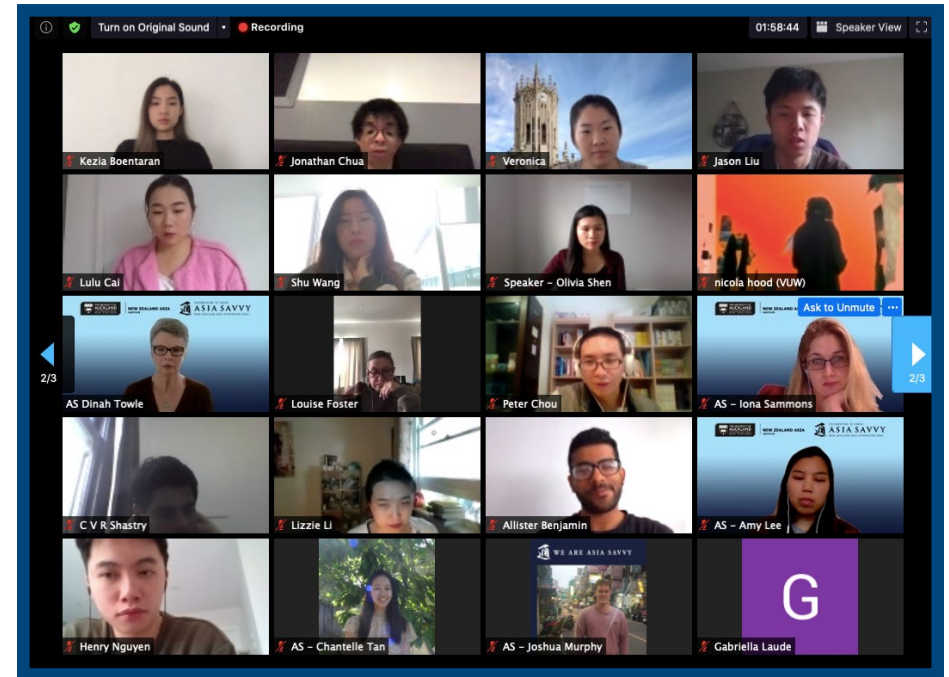
Awards and concluding remarks

Natasha Hamilton-Hart's personal take on the theme was being aware of cultural context and seeing all people as individuals. She commended the student committee, Dinah and Deepika on their hard work producing the Symposium and thanked everyone for their participation in a successful, energising event with wonderful speakers and chat contributions.

She praised the good, thoughtful and interesting essays adding how hard it was to choose the winners and recommended everyone keeps exploring and communicating and hopes they stay in touch.



These remarks were followed by drawing prizes and award presentations for the best essay prize - **Emma Sidnam** and runners-up - **Hanifa Kodirova and Niamh Masterson**.



Student essays

Participants in the Asia Savvy conference are required to complete a 300 word opinion piece on selected topics relevant to each conference theme.

- What does the term cross-cultural competency mean to you, and how do you think it is best achieved?
- Why do you think it is important to have cross-cultural competencies?
- Have you found that New Zealand's multicultural society provides opportunities to develop strong cross-cultural competencies?

Three prizes were awarded for this year's best essays – one first prize and two runners-up: two iPads and the opportunity to meet one-to-one with three experts from industry, organised by the University of Auckland Business School Alumni. The first prize was awarded to **Emma Sidnam**. The two runners-up were **Hanifa Kodriva** and **Niamh Masterson**.

The winning essays are included along with those of all other finalists.

What does the term cross-cultural competency mean to you, and how do you think it is best achieved?

Sivaram Anandasivam
Auckland University of Technology

When firms expand their operations globally, they encounter differences in the way that they operate in different countries. For example the procedures and strategies developed for their home country might be unsuccessful in foreign countries. The way that things got done back at home can be the opposite of how things are done in foreign lands. It can be said that such differences can be attributable to the culture of that particular nation.

Thus the discussion encounters the concept of culture. As is further elaborated on, there are many definitions for a nation's or organization's culture. Academics have presented their different viewpoints and methods for determining cultures. The discussion will aim to provide some of these definitions and highlight on some of the contemporary viewpoints regarding culture and its implications for operations in global organizations.

From a business context, the culture of a nation will have an impact on factors such as management of employees, negotiation procedures, drafting of contracts, the quality of human resources and the selling and marketing of products. A nation's culture is not something that can be observed first hand. Culture is based on certain assumptions and values. Thus these will translate into behaviours which are manifested. For example Americans are generally highly time conscious. Time spent not achieving anything is considered as time wasted. Thus they are constantly on the move trying to accomplish something. This behavior stems from their assumptions and values such as time is money etc.

Another important feature is that culture is not something that can be completely understood. There can be considerable variations of behaviour even amongst members of the same culture. Also it cannot be accurately evaluated prior to actual experience. As such the objective of this discussion is to analyze why the culture of a country will affect businesses practices in that country. The discussion will also look at how culture will affect an organization's ability to conduct business in that particular country. It is here that the implications for issues such as managing people, selling of products and negotiations etc. will be discussed.

Why do you think it is important to have cross-cultural competencies?

(Sai Venkata) Vinay Chittuluru
University of Auckland

Culture is defined as different ideas, habits, beliefs and traditions of different countries and people. Moreover, understanding different cultures will enhance the skills of a leader to handle the cross-cultural team. These skills are known as cross-cultural competencies. This essay will describe the importance of cross-cultural competencies for a global leader to enable excellent team performance through three critical competencies.

Cross-cultural competency is crucial to becoming a global leader who handles diverse cultural groups authentically. By having cross-cultural competencies, the leader can create authentic relationships with individuals from different cultures. For example, in an MNE, the team leader drives representatives, from multiple nationalities and cultures to accomplish the goals of the organisation. Still, because of cultural diversity among team members; because of different understandings of professional manners; and because of

conflicting working styles of team members, the team members will not build trust and not collaborate to work together. As a result, the leader will notice a detrimental impact on the team's performance.

However, if the leader has cross-culturally competencies, then the leader will have a greater "tolerance for ambiguity" and effectively manage ambiguous and different situations faced by the team members. The tolerance for ambiguity is one of the cross-cultural competencies. Additionally, these cross-culturally skilled leaders will engage in significant and meaningful interactions with individuals of different cultures to understand the nuances faced by them. Hence, leaders will use these high-quality "cross-cultural experiences" to identify and apply culturally diverse appropriate business behaviours to engage dissimilar team members to build trust. Thus, obtaining cross-cultural experiences is an intercultural competency.

Also, suppose the leader has the "willingness" to have fewer rigid views of right and wrong. The leader will embrace different cultures, both on a personal level and as a leader in the organisation, to adjust with the diverse cultures of the team members and to make them comfortable while working in a team. Thus, willingness is a cross-cultural competency. Hence, if the leader has cross-cultural competencies, then the leader will empower and motivate the team to communicate among themselves openly and frequently.

Finally, the leader will successfully integrate the different perspectives of dissimilar team members to make the team perform adequately.

The team leader with cross-cultural competencies can engage team members and improve performance as compared to a leader with no intercultural skills. Also, tolerance

for ambiguity, cross-cultural experiences and willingness are essential skills of a cross-culturally competent leader.

Why do you think it is important to have cross-cultural competencies?

Hanifa Kodirova
Victoria University of Wellington
(Best essay prize runner-up)

I live in a hyper-globalised world. My morning coffee is from Colombia, my university lecturer is Polish, my clothes are American, and my laptop is made in China. I open my phone and headlines from Europe, the Middle East and Asia scroll in. Even I, as an immigrant, am imported into this country from Uzbekistan.

This lifestyle did not happen by accident. It took years of political negotiation, ground-breaking scientific research, the development of norms which left protectionism in the dust and opened the gates to a new type of success beyond and between borders. It is precisely because people before me got cross-cultural competency right, that I enjoy the fruits of this globe without leaving my town.

Cross-cultural competence is the successful interaction between people of different cultures; it is the ability to adapt in unfamiliar cultural settings; and it is the display of respect and curiosity towards those who live life from a different perspective. It is important to have cross-cultural competence if we want to continue to flourish, develop and attain those unattainable levels of success. From what we already know, the world works in magical ways when working in unison, and the worst tragedies occur when we build borders against others on our lands and in our minds.

But, material and economic success is not the only reason why we need to be cross-culturally

competent. The human population is slowly learning about the importance of individual rights and the rights of communities to be who they are without shame or prejudice. We have a long way to go, but if we train ourselves to be cross-culturally competent, we value other people as people with valuable perspectives on life, with valuable moral outlooks that they hold dear to heart, and we learn to behave as brothers and sisters, rather than "trading partners" or "delegates".

Cross-cultural competency is the key to unlocking an ideal world - all it takes is an open mind and an open heart.

Why do you think it is important to have cross-cultural competencies?

Memphis Lun
Victoria University of Wellington

Today's world is marked by complexities and challenges requiring the knowledge to learn, work and live together. This has created a need to understand and embrace diversity in all its forms. It is vital individuals have cross-cultural competencies, as they are the important skills that allow individuals to effectively collaborate in culturally diverse environments.

There is a certain concern for the wellbeing of people beyond the home nation and country they identify with; a belonging greater than their current local community. This concern is about how we act and relate to ourselves and to others based on universal values.

I come from a culturally diverse background, where my father is Chinese, and my mother is New Zealand European. This background introduced me to cross-cultural competencies such as awareness, an open attitude and communication skills that can be used to engage with others across cultural boundaries. I

have found these competencies to be extremely valuable to me as I got older.

New Zealand offers a diverse environment for cultures all over the world where those of Pakeha descent are a minority in a vast number of New Zealand kindergartens. Post-teenage years, I have entered a world which brings together people from various ethnic backgrounds, religions and values. An ability to engage with people on a respectful and open level has allowed me to make connections that have grown into strong relationships.

We need people who see interactions, issues and complexities all around the world and who can act on them by applying their global knowledge to resolve them in various ways. The key to learning about global and cross-cultural competencies is learning how to use these at an early age. Raising children in an environment that refines cross-cultural competencies enables them to develop the social skills that will become highly valuable later on in life. This is what makes cross-cultural competencies so important. This is what people need in this everchanging and diverse world.

Have you found that New Zealand's multicultural society provides opportunities to develop strong cross-cultural competencies?

Shisla Macleod
University of Auckland

When I moved to New Zealand seven years ago, I was surprised to see such incredible diversity. I had never met a Pacific Islander; never interacted with a Chinese; and had never even seen someone from India outside a movie screen. I must admit, I was also slightly afraid, as I was unsure of which 'group' I could fit in to.

Such 'groups' – Chinese societies, Indian

communities, Latin clubs - are often used for the argument that different cultures alienate themselves to others and deny the opportunity to develop cross-cultural relationships. They are even sometimes used as an excuse for people's ignorance toward another culture. I disagree with this and argue that everyone in New Zealand can develop strong cross-cultural competencies, and that there are plenty of opportunities to do so.

In an average day, it would be rare not to interact with at least one person of a different culture. These simple interactions assist in developing cross-cultural competencies, whether people know it or not. For example, just by going to local dairies, you will see that majority of them are owned by Indian families. This subconsciously teaches us that Indians are very family-orientated; and you may find yourself asking about your Indian colleague's family's wellbeing more often.

Events, such as Diwali, Chinese Lantern Festival and Pacifica, are open to the public and give us a better understanding of these cultures. Networking events and workshops, such as Asia Savvy, are often free and provide further opportunities for interaction with those from different cultures.

Going back to my story, aside from the initial shock, I never really had to think about the diversity again. Being a Brazilian, people were just as curious about me as I was about them. I told them about myself and they taught me about their place in Aotearoa. I realised that these groups do often stay together, because it is natural for people seek comfort of those who understand their own background. I do this when I meet Latin people: it is like a home outside of home. But this is not to say that I, or any of these people, would deny the opportunity for an outsider to join them.

To conclude, New Zealand can be thought of as a whole big world, in a small piece of land. To develop strong cross-cultural competencies, all you have to do is cross the invisible border and put yourself out there.

What does the term cross-cultural competency mean to you, and how do you think it is best achieved?

Niamh Masterson
University of Auckland
(Best essay prize runner-up)

Cross-cultural competency is a loaded term. With it comes, there is the willingness to not only learn about other cultures, but to be able to integrate yourself into multicultural settings and begin to understand and communicate with others from these cultures.

To me, cross-cultural competency is being able to build relationships with people who delve deeper into learning about their cultural values and how that influences their decision-making. Both on a day-to-day basis and in a business setting, I believe that heritage and culture have an inherent impact on the choices we make and through better understanding this, a more inclusive world view can be achieved. Not only this, but as relationships continue to expand in terms of global networking, the ability to communicate and collaborate with people from multiple cultures is essential in continuing to develop as an individual in any kind of setting, whether it be business, political or social.

As an individual who is of both Asian and European heritage, I continue to adapt and learn more about the various ways I view the world and how that is influenced by my own culture. My bi-cultural heritage has given me insight into the different and sometimes opposing behaviours of my two cultures. However, acknowledging these contrasts has provided me

with the opportunity to not only recognise my own diversity, but also to appreciate the breadth of cultural knowledge that it has given me.

Having a multicultural background is a privilege, however it is not a necessity in being able to gain cross-cultural competency skills. Achieving cross-cultural competency is like most things continuously evolving. I believe that finding first the motivation to acknowledge diversity and having attitudinal awareness towards cultural behaviours and values is essential in becoming someone with these cross-cultural competency skills. Moreover, building on these skills through communication is what I consider to be invaluable in terms of sustaining these skills and integrating yourself into a competitive yet inclusive cross-cultural environment.

Why do you think it is important to have cross-cultural competencies?

Emma Sidnam
Victoria University of Wellington
(Best essay prize winner)

We are born into the ways our parents live.
 The way they eat and drink, breathe and think,
 It is all pre-written for us.
 The paths we follow are not our own,
 We are moulded by society as surely as
 A river flows into the ocean,
 And it's true that we grow
 Up, we form our own views,
 But our cultures are imbued
 In our hearts as surely as a stars only shine
 in the dark -
 And we must allow ourselves
 To break out of the night,
 To let the light in.

The world is a vast trove
 Of colours, spices, scents
 and the more we see, the more

we want to see,
 When we realise that our realities
 Are only reality on one side of the sea,
 We may grieve.

But we should treat our grief as an opportunity
 To learn, and to see what's further afield.

And more,
 To stay within one way of life
 Is to only live in one frame of mind
 When in fact we have access to multitudes.
 In New Zealand,
 To restrict oneself from the wonders seven
 Is to live under the shadow of a colonial heaven
 And at that point, we're just ignorant.

Because the world is becoming increasingly
 global,
 Few people stay in one place,
 And it is important to appreciate
 That our way is not the only way,
 That when we are face to face
 With strangers
 We should see them as potential friends,
 Connections can span borders,
 Bring divisions to their end.

And that extends to language,
 The ability to speak,
 For a culture is stunted
 Without its tongue,
 The way a person is stunted
 With just one.

Because the thing about translation
 Is that the words are never exactly the same,
 And when we translate our days
 Into new places, we realise that once
 We start writing our names with
 New ways of living, we gain
 Whole other versions of ourselves.
 We think that we know our minds,
 Until our lines are in a different script.
 We may think we have our ways of life,

Our manuscripts in black and white,
But that is just why we have to branch out
And see beyond.

Why do you think it is important to have cross-cultural competencies

Emily Talbot
The University of Auckland

In a globalised world, a country's ability to connect with and comprehend foreign cultures has become a competitive necessity.

The rise of technology has sped up production processes and increased productivity. This is great for business. However, the capabilities of even ground-breaking artificial intelligence and computer technologies are exhaustive. Machines are the masters of efficiency but what they lack is empathy. To continue innovating in an ever-changing world, it is human minds that we must expand. If we want to maintain diplomatic and comprehensive relationships with each other; as colleagues and neighbours, we must learn to understand each other. This is where cross-cultural competency comes in.

Auckland is the world's fourth most diverse city with 39% of its population born overseas. The myriad of cultures this statistic encompasses represents how incredibly diverse New Zealanders are. However, with greater diversity comes a greater responsibility to provide people living in Aotearoa with the knowledge, skills and motivation that will enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural environments. The variety of skill sets offered by diverse teams is exceptionally advantageous but can be problematic if not managed with careful consideration.

Individuals with mono-cultural perspectives risk dividing groups by expressing their frustration when differing opinions are

voiced. Incredulosity that arises here is toxic in any environment and is dangerously demoralising. This is not uncommon in New Zealand, where, in a postcolonial world, New Zealand Europeans are the dominant ethnic group, living alongside Māori, Pasifika, Asian New Zealanders and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African people. According to the Human Rights Commission, one in three complaints received by them are regarding racial discrimination. It would be impossible for us to forget the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings that shook the globe and shattered the hearts of millions. Numerous instances of overt and covert racism continue to taint our news headlines, despite the leadership of a vehemently anti-racist leader, Jacinda Ardern.

What does this show us? Misunderstandings and dissonance between racial groups are often rooted in individuals' poorly developed cross-cultural competencies. We must engage in discussions that proudly bring to light our cultural differences and bind us together with our common humanity. By methodically breaking down our cultural conditioning, we can work together to dismantle racism in our homes and our businesses, building a more prosperous and equitable future for all.

What does the term cross-cultural competency mean to you, and how do you think it is best achieved?

Sze Mun Tan
University of Auckland

We live in an increasingly diverse world where interactions with people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds are inevitable. We cannot expect everyone to behave or think like us as people from different cultures see and do things differently. As a university student, I often find myself working in teams that consist of people

from different cultural backgrounds. Working in a team with people from diverse backgrounds can be challenging as different people have different perspectives. Over the years, I have developed cross-cultural competency to adapt to a multi-cultural environment.

In my opinion, cross-cultural competence is the ability to put yourselves in others' shoes to understand their cultures which is extremely important for effective interactions. Cross-cultural competence is important to build strong relationships with people all around us. There are several aspects to acquire cross-cultural competence. Firstly, we need to have a deep understanding of our own culture. Without a good understanding of our own culture, we will not be able to understand others' cultures. Secondly, we need to be willing to learn about others' cultures genuinely. It is important to be open-minded to truly understand their cultural practices. We should never put our culture above others' as every culture is unique and learning to accept and respect those differences is extremely important. Lastly, we need to put effort into developing cross-cultural skills which include non-verbal communication. To develop cross-cultural skills, we need to first change our prejudices towards other cultures. We need to have a positive attitude towards learning the differences in others' cultures.

Our goal towards achieving cultural competence should not be mastery as we will always meet new people with new cultures and backgrounds. Thus, I believe cross-cultural competency is best achieved by simply just having the willingness to open our hearts to learn about others' cultures. The key to learning about the cultures of others is to listen. Pay attention and listen carefully with interest when others speak. Be curious to ask and learn about their language, food and beliefs. Life becomes more colourful and interesting when we invite them into our world and learn all we can about theirs. Embracing cultural

differences is the key to success as we live in an increasingly diverse society.

What does the term cross-cultural competency mean to you, and how do you think it is best achieved?

Rena Zhu
Auckland University of Technology

To inspire is to learn, to learn is to be willing and to be willing you have to be open and optimistic to accepting experiences. These words all interrelate to one another through common themes of connection and relationships. Whether it is honing close relationships with friends, developing closer bonds with colleagues and networks or fostering an interpersonal relationship with yourself, first and foremost we must understand the term "culture".

It goes without saying that the term "culture" is a very confusing word - to break it down into one of its simpler forms, the Latin derivative of culture is "colere" which means to "tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture".

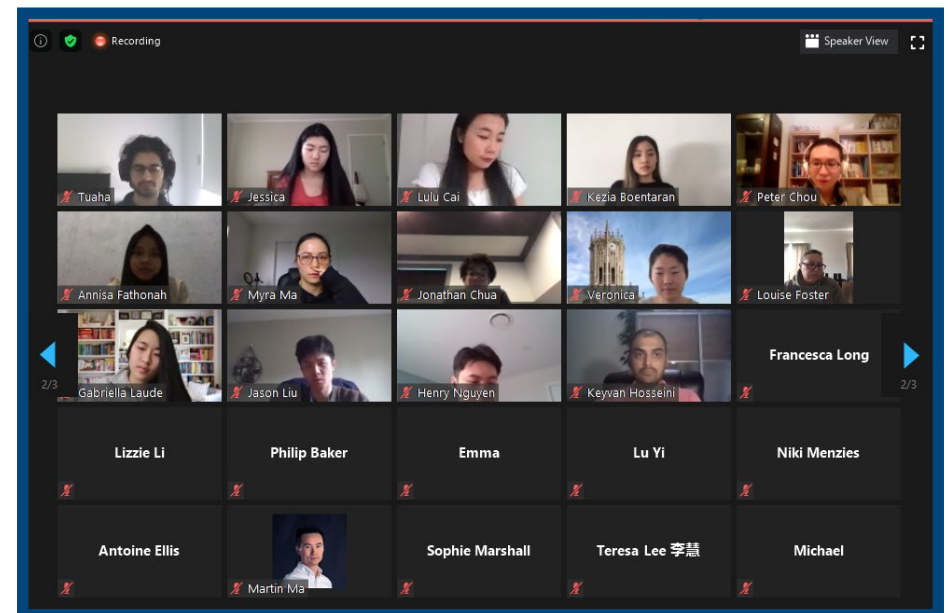
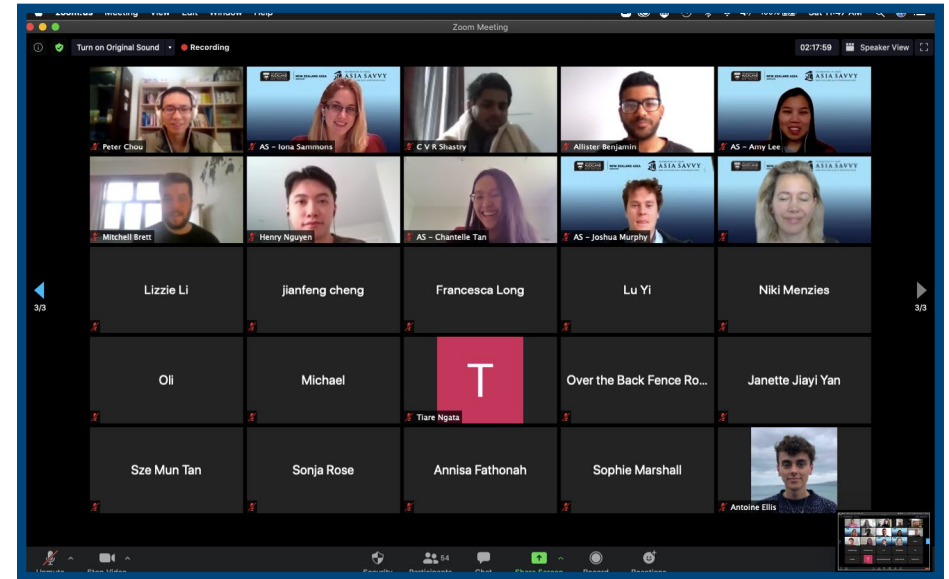
So, what does the term "cross-cultural competency" have anything to do with culture? According to psychology, it is understood that one of their most important goals is to achieve "understanding of the nature of competence in the international workplace, in diplomatic circles, in the board rooms of major worldwide companies and organisations, in counselling clinics and hospitals, in multicultural schools, and in a wide variety of cross-cultural settings". Not only does this highlight the many areas within our society where cross-cultural interactions take place, but also shines light to illustrate the importance of developing cross-cultural competencies to communicate with others in a more intimate level.

To enable yourself to cross paths with others and develop a sense of openness and perspective, you first need to be willing and able - your willingness and ability as a pair compliment your capability to take on other people's perspectives without pre-misconceptions. It is common within educationalists to express attitudes called implicit bias. The definition of implicit bias is "an unconscious attitude or stereotype that affects our actions, beliefs, and memories. When we're unaware of these notions we may hold, they can lead to unintentional discrimination."

Similarly, if we want to achieve cultural competency, we must overcome some of our unconscious thoughts or biases. This may be difficult due to how different each of our past experiences are, our beliefs and our cultures. To overcome implicit bias, or to establish traits such as emotional resilience, flexibility, openness, perceptual acuity, social initiative, empathy, and tolerance of ambiguity which foster cross-cultural competencies, we should practice self-awareness and implement incremental changes to adapt to our cross-cultural society.

Although we are surrounded by diverse cultures and people in New Zealand, many of us do not have the conscious skills to build on what we have to strengthen our cultural engagements. Whether cross-cultural competence resides within the person or is manifest within the context of intercultural interactions is an important conceptual issue with major consequences for measurement.

My philosophy on cross-cultural competency is that one must be open to past, present and future experiences. Through engaging in and with a variety of cultures, understanding and tending to those who surround you (the earth) will help you sustain growth especially when you are open and nurturing the all the forms that culture comes in. Everyone and anyone can benefit from establishing cross-cultural competencies especially if you want to succeed in many aspects of society.



The New Zealand Asia Institute (NZAI)

The New Zealand Asia Institute (NZAI) was established in May 1995 as a research institute of the University of Auckland. It has been hosted by the University of Auckland Business School since 2009. The Institute aims to foster better understanding of Asia among New Zealanders and to increase awareness of Asia in this country.

The mission of the NZAI is to:

- Undertake, support and disseminate research that addresses the needs of New Zealanders for improved understanding of contemporary Asia.
- Provide visibility and leadership for the development of research expertise on Asia within the University.
- Contribute to building the capabilities of New Zealand business and government to develop productive relationships in Asia.
- Contribute to developing Asia-relevant awareness, skills and knowledge among students.

As part of the Business School, the NZAI support's the School's strategic focus on knowledge of international business. Our focus on Asia recognizes the importance of this region in economic and cultural terms, and the need to better understand this dynamic region.

The Institute is proud to have supported the Asia Savvy student conference since 2011. Through bringing together and engaging students from across New Zealand, along with businesses and community leaders, we hope to create and sustain a platform for engagement with Asia.

Acknowledgements

NZAI and the Asia Savvy committee would like to thank Antje Fiedler, Dinah Towle and Deepika Jindal for their valued contributions towards developing the conference along with the ambassadors who volunteered their energy and time towards making the conference a success.

Additionally, NZAI acknowledges the generous support from sponsors for this year's conference.

Sponsored by:



CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE



BUSINESS SCHOOL

Supported by:



NEW ZEALAND ASIA INSTITUTE



ASIA SAVVY

Asia Savvy conference contact:

Dinah Towle
New Zealand Asia Institute
Email: d.towle@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: 09 923 1636

www.asia-savvy.com



Asia Savvy Conference



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND ASIA
INSTITUTE