

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE "CULTURE PROBLEM" IN
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION:
TOWARD A CRITICAL PROFICIENCY OF
POWER

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Intercultural Communication (INCC) is dominated by a simple conception of culture that has, in essence, led its research and literature away from attending to relations of power in intercultural relationships. INCC's traditional approach based on positivistic and static notions of culture are rather anemic in their own right but also too brittle to support the lived experiences of globalization. One negative consequence of this faulty theoretical framework is in applied INCC, intercultural communication training, which seems to have influence across disciplinary lines, specifically in teacher training programs. Therefore, in this dissertation, I offer a close examination of the "culture problem" in the theoretical framework of INCC and propose Bourdieu's critical social theories as an alternative approach to studying intercultural

relationships. Bourdieu's conceptions of the field of power, field of opinion, symbolic capital, and habitus offer a productive means of approaching culture more critically as it situates all social interactions, of which intercultural interactions are a subset, in dynamic fields of power that have the explanatory capability to carefully attend to the relations of power at work in these social interactions. I then offer an example of how Bourdieu's theories bear out in practice when they are applied to an intercultural training program in a master's level class for pre-service ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers.