

Intercultural Theory Underlying Cultural Detective

Main resources for this document:

- *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, JN Martin and TK Nakayama, ©2000 Mayfield Publishing
- *Communicating Across Cultures*, S. Ting-Toomey, ©1999 Guilford Press.

COMMUNICATION

Context: "People communicate differently depending on the context." (Martin & Nakayama p. 73)

Low context: Intention or meaning is best expressed through explicit verbal messages. (Hall 1976)

High context: Intention or meaning is best conveyed through context and nonverbal channels.

Power: "...People in power consciously or unconsciously create and maintain communication systems that reflect, reinforce, and promote their own way of thinking and communicating." (Martin & Nakayama p. 75)

Dialectical perspective: "Looks at the dynamic and interrelated ways in which culture, communication, context, and power intersect in intercultural communication interactions." (Martin & Nakayama p. 77)

CONFLICT

Characteristics: Conflict involves intercultural perceptions, interaction, interdependence, self-interest and mutual-interest goals, and the protection of intergroup images. (Ting-Toomey p. 198)

Orientations: Conflict as opportunity or destruction. (Martin & Nakayama, pp. 290-291)

Types of conflict: Affective, conflict of interest, value, cognitive, goal. (Martin & Nakayama, p. 294)

Intercultural Theory

- **Communication**
- **Conflict**
- **Culture**
- **Ethics**
- **Perception**
- **Identity**
- **Intercultural Interaction**
- **Language**
- **Transitions**
- **Intercultural Effectiveness/Competence**

Roots of conflict at the societal level are often located in the contexts of social, economic and historical conflict. (Martin & Nakayama, p. 300)

Mono- and polychronic conflict rhythms: Monochronic means conflict is scheduled and compartmentalized, making it possible for a person to concentrate on one thing at a time. Polychronic conflict rhythm is characterized by the simultaneous occurrence of many things and by a great involvement with people. (Martin & Nakayama, based on Hall and Hall, 1987)

CULTURE

Definition: "Refers to a diverse pool of knowledge, shared realities, and clustered norms that constitute the learned systems of meanings in a particular society. These learned systems...are shared and transmitted through everyday interactions. Culture facilitates members' capacity to survive and adapt to their external environment." (Ting-Toomey p. 9)

Functions: Frame of reference for defining who we are, provides a sense of group belonging, helps us distinguish in-group and out-group, facilitates adaptation to the surrounding environment, and affects how we communicate. (Ting-Toomey pp. 12-14)

Interactive relationship between culture and communication: "Culture influences communication. That is, cultural groups influence the process by which the perception of reality is created and maintained...However, we might also say that communication helps create the cultural reality of a community." (Martin & Nakayama p. 62)

Resistance: Some cultures are formed by circumventing or resisting the dominant cultural system. (Martin & Nakayama p. 73)

Folk culture: "How traditions are played out in contemporary society to form cultural group identities... no relationship to profit. These differences mark cultural groups...they express and confirm cultural identity and group membership." (Martin & Nakayama p. 233)

Popular culture: "Television, music videos, and popular magazines would be systems of popular culture...includes the innovative, alternative ways that marginalized social groups are able to express themselves...Intercultural contact and communication play a central role in the creation and maintenance of popular culture...nearly always produced within a capitalist system that sees the products of popular culture as commodities that can be economically profitable." (Martin & Nakayama pp. 234-235) "We rely on popular culture to understand many kinds of issues: the invasion of Grenada, the vote to allow divorce in Ireland, the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the murders of homeless children in Brazil, the breakup of the former Soviet Union, the rise of nationalism in Quebec and Eritrea and Tahiti. For many of us, the world exists through popular culture." (Martin & Nakayama, pp. 249-250)

Cultural imperialism: "The definition is complex...the interrelatedness of issues of ethnicity, culture, and nationalism in the context of economics, technology, and capitalism—resources that are distributed unevenly throughout the world." (Martin & Nakayama p. 247)

Dimensions of culture: Beginning with Ned Hall, Strodtbeck, Kluckhohn, and continuing through Hofstede, Ecotonos (simulation game), Trompenaars, and nearly every intercultural training and consulting firm today, there are many versions of the "dimensions of culture." These provide valuable inside/map of differences that can make a difference. And, they have in practice become overly static, dogmatic, and used as substitutes for culture-specific knowledge.

ETHICS

Ethical absolutism: "Belief that the same fixed evaluative standards should be applied to all cultures in evaluating 'good' and 'bad' behavior." (Ting-Toomey p. 272)

Ethical relativism: "Right and wrong are determined predominantly by the culture of the individual." (Ting-Toomey p. 273)

Derived ethical-universalism: "Deriving universal ethical guidelines while placing ethical evaluations within the proper context, culture and time. Is an ideal goal but demands collaborative dialogue, attitudinal openness, and hard work from members of all gender, ethnic and cultural groups. Demands that all voices be heard and affirmed. Also demands equal power distributions and no fear of sanctions. Most 'universal ethics' approaches, unfortunately, are 'imposed ethics' that rely heavily on Eurocentric moral philosophies to the exclusion of other cultural group's voices." (Ting-Toomey p. 273)

Contextual relativism: Emphasizes the importance of understanding the problem in context. "Mindful ethical judgments in this framework require breadth and depth of context-sensitive knowledge, culture-specific knowledge, and genuine humanistic concern. It demands individuals from diverse communities who, with cognitive and emotional integrity, agree upon an ethical-universalistic framework. We can commit the error of being either too ethnocentric in our judgment or too ethnorelative in our attention." (Ting-Toomey p. 275)

Self-reflexivity: Reflect on "your place in society. By knowing what social categories you belong to, and the implications of those categories." (Martin & Nakayama p. 21)

Learning about others: "Never lose sight of the humanity of the topic of study. ...studying real people who have real lives." (Martin & Nakayama p. 22)

Global business ethics: A set of principles that help us understand what is right and wrong in the specific contexts of global commerce and cultural differences. These are particularly important when navigating the grey areas when something is ethical but not compliant, or when something is compliant but not ethical. (Stieghorst, Marcel & Hofner Saphiere, 2008, *Cultural Detective Global Business Ethics*)

PERCEPTION

We tend to see what we expect to see, and we tend to miss/not perceive that which we don't expect or have a category for.

IDENTITY

Primary identities: Cultural, ethnic, gender, personal (Ting-Toomey p. 29-36)

Situational identities: Role, relational, facework, symbolic interaction (Ting-Toomey p. 36-39)

Avowal: The identity I claim for myself

Ascription: The identity given to me by others

Labels: The terms we use to refer to a person's identity (African American, Latino, etc.)

Identity negotiation: Based on ten core assumptions including that identity is formed via communication with others; people experience security in a culturally familiar environment and vulnerability in an unfamiliar one; familiarity leads to trust; people tend to experience inclusion when their identity is endorsed and differentiation when their identity is stigmatized; satisfactory outcomes include feeling understood, respected and supported; and mindful intercultural communication integrates knowledge, motivation, and skills to communicate satisfactorily, appropriately, and effectively. (Ting-Toomey, pp. 40-41)

Independent and interdependent self-construal: The degree to which people conceive of themselves as connected to or separate from others. (Markus & Kitayama, 1994)

Minority/majority identity development: Members of dominant cultures are often able to accept their identities without question. Members of minority groups frequently are forced to deal with competing realities. Minority group members may internalize or resist dominant norms.

Postmodern cultural space: "Exists only while it is used...Is fluid and fleeting." (Martin & Nakayama p. 198) "...Is dynamic and allows people to participate in the communication of identity in new ways." (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998)

Global nomad, global expatriate, multicultural person, new internationalist, transnationalist: People who define their identities from a fluid, multidimensional perspective. Includes those who do not identify primarily or exclusively with their passport or birth country.

Social identity: People practice in-group favoritism and out-group differentiation for the purpose of enhancing their social and personal identities. (Ting-Toomey p. 147)

"...while there are cultural tendencies or norms, each person is unique and complex ...stereotyping or over-generalizing is counter-productive."

Blended Culture: Refers to people whose core identity defies categorization by ethnic group or nationality, who have been significantly influenced in their fundamental sense of who they are by two or more ethnic and/or national cultures. As a result of their profound bicultural or multicultural experience, they hold multiple frames of cultural reference within themselves. (Schaetti, Robinson & Hofner Saphiere, 2010, *Cultural Detective Blended Culture*)

INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION

Definition: An interactive (of behavior, goals, roles, physical setting, cognition, and social skills), interdependent process in which people from different cultural communities engage in symbolic exchange (verbal and nonverbal symbols used to create shared meaning) to negotiate shared meanings. " (Ting-Toomey pp. 17-19)

Attribution: People use their implicit assumptions and built-in social categories to explain behaviors or events. We generally interpret and explain human behavior by attributing causation to the perceived disposition of the person or to environmental/situational factors. (Heider 1958)

Attribution biases: People tend to overestimate negative dispositional factors and underestimate situational ones. People attend to negative information more than positive. If one out-group member engages in a negative action, we typecast the entire out-group as behaving similarly. (Ting-Toomey p. 153)

Contact hypothesis: "The notion that better communication between groups of people is facilitated by simply putting them together in the same place." (Martin & Nakayama p. 102) There are eight requirements for this to be true:

1. Group members of equal status within and outside the contact situation
2. Strong institutional and normative support for the contact
3. Voluntary participation
4. Contact has potential to extend beyond the immediate situation and occur in a variety of contexts with a variety of individuals from all groups
5. Maximize cooperation among groups and minimize competition between them
6. Approximately the same number of group members from each culture
7. Look for common ground, particularly similar values and beliefs
8. Look at group members as individuals not cultural representatives

Rigidity of stereotypes: "Stereotypes help us know what to expect from others...They become particularly detrimental when they are negative and when they are held rigidly. Research has shown that, once adopted, stereotypes are stubborn. In fact, people tend to remember information that supports a stereotype but may not retain information that contradicts" it. (Martin & Nakayama p. 128)

Mindful stereotyping: "Since it is inevitable that all individuals stereotype ... the key to dealing with the issue is to learn to distinguish between mindless and mindful stereotyping...holding the stereotypes consciously or mindfully; assuming they are first best guesses rather than definitive answers; using loose, interpretive categories rather than evaluative ones; employing qualifying, contextual statements to frame our perceptions and interpretations; being open to new information and evidence; getting to know, in depth, the group membership and personal identities of individuals; and recognizing valued and meaningful differences and similarities." (Ting-Toomey p. 163)

Relationships across cultures: There exist basic dialectical tensions—"we can simultaneously feel the need to be both connected and autonomous in relationship with our parents and with others," and the idea that communication and relationships involve balance/tension between apparent polarities. The authors suggest six intercultural relationship dialectics: differences-similarities; cultural-individual; privilege-disadvantage; personal-contextual; static-dynamic; history/past-present/future.

LANGUAGE

Functions: Group identity, perceptual filtering, cognitive reasoning, status and intimacy, and creativity. (Ting-Toomey pp. 91-100)

Semantic differential: The idea that many languages have three dimensions of meaning: the evaluative (the word's connotation is good or bad), potency (the word evokes a strong or weak reaction), and activity (the speed or motion we associate with the word).

Qualified relativist approach to language and thought: The idea that language affects our perception and thinking, which in turn affect our use of language. (Martin & Nakayama p. 153).

Language negotiation: Explicit or implicit decision about which language to use in a given situation. "These decisions are sometimes clearly embedded in power relations (Martin & Nakayama, p. 167).

TRANSITIONS

Systemic factors: Socioeconomic conditions; attitudinal stance on assimilation or pluralism; role of local institutions; host culture's definition of the role of "stranger;" distance between the two cultures (degree of psychological adjustment needed to bridge the dissimilarities). (Ting-Toomey pp. 237-238)

Individual factors: Motivational orientation; individual expectations; cultural and interaction-based knowledge; and personality attributes (such as tolerance of ambiguity). (Ting-Toomey pp. 239-241)

Interpersonal factors: Contact network; ethnic media; and adaptive interpersonal skills (psychological well-being, awareness of host values). (Ting-Toomey pp. 241-244)

Assimilation: Central focus is on adapting rather than on maintaining one's cultural heritage. Is frequently a voluntary choice. When enforced can create immense tension.

Separation/traditional-oriented: Choice to retain original culture and avoid interaction with other groups.

Segregation: Separation initiated and enforced by the dominant society. (Martin & Nakayama p. 207)

Integration/bicultural-oriented: Dual focus on maintaining original culture and maintaining daily interaction with people from other cultures.

Marginalization: "...Little interest in maintaining cultural ties with either the dominant culture or the migrant culture...not fully able to participate in" either culture. (Martin & Nakayama p. 209)

Culture shock: Involves identity loss; identity strain/effort; identity rejection; identity confusion (role ambiguity and unpredictability); and identity impotence (not being able to cope). (Ting-Toomey p. 245)

Uncertainty reduction: Intercultural relationships are by nature ambiguous, and participants desire to reduce anxiety and gain information, both to predict and explain behavior. (Gudykunst, 1998)

U-curve: The idea that adaptation to a new culture consists of predictable phases: excitement, culture shock or fatigue, and adaptation (Lysgaard 1955). "Kealey (1989) found that those who communicated more in the host country experienced a greater deal of culture shock and had more initial difficulty in adapting to the new country...also were rated by their host country co-workers as more successful." (Martin & Nakayama, p. 215)

W-curve/reentry: The idea that the person who returns home is not the same person who left home, and neither does the person return to the same place s/he left. The often unexpected "reverse culture shock."

Process model for intercultural interaction: Premised on the data that the U-curve and W-curve are over-simplified and unsubstantiated, this is a model for transition training composed of four components: Experience/what, Understand/why, Personalize/how, Apply/what now. (Berardo, <http://www.culturaldetective.com/transitions>)

"During the Cultural Detective, you will have the opportunity to better realize the tremendous impact that culture has on everything we do..."

INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS/COMPETENCE

Intercultural effectiveness requires both:

- Culture-general knowledge and skill, and
- Culture-specific knowledge and skill.

Experience proves that culture-specific knowledge is most readily recognized and highly valued; culture-general expertise can be difficult to discern. Therefore a resource person can be more valued and trusted than the lead facilitator. And, culture-general knowledge has relied heavily in recent decades on statistical data and theory.

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, M.J. Bennett, *Education for the Intercultural Experience*: developmental progression from ethnocentrism (three stages include denial, defence, and minimization) to the development of ethnorelative competency (three stages include acceptance, adaptation, and integration). Also the DMIS-based *Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)*, developed by Milton and Mitch Hammer.

Permeability, George Kelly, Theory of Personal Constructs: the ease with which we are able to see and accommodate new information. More permeability is better. Most people view events through templates, and we look for only enough information to confirm what we think we see.

Cognitive Complexity, T.W. Adorno et al, *The Authoritarian Personality*: higher complexity is better. Simpler cognitive structures have only two categories—"friend" and "foe." Higher cognitive structures see variations and possibilities.

Belief Holding, Michael Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind*: holding beliefs tentatively and situationally instead of imposing them on or expecting them of others; it's not what we believe but how we believe it.

Knowledge, Attitude, Skills, a summary of many leading interculturalists' approach:

- Knowledge: the information necessary to interact appropriately and effectively in different cultures and across cultures; the cognitive orientation to facilitate the acquisition of this information.
- Attitude: includes positive feelings toward the culture, intercultural sensitivity, relaxation in social settings, empathy, and ethnorelativism.
- Skills: the behaviours necessary to interact in a new culture appropriately and effectively; includes mindfulness, self disclosure, behavioural flexibility, identity maintenance, uncertainty reduction strategies, face support, appropriate display of respect, and ability to build relationships.

Competence: Motivation, knowledge, attitudes, behavior and skills—ability to form intercultural alliances and coalitions. (Martin & Nakayama, pp. 317-330) Appropriateness (match expectations), effectiveness (mutual shared meaning and desired goal-related outcomes), and satisfaction (desired identity images are elicited or validated) achieved by using knowledge, mindfulness and communication. (Ting-Toomey pp. 262-271)

Inattention to diversity in the workforce: Low morale due to culture clash; high absenteeism due to psychic stress; high cost of employee turnover; enormous waste of personal energy and creativity. (Loden & Rosener 1991 p. 12)

Advantages of managing diversity: Full utilization of human capital; increased knowledge and mutual respect; increased commitment; greater innovation and flexibility due to fuller participation in problem solving; improved productivity. (Loden & Rosener 1991 p. 220)