3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this chapter, students should be able to demonstrate a broad understanding of the following:

❶ the benefits of intercultural competence

❷ distinctions between *inter*cultural communication, *cross*-cultural communication and *intra*cultural communication

❸ how to draw on a range of theories in order to anticipate some of the possible intercultural communication issues that are likely to influence relationships in culturally diverse groups

❹ the value of developing intercultural competence for organisations

❺ strategies for improving intercultural communication personally and within organisations

THE BUSINESS AND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Culture affects human activities on personal, national, international and organisational levels and impacts on contexts like trade, foreign investment and international relationships. The 2009 case of Stern Hu, a senior executive of Rio Tinto who was arrested for allegedly compromising Chinese security, is an interesting case in point. Since the success of activities on micro and macro levels depends on understanding the cultural implications of these kinds of contexts, it is hardly surprising that research about intercultural communication has increased (Kim & Ebesu Hubbard 2007, pp. 223–25) in order to understand more about this fascinating and important topic. Academic and business literature stresses the importance of working people developing intercultural communication competence, global perspectives on management theory and a deep understanding of the influence of culture in multicultural business and management environments (see Cushner & Brislin 1996, p. 10; Dongsong, Lowry, Zhou & Fu 2007, p. 57; Earley & Ang 2003, p. 1). Universities are also concerned with the best way to prepare future graduates for intercultural communication (Goby 2007, p. 425).

Factors giving rise to an increased interest in intercultural communication

Globalisation, increased travel and tourism, the internet, international terrorism and the emergence of global economies have all brought attention to the importance of trying to understand and

overcome the challenges of intercultural communication. To illustrate, globalisation has resulted in large proportions of populations being born overseas and a consequent multiplicity of languages being spoken. Under such circumstances, people communicate interculturally on an almost daily basis and need to become good at it (Arasaratnam 2007, p. 105; Kim & Ebesu Hubbard 2007, p. 225) whether in personal or workplace contexts.

Since it is almost impossible to find a unicultural organisation (Stohl 2001, p. 324), intercultural communication is of increasing interest to organisations and many managers believe that being interculturally competent is critical when working on multicultural teams (Matreev & Miller 2004, p. 109). Organisations are influenced by the national and regional contexts in which they operate, as well as the individual organisational culture (Brannen & Salk 1999, p. 34). Many managers routinely communicate across international borders and acquire a high level of expertise in working with people who perceive and interpret behaviour in very different ways, and they do this by becoming global learners, drawing on international networks and relationships (Butts 2007, p. 110; Luijters, Van Der Zee & Otten 2008, p. 26). According to Osland (2008, p. 19), the literature suggests that intercultural competence is related to interpersonal relationships, in that it requires tolerance for ambiguity, empathy and recognition of multiple perspectives. Such cultural expertise is important because managerial styles vary across cultures (Rodrigues & Kaplan 1998, p. 34). "Cultural differences matter" because, when employees find themselves in complex cultural situations, the rules of social interaction are often uncertain (Brannen & Salk 1999, p. 33). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that recent research also makes connections between intercultural experiences such as international travel and academic exchange and graduate employability (Crossman & Clarke 2009).

How culture influences organisational practices

Culture affects all manner of activities in organisations. It influences the choice of appropriate technologies, how to best negotiate trade policies and how to provide the right kind of guidance to expatriate employees (Brannen & Salk 1999, p. 33). Managers need to know how culture affects the way employees are motivated and stay committed to an organisation (Sidle 2009, p. 19) and therefore alters the extent to which pay and rewards structures motivate some or anger others and give rise to perceptions of inequity (Wheeler 2002, pp. 612–13). Culture influences equity in organisations through the implicit assumptions found in policies and reward systems (see Wheeler 2002, p. 613). It also influences how groups and ethnic subgroups perceive ethical issues and decision making in business (Rashid & Ho 2003). It affects how people structure their thoughts, ideas and messages, since Westerners are more inclined to organise themselves in a linear manner, leading from the basis of evidence to a conclusion, but in some other cultures individuals are more likely to approach ideas in a spiral manner, beginning from a general ideological consideration and gradually approaching a conclusion (Triandis 2000, p. 150). Such differences can give rise to frustration. As Ruskin (1907, p. 2), a philosopher of the last century, observed, "hearers are never so much fatigued as by the endeavour to follow a speaker who gives them no clue to his purpose". How people feel about change is also culturally dependent (Spinks & Wells 1997, p. 289).

Communication researchers explore what happens when culturally diverse employees work together in achieving shared goals within a complex multinational organisation (Brannen &

Salk 1999, p. 34). Without the cultural expertise to make judgements about how varied values, behaviour and emotions are likely to play a part, managers would quite simply be unable to address the significant challenges presented by complex culturally, heterogeneous teams, which can easily give rise to ambiguity, conflict and dysfunctionality (Dongsong, Lowry, Zhou & Fu 2007; Humes & Reilly, 2008, pp. 118–26; Matreev 2004, pp. 55; 57). Ting-Toomey (2007) has made an important contribution to our knowledge about how intercultural communication can involve conflict which stems from a perceived or actual incompatibility of cultural values and norms in either face-to-face or mediated contexts. According to Ting-Toomey (2007, p. 256), the greater the difference between two cultures, the more that conflicts will arise in areas such as historical grievances, cultural world views and beliefs.

Researchers have revealed a great deal of information about the ways individuals with different cultural traditions work together in a variety of organisational contexts. Sriussadaporn has found that intercultural problems in the workplace with foreign companies in Thailand related to a number of issues, including concepts of accountability, approaches to tasks, time management, language and personal/work relationships (Sriussadaporn 2006, p. 333). Matreev and Miller (2004, pp. 108–09) tell us that Russians may be motivated more than Westerners by security. This literature can guide international workers as to the cultural implications of giftgiving, how people should dress in the workplace, forging friendships, punctuality and how status affects communication (Spinks & Wells 1997, p. 288). Different ways of greeting, use of space, eye contact, body language, facial expressions and the use of touch and gestures can all cause confusion. In other words, researchers throw light on what may happen when culturally diverse employees work together in order to achieve a shared goal in a complex multinational organisation (Brannen & Salk 1999, p. 34). It is worth noting, however, that despite the vast amount of research that seeks to link business and culture directly, some writers have suggested that the variable and practical contexts of individual organisations at any particular point in time tend to make such links tenuous and unreliable, because it is unrealistic to imagine that all circumstances can be interpreted through the lens of cultural conditioning (Heine 2008, p. 129).

Activity 1   RESEARCH, INTERCULTURAL

Using any online university databases available to you, access the following journal paper. Use the paper as the basis of a summarised/short report for a manager who wishes to be aware of the potential intercultural communication issues that might arise when Chinese and Australian/New Zealanders work together. If this paper is unavailable to you, locate another that compares two or more cultures and summarise or outline what you find in the literature review of the paper or any research findings that may be helpful in briefing a manager preparing to work with intercultural teams.

Batonda, G & Perry C 2001, 'Influence of Chinese on relationship development processes in overseas Chinese/Australian networks', *European Journal of Marketing,* vol. 37, no. 11/12, pp. 1548–74.

Adopting a 'you' attitude

When an appropriate level of cultural expertise is brought to organisational management, the results are highly beneficial, but organisations need to begin by fostering organisational contexts where minority cultures are valued and cultural ambiguity is tolerated (Luijters, Van Der Zee & Otten 2008, p. 154). Often, these kinds of environments entail the adoption of a 'you' attitude that focuses on the viewpoints of others. Unless the practices of culturally diverse employees and organisations are illegal or where businesspeople feel they cannot compromise their ethical standards, it is helpful to consider some adaptations to accommodate the customs and cultures of others in intercultural communication contexts (Spinks & Wells 1997, pp. 290–91).

Researchers have now identified the existence of cultural intelligence. Earley, Soon and Tan (2006) have suggested that those with high cultural intelligence (CI) tend to display the ability to:

1. adapt to unfamiliar cultural contexts
2. consider the implications of culture in problem solving
3. motivate others to consider culture
4. perceive culturally sensitive issues
5. access cultural knowledge (in other words, the facts that we hold true about another culture)

Since we are now more aware of the criteria for establishing cultural competence, this information can be used to assist managers in working with trainers on how to develop cultural competence.

Intercultural competence does not happen all at once, but is acquired in a process of learning. Triandis (2000, p. 149) suggests that there are four stages of intercultural competence:

1. Unconscious incompetence

When people initially communicate interculturally, they tend to assume that cultural others are similar to themselves and they are therefore in a stage of 'unconscious incompetence'.

2. Conscious incompetence

As interpersonal challenges become apparent, people realise they are not communicating well, but are not sure how to improve the situation, so they move to the stage of 'conscious incompetence'.

3. Conscious competence

Later, as people begin to learn about the culture of another person, they try to communicate differently and move into the stage of 'conscious competence'.

4. Unconscious competence

The stage of unconscious competence is reached when people are more able to communicate easily and effectively with cultural others as they further develop their understandings and make adjustments without even thinking about it.

∞ **Activity 2**   INTERCULTURAL, REFLECTION

Consider an intercultural experience that you have had, perhaps as a result of travel or spending time with a cultural community. Decide on the stage of intercultural competence you believe that you reached and illustrate your view with a rationale. Present this analysis to a wider group.

The benefits of developing expertise in intercultural communication can include high levels of innovation, employee identification and commitment to goals (Luijters, Van Der Zee & Otten 2008, p. 154). This expertise can also make a major difference in gaining a competitive advantage (Dongsong, Lowry, Zhou & Fu 2007, p. 54). When people from different cultures work well together, compromises can also be negotiated more easily in terms of decision making, work roles, teamwork and quality issues (Brannen & Salk 1999, pp. 56–57). Of course, intercultural communication will not only involve face-to-face relationships, because organisations increasingly depend on virtual international teams to conduct business across borders (Jarvenpaa & Leidner 1999, p. 791; Matreev 2004, p. 55; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003, p. 244). It has long since been clear that intercultural communication training in organisations is not simply valuable but critical to success.

Leadership literature suggests a shift in the last decade or so from observations that it is important to understand culture to Bjerke's contention that "the job of leaders is culture" (cited in Crossman 2009, p. 223). Effective communication is now regarded as a "hallmark of effective leadership" (Hogler, Gross, Hartman & Cunliffe 2008, p. 393). Within the last decade, leadership literature has increasingly explored the phenomenon of cultural leadership specifically and some writers have made clear connections between leadership as an interactional phenomenon with communication and context. Global leaders need to have culture-specific knowledge, including an understanding of their own culture and the ability to understand and motivate followers, partners and stakeholders who are culturally diverse (Osland 2008, p. 19). Such leaders need to be aware that conceptualisations of leadership are also connected to culture. For example, in low context cultures, responsibility tends to be distributed throughout an organisation, whereas in high context cultures, leaders are expected to accept responsibility for the success or otherwise of the organisation (Hall 1981, p. 113). A more detailed treatment of high and low context cultures can be found later in this chapter.

INFORMATION

Culture relates to the development of learned, shared understandings of values and appropriate behaviour within a group.

CONCEPTUALISING CULTURE

Most theorists agree that enculturation, or becoming part of a culture, occurs through the process of learning from group interaction, so that cultural ideas, values, beliefs and behaviour are communicated and maintained by social groups. Culture is shared among a group of people and thus, as Jensen (2005) described it, culture is socially constructed and influences as well as explains actions. It is an all-encompassing phenomenon that affects all aspects of the human experience: how people think, the kinds of things they say and how they behave and respond to the behaviour of others. Culture affects both material and spiritual aspects of life, the food we eat, how we dress, the furniture we choose and even what people regard as important (or not) (Bjerke 1999, p. 26). Culture is distinguishable from personality, because personality is a personal set of 'mental programs' that is partly inherited through genes and partly learned, whereas culture is not innate or part of an individual's genetic profile (Hofestede & Hofestede 2005, p. 4). However, some researchers have identified specific personality characteristics related to intercultural sensitivity such as respect, interest in culture, flexibility, tolerance, open-mindedness, sociability and a positive self-image (Herfst, van Oudenhoven & Timmerman 2007, p. 68).

∞ **Activity 3**   RESEARCH, EVALUATION

Many definitions of culture exist in communication literature. Make a note of the commonalties and differences in the space provided below, following the definitions. For example, in some of these definitions the concept of 'values' recurs. Hofstede (2007, p. 413) places great emphasis on values as cultural indicators of what is good or evil, dirty or clean, moral or immoral, rational or irrational, and claims that management as an activity concerned with people will ultimately always be related to culture. Find at least two more definitions of your own through personal research in your university library and add them to the list before you begin the activity. Discuss which definition you would choose to include in an essay about intercultural communication and explain why.

"Culture shapes behaviour and influences communication because it structures one's perceptions and ideas of the world" (Stohl 2001, p. 341).

"Culture is simply a set of values, attitudes and beliefs shared by a group which sets the standards of behaviour required for continued acceptance and successful participation in that group" (Scarborough 1998, p. 1).

Culture is "the commonly shared beliefs, values, and norms of a group of people" (Northouse 2007, p. 338).

"Our culture provides us with a system of knowledge that generally allows us to know how to communicate with other members of our cultures and how to interpret their behaviour" (Gudykunst & Kim 2003, p. 15).

Culture is "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (Hofstede 1984, p. 210).

"Culture as a concept includes the ordinary aspects of life such as greetings, eating, showing or not showing feelings, keeping physical distance, expressing love and personal hygiene" (Hofestede & Hofestede 2005, p. 4).

"Culture is the coherent, learned, shared view a group of people has about life's concerns that ranks what is important, instills attitudes about what things are inappropriate, and prescribes behaviour" (Beamer & Varner 1995, p. 2).

". . . there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organized, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function" (Hall 1981, pp. 16–17).

Additional definition

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Commonalities in the definitions

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Differences in the definitions

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INFORMATION

Intercultural communication concerns communication between people of different cultures and emphasises the co-construction of a new cultural space.

INFORMATION

Cross-cultural communication focuses on the differences between communicators from diverse cultures.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THE CONCEPT OF 'THIRD SPACE'

The terms '**intercultural communication**' and '**cross-cultural communication**' can be differentiated in that intercultural communication tends to refer to what happens when people from different cultures interact and how they modify their communication as a result of that interaction, whereas cross-cultural communication focuses on the similarities and differences between cultures (Kim & Ebesu Hubbard 2007, p. 228). Intercultural communication emerged as an alternative paradigm to cross-cultural communication from about the 1970s (Seely 1996, p. 7) and now appears to be used more frequently, since the concepts of political correctness and inclusiveness call for convergence rather than emphasising difference (Goby 2007, p. 426).

The consideration of the change or adjustment that occurs when people from different cultural backgrounds interact has given rise to discussion about a concept known as 'the third space' or 'third culture' (Lee 2006, p. 253). The term was reputedly first coined by Homi K Bhabha (1994) as a concept to describe the possibility for a negotiated re-imagining of cultural identity, although it may well be grounded in Buddhist spiritual traditions. In other words, individuals who find a new way to interact and communicate literally make adjustments to their own sense of cultural identity in order to find new opportunities for conducting their relationship. Within the third space, individuals need to draw on their capacity for empathy and pay attention to alternative perspectives. The concept of the third space challenges ideas of 'us versus them' distinctions in a way that focuses on the 'our' in relationships between people, and this view is consistent with one aim of intercultural communication: to create awareness and understanding (Butts 2007, p. 110).

It is not a perspective that tolerates the cultural domination of one group over another but, rather, encourages the co-creation of a new space where each party has to make a commitment and some

adjustments so that each individual feels part of a new cultural domain beyond their original cultures (Lee 2006, p. 255). Developing a third space involves considering the needs of others and creating opportunities together for fulfilling them. The notion of the third space is thus what occurs when people of different cultures create shared meanings when inhabiting the same context (Crossman 2004, p. 18).

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

It should be noted that communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is technically a form of intercultural communication, because Indigenous peoples often have values and epistemologies that are quite different from the world view of surrounding nation-states and communities (Champagne & Abu-Saad 2006, p. 1). Some writers choose to consider the communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through the lens of interracial communication as a discipline under the umbrella of intercultural communication (Orbe & Harris 2008, p. 6).

All organisations would do well to consider how communication occurs between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. As Ma'Rhea has made clear in her online chapter for this book, non-Indigenous employees need to develop the required communication skills and understandings in order to improve the capacity of Indigenous people working in organisations and to create workable business partnerships, in order to create a more sustainable future both socially and economically. For Ma'Rhea, the quality of communication within organisations and between people comes down to considering whether non-Indigenous employees expect Indigenous people to 'fit in' with existing practices or whether there is a genuine undertaking to hone communication skills and understandings in ways that could lead to more positive outcomes and innovative solutions for all concerned. The policy of large mining companies wishing to hire Indigenous people from remote communities and to have them 'fit in' with existing rules and regulations gave rise to conflicts, and now they have few Indigenous employees from the local communities prepared to work for them, whereas businesses such as the Argyle Diamond Mine have listened, collaborated and forged long-term partnerships (Ma'Rhea 2010).

Ma'Rhea has authored an outstanding resource concerned with communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in business settings that is available at www.mhhe.com/au/crossman. I urge both students and their teachers to source this material to gain deeper insights and understandings of this topic.

∞ Activity (devised by Ma'Rhea 2010)   INTERCULTURAL, RESEARCH, EVALUATION

Conduct an internet search using the words 'case study' and 'Indigenous communication' in order to find a case study about communication between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people in business and organisational contexts. Present to others your evaluation of the degree of effectiveness of the communication approaches and practices between the parties. You may find the following URL to government sources useful in making your assessment: http://www.nrm.gov.au/publications/case-studies/Indigenous-engagement.html.

INTRACULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intracultural communication refers to communication that occurs between members of the same cultural group and assumes that members share some beliefs, values, customs and behaviours, but in fact this is not always the case. One only has to reflect on the differences in values and attitudes found within families, generations, friends and colleagues who share the same national culture. Within Australia and New Zealand as national cultures, a number of groups are identifiable such as teenagers, the elderly, Maoris, Sudanese Australians, Christians and students, for example. These kinds of groups are known as 'subcultures' and may not be characterised by the same values or behaviour assumed to be representative of national culture. Almost everyone simultaneously belongs to a number of different subgroups which correspond to different levels of culture (Hofestede & Hofestede 2005, pp. 10–11). Thus, intercultural communication and intracultural communication actually involve a blend of almost unique cultural factors that come into play when two or more people interact. In multicultural nations such as Australia and New Zealand, different ethnic cultures can share elements of the same national cultures (Kim & Ebesu Hubbard 2007, p. 232) even when ethnic groups may appear quite different. Because of this kind of complexity, it can sometimes prove a challenge for cultural theorists to generalise about intercultural communication.

INFORMATION

Intracultural communication is communication between and among members of the same cultural group.

Activity 4

EVALUATION, EXPERIENTIAL

Make a list of the subgroups to which you belong and compare your list with that of another student. What are the similarities and differences between the two lists? Discuss how the characteristics of these subgroups are different from those of the national culture.

Table 3.1

Person A's subgroups	Person B's subgroups

HIGH AND LOW CONTEXT CULTURES

In multinational organisations, the taken-for-granted rules that govern how people interact can quickly become less clear (Brannen & Salk 1999, p. 33) when cultural diversity plays a part. Even when variations in cultural behaviour and assumptions are subtle, they can have farreaching consequences (Goby 2007, p. 427). Research concerned with high and low context cultures is one factor to consider in assessing the implications of culture in an organisational context including multicultural teams. Hall's foundational work, *Beyond culture,* differentiates between high and low context cultures. Simply put,

in cultures that are described as 'high context', the context in which the communication occurs is noted in a more holistic way than in 'low context' cultures where there is less attention paid to the context and more to the words actually spoken. In other words, people in low context cultures tend to communicate in more verbally explicit ways than those in high context cultures.

Triandis (2000, p. 145), for example, described a meeting that took place in 1991 between the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Tariq Aziz and the US Secretary of State, James Baker. Also present at the meeting was Saddam Hussein's brother, who was relaying over the phone to Saddam Hussein his observations of the meeting. Baker was speaking in a calm voice and not shaking his fist, but nevertheless clearly indicating that the US would attack if Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait. Hussein's brother paid less attention to the words spoken and more attention to the context, which communicated an apparent lack of anger, and therefore he seriously misread the situation and what followed is history. The miscommunication arose because, in the West, individualist cultures sample the content or the words actually spoken in communication more closely than the nonverbal context. Iraq is a high context culture that considers the context of the communication or nonverbal communication rather more than the words spoken. Triandis' (2000, p. 145) illustration of how low and high context cultural differences can lead to conflict is useful because, although wars are not generally started through miscommunication in business meetings, these differences can have serious consequences.

According to Triandis (1994, pp. 169–70), high context cultures are found mostly in homogenous societies such as Japan where there is an emphasis on maintaining long-term relationships and a tendency to avoid saying no, preferring to describe impossible circumstances as 'difficult'. Employees from high context cultures may also appear to Westerners as being less inclined to be specific in order to soothe unpleasantness (Hall, cited in Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, Korac-Kabadse & Savery 2001, pp. 7–8) and co-workers from low context cultures may interpret this strategy as a tendency to talk around the point, only giving clues about the nature of a problem, hoping others will deduce what is bothering them without asking directly (Triandis 1994, pp. 169–70).

Low context cultures include the US, Australia, Switzerland, Germany and other Western European countries. Individuals from these kinds of societies communicate in explicit and verbalised ways (Triandis 1994, pp. 169–70) and tend to over inform—a characteristic that may be perceived by those from high context cultures as condescension (Hall, cited in Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, Korac-Kabadse & Savery 2001, pp. 7–8).

ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL APPROACHES BY HIROKO NOMA

Similarities with work conducted on high and low cultures are also evident in literature suggesting that people in some cultures may be more or less inclined to view the world in 'analogue' or 'digital' ways. In intercultural settings, people often assume that in other cultural groups people also see and understand the world in the same manner (Nisbett 2003). Recent research reveals that there are cultural differences in perception and cognition. According to Nisbett and Miyamoto (2005), Western people tend to focus on salient objects and understand the world context-dependently, analytically and logically with categories and rules, while

eastern people are inclined to see and understand the world context-independently and holistically, paying more attention to relationships among objects.

These two different manners of perception and cognition are referred to as 'analogue' and 'digital' approaches to accessing surrounding information and knowledge, and have been explored in philosophy, psychology and education (Paivio 1974). Since a culture contributes to making people unconsciously decide "what to attend to and what to ignore" in surrounding information (Bird & Osland 2006, p. 124), intercultural communication between those who are likely to use an analogue-dominant manner and others who tend to use a digital-dominant manner can cause a paradigmatic confusion. It is essential to understand these two diverse approaches in order to build mutual understandings and enhance effective communication in intercultural contexts.

INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST CULTURES

Activity 5   RESEARCH, REFLECTION

Cultures are sometimes also considered in terms of being more or less *individualist* or *collectivist.* Triandis (1994; 2000) compared the characteristics of individualist and collectivist cultures and his thoughts have been summarised in the table below. Some gaps have been left in the table. After conducting some independent research, please discuss with one or more other students the kind of information that could be used to complete the table. Please note that some information provided in the table has been accessed from sources other than Triandis and has been referenced on an individual basis accordingly.

Table 3.2

Individualist	Collectivist
Western	Asian and Latin American
(e.g. US, New Zealand, Spain, Australia, UK)	Russian (Matreev & Miller 2004)
Autonomy and independence	Interdependence with families, co-workers, tribe or co-religionists
Instrumentalist, getting the job done	Emphasis on relationships
Concerned with own interests and those of the immediate family	
Tend to be low context	Tend to sample the context of communication/ high context
People focus on verbal information	
Affluent	
Heterogenous	Homogenous

Industrialised	Traditional, agricultural
Competition	
Express dissonant views openly	Consensus
Individuality	
Personal goals	Group goals
Freedom	
Pleasure	Obedience, duty, responsibility
	Hierarchy
	People avoid being excluded from the group; fitting in is important.
Less likely to sacrifice personal rights for the group	Consider best option for group
	Concerned with the good of the firm (Dubrin, Dalglish, Miller 2006, p. 432)

The table and discourse generally in the literature suggest a polarised approach to collectivism and individualism. However, while human behaviour is influenced by culture, particular situations will also encourage people to behave slightly differently so, wherever people live in the world, both collectivist and individualist cognitions may be evident at any given time (Triandis 2000, p. 148). It is worth remembering the comment of Bhabha (1994, p. 28) who argued against the tendency to polarise and binarism: "Must we always polarize in order to polemicize?"

Activity 6   T H E O R Y   I N T O   P R A C T I C E ,   C R I T I C A L   T H I N K I N G

What sort of situation do you think could lead people from an individualist culture to behave in a more collectivist way?

COMPLEX/SIMPLE, TIGHT/LOOSE, ACTIVE/PASSIVE AND UNIVERSALIST/PARTICULARIST CULTURES

Triandis (2000, p. 147) also distinguishes between *complex* and *simple* cultures and *tight* and *loose* cultures. Hunter-gatherer cultures are described as simple, whereas Triandis describes information societies as complex. Triandis (ibid.) suggests that within complex cultures there are likely to be a

Activity 7

If your tutorial/seminar group is culturally diverse, interview someone from a culture that differs from your own and ask them to what extent they believe they personally endorse particular behaviour and values in the culture they grew up in. Find out if they believe they come from a culture that tends to be more individualist or more collectivist.

If your tutorial group tends to be monocultural, interview people who have travelled to other countries about the extent to which they believe the characteristics in the table were observable.

Activity 8

On the basis of the preceding discussions and any individual reading, as a larger (tutorial) group theorise about which countries the group as a whole believes to be more collectivist or individualist. Record the information on a whiteboard or overhead projection, for example, so the whole group can collaborate in compiling and responding to the ideas.

Write the name of the country in a list down the lefthand side and either 'C' for collectivist or 'I' for individualist to the right, next to each country name. Some information about individual countries is given at the end of the chapter, but you should check the conclusions the class has reached by researching the literature on individualist and collectivist cultures. Thus in the 'Verified by what evidence?' column, you need to give the name of a source to corroborate your view on whether a particular country is either collectivist or individualist.

Table 3.3

Name of country	'C' or 'I'	Verified/not verified by what evidence?

number of subgroups with varied beliefs and attitudes, while in simple cultures there is more likely to be a greater agreement or consistency in values and viewpoints. Also, simple cultures tend to have fewer kinds of jobs, whereas in complex cultures there are likely to be around a quarter of a million different jobs with a high level of specialisation. While these distinctions are useful, the term 'simple' might well be regarded as patronising and lacking in political correctness.

Triandis (2000, p. 147) also explores the concept of 'tight' cultures, which are normally found in isolated areas with low population density. Tight cultures are characterised as having a high number of rules about what is considered appropriate behaviour in any given situation, and people can become

upset and angry when these rules are not followed. Loose cultures are much less likely to have strict rules about what is considered to be the proper way to behave, so there is a greater toleration of deviation, especially in densely populated cities, although it is possible that some ethnic communities or subcultures within those cities have a somewhat tight culture (Triandis 2000, p. 147). Again, Triandis (2000) distinguishes between *active* cultures, which are more individualist, competitive, action orientated and emphasise self-fulfilment, and *passive* cultures, which tend to be collectivist and emphasise cooperation and getting along with others.

Triandis (2000) also describes *universalist* cultures as those that tend to treat people in employment contexts on the basis of universal criteria of competency, as opposed to *particularist* cultures, which are more likely to treat others on the basis of who they are or make assumptions that strengths in one area will be applicable to a different context. For example, if someone is perceived as being a good person generally, they are more likely to be considered as the right person for a particular position, with less emphasis being placed on their competence (Triandis 2000) in terms of qualifications or experience. It is possible that when people emigrate they bring some of these values with them and these values may become incorporated into the host culture. In your experience of Australia and New Zealand, are you able to identify particular businesses or industries that appear to hire employees from specific racial groups? (Think about nail bars, taxi companies etc). Is there potential for a clash of cultural values, do you think, when particularist approaches to hiring begin to occur in countries like Australia and New Zealand which tend to have universalist criteria of competency?

MONOCHRONIC AND POLYCHRONIC CULTURES

Misunderstandings or even conflict may also arise in communication depending on how people view time or, more specifically, whether they come from a monochronic or polychronic culture. The following table provides a quick snapshot of the broad approaches to time in monochronic and polychronic cultures.

Table 3.4   **Approaches to time in monochronic and polychronic cultures**

Monochronic	Polychronic
Examples: northern European (Sweden, UK, Germany)	Examples: Japan, Latin America, Spain, Middle East
More likely to conduct one conversation at a time (Kidd 1999, p. 212)	Likely to conduct many conversations simultaneously (Triandis 2000, p. 149)
Likely to arrive on time (Bjerke 1999, p. 75)	May arrive late to appointments (Bjerke 1999, p. 75)
Emphasis on schedules and compartmentalisation (Kidd 1999, p. 213)	Emphasis on completing human transactions regardless of schemes (Kidd 1999 p. 213)
Time is limited and a finite resource, like money, and can be spent (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 45), saved or lost. Time is structured in a linear way, organised in time slots or appointments. Time is tangible	Time is unlimited and simultaneous and expected to expand to fit what is happening and meetings can be interrupted (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 45) Multi-tasking

a|a ∞ **Activity 9**   THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Discuss the practical implications of some of the ideas presented about monochronic and polychronic cultures. For example, think about how a person from a polychronic culture might display multi-tasking and how this might be perceived by someone from a monochronic culture.

FACE

Ting-Toomey (2007, p. 256), drawing on her own work, maintains that "[I]ntercultural conflict often involves different face-losing and face-saving behaviours. Face, it has been argued, is a poorly understood concept affecting intercultural communication and refers to a claimed sense of desired social self-image in a relational or international setting and involves a constant awareness of avoiding situations where someone would feel uncomfortable, especially in front of others" (Khan-Panni & Swallow 2003, p. 17).

AN ICEBERG ANALOGY OF CULTURE

Both Hall (1952) and Trompenaars (1994) developed theories suggesting that some cultural phenomena are external (visible and objective) while others are internal (invisible and unconscious). The internal/external concept is explained as a metaphorical 'iceberg' because at the tip there are the external signs of formal culture, such as language, customs, typical food and dress, which can easily be learned (or changed) and values and beliefs, which are more subtle, elusive and less easy to observe, articulate and understand. Continuing the metaphor, the underwater or internal culture is concerned with values, thinking, nonverbal communication, concepts of time and space and what is learned unconsciously, and is much more difficult to change (De Anca & Vázquez 2007, p. 85). Such metaphors enable people to identify and express concepts in ways that go deep but also render them more accessible. Kleinberg (1999, p. 65) has also distinguished between explicit cultural knowledge, as norms people consciously articulate, and tacit cultural knowledge, pertaining to unconscious assumptions considered as being at the core of cultures by scholars.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Language is an important aspect of culture, because people use words based on how they conceptualise the world. For example, in countries with a high snowfall there are likely to be more words to describe snow than in countries like Australia where there is less snow (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 44). In this way, language determines and reflects how people 'see' the world and respond to it in their decision making (Whorf 1956, pp. 134–59). The way people think and express feelings is therefore dependent on the vocabulary in their first language (Bjerke 1999, p. 22). Research suggests that, by the end of the next decade, English, Spanish and Chinese will be the three main languages spoken and, despite the fact that English is considered by many to be the language of business, it will behove English speakers to learn at least one of these other languages and also learn something about the corresponding cultures (Khan-Panni & Swallow 2003, p. 3).

ETHNOCENTRISM

One of the earliest definitions of **ethnocentrism** appears to have come from Sumner, a professor at Yale University in the US. According to Sumner (1959, p. 13), ethnocentrism refers to the view that one's own group is the centre of everything and "all others are scaled and rated with reference to it". Like others (Cushner & Brislin 1996, p. 5; Northhouse 2007, p. 303), Triandis (2000, p. 151) suggests that all humans have ethnocentric tendencies, in that they are inclined to consider their own group's standards and behaviour as most desirable while those of other cultural groups are evaluated based on the extent to which their behaviour is aligned with the expectations of the "in group". Thus, he reasons, ethnocentrism involves seeing one's own cultural norms and behaviours as 'natural and correct' and those of others as 'unnatural and incorrect'. These behaviours might include nonverbal communication such as gestures, the expectations of men and women in society, the degree of sustained eye contact that is acceptable, or whether public nosepicking or spitting, for example, are viewed with disgust or as a matter of fact.

People tend to assume that others will largely share the same opinions, and the more similar people seem to be, in terms of dress, culture, profession etc, the more likely it is that an individual will assume a shared perspective (Triandis 2000). In business dealings with others, particularly those with a different cultural background, such an assumption is a mistake. Triandis (2000) further suggests that collectivist cultures are more likely, although not exclusively, to reject 'out groups'. For example, even in an academic context, there is a tendency for communication scholars to overlook theories that did not emanate from the West because they have been enculturated according to their own cultural norms, expectations and theories (Kim & Ebesu Hubbard 2007, pp. 223–25). Prejudice, as a fixed belief, attitude or emotion based on inaccurate or unsubstantiated information, is closely related to ethnocentrism, but is not confined to culture as it can also apply to sexism, ageism or homophobia, for example (Northhouse 2007, p. 304). Although it is difficult to avoid ethnocentrism, **cultural relativism** is a perspective that seeks to counteract the effects of ethnocentrism by evaluating the behaviour of others in terms of their own cultural values, rather than one's own.

STEREOTYPES

A stereotype may refer to either positive or negative judgements and is therefore distinguished from prejudice, which is based on irrational and suspicious hatred of a race, sexual orientation or religion, for example (Jandt 2004, p. 93). The events in Europe leading up to and including World War II illustrate how stereotyping which is learned through socialisation can be reinforced by the media in ways that have the potential to fuel notions of superiority and inferiority in order to justify unfair treatment. Such learned behaviours are hard to avoid because, as Gudykunst (1994, p. 89) asserts, "we cannot not stereotype".

Stereotypes can be viewed as an oversimplification of behavioural patterns. Not all Australians wear hats with corks dangling from them! Stereotyping is based on untrustworthy assumptions, since individuals in a particular culture are not identical and do not demonstrate completely integrated behaviour or values (Bjerke 1999, p. 75). Thus, despite the fact that culture is conceptualised as a group phenomenon, it is "dynamically negotiated" by individuals in varied ways (Brannen & Salk 1999, p. 40) and to different extents. It has been argued that stereotyping occurs less frequently than it did a decade or more ago, given the rise of political correctness, but Pickering (2001, p. 47) theorises that

INFORMATION

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to judge other cultures based on the beliefs and values of one's own.

INFORMATION

Cultural relativism is an openness and respect for diverse cultural perspectives.

the tendency to stereotype has merely been replaced by the concept of 'othering' and its nominative object, 'the other'.

∞ Activity 10   EXPERIENTIAL

Discuss with another student any personal experiences of stereotyping. Do you agree that stereotyping occurs less often than it once did?

HOFSTEDE'S DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

Hofstede, a Dutch management researcher, identified several dimensions along which cultures differ—power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-/short-term orientation. Hofstede's many publications (see, for example,1984; 1994; 2001) about his research are based on extensive surveys conducted between 1967 and 1973 of more than 100,000 IBM employees working across 72 different countries (Ailon 2008; Powell 2006, p. 12) and provide useful insights and understandings about intercultural business communication. Indeed, it could be argued that Hofstede has provided researchers, academics and managers with a vocabulary for describing cultural tendencies, so that observations that Russian culture is high on uncertainty avoidance and power distance (Matreev & Miller 2004, p. 108), for example, provide people with a starting point for discussion and decision making.

Power distance

Power distance (PD) relates to the way different cultures create levels between people based on power, authority, prestige, status, wealth and material possessions (Northouse 2007, p. 306). Melkman and Trotman (2005, p. 8) have interpreted PD as the extent to which individuals in a particular national culture tolerate unequal power and wealth distribution. They suggest that a high PD is more likely to be found in a caste system which makes upward mobility extremely difficult, although they acknowledge that in many countries such as India, a growing well-educated middle class has probably weakened the extent to which this observation can be supported.

Spain (see Morden 1995, p. 22), Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Malaysia, Russia and India are examples of national cultures with a high PD where hierarchies, power and privilege remain unchallenged. In a business setting, one implication would be that 'the boss' will make most of the major decisions and subordinates will be expected to comply (Dubrin, Dalglish & Miller 2006, p. 432). Correspondingly, organisations in lower PD cultures such as Sweden, Ireland, Israel and Australia tend to be flatter, with greater equity among employees and less likelihood that they will accept directions from managers or that their managers are making the right decisions (Dubrin et al. 2006, p. 432). Holding power in a low PD country is thus de-emphasised and in countries like the Netherlands, management will not rely on orders but on consensus and persuasion (Hofstede 2001, p. 97).

Individualism/collectivism

In cultures with a high individualism (IDV) ranking, individual rights are valued and people tend to be focused on looking after themselves and their own immediate family, whereas a low IDV ranking typifies collectivist cultures where there are close ties between people, communities and

their extended families (Melkman & Trotman 2005, pp. 8–9). The implications for management might be, for example, that when employees from highly individualistic Anglo-Saxon cultures work with those from low IDV ranking cultures such as the Middle East, a manager might expect those from high IDV cultures to view expressing their opinions as a personal right, whereas people from low IDV cultures are more likely to be focused on reaching consensus in the decision-making process (Melkman & Trotman 2005, pp. 8–9). Interestingly, there is evidence that some dimensions may be more influenced by generational change than others. Powell (2006, p. 13) suggests that young Japanese tend to be more individualistic than the previous generation, although this does not seem to be the case in terms of power distance, uncertainty avoidance or masculinity and femininity, which do not seem to have changed over time.

Masculinity/femininity

Masculinity and femininity are other important values that relate to differences between cultures. These concepts are not concerned with being female or male but about behaving in a masculine or feminine way so, for example, in feminine countries such as the Netherlands, soft skills are demonstrated by men as well as women (Powell 2006, p. 13). High levels of masculinity are found in countries such as Afghanistan, Japan, Austria, Venezuela, Italy, Germany, Austria and Mexico and low levels of masculinity in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Portugal and Thailand. Femininity relates to caring for others, the importance of people and relationships, non-material values, helpfulness, conscientiousness and a tendency to be receptive to intrinsic rewards (Hofstede 1984; Wheeler 2002, p. 617). Masculinity is associated with the desire for extrinsic rewards and material success, the importance of money and things, aggressiveness and being ambitious, competitive and dominant (Hofstede 1984; Wheeler 2002, p. 617). In countries with a high masculinity ranking, gender differentiation is more clearly culturally observable, with males holding more powerful positions (Hofstede 1984; Melkman & Trotman 2005, pp. 8–9).

Wheeler's (2002, pp. 616–27) study provides strong evidence that cultural values, including masculine and feminine dimensions, are related to the level of equity sensitivity and thus reactions to how well people feel they are rewarded, levels of satisfaction, willingness to work harder at a lower wage and emphasis on the work itself versus emphasis on pay. This kind of knowledge is very useful for managers, who need to understand and communicate with employees in reaching agreement about effective reward structures, whether in domestic and increasingly diverse cultures or in global operations across many different cultures (Wheeler 2002, pp. 616–27).

Uncertainty avoidance

Countries with high levels of uncertainty avoidance (UA) include Russia (Matreev & Miller 2004, p. 108), South American countries such as Guatemala, Uruguay and Panama (Melkman & Trotman 2005, pp. 9–10), Austria, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Japan, France and Spain. Those with low UA levels include Singapore, Denmark, Ireland, Sweden and the UK (Rodrigues & Kaplan 1998, p. 36).

Basically, Hofstede (1984) describes people from countries with strong or high UA as those who feel uneasy in situations of uncertainty and ambiguity and prefer structure and direction, whereas those from weak UA countries are more likely to be tolerant of uncertainty and ambiguity and require more autonomy and less structure (Rodrigues & Kaplan 1998, pp. 34–35).

The following table presents the broad defining characteristics of both high and low UA cultures, which have been drawn largely from Hofstede's work (2001), but the observations of other writers have also been noted.

Table 3.5 Characteristics of high and low UA cultures

High uncertainty avoidance cultures	Low uncertainty avoidance cultures
Expressing emotions is considered normal	Emotions tend to be controlled in workplaces
Tendency to stay with same employer	Less hesitation to change employers
Company loyalty is a virtue	Lower work stress
Pessimism about employer motives	Optimism about employer motives
Little openly admitted dissatisfaction with employers	Dissatisfaction is verbalised
Less obvious ambition for advancement	Greater ambition is evident
Critical attitudes towards younger people and a larger generation gap	Favourable attitudes towards younger people
Suspicion of foreign managers	Acceptance of foreigners as managers
Ideological appeal of harmony with nature	Harmony with nature less appealing
Conservative approaches	More openness to change and new ideas
Strong desire for law, order and rules to minimise uncertainty	Tolerance for diversity
Intolerance for deviance in behaviour or ideas	Greater willingness to take risks
Concern for security	Distaste for dependence on rules
Employees are more likely to expect clear answers and structured training from managers (Melkman & Trotman 2005, pp. 9–10)	Employees tend to be more comfortable with open-ended situations where a range of answers are possible and there is less structure (Melkman & Trotman 2005, pp. 9–10).

Obviously, the discourse of Hofstede and writers who largely draw on Hofstede's work is somewhat polarised, but in actual fact the differences between countries are much more complex than these extreme descriptions suggest. Although it is true that Hofstede's research suggests innovation is far more difficult to bring about in high UA countries, evidence suggests that in Japan, for example, once innovations are accepted, they are taken more seriously than in low UA countries, where people may welcome innovations very easily but put little energy into applying them (Hofstede 2001, p. 167). It is also useful to take into account that, although Hofstede's work relates to national cultures, subcultures such as particular age groups may behave somewhat differently and their degree of UA will vary from that of the national culture as a whole (O'Sullivan 1994, p. 48).

Long-term/short-term orientation

At a later date, Hofstede added a fifth dimension—long-/short-term orientation. According to Hofstede (2001), low long-term orientation countries tend to cultivate environments where quick results are expected with a focus on profit. Status has less importance in relationships, leisure time is valued and smaller proportions of income are saved. In contrast, high long-term orientation is found in cultural contexts where persistence, a focus on long-term rewards and building relationships are valued in the process of gaining a market position. These relationships are usually conducted between people of similar status. Leisure time is less important and a larger proportion of additional income is saved, often with a view to investing in real estate (Hofstede 2001, pp. 360–66). Hofstede's questionnaires were based on Chinese values. Ailon (2008, p. 897) argues that the "supposedly long-term-orientated

East Asia" in fact reaffirms the conceptualisation of the short-term orientated West. Of interest in relation to leisure time is that German and Japanese employees who work together, for example, are likely to find differences in work/life attitudes, so that Germans would be less likely to accept working at weekends or evenings than Japanese workers who would tend to be more flexible in this regard (Brannen & Salk 1999, p. 57).

CRITICISMS OF HOFSTEDE'S WORK AND OTHER MORE RECENT RESEARCH WORK

Hofstede's work has been criticised over the years on a number of bases. First, many researchers view the fact that his research was conducted with only one organisation as a limitation which does not suggest that his research results can be extrapolated across nations to wider populations. Also, he collected data using surveys, when many cultural researchers believe that qualitative interviews and questionnaires with open, semi-structured questions work best with cultural studies. Since his work was conducted in the 1980s, the world has changed a great deal, so findings from his study need to be treated with some care. Kim and Ebesu-Hubbard (2007, p. 231) have also drawn attention to research suggesting that Hofstede's work tended towards colonial discourse that casts cultures as either 'traditional' or 'backward' and thus appears to subscribe to crude stereotyping, especially given its polarised presentations of ideas. Ailon (2008, pp. 893–95) has similarly accused Hofstede of privileging and justifying "the power of Western managers" and also of indicating an oversimplified vision of culture in the world which is "inaccurately presented as though it is systematic, predictable and based on unambiguous causal logic". Ailon (2008, p. 896) also suggests that, in terms of the feminine and masculine dimension, Hofstede in his 1980 work (pp. 262–63) essentially legitimated sexual inequality.

Other researchers have also contributed to the development of our understandings of culture in ways that built on Hofstede's work. Northouse (2007) provides a useful account of the theories put forward by House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, Gupta & Associates (2004). House et al. have produced what are known as the Globe studies involving employees from 950 organisations from 62 different cultures and, building on previous research, they identified nine cultural dimensions: *uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation and humane orientation* (Northouse 2007, pp. 306–07). Some of these dimensions are similar to those of Hofstede, but new ones have made a clear contribution to our understandings of culture (Nahavandi 2006, p. 14). House et al. tended to cluster a number of countries together which appeared to have similar cultural characteristics (Northouse 2007, pp. 309–13). Their research indicated that Americans, Germans and the Spanish are more likely to be assertive in business, although within German culture there is an increased likelihood of uncertainty avoidance and evidence that generosity and caring are not valued as highly as they are in the US and Spain (Nahavandi 2006, p. 14). Nahavandi also notes that in the House et al. study, Swedes and Japanese were apparently least assertive and direct. Sriussadaporn's (2006) research has made similar observations of Thais as perceived by workers from different cultural backgrounds.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Ting-Toomey (2007, p. 259) suggests that, in order to develop skills and build competent interaction capacities, individuals need to be "mindful" of intercultural differences and avoid being judgemental about unfamiliar behaviour. One constructive way to do this, she believes, is for organisations to deliver intercultural conflict training to assist with the management of emotional frustrations and the interaction struggles that are due to cultural group membership differences. Effective intercultural communication training should include some of the following suggestions and approaches for trainees, many of which have been informed by the work of Khan-Panni and Swallow (2003, p. 13):

1. acknowledge personal cultural assumptions and consider any experiences or reasoning that drives them; are these assumptions supported by research?
2. be open to alternative ways of doing things and approaching issues or problems
3. avoid making generalisations about people on the basis of their culture
4. respect the individual and their culture as you do your own
5. be patient and tolerant
6. be sensitive to nonverbal cues
7. listen carefully to the perspectives and feelings of others
8. view learning about cultures as a lifelong commitment that involves independently seeking out sources of expertise such as journal papers, books, respected internet resources and culturally diverse colleagues
9. be humble; do not be afraid to check that you have understood something or that your words and actions have not given offence, because there will always be imperceptible differences among culturally diverse individuals.

CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY
ASIA BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT FOR KIWI TRADE

Sahar Lone, *New Zealand Herald*, 18 February 2010

A new survey shows an increase in the number of people who think free trade agreements will impact positively from 74 per cent in 2008 to 78 per cent. A survey released this week is showing that New Zealanders see Asia as increasingly important for trade. The results of the Asia New Zealand Foundation survey were released today and reveal that 81 per cent of respondents felt the Asia region is important to New Zealand's future. The survey showed an increase in the number of people who think free trade agreements will impact positively from 74 per cent in 2008 to 78 per cent.

Foundation executive director Richard Grant says business and education are areas of continuing focus. "One of our objectives is to educate people about Asian communities and cultures. I think we're going to increase our tempo in that area."

The Business Education partnership began in November and will span three years. Grant says the scheme is about adding cultural knowledge to New Zealand organisations and maintaining links with Asia as a trading partner. Businesses enrolled in the scheme include the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, the Meat Industry Association and law firm, Bell Gully.

Bell Gully, one of the founders of the Asia NZ Foundation, has formed the Asia Group, comprised of the law firm's members who are fam150r with conducting business in Asia and representing Asian businesses in New Zealand. The group includes staff who have learned Asian languages, customs and protocol. The interest in this sector is growing for the firm, which represented Hong Kong's largest listed infrastructure company, Cheung Kong, when it bought Vector's Wellington electricity network.

Bell Gully partner Simon Watt says, to complement the Asia Group, the firm is arranging secondments for lawyers in Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong. He says this is a measure towards understanding and experience of business in the region. "It is helpful to be aware of cultural issues or protocols, and it certainly does help to have staff who have worked in Asia." He says the group of about 10 is likely to expand as more staff gain this kind of cross-cultural experience.

Josephine Ellis, senior lecturer in communication studies at AUT University, says there is a need to train businesses in intercultural communications but wonders if it is being met. "People are learning on the go, by trial and error. I'm not sure how many companies are putting efforts into it. Often staff are left to manage it as they go." She says her son struggled with adjusting culturally when sent to work as a merchant banker in Hong Kong two years ago. "He really wasn't given any training as to what he could expect. There's quite a system of staff getting envelopes of money from senior staff for Chinese New Year. No one would have realised. And so he was running around frantically trying to organise all these envelopes and not offend anyone."

The survey suggests respondents' most regular contact with Asia is through shopping, shops or services. Business or work contact was also high at 70 per cent.

Kiwi clothing label Commoners Alike is being launched later this month. With manufacturing based in Hong Kong and China, director Jae Mills says trade with Asia is increasingly important to New Zealand. He says the factory he deals with is owned in part by a New Zealander. "The difference is you're committed to quite a high minimum. I've been lucky to work with someone who's really committed to work with us and really grow small labels. We need to be quite aware of our industry in New Zealand. I'm not saying we need to look at China for all our manufacturing like clothes or chocolate. But certainly some of it, I mean, Karen Walker makes her clothes there."

Source: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm

Questions

1. Imagine you are part of the management team at Bell Gully, discussing whether or not to approve Simon Watt's proposal to send lawyers on secondment to Asia. Discuss the value you believe secondments to Asia for lawyers will have in assisting intercultural communication with Asian businesspeople. What specific skills and understandings might be developed in this way? How long would the sabbatical need to be in order to be worthwhile? What difficulties might there be in insisting on secondment or at least expecting it? Decide if your group will approve Watt's proposal. You may like to read the following paper to inform your discussion.
Crossman, J & Clarke, M 2010, 'International experience and graduate employability: Stakeholder perceptions on the connection', *Higher Education,* vol. 59, no. 5, pp. 599–613.

   DOI: http://www.springerlink.com/content/fqk1337344360215/.

2. Discuss how you would go about finding information to refute or support Josephine Ellis' assumption that intercultural communication training is inadequate to meet the needs of organisations in a particular country.

3. In a small group, based on what you have learned from this topic in the text and the case study, as well as from your reading, plan a training session for an organisation (perhaps Bell Gully). What would you include? How would you organise the learning and why? How long would the training session be? How would you assess its effectiveness?

4. Research the practice of giving money in envelopes at Chinese New Year in Hong Kong banks and present what information you found about this cultural practice more broadly to the rest of the group. Explain why not getting the envelope giving 'right' had the potential to give rise to causing offence. If you have members of your class who are from Hong Kong, you may want to draw on their experience to inform your understandings and knowledge. Discuss how this practice would be viewed in your country.

SUMMARY

Globalisation and technological development have given rise to culturally diverse workforces. It is thus critical that employees at all levels develop understandings about how culture affects communication between colleagues and organisations. Almost all professional activities will involve some kind of cultural component. Cultural diversity is a double-edged sword, capable of stimulating innovation, alternative perspectives and inclusive solutions to problems. Mismanaged, it can lead to serious conflict at personal, organisational or international levels.

Culture is a dynamic but nevertheless shared and learned response to all aspects of human experience.

This chapter has drawn on the work of key communication theorists such as Hall (1981), Ting-Toomey (2007), Triandis (2000), Trompenaars (2007), Hofstede (1980; 1984; 1994; 2001; 2005; 2007) and House et al. (2004) to illustrate the complex ways

that culture influences individuals and organisations. Theories developed over the last half century or more have all contributed to knowledge that has enabled discussion and ideas about how to develop intercultural expertise in managers. The literature also indicates that broadly understanding one's own cultural assumptions is a crucial aspect of developing empathy for others who hold alternative conceptions. This kind of cultural expertise is an essential ingredient in creating a cultural 'third space' in interpersonal and organisational communication.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Consider some of the issues that a manager would need to take into account when a team of culturally diverse employees from three countries of your choice work together. Draw on the theories presented in this chapter to illustrate your perspective.
2. Describe and expand on the information provided in this chapter concerned with one of Hofstede's dimensions by accessing literature available to you.
3. Suggest ways that intercultural communication can be improved among students in your course.
4. Why do organisations need to take intercultural communication seriously?
5. From your experience of the literature on intercultural communication, reveal and discuss one important topic about intercultural communication that has not been included in this chapter but, in your view, should have been.

Activity answers   REVIEW

Activity 1

Some of the issues raised by Batonda and Perry (2001) that might arise or need to be considered when mainland Chinese and Australians/New Zealanders work together are below.

1. Australian business culture is highly individualistic, providing priority of task over relationships.
2. It is acceptable for Australians to be open in their opinions.
3. Australians tend to distrust authority more than Chinese do.
4. Australians tend to be more assertive and confrontationist.
5. Australians are more likely to pursue personal benefit and financial reward.
6. Australians have a linear concept of time.
7. Chinese businesspeople place a greater and more complex focus on giftgiving.
8. Chinese are more likely to place emphasis on relationships.
9. Chinese tend to be less direct than Australians.
10. Chinese tend to invest in long-term relationships rather than short-term goals.
11. Chinese workers are more used to working in paternalistic and autocratic environments.
12. Chinese prefer to deal with people of the same status.

Activity 2

Answers will vary.

Activity 3

Answers about the commonalties and differences in definitions of culture will vary, but the most likely observations of commonalities are that culture is a dynamic (changes over time), shared, all-encompassing and learned phenomenon that impacts on the lives of people.

Activity 4

Answers will vary.

Activity 5

Table 3.6

Individualist	Collectivist
Western	Asian and Latin American
Autonomy and independence	Interdependence with families, co-workers, tribe or co-religionists
Instrumentalist, getting the job done	Emphasis on relationships
Concerned with own interests and those of the immediate family	**Emphasise group needs, extended family, club or organisation**
Tend to be low context	Tend to sample the context of communication/ high context
People focus on verbal information	**Pay attention to nonverbal communication such as eye contact, body language, touching behaviour or proximity**
Affluent	**Poor**
Heterogenous	homogenous
Industrialised	Traditional, agricultural
Competition	**Collaboration**
Express dissonant views openly	Consensus
Individuality	**Fulfils group expectations**
Personal goals	Group goals
Freedom	**Security**
Pleasure	Obedience, duty, responsibility
Flatter organisations, equality	Hierarchy
People avoid being dependent on others or having to conform	People avoid being excluded from the group; fitting in is important
Less likely to sacrifice personal rights for the group	Consider best option for group
Concerned with personal career (Dubrin, Dalglish, Miller 2006, p. 432)	Concerned with the good of the firm (Dubrin, Dalglish, Miller 2006, p. 432).

Activity 6

War or when a country is perceived to be under attack in other ways may lead people from an otherwise individualist culture to behave in a collectivist manner (Triandis 2000, p. 148).

Activity 7

Answers will vary.

Activity 8

The US, Australia, UK and Canada are countries that appear to be highly individualist and Venezuela, Colombia, Pakistan, Thailand and Singapore tend to be more collectivist.

Activity 9

A polychronic person might display multi-tasking in a meeting by interrupting it and answering a telephone call and having a protracted conversation, or by engaging in a further conversation with someone who enters the room or responding to a text message. Someone from a monochronic culture may feel the time they have had allocated for the meeting has been wasted and that the person from the polychronic culture is being rude.

Activity 10

Answers will vary.

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