

BOOK REVIEW

Minabere Ibelema. ***Cultural Chauvinism: Intercultural Communication and the Politics of Superiority***. New York: Routledge, 2021. xiv + 140 pp. Notes. References. Index. \$24.95. Paper. ISBN: 9780367710033.

Cultural Chauvinism: Intercultural Communication and the Politics of Superiority, written by the esteemed scholar Minabere Ibelema, is a thought-provoking exploration of the complexity surrounding intercultural communication and the power dynamics that often underlie these interactions. Minabere Ibelema delves into the concept of cultural chauvinism, shedding light on the implications of superiority politics in cross-cultural exchanges. This exploration of cultural chauvinism is presented in a detailed and unique multidimensional manner. Ibelema introduces the book by establishing an all-encompassing backdrop of chauvinism as “the tendency of peoples of the world to think of themselves as superior to others and therefore more valuable” (xi).

Ibelema uses a nuanced and insightful approach to explore the power dynamics embedded in intercultural convergence. This is the foremost way in which cultural chauvinism serves as a tool for asserting dominance, whether at the individual, institutional, or societal level. The regularity of this occurrence across global regions is evident in discourses concerning racial, political, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic issues. For example, the author demonstrates the tendency of individuals or societies to assert the superiority of their own culture over others. Moreover, racism is situated in the manifestation of cultural superiority: “Cultural chauvinism is obviously attitudinal. Yet, it has concrete—sometimes tragic—consequences” (2). The author implores the readers to confront the underlying biases and preconceptions that can permeate interculturality.

The author skilfully offers a clearer understanding of how these attitudes can obstruct clear communication and reinforce negative perceptions, inequality, and discrimination. For example, he explores the perspectives of identity using real-world issues to illuminate the pivotal superiority of Western values and their centrality in global politics. The author demonstrates how overtly offensive expressions can reveal the varied and routine ways through which the superiority of cultures is often expressed without arousing raised eyebrows. This shows too that even when such expressions do not offend, they influence consequent behaviors and policies.


The author weaves theoretical frameworks with practical examples, to help readers grasp the relevance of the book’s insights in their everyday lives and interactions. Throughout the book, Ibelema offers valuable insights into the role of language. As he observes, language is not just a tool for connecting with others, but it also functions as a repository of cultural values and identity. The author

argues that lingual jingoism—the belief in the superiority of one’s own language—can be a subtle yet potent form of cultural chauvinism.

Ibelema emphasizes throughout this book the need for cultural humility, which stands in direct contrast to cultural chauvinism (116). According to him, cultural humility involves a willingness to engage in self-reflection, recognize one’s own cultural biases, and approach intercultural communication with an open mind. The author insists that fostering cultural humility is essential for building genuine connections and mutual understanding between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Overall, this book makes a significant and timely addition to the field of intercultural communication scholarship. It encourages readers to address the power dynamics present in cross-cultural interactions, critically evaluate their cultural prejudices, and work toward developing cultural humility. In an increasingly diverse and linked world, this book is an invaluable tool for academics, students, and anybody else who wants to build meaningful interpersonal connections.

The ideas in this book hinge on inclusivity, which specifically includes but is not limited to cultural understanding, empathy and perspective-taking, tolerance and acceptance, social justice and equality, and intersectionality. This allows room for people to recognize cultural bias, critically examine power dynamics, promote cultural humility, dismantle stereotypes, demonstrate shared humanity, encourage intercultural dialogue, and practically apply the principles of unification. All these activities are not only applicable but also essential for fostering a more welcoming and peaceful global community as we traverse an era of globalization.

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