# Individual, Institutional and International: Three Aspects of Intercultural Communication

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**Abstract**  This chapter starts by revisiting the three main sets of overarching questions that guided the Macao International Forum out of which grew this book. The second part, "Individual Cultures and the Individual as Cultural Artifact", focuses on the first corner of a three-part triangular perspective, and begins by considering the original meanings of "individual" and "artifact", and how those meanings have developed and expanded over time. To some extent reversing the idea that artifacts are, by definition, things made by humans, I propose that each of us is as much an artifact as the objects we make.

In the third part of the chapter, Institutional Cultures, I contrast the relatively new idea of individuals as cultural artifacts, with institutional cultures, which have a long-documented history, even though individuals have been around for far longer than the institutions they eventually created. I also consider how such institutions, as extensions and manifestations of societal cultures, reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the individuals and groups who created them. The fourth section explores the amorphous idea of "International Culture", using the concept of "Internet Culture" as a way of concretizing the notion of "International Culture". The chapter concludes by connecting the three corners of the triangle – Individual, Institutional, and International/Internet Cultures – to the three main sets of overarching questions that guided the Forum.

## 1    Introduction

As we saw in the Introduction chapter of this volume, the international conference out of which this volume grew focused on three main questions:

Q1. What are the challenges facing, on the one hand, government and educational institutions, and, on the other hand, individual educators and students, in adapting to an increasingly internationalized educational environment?

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Q2. What are the challenges of intercultural communication vis-à-vis these invisible (or partly visible) constructed boundaries that intersect society, even in today's increasingly fluid, dynamic, hybridized and globalized world?

Q3. What challenges to intercultural communication, as individuals/cultures/groups interact with each other, are posed by ideological considerations, which may not always be fully conscious or explicitly articulated, but which are nevertheless powerful forces affecting decision-making behaviour?

These are complex questions, which, together, cover an expansive area of theory and practice, in relation to intercultural communication in Asia, revolving around the three central themes of Education, Language and Values. An overarching question then emerges: How can such broad and deep questions be connected? One way of doing that is to employ another set of three-part relationships, which I will do in this chapter, between the Individual as Artifact, Institutions as Cultural Artifacts, and the Internet as a form of "International Culture".

What follows, then, is a three-part conceptualization of intercultural communication, based on the notion of Three Is: Individual, Institutional and International. The first "I" stands for "Individual", and is based on the idea that each of us is a cultural artifact, which challenges the notion that artifacts are things made by humans, as I claim that humans are as much cultural artifacts as the things they make. The second "I" is for "Institutional Culture", as all institutions have not only an overarching culture, but also myriad sub-cultures. The third "I" makes the amorphous notion of "International Culture" more concrete by focusing on "Internet Culture", starting with two competing propositions: The Internet has No Culture vs. The Internet is All Cultures.

There are several ways in which Internet Culture(s) could relate to International Culture(s). For example, the claim could be made that Internet Culture embraces all other cultures, and so is inclusive in the broadest possible sense, or that the Internet captures, albeit eclectically and in an ad hoc manner, enough individual and international cultures to be a viable platform for global communication, across space and time, in ways that were not possible before. Similar claims could be made that Internet Culture is somehow "neutral", in the sense that it "neutralizes" cultural differences across the board, thereby creating a level playing field, and/or that Internet Culture may in some sense "homogenize" difference, so that people can communicate across the Internet, in spite of external regular cultural differences, making the Internet a "culture-free" zone. It may be too soon to say which of these two claims could be more or less true than the other, as it may depend on the country, context and culture being used as the reference point when considering the two claims.

We can use this triangular perspective as a way of connecting recurring themes regarding intercultural communication in Asia, in relation to Education, Language and Values. It should also be pointed out that each of these concepts – Individual Culture, Institutional Culture, and International/Internet Culture – could be a chapter, or a book, in their own right. Indeed, a large number of large volumes have been written on Institutional Culture and Internet Culture. However, as the purpose of this chapter is to present these three concepts as concisely as possible, each of the three main "I"s will be explored in a preliminary manner (with more on this relationship to come in following publications).

## 2 Individual Cultures and the Individual as Cultural Artifact

Looking into the origin of words is something of an occupational hazard for those of us who do language for a living. And if we are going to consider this concept of the "Individual as Artifact", then it helps to understand what we mean. According to Harper (2016), the word "individual", as an adjective, comes from the early fifteenth century, with the original meaning being "one and indivisible, inseparable" with reference to the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, reflecting perhaps the male bias in words and their meanings at that time (and some would say, still today). By around 1610, the meaning had become somewhat more gender-neutral, defined as "single, separate, of but one person or thing" and by 1889, "individual" also meant "intended for one person", as in an "individual portion".

The meanings of "individual" as a noun followed a similar semantic and syntactic trajectory, but its original meaning, in 1600, was "a single object or thing", which grew to mean "a single human being, as opposed to a group, etc." by the 1640s, with the colloquial sense of "person" attested from 1742. It is also worth noting that the Latin "individuum" as a noun meant an atom, or indivisible particle, and in early fifteenth century Middle English "individuum" meant "individual member of a species". The educational implications of such meanings are alluded to in the example statements given in the online *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary*: "We try to treat our students as individuals", and "If nothing else, the school will turn her into an individual". Such definitions may reflect a cultural bias towards individuality as an inherently good thing in the countries that used to "own" English, such as the U.K., the U.S., Canada and Australia. As we noted in the Introduction chapter, such biases may be especially important when comparing and contrasting cultures that are characterized as being towards the more Individualistic end of the Collectivistic-Individualistic Cultural Continuum with those at the more Collectivistic end, which includes many Asian cultures, perhaps especially those described as "Confucian Heritage Cultures" (a term contested by, for example, Wang 2013) such as China, Vietnam, Singapore, Korea and Japan (See, for example, Phuong-Mai et al. 2005; Tran 2013).

Moving on to *artifact* (spelled *artefact* in UK English), we find a shorter and more recent history, starting in around 1821, when the word meant "anything made by human art", from the Italian *artefatto*, which was created by combining *arte*, "by skill", with *factum*, "thing made", which in turn came from *facere*, "to make, do". Harper (2016) also notes that the spelling of "artifact" with an "i" came later, in the 1880s, and that the archeological meaning dates from the 1890s. The modern meaning of "artefact" is given in the *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary* as: "an object that is made by a person, such as a tool or a decoration, especially one that is of historical interest", and the example given of how it is used in a sentence is: "The museum's collection includes artefacts dating back to prehistoric times". One of the consequences of such definitions is that artifacts are seen as things made by people, but the people themselves are not usually seen as artifacts, unless the act of procreation is seen as the making of "human artifacts" or humans *as* artifacts.

This may be one of the reasons why the concept of the "Individual as Artifact" appears to be a somewhat original idea. For example, Google Scholar shows around 4,000,000 hits for "Individual" and around 1.3 million hits for "Artifact" (and, reflecting the dominance of U.S. spelling, only 330,000 hits with the British spelling). But, interestingly, there appear to be no exact matches for the term "Individual as Artifact" in the trillions of pages that Google claims to search. Some research has touched on this concept, for example, in cognitive science, Newman et al. (2014) asked, in their study of "Individual Concepts and their Extensions", in the title of their article: "Are artworks more like people than artifacts?" (pp. 647–662). In answering their own questions about identity, Newman et al. concluded that: "there are important ways in which judgments about ART appear to be more similar to judgments about PERSONS (in their reliance on sameness of substance) than judgments about other kinds of artifacts" (p. 658). However, what we are asking here is: To what extent can a person be considered an artifact?

There have also been explorations of this concept of "Individual as Artifact" in philosophy (see, for example, Errol Katayama's *Aristotle on artifacts: A metaphysical puzzle*, 1999), but few, if any, in education. However, in the broad area of language and meaning, some works have alluded to this concept. For example, Ezell and O'Keeffe's edited collection, *Cultural artifacts and the production of meaning: The page, the image, and the body* (1994), explored such concerns as "the implications of reproduction in manuscript and print cultures, the changing dynamics of print and authorship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the visual art of post modern books, the psychotechnology [*sic*] of memory in modern fiction, and 'body art' as the concrete expression of the visceral realism of tragedy" (back cover). Whether body art is indeed such an expression of tragedy is open to question. But Ezell and O'Keeffe did see the connection between the human body and cultural artifacts, in which all three – the printed page, the created image, and the human body – can all be reproduced by different means, with varying degrees of sameness or differentness, compared to the original, which echoes the conclusions of Newman et al. (2014). More specifically focused on language, the philosopher Andy Clark argued that language is "in many ways the ultimate artefact" (Clark 1997, p. 218), although this view has been challenged by other philosophers, such as Wheeler (2004).

Having considered the meanings of and relationships between individuals and artifacts, we can now consider what is meant by "cultural artifact", and here we see a wide range of applications and possibilities. For example, 35 years ago, Marsden and Nachbar (1982) wrote about "movies as artifacts" in their cultural criticism of popular film, and from an information sciences and cataloging perspective, Smiraglia (2008) described "documents as cultural artifacts" (pp. 25–37). In *Frames within frames* (2001), Oberhardt described art museums as cultural artifacts, and as a way of teaching theology and religion, Campbell (2014) created activities based on "religious cultural artifacts" (p. 343). Regarding technology and new media, Sterne (2006) reported on the digital music-playing device known as an "mp3" as a cultural artifact. According to the BBC WebWise team, in addition to being a physical object, mp3 is also "a digital music format for creating high-quality sound files"

which "transformed the way people buy and listen to music" (2012). Ten years ago, the mp3 player was not only "at the center of important debates around intellectual property and file-sharing" but it was also, according to Sterne, "a cultural artifact in its own right" (Sterne 2006, p. 825). The basis for that claim is that the mp3 is (or was) "an item that 'works for' and is 'worked on' by a host of people, ideologies, technologies and other social and material elements" (p. 826), which highlights a number of important aspects of cultural artifacts.

One of the most interesting areas of study, related to the concept of the Individual as Cultural Artifact, looks at the human body – dead or alive – as a cultural artifact. A study of ritualistic and ceremonial artifacts to do with death was carried out by Curşeu and Pop-Curşeu (2011), who describe their study as "an exploratory cultural artifact analysis" (p. 371–387) of a burial ground in Romania known as the Merry Cemetery of Săpânţa. In terms of what constitutes a cultural artifact and how they come into being, Curşeu and Pop-Curşeu explained that: "Communities, as social groups that share cultural values and engage in joint activity, often develop cultural artifacts which represent patterns of community change, dynamics of interpersonal and inter-group relations, and critical historical and socio-political events" (p. 371), which emphasizes the communal nature of such artifacts.

This tendency to see artifacts as objects made by humans but not to see ourselves as artifacts or "made objects" may reflect a natural human tendency to think of humans as "special" or "different", which goes back at least 2500 years to Aristotle's description of humans as "rational animals". An important aspect of the difference between ourselves and other animals is the brain size of humans, and focusing on that particular organ, archeologist Steven Mithen and cognitive neuroscientist Lawrence Parsons asked, at the beginning of their article on "the brain as a cultural artifact" (2008, pp. 415–422): "Where does biology end and culture begin?" (p. 415). Mithen and Parsons explain that, by describing the brain "as an artefact of culture" they mean that "both its anatomy and function have been unintentionally influenced by the cultural contexts in which it has evolved and in which it develops within each individual" (pp. 415–416).

That approach to the human brain relates to the idea that each of us is a "made object" – shaped as much by the world around us as we shape it, which in turn relates to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. As Whorf wrote, in 1952, language is "not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself a shaper of ideas" (p.5, quoted in Kim 2000, p.100). In the same way that language, as well as being a means of communication, shapes us and the world around us, human beings not only create artifacts, but we ourselves are artifacts. As Mithen and Parsons put it: "The body, whether living or dead, is as much a cultural artefact as a biological entity" (2008, p. 415), and they go further, stating that: "Once human bodies are no longer living, their potential as cultural artefacts becomes even greater" because "Dead brains can also become cultural objects" (p. 415), a famous example of which is the post-mortem brain of Albert Einstein (see, for example, Hao 2014). It is also worth noting that these dead brains, while being a biological relic, also exist in the works that have been produced by those bodies that housed their brains, which are themselves also artifacts.

Commenting on the need for greater interdisciplinary approaches in this area, Mithen and Parsons state that: "historians need to become more scientifically literate, while biologists and physiologists have to become more historically minded and appreciate just how much our brains are products of society and culture" (2008, p. 421). Their comment points to the on-going need for more interdisciplinary studies, not only between archeology and cognitive neuroscience, but also between cultural studies, language studies and education.

That need for greater "inter-disciplinarity" was identified a decade before Mithen and Parsons (2008), by Hinde in his book, *Individuals, relationships and culture* (1987), in which he described the "division between the biological and the social sciences" as "an unfortunate consequence of implying a clear distinction between the biological and social sides of human nature" (p. vii). Thirty years later those divisions are not as great as they used to be, but it appears that we still have some way to go before the gap between these two sciences is fully bridged. And in relation to the bi-directional nature of individual-artifact relations referred to above, Hinde also noted that: "the actual artifacts, institutions, myths, etc. are seen as expressions of the culture" that "may in turn *act back upon* and influence culture in the minds of the individuals" (1987, p. 4, emphasis added).

Having explored the first "I", for Individual", we can now consider the second "I" of "Institutional Culture".

## 3   Institutional Cultures

In this section, I will look at how the relationships between individuals and institutions are reflected in the ways in which groups of individuals create institutions, as extensions and manifestations of societal cultures, and the ways in which those institutions, as artifacts, reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the individuals who created them. However, in contrast to notions of individuals as cultural artifacts, which appear to be relatively new, institutional cultures have a long-documented history, which may be somewhat surprising, given that individuals have been around far longer than the institutions they eventually created. For example, according to Anne Goldar and Robert Frost (2004), in the introduction to their edited collection, *Institutional culture in early modern society* – by which they mean Europe from around the late fifteenth century to the late eighteenth century: "Institutions have always loomed large in the writing of early modern history" (p. xi). The examples they give of such institutions include parliaments, law courts and the church, as well as guilds, charities and schools, which Goldar and Frost describe as being "essential features of the landscape" (p. xi).

Goldar and Frost also state that: "One of the most important issues for the members of any institution was establishing and maintaining a sense of the institution's identity" (p. xiii), which shows how individual and institutional identities can overlap, in terms of how those are established and maintained. The ways in which individual and institutional identities exist within political contexts was explored by

Bennich-Björkman (2007), who asked: "To what extent do existing institutions particularly determine the political culture of a society, and to what extent does culture exist independently?" (p. 1). However, as we discussed in the Introduction chapter of this book, we question the idea that culture can really exist independently.

Schools were one of the examples given by Goldar and Frost, and much has been written about institutional cultures within educational organizations such as schools, colleges and universities. A dramatic account of a "contested institutional culture" was presented by Morin (2010), who reported on a change of president at The College of William & Mary in Virginia, which was founded in 1693, making it the second oldest tertiary institution in the United States (after Harvard University). In 2005, the College President of 13 years retired, so that the College, which was long known "as a bastion of conservatism" (Morin 2010, p. 93), was now in a position to take the opportunity to change their future, through the appointment of a new president. The College therefore appointed "a liberal democrat and former candidate for political office [who] won over the students, faculty, and Board of Visitors with his larger-than-life presence and impassioned speeches", and who attempted "sweeping changes" at the College "from the very outset of his tenure" (p. 93). However, the new initiatives "were not met with the widespread acclaim many had anticipated" (p. 93) and in the end, the new president served for just two-and-a-half years.

The importance of those in leadership roles understanding the institutional cultures of academic institutions such as universities was the focus of Rita Bornstein's *Legitimacy in the academic presidency* (2003), in which she wrote: "The search for cultural adaptation and acceptance is a mutual process between the new president and the institution's constituents" (p. 45). Borstein went on to note that, although "Most presidents work hard to learn and adapt to their new culture. Some, *generally to their peril*, turn their backs on the institution's history and traditions as they seek to make change" (p. 45, emphasis added). That is exactly what appears to have happened to the new and short-lived President of The College of William & Mary, which is a particularly illustrative example of the kind of upheaval that can take place, when the culture of an institution clashes with the culture of the individual. In that sense, the "Individual as Artifact" is in conflict with the "Institution as Artifact". Although The College of William & Mary may be considered a quintessentially American institution, there may be lessons for universities in Asia. For example, as the vice-president of a university in Hong Kong, Mok (2007) wrote: "One major trend related to reforming and restructuring universities in Asia that has emerged is the adoption of strategies along the lines of the Anglo-Saxon paradigm in internationalizing universities in Asia" (p. 433).

A useful metaphor for considering how individual cultures exist within institutional cultures, and vice versa, is "navigation". For example, Walker (2011) gives advice on "determining and navigating institutional culture" (pp. 113–117), in the context of library management at a university college in Brooklyn, New York. Highlighting the multiplicity of cultures within an institution, Walker points out that: "Often, there is no single culture within an organization – especially if you are in a multi-layered institution", which applied to Walker's college, where she had to

take into account the culture of the library, of the College, of the university as a whole, and of the various groups within each of those. It is likely that all institutions, especially larger ones, will be multi-layered, and that the larger and more multi-layered the institution, the more navigation will be needed, as the greater will be the possibilities of getting lost in the maze that can constitute institutional cultures.

In relation to navigating within a particular geographic, linguistic and cultural context, Gold et al. (2002) focused on the ways in which institutional cultures in China are reflected in social connections, specifically the Chinese practice of *guanxi*, which Gold and his co-authors explain is "loosely translated as 'social connections' or 'social networks'" (p. 3). Gold et al. describe *guanxi* as "among the most important, talked about, and studied phenomena in China" (p. i), which "lies at the heart of Chinese social order, its economic structure, and its changing institutional landscape" (p. 3). *Guanxi* is, therefore, "important in almost every realm of life, from politics to business, and from officialdom to street life" (p. 3).

An example of how understanding and acceptance of guanxi has grown in the years since Gold et al.'s *Social connections in China: Institutions, culture, and the changing nature of guanxi* (2002) was a BBC news story titled, "Doing business the Chinese way" (Hope 2014). In that new story, *guanxi* is described as being, "a crucial part of life in China", the roots of which are "tightly bound in history, with the notions of obligation and loyalty going back thousands of years". For the news story, Kent Deng, an associate professor at the London School of Economics, was consulted. He stated that: "The Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, when families and friends were encouraged to report on one another in a bid to enforce communism, meant that *guanxi's* importance increased as a way to rebuild trust" (Hope 2014).

In addition to studies of the cultures within educational systems, there have been many studies exploring the cultures of other societal institutions. For example, in their research on institutional culture and regulatory relationships in the Tanzanian health care system, Tibandebage and Mackintosh (2002) defined "institutional culture" in their context as "the norms of behaviour within facilities and in particular of facility staff towards patients and would-be patients" (pp. 271). Tibandebage and Mackintosh also asked the question: "How does the nature of the transaction between patient and facility interact with the facilities' internal institutional culture?" (p. 280). That question highlights the multidirectional and transactional nature of intercultural interaction, as well as the hierarchical aspect of "Individual as Artifacts" in such institutions, depending on, in this case, whether the individual was a patient or a staff member. (For more on the language and culture of patient-doctor interactions see Sussex, this volume.)

Similar questions were asked by Alesina and Giuliano (2015), in their study of how cultural traits affect economic outcomes: "How do culture and institutions interact? Can any causal link between the two be established?" (p. 898). For Alesina and Giuliano: "Culture and institutions are endogenous variables determined, possibly, by geography, technology, epidemics, wars, and other historical shocks" (p. 898), which would include the Cultural Revolution in China in the 1960s and 1970s, referred to above. Drawing on a medical metaphor, in which "endogenous"

is used to refer to a disease that is not caused by external, environmental factors, Alesina and Giuliano's position is that institutional cultures have internal origins, which, organically speaking, grow from within an organism. Alesina and Giuliano also discuss different types of institutions, such as political and legal institutions, regulations, and the welfare state, as well as different cultural traits, including trust, family ties, and individualism, which reiterates the idea of the "Individual as Artifact".

In their rejection of the notion of culture as "informal institutions" (2015, p. 902), Alesina and Giuliano draw on a number of definitions of "institution" from other researchers, including North (1990), according to whom, institutions are

> […] the humanly devised constraints that structure human interactions. They are made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behavior, convention, and self-imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics (cited in Alesina and Giuliano 2015, p. 901).

North's definition highlights a number of important cultural aspects of institutions, including their "artifactual" nature, as they are created by humans, and the role of these particular artifacts as necessary structural "boundaries", enforced in ways that are both explicitly written and implicitly understood.

For Acemoglu et al. (2006) the two main types of societal institutions are economic and political, and they define such institutions as "mechanisms through which social choices are determined and implemented" (cited in Alesina and Giuliano 2015, p. 902). That raises the important question of *who* determines and implements those societal choices, which are, in general, decided by a small group of individuals and then applied to everyone else in that society, who may or may not accept them, often with negative consequences for those who reject the choices imposed upon them.

The relationships between medieval trade (from the fifth to the fifteenth century) and modern economies were explained by Greif 2006a, b, p. 30), who defined an institution as "a system of social factors that conjointly generates a regularity of behavior". By "social factors", Greif was referring to "man-made, nonphysical factors that are exogenous to each person they influence," including "rules, beliefs, norms, and organizations" (Greif 2006a, p. 30). As we can see, this contrasts with Alesina and Giuliano's position that "Culture and institutions are endogenous variables" (p. 898), and the reference to "man-made" again recalling the notion of the "Individual as Artifact".

Alesina and Giuliano conclude their 50-page paper by returning to their original question: "What roles do culture and institutions play in determining the wealth of nations?" (p. 938). They reject the idea that either one is causally superior to the other, because: "Culture and institutions interact and evolve in a complementary way, with mutual feedback effects" (p. 938), which is similar to the bi-directional, human-artifact interaction discussed above.

After our brief consideration of the concepts Individuals as Cultural Artifacts, and Institutional Cultures, we can continue on our journey, into the virtual world of Internet Culture.

## 4   Internet Culture as "International Culture"

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, at least two opposing positions are possible here. One is that the Internet has No Culture or No Cultures. The other is that the Internet is All Cultures. Deciding on which position to take would include, for example, the fact that, for the latter position to hold true, all the countries of the world would need to have access to the Internet. In a 2014 BBC news story titled "The last places on Earth without the internet", Rachel Nuwer (2014) asked: "Is there anywhere left on Earth where it's impossible to access the internet?" She concluded that: "There are a few places, but you have to go out of your way to find them", with North Korea possibly being such place. However, that is at the level of countries, not individuals, and Nuwer pointed out that, in 2014, it was "a well-established problem that many of the world's poorest people do not have the means or technology to log on", with less than one third (31%) of people in the "developing world" using the Internet, compared to more than three-quarters (77%) in the "developed countries".

Whether the World Wide Web is now truly worldwide, in terms of every country having access, is open to question, but it is possible that we may be nearly there. Therefore, in considering the two opposing positions put forward above, it does seem as though we are now much closer to the "Internet is All Cultures" position, than the "Internet has No Culture" position. This is not to suggest that the Internet contains all artifacts from all cultures, but the claim can be made that Internet Culture is now at least one of the major and most influential forms of "International Culture" in the world today.

One of the first books about Internet Culture was the collection edited by Robert Shields, titled *Cultures of the Internet: Virtual spaces, real histories, living bodies*, published in 1996, not long after the World Wide Web had been established, in the early 1990s. The Web grew out of the original version of the Internet, called ARPANET, which came online at the end of the 1960s, as a result of work in the scientific and military fields. That work culminated in the release of the Microsoft Corporation's *Windows 98*, in June of 1998, thereby completing the shift to a commercially-based Internet. As a result, in 1996, Shields stated that: "The Internet is here" but asked: "But have we caught up with all the implications for culture and everyday life?" More than 20 years later, we may still be asking ourselves that same question, and still looking for answers, partly because the Internet is constantly growing, and therefore constantly changing, which makes "catching up" difficult, if not impossible.

At that time, Shields envisaged the online world as, "a playground for virtual bodies in which identities are flexible, swappable and disconnected from real-world bodies" and "the rise of virtual conviviality" which would supplement "the physical encounters between actors in public spaces" (back cover). This idea of a "virtual conviviality" did catch on in some fields, such as Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). For example, Fainholc (2011) predicted: "a new meaning of the concept of social inclusion for a new conviviality within global social systems traversed by ICT" (p. 47). Fainholc also predicated that this "virtual conviviality" would overcome the "socio-educational exclusion mediated by technology" (p. 47).

However, one of the developments not anticipated by Shields, Fainholc, or others at that time was the Internet as a particularly effective tool for disseminating Hate on a scale not possible before. In *Human rights and the Internet*, Karen Mock, in a chapter titled "Hate on the Internet" (2000, pp. 141–152), pointed out that: "Hate mongers were among the first to realize the tremendous power of the Internet to spread their hateful messages and to recruit members to their hateful causes" (p. 141). That potential appeared to have been harnessed to an unprecedented extent in the U.S. Presidential Elections of 2016, which may constitute one of the most hateful in recent history. For example, in November 2016, the BBC News reported on a sharp increase in the number of "hate attacks" that had been recorded in the US since the election: "A US hate-attack monitoring group has documented 437 cases of intimidation and abuse towards minorities since the general election a week ago […] It comes after the FBI reported a 67% rise in anti-Muslim bigotry last year". Whatever the reasons for these troubling and marked increases in race-based and religion-based hate attacks, the Internet and online social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, appear to have played a major role.

Following Shields (1996), David Porter, in *Internet culture* (1997), described the Internet as "a cultural phenomenon" (p. xiii), which is "the product of the peculiar condition of virtual acquaintance that prevails online" (p. xi). Some of the challenges of Internet culture and online communication identified by Porter revolved around language, and the communicative contradiction of more people being more connected than ever before, but with the potential for communications breakdowns being that much greater. As Porter put it: "There are words, but they often seemed stripped of context […] It is no wonder that these digitalized words, flung about among strangers and strained beyond the limits of what written language in other contexts is called to do, are given to frequent misreading" (p. xi). Porter's observations underscore the fact that increased connectivity has been accompanied by greater possibilities for miscommunication. It is here that the Internet – sometimes as a result of the tendency to truncate messages (for example, when using Twitter or other forms of text messaging), and sometimes because of a lack of contextual cues – may be most likely to lead to communication breakdowns in ways that could be hard to imagine in face-to-face, in-person interactions. Porter concluded his Introduction by noting that the Internet had, at that time, "grown in recent years from a fringe cultural phenomenon to a significant site of cultural transformation and production in its own right" (1997, p. xvii). That same year (1997), Sara Kiesler's edited collection, *Culture of the Internet* was also published. Kiesler observed that: "If the Internet is a new domain of human activity, it is also a new domain for those who study humans" (p. x).

Within a few years, by the end of the 1990s, the idea of "cyberspace" had been established, which Jordan (1999), in his introduction to the politics of cyberspace, defined as: "virtual lands, with virtual lives and virtual societies, because these lives and societies do not exist with the same physical reality that 'real' societies do" (p. 1). Such a description is consistent with Walker's (2011) ideas about "navigating institutional culture" (pp. 113). Jordan also stated that: "Virtual societies are marked by political, technological and cultural patterns so intimately connected as to be

nearly indistinguishable" (p. 2), and in another tripartite set of connections, Jordan wrote that: "Cyberpower can be broken down into three distinct levels: the individual, the social and the imaginary", which may be somewhat analogous to the relationships between Individual, Institutional and International Cultures.

In discussing the affective dimensions of Internet Culture, King (2001) claimed that: "Internet researchers have long argued that a unique culture underlies online social interaction, a culture similar to but separate from the everyday culture of the offline world" (p. 428). Within such claims we can see a more dichotomous view of the online world versus the off-line world, in which one was either in one or the other, but not both at the same time. While that might have been true in the early 2000's, it is more likely today that many people inhabit both spaces simultaneously. However, the findings of King's study did indicate that Internet users shared "a large set of common affective sentiments toward Internet-related concepts" and that those shared sentiments could be thought of as "cultural sentiments" (p. 428).

Having considered some of the early work on Internet Culture from the mid-1990s to the early 2000's, we can now explore some of the recent work carried out in this area. In terms of changes to the ways in which we communicate and how those can change the way we identify ourselves and others, Tim Jordan (2013) explained that: "With the internet came not just email, electronic discussion boards, social networking, the world wide web and online gambling but across these, and other similar socio-technical artifacts, also came different identities, bodies and types of messages that changes the nature of communication and culture" (p. 1). These changes have had far-reaching effects not only on notions of identity and community, but also on mental health. For example, from the field of Transcultural Psychiatry, Kirmayer et al. (2013) reported that: "The Internet and World Wide Web have woven together humanity in new ways, creating global communities, new forms of identity and pathology, and new modes of intervention" (p. 165). The Kirmayer et al. (2013) paper was part of a special issue of the journal *Transcultural Psychiatry*, based on research presented at a conference on "Cultures of the Internet", which took place in Montreal, Canada, in 2011.

In relation to individual, "artifactual" identities, and the communities that are formed when groups of individuals with shared interests, wants and needs come together, the conference on "Cultures of the Internet" focused on four broad areas, including: "how the Internet is transforming human functioning, personhood and identity" and "how electronic networking gives rise to new groups and forms of community, with shifting notions of public and private, local and distant" (Kirmayer et al. 2013, p. 165). These two spatial pairings, i.e., the public-private and the local-distant, should be seen as continua, rather than as dichotomies.

The other two main areas that the conference on "Cultures of the Internet" focused on were: "the emergence of new pathologies of the Internet, e.g., Internet addiction, group suicide, cyberbullying, and disruptions of neurodevelopment" and "the use of the Internet in mental health care … as well as for the delivery of health information, web-based consultation, treatment intervention, and mental health promotion" (p. 165). The kind of addiction referred to by Kirmayer et al. (2013) raises

the question of what other cultures, if any, have generated their own pathologies. One possible example could be religious cultural crusades, such as the Inquisition, as discussed by Mary Perry and Anne Cruz in their book *Cultural encounters: The impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World* (1991).

Since addiction to the Internet was recognized as "a new clinical phenomena" (Young 2004, pp. 402–415) in the mid-2000s, a growing body of work has researched and reported on this emerging health problem. For example, in 2006, in the *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, Widyanto and Griffiths presented a critical review of studies of Internet addiction, and found that "a relatively small percentage of the online population" (p. 31) could be described as being "addicted". However, the number of cases of Internet Addiction has continued to grow, as reported by, for example, Weinstein and Lejoyeux (2010), in *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, who defined "Internet addiction" as "excessive use of the Internet with resulting adverse consequences" (p. 281). Those consequences include: "arguments, lying, poor achievement, social isolation, and fatigue" (p. 282). Such "social isolation" stands in stark contrast to the earlier (Shields 1996) and more recent (Fainholc 2011) ideas about a new "virtual conviviality", free of the constraints of time, place and space.

One of the most recent works on Internet Culture is titled, rather ominously, *The social media abyss*, with a subtitle of, *Critical Internet cultures and the force of negation* (2016), by Geert Lovink, according to whom we are witnessing: "the drying up of a horizon, from the unbounded space of what was the internet into a handful of social media apps" (p. x). Lovink goes on to claim that: "In this global slump, IT giants such as Google and FaceBook have lost their innocence" (p. x). That comment suggests, some would say rather naively, that those two corporations were ever "innocent", especially given their net worth, in the hundreds of billions of US dollars, at the end of 2017. All culture comes at a cost, and that includes Internet Culture.

In the development of the idea of artifacts as "things made by people" – as well as the people themselves – "The Internet of Things" is emerging as "the rise of a promising new research field" (Bunz 2016, p. 1280), and "the next big thing" (p. 1279) in Media Studies. This new field is the result of books such as *The Internet of Things* (Greengard 2015), *The epic struggle of the Internet of Things* (Sterling 2014) and *Abusing the Internet of Things* (Dhanjani 2015), as well as *How the Internet of Things may set us free or lock us up* (Howard 2015). According to Bunz, the term "Internet of Things": "denotes objects that have become seamlessly integrated into a digital network" (2016, p. 1279). Bunz gives examples of consumer devices and home applications such as lighting systems, loud speakers, and heating systems, "which all have been connected to smartphones and can be manipulated from outside the home" (ibid.).

This third "I" (which may have something to do with "The Third Eye" in Hinduism) is longer than the other two lines of the 3-I triangle, partly because the Internet has grown, in a relatively short time, to be such a pervasive – some would say "invasive" – part of the lives of so many people on the planet, and that is likely to continue to grow.

## 5   Conclusion

We can now re-visit the three focus questions, at the beginning of this chapter, in light of the discussion of the Three Is:

> What are the challenges facing governments and educational institutions, individual educators and students, in adapting to an increasingly internationalized environment?
>
> What are the challenges of intercultural communication vis-à-vis these (in)visible constructed boundaries that intersect society, in today's globalized world?
>
> What challenges to intercultural communication are posed by the kinds of ideological considerations discussed above?

Returning to the idea of the "Individual as Cultural Artefact", we can see that there is a two-way relationship between individuals and their cultures, and it seems clear that individuals are changing the cultures of Asia, and in a more globalizing and Western sense. But it is also clear that these cultural values are, in general, changing individuals, in particular making them more culturally pluralistic than they used to be. Several of the chapters in this volume pick up the sense of identity, for example Wu and Li. But in a wider sense that kind of shift, and the collaboration and/or tension between Individual and Culture, with each being artefacts of the other, runs throughout the chapters in this book.

Regarding Institutional Cultures, the chapter by Snow in this volume is illustrative here, as are the observations by House, and especially Gao, who presents a compelling narrative about the tensions between Chinese education and the imperative of English competence, both linguistically and culturally. It is also possible that geographical spaces can be seen as a special kind of "institution", in a more metaphorical sense, which is the focus of Radwańska-Williams' chapter, and which is an important part of Oshima's chapter, showing how her work with *rakugo* is changing the institution of theatre, performance and humour.

Last but by no means least is the impact of the Internet and its culture in and beyond Asia. For example, in 2015, Cosseboom reported on "How the 'Internet of Things' is poised to boom cross Asia", which shows that the Internet is not only an artefact in its own right in Asia – see, for example, the Japanese influence through the invention and explosion of the emoji – but also an artefact-producing catalytic medium. Between All-Culture and No-Culture, the Internet is also a medium that juxtaposes cultures and prompts its inhabitants to share and exchange thoughts, ideas, feelings, etc. (see the chapters by Wu and Li, and by Lian and Sussex in this volume), making it both active and passive, an agent and a product, a medium and a message.

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