Social Psychological Concepts in the Context of Intercultural Communication

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Abstract

Increased communication between people of different cultures has led to the development of the field of intercultural studies. The field is interdisciplinary in nature, as it draws from theories by scholars in other fields, one of which is social psychology. This dissertation examines aspects of social psychology that are particularly relevant to intercultural communication, as a greater understanding of certain social psychological concepts may increase the effectiveness of intercultural interaction. Central to the argument is the notion of the group, as group inclusion provides norms, roles, and social identities to its members. The relationship between group membership and identity is examined in detail, especially with respect to individuals' sense of identity and how they relate to members of their in-groups and out-groups. The social comparison theory is an integral part of identity construal because when forming a social identity, people need to compare themselves to others who are not part of their in-groups. How people view members of their out-groups (and compare themselves against them) is related to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Group identity and the use of stereotypes are related to self-esteem, as there is a tendency to view in-group members as inherently superior to out-group members. While this dissertation focuses on social psychological factors that are important to intercultural communication, the psychological aspects of cross-cultural adaptation are briefly discussed, as they also have the potential to influence intercultural interaction. Contexts in which intercultural communication is most likely to take place are examined, focusing on the social psychological factors that underlie such communication. The role of the cultural marginal is also discussed, as people who are socialized into the periphery of two or more cultures develop a unique cultural perspective that, in recent years, has become a socially desirable view.

Introduction

Communication between peoples of different groups and cultures is not a new phenomenon; it has been occurring for centuries as humans have migrated, become involved in warfare, and traveled for leisure. Intercultural communication has become more commonplace in the past 100 years or so largely through technological developments, as methods of travel are becoming more accessible to more people, the speed of information dispersal is ever-increasing, and media forms such as the television and internet are connecting people from distances further than ever before. Some pundits argue that "the world is shrinking" (Spitzberg, 2000) or that we now live in a "global village" (McLuhan and Rogers, 1989) due to these advances in technology; however, the proposed "smaller" world in which we now live has less to do with the earth's size and everything to do with how people communicate.

The increased frequency of intercultural interaction has led to the development of a relatively new field labeled "intercultural studies." The field is interdisciplinary in approach because it draws from theories of interaction and perception developed in fields such as cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and communication studies. The various constituents contribute an important aspect to what is now known as the field of intercultural studies—the cultural anthropology perspective is concerned with the origins and development of culture; the sociology perspective addresses how people function in organizations and institutions; the psychology perspective adds observations of human behavior and identification processes; the philosophy perspective provides a depth of thought concerning knowledge and ethics; communication studies give insight into how and why people communicate with each other. Thus, it can be said that the field of intercultural studies has to do with profound attention to how culture plays a role in people's behavior, identification, and attitudes,

and how culture manifests itself in social situations, including organizations, institutions, and communication between peoples.

This dissertation will closely examine the contribution of psychological aspects to the field, especially with regard to intercultural communication. I believe that some underlying psychological processes are either taken for granted or are ignored when discussing group phenomena, especially communication with another person or group. For example, it is widely acknowledged by theorists in many fields, including those in intercultural studies, that people who belong to an in-group will view themselves and the members of the group more positively than members of an out-group. While this is true, the psychological process behind such group behavior, i.e., the *function* that the behavior has for group members, is not usually examined. Exploring the psychological perspective of intercultural communication will possibly lead to enhanced communication between peoples because understanding the psychological function behind chosen modes of interaction may make the intended message more clear. I will rely predominantly on theories and concepts developed in the field of social psychology, as this is the area of psychology that most addresses people's behaviors and attitudes in the presence of other people.

My interest in exploring the applications of social psychology to intercultural communication stems from a combination of two factors: my undergraduate degree in psychology and my participation in modules as part of this master's degree program. I found that my perspective on intercultural interaction was markedly different from my classmates' due to my background in psychology. I felt that I could "tease out" aspects of social psychology that are present in intercultural communication theories and bring them to the surface for further analysis and discussion, which I will attempt to do in the present work. A disclaimer about my background needs to be made at this point, as it is

probable that my cultural and educational experience will affect my analysis. I am an American, and although I lived in Saudi Arabia for the first fifteen years of my life, I received all of my education at institutions with American-oriented curricula. I make this point in order to acknowledge the possibility of an implicit "Western" perspective that may be apparent in my arguments, in spite of intended objectivity. There is a line of thought in critical linguistics that suggests that all perception involves some theory or ideology and that as such, there are no completely theory-free facts or objective realities (Fowler et al., 1979). It is possible that this reasoning extends to the influence of culture in making observations; that is, that there are no "culture-free" observations because the very process of making the observation will include a certain degree of subjectivity. Thus, I will try to make it clear how I perceive the concepts I examine and how I intend to use them in context so that readers may make their own decisions about whether or not there are cultural biases involved.

This dissertation does not, as its focus, rely on the generation and analysis of empirical data. The methodology involves bringing to the surface social psychological aspects that are embedded within phenomena associated with intercultural communication. I will examine the psychological concepts in the context of intercultural communication to illustrate how they influence the interaction. Thus, the process of investigating the relationship between social psychology and intercultural communication involves reviewing what is available in contemporary literature and discussing the concepts in an intercultural context. I have also included interviews with individuals whose intercultural experiences provide examples of social psychological influence. The interviews provide complementary material to the literature discussed and are not intended as empirical data.

In order to apply social psychological concepts to intercultural communication, it is necessary to provide conceptualizations that describe what the fields of social psychology and communication studies examine. This is done in chapter one, where I also define other terms that are central to the dissertation, such as culture, intercultural, and communication. Chapters two and three explore the notion of the group by investigating the formulation and function of groups, as well as individuals' relationships to groups and to other individuals. Social identity is a concept of social psychology that is particularly relevant to intercultural communication because how individuals define themselves in certain contexts may dictate their communicative behavior. How people perceive others is a very important part of social psychology, especially because stereotypes may lead to prejudice and racism. Chapter four will examine not only the social role of phenomena such as stereotypes, but also their underlying psychological functions that may impact their role in communication.

Chapter five briefly discusses psychological phenomena that may occur as a result of intercultural contact, and the chapter also examines specific situations and groups of people who would most likely benefit from knowledge of psychological processes in intercultural interaction. For example, international business, which includes not only business transactions between two nations but also multi-national companies, has grown exponentially in the past 100 years. Effective intercultural communication is essential to businesses not only interested in working with other companies but those with an international workforce. Migration and second language learning have resulted in intercultural classrooms where becoming proficient in another language also means being competent on a social and cultural level. Finally, cultural migrants will be examined in chapter six, as their role in intercultural interactions is a unique and specific one. Aspects of social psychology that were deemed relevant to

intercultural communication will be reexamined with respect to cultural marginals because these people are almost always interacting and communicating with people from other cultures. Since cultural marginals are, by definition, people without a specific culture with which they can identify, their social identification process usually varies in relation to particular social contexts; hence, they are people for whom psychology and communication are constantly interacting.

As a result of the increase in global mobility, the number of cultural marginals is rising, as well as the number of intercultural businesses, workplaces, classrooms, and communities. It has become politically correct and perhaps even en vogue to be described as "multicultural," "diverse," or "culturally competent." This paper will attempt to explore the psychological processes behind what those terms aim to describe with regard to communicating with people from other different cultures. While intercultural interaction is not a new phenomenon in terms of the world's social history, an in-depth investigation into what psychological aspects are at work during such interaction is long overdue.

Chapter 1. Social Psychology and Intercultural Communication

A major complication in the field of intercultural studies is a definitional one: very rarely do two scholars use the same term in the same manner. The aim of this chapter is to provide brief descriptions of some of the main terms and concepts that will be prevalent throughout this dissertation. Some of these concepts, such as social psychology and communication studies (in particular, the intercultural component) are used as the main structure for analysis; therefore, it is especially important to outline their scope of study and which aspects will be relevant to the present discussion.

<u>Working definitions of social psychology and communication studies</u>

Most introductory textbooks for students of social psychology provide definitions that orient the field around the realms of social influence and human behavior. Thus, Tajfel and Fraser state that the "aim of social psychology is to analyze and understand human social behavior" (1978, p.17). Aronson, Wilson, and Akert provide a narrower definition of the field as "the scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people" (1999, p.6). Aronson et al. differentiate social psychology from sociology by emphasizing the importance of influence in social situations; that is, instead of having an objective view of social situations, social psychologists are interested in how people interpret and respond to their social environments. The definition of social psychology that I will use in this dissertation is provided by David Myers, who says that social psychology is "the scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another" (2002, p.5). His conceptualization of social psychology appeals to me because he includes both influence and relationships as important aspects. I feel that people's sense of identity is also an important component

of social psychology that is lacking in Myers's definition; therefore, I want to add the study of identity to the present conceptualization of social psychology.

Bond and Smith (1999) believe that the history of social psychology has made the field inherently ethnocentric. A recent estimate of the 56,000 researchers in the entire field of psychology showed that 64 percent are American, and Bond and Smith claim that researchers in the sub-field of social psychology represent a similar percentage. They go on to point out that most of the articles published in journals come from North America (mostly the United States and Canada), and also that the majority of citations that appear within social psychology textbooks (American or otherwise) refer to studies conducted in North America. Therefore, it is likely that most social psychologists, whether or not they are educated in the United States, Canada, or elsewhere, are exposed to studies predominantly conducted within North America. Although studies from other countries and cultures are becoming more mainstream in the field, it is important to note that the preponderance of North American culture within the development of social psychology is an obstacle to its objective application.

Introductory textbooks also usually include an almost defensive disclaimer about the validity of the field of social psychology. For example, Myers (2002) includes a section in his introductory chapter addressing the suggestion that social psychology is simply glorified common sense. He goes on to say that common sense seems to be more obvious *after* the fact, and that social psychologists use experiments and other scientific methods to form hypotheses and theories in order to systematically *predict* group behavior. Tajfel (1978) also addresses the suggestion that social psychology is merely a "restatement of the obvious" by saying that "what superficially appears obvious becomes less so on closer inspection" (p.22). Researchers within the field recognize the criticism that social psychologists merely study obvious phenomena, but

they counter this criticism with the suggestion that what lies *underneath* the apparent obviousness of social behavior is really the focus of their study.

The field of social psychology is also interdisciplinary in nature as it draws from theories present in other fields, one of which is communication studies. Examining how people behave in groups also involves a study of how they communicate with each other. Scholars in the field of communication studies also struggle to define exactly what it is they are investigating. Most academics agree that communication involves not only the transmission of messages but also the production and exchange of meanings (Fiske, 1990; Price, 1996). There is, however, plenty of room for interpretation as different researchers may perceive these abstract concepts in markedly distinct ways. For example, Gudykunst (1998) suggests that only messages, not meanings, can be transmitted from one person to another, and that miscommunication occurs when people perceive different meanings from the same message. I will rely on the broad definition of communication as the transmission of messages and the production and exchange of meanings, because, as will be shown, the variety of communication between cultures and contexts will call for refinement of the term within specific situations.

Defining "culture" and "intercultural"

Again, in order to examine what aspects of social psychology are relevant to intercultural communication, it is necessary to define what is meant by the terms "culture" and "intercultural." Culture itself is such a broad concept that is impossible to define exactly what it is; it is only possible to define how I intend to use the concept in this paper. Indeed, definitions vary from all-encompassing remarks such as "culture is ubiquitous...and all-pervasive" (Samovar and Porter, 2000, p.7) to more explicit statements, such as the one provided by Geertz which suggests culture is "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions

expressed in symbolic form by means of which men [and women] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" (1973, p.89). A complication with Geertz's definition is that parameters such as "meanings" and "symbols" require further explication. Therefore, the definition of culture that I prefer is one used by Young Yun Kim, a cross-cultural researcher, who says that culture is "a pattern of knowledge, attitudes, values, mind-sets, perceptions, and behaviors that permeate all life activities" (1988, p.176). Kim's definition of culture is broad, yet it provides a concrete conceptualization of the construct.

Of course, now that the broad concept of culture has been defined, it must be noted that there are many types and subsets of culture. Most scholars agree that culture is not innate but *learned* (Kim, 1988; Samovar and Porter, 2000; Barnett and Lee, 2002); therefore, the many social environments to which an individual is exposed may offer different cultural experiences. That is, without even leaving their own country, people may experience different cultures in their homes, their schools, their workplaces, and other social groupings. This dissertation will attempt to mainly focus on "national" culture, which can be considered attitudes and behaviors shared by members of a nation. There are several problems when even attempting to group people together using their nation as the shared group that need to be mentioned. For example, in a country such as the United States, the "national" culture is comprised of many groups of people that Hollinger (1999) labels "communities of descent." These various communities of people would probably argue that their respective cultures are not simply subsets of "American" culture but separate, recognizable entities. In short, to use national culture as a construct minimizes the diversity found within those nations. It would be beyond the scope of any discussion to try and recognize the many sub-cultures that contribute to a larger one, but it necessary to recognize that within cultures, whether they be national,

regional, or otherwise, there is room for variety, dissent, and even conflict. Barnett and Lee (2002) shed some light on this when they argue that culture is a property of a group that is formed by the association of individual minds; therefore, the group result is exterior to the individual. The individual contains a part of the group culture, but no one person can contain all elements of a culture. This perspective accounts for the way culture is construed as individuals who collectively associate certain behaviors and beliefs, yet it also provides room for the diversity of those individuals.

Intercultural studies is therefore concerned with the interaction of peoples who define themselves as members of different cultures. How people define themselves when interacting with others will be discussed later in this dissertation, but the previous discussion about what "culture" is can now be examined in terms of communication. Cross-cultural communication research is usually regarded as a comparison of communication styles and techniques across different cultures, whereas intercultural communication can be conceptualized as "communication between people from different national cultures," which most scholars limit to face-to-face communication (Gudykunst, 2002, p.179). Indeed, some of the features of cross-cultural communication research may be very useful to intercultural communication, as understanding communication styles of another culture may increase the effectiveness of the intercultural interaction. However, it is important to realize that cross-cultural communication research and intercultural communication research are separate components of the larger field of communication studies.

The difference between intercultural communication and *international* communication is that the latter term refers to "mass-mediated communication between two or more countries with differing backgrounds" (Hart and Rogers, 2002, p.5). The focus of this dissertation is intercultural communication, but it is important to recognize

that elements of international communication may influence communication between peoples. Although the present discussion will focus on communication between people of different national cultures, I would like to stress that there are concepts of intercultural communication that can be applied to communication between people who belong to the same national culture but who identify themselves with other subgroups, such as the disabled, the elderly, communities of descent, and so forth. Singer (1998) echoes this by saying that in addition to trying to communicate with foreigners, intercultural communication tries to "understand—and overcome—the barriers to effective communication between different people and different groups within the same country" (p.xiii).

Modes of communication

In order to discuss intercultural communication, it is useful to first review some of the ways that scholars measure communication. People communicate through verbal communication, both oral and written, and they may rely on the explicit meaning of the words themselves or they may rely on other contextual or cultural cues to supplement the spoken words and relay the intended message (Price, 1996; Wardhaugh, 1993). Contextual or non-verbal cues can be assessed as non-verbal behavior that communicates meaning. Bodily behavior such as gestures (Price, 1996) and facial expressions (Samovar and Porter, 2000), the use of space and social distance (Hall, 1966), and how and when people touch each other during communication (Samovar and Porter, 2000) are examples of non-verbal behavior that are forms of communication. Even the use of silence communicates some form of meaning, and it may vary from culture to culture (McDaniel, 2000).

How culture affects communication

The extent to which people in a certain culture rely on the use of context can be a descriptor of the culture itself, as Hall (1976) conceptualizes the assessment of cultures as "high-context" or "low context;" that is, whether or not the majority of one's message is transmitted through contextual and non-verbal cues or explicitly through words. Another factor that may influence communication is peoples' perception of time. Hall (1983) differentiates between cultures where people tend to do many things at once as cultures that use polychronic time, whereas cultures that focus on one task at a time are cultures that use monochronic time. Polychronic time cultures stress the involvement of people and the completion of transaction and monochronic time cultures stress adherence to preset schedules. The way people perceive time can influence their communication with others, especially if they perceive time in a different manner, because it can mean variation in topics discussed in conversations, the time one takes to make a decision, and the turn-taking that takes place in conversations.

Culture can also affect verbal communication, as many scholars believe that language and culture are inseparable (Samovar and Porter, 2000; Goodenough, 1964; Sapir, 1921). The very structure of a language can be an indicator about some aspects of the culture with which is it associated—for example, East Asian languages are very complex and may differentiate according to social status, degree of intimacy, age, sex, and level of formality. There are elaborate linguistic systems of honorific speech in these languages, and the differentiations are present "not only in the referential terms but also in verbs, pronouns and nouns" (Yum, 2000, p.68). Therefore, one who does not even speak East Asian languages can recognize that because of the structure of the languages, there are complex societal and hierarchical boundaries that must be recognized in those cultures. There are no such extensive honorific linguistic systems in

English, which reflects the lack of complex societal relationships and intrinsic hierarchies in most English-speaking cultures.

If there is an inherent association between language and culture, then differences between two languages should be accompanied by differences in the respective cultures with which they are associated. For example, Whorf (1956) suggests that differences between SAE (Standard Average European) languages and the Hopi language reveal a difference in how speakers of those languages view the world. SAE speakers tend to see the world in terms of things, whereas Hopi speakers tend to see the world in terms of events. Whorf holds that the grammatical forms of the languages are connected to prevalent modes of thought. Whorf went on to construct a hypothesis regarding the relationship between language and thought, later renamed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. The "strong" form of the hypothesis states that language shapes how people perceive their world, which is also known as linguistic determinism. The "weak" form of the hypothesis suggests that diversity in language categories and structure lead to cultural differences in thought and perceptions of the world, which is also known as linguistic relativism (Fong, 2000). Following this hypothesis, it can be said that learning another language may also mean learning another way of thinking and/or perceiving the world. This is further supported by Richardson (1998), whose preliminary research suggests that as people learn another language, their concept of spatial expression becomes increasingly similar to that of native speakers of the target language. Thus, learning another language means not only learning about another culture, but also learning another way to communicate.

Intercultural communication competence

The term "competence" is subject to as many different interpretations as the term "culture;" as such, it is necessary to define what competence means with regards to

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intercultural communication. In fact, what it means to be linguistically competent in a first or second language is under constant revision. Coleman (1998) suggests that in addition to mastering grammatical systems of a language, contemporary definitions of foreign language proficiency include a sociocultural or sociolinguistic component. In other words, communicative competence is becoming increasingly important as a part of linguistic competence. To ethnographers of communication, communicative competence is "not only the language code, but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. It deals with the social and cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have to enable them to use and interpret linguistic forms" (Saville-Troike, 1989, p.21). Therefore, to have intercultural communication competence, people must be able to communicate appropriately in more than one cultural context.

Intercultural communication competence focuses less on linguistic performance and stresses "the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures" (Wiseman, 2002, p.208). This suggests that intercultural communication competence is not a skill that people develop unconsciously; there has to be a significant amount of effort involved to acquire information about how to interact appropriately with other cultures. It is possible that second language learners, as a result of developing proficiency in a foreign language, will also develop appropriate communicative skills. However, for people to achieve intercultural communicative competence, they must be motivated to learn and develop skills that allow them to communicate effectively in any cultural context. The following chapters will discuss how knowledge about certain aspects of social psychology can be an aid to developing effective intercultural communication skills.

Chapter 2. The notion of the group

The concept of the group is central to many aspects of social psychology. For example, researchers are concerned with how people function in groups, how groups influence people through both membership and exclusion, and how people identify themselves and others through groups. This chapter will be dedicated to examining basic group phenomena: how groups are formed, why groups are formed, how membership is determined, and how boundaries affect group formation. The subject of identity with respect to group membership is a broad discussion that merits its own chapter later in this dissertation.

<u>Definition of "group"</u>

The most basic question when thinking about groups, as is the case with most of the terms discussed in this work, is a definitional one: what, exactly, *is* a group? Most scholars determine whether a group exists by the presence of intentional and deliberate interaction between people. For example, group dynamics expert Marvin Shaw (1981) defines a group as "two or more people who interact and influence one another" (p.282). The interaction implied in this definition is one that lasts over a considerable amount of time. Two people bumping into each other on a busy street could not be considered a group; however, if those same two people were jogging partners down that same busy street, they would constitute a group. Aronson et al. (1999) differentiate between nonsocial groups and social groups; they consider the presence of two or more people who are in the same place but are not interacting to be part of a nonsocial group, whereas two or more people who participate in meaningful interactions constitute a social group. Their argument is that the mere presence of others can influence people's behavior, whether or not they are part of a social group. For example, students working individually on computers in a terminal lab would be considered a nonsocial group. The

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students, while not interacting with each other, may alter their behavior as a result of other people's presence. However, if the students were putting their efforts together in the form of a group project, they would be part of a social group. For the purposes of this dissertation, the concept of the "group" will imply a social group, but it is important to note that nonsocial groups, or the presence of more than one person without interpersonal interaction, may still be a behavioral influence.

Singer (1998) narrows his definition of group interaction as shared perception, as he says that a group forms when "two or more individuals communicate the fact that they share a common identity or view of something. Once they do communicate that similarity, verbally or nonverbally, they have become an identity group" (p.59). Through his terminology, it is evident that Singer conceives of groups as part of people's identities, a concept that will be addressed at length in a later section. For now, it is sufficient to define the notion of the group as a formation that occurs when people interact and influence each other, or when they acknowledged a shared perception.

Function of groups

Now that the definition of groups has been discussed, this leads us to another question: *why* do people form groups? Groups do not form haphazardly; rather, as Turner (1987) says, "groups formation [is] an adaptive social psychological process that makes social cohesion, co-operation, and influence possible" (p.40). Thus, it would seem that groups form so that people can function in society. Aronson et al. (1999) suggest that forming relationships with others "fulfills a number of basic human needs," possibly "an innate need to belong to social groups" (p.339). Evolutionary psychologists have argued that in our evolutionary past, it was advantageous to belong to social groups because it was easier to hunt food, find mates, and to care for children

(Myers, 2002). The survival advantage that was associated with belonging to social groups has thus evolved into an innate need to belong to such groups.

Belonging to a group can be a source of social behavioral information. For example, if people are unsure how to behave in a given situation, they are likely to rely on behavior around them as a cue to what is considered appropriate (Aronson et al., 1999; Myers, 2002). People are usually influenced by the social behavior of others, regardless of whether or not they belong to the same social group, but they are more likely to conform to the behavior of their fellow group members than of those with whom they have no association. Maintaining membership in a group may sometimes mean conforming to that group's social norms, which are explicit or implicit "rules for acceptable behaviors, values, and beliefs" of its members (Aronson et al., 1999, p.294).

Belonging to a social group can also establish specific roles for its members, and whereas social norms dictate behavior that is appropriate for all group members, social roles dictate the behavior of people in certain positions in a group. For example, when in a classroom, the difference between the roles of students and professors will usually cause them to adhere to different social behavior. Well-established social roles, such as that of the student, employer, professor, and so forth, are useful because group members will usually be able to predict appropriate behavior when assuming one of those roles. For example, professors will not have to significantly alter their behavior when interacting with different sets of students; although each section of students may constitute a separate social group, the appropriate behavior for the relevant social roles will, in most cases, apply to all of the groups. Thus, it can be said that belonging to a social group functions as cues for appropriate behavior, especially regarding social roles. Appropriate behavior can be considered in terms of individuals' interactions with

other members of the group and also their interactions with people who are not in their social group.

<u>In-groups and out-groups</u>

Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory holds that "people learn about their own abilities and attitudes by comparing themselves to other people" (Aronson et al., 1999, p.181). I argue that the social comparison theory can be extrapolated to groups as well; that is, that groups learn more about themselves by making comparisons to other groups. This is complemented by Turner's (1987) suggestion that groups form when people perceive themselves as "us" in contrast to "them." The "us" perception relates to members of in-groups, whereas the "them" perception relates to members of out-groups. In-groups, according to social psychologists, are groups with which individuals identify and feel that they are members (Aronson et al., 1999). Out-groups, of course, are logically the opposite: they represent groups with which individuals do *not* identify nor feel that they are members. Gudykunst (1998) adds that people are usually concerned about the welfare of their fellow in-group members, whereas they are not concerned about the welfare of people belonging to out-groups.

The way in which people see members of their in-group is also vastly different from how they view members of their out-group. For example, many people experience what is called the out-group homogeneity effect—the sense that "they" are all alike and different from "our" group (Myers, 2002). In addition, the more familiar that people are with a social group, the more likely they are to see the diversity within the group. Experiments by psychologists in both the United States and Scotland reveal that people of other races seem to look more alike than do people of one's own race (Myers, 2002). This holds true across most races—African Americans can more easily identify another African American than a European American. Latinos can more easily recognize

another Latino than an Asian American. Myers (2002) suggests that this is because when we view someone from our own racial group, we are less race conscious and pay greater attention to individual characteristics. When we view someone from another racial group, we attend, first, to racial characteristics rather than individual features.

How people distinguish in-group members from out-group members is related to Tajfel's social categorization theory "which helps to create and define the individual's place in society (1978b, p.63). Other psychologists have expanded on this theory, suggesting that in order to make sense of the world, people create groups into which they categorize others (Aronson et al., 1999). For example, many Americans have a good idea of what it means to categorize people into the "African American," "Asian American," or "European American" social categories. Although the characteristics of the individuals in each category may vary, there are shared distinguishing characteristics that classify them as members of one social group and not of another. The boundaries of in-groups and out-groups are not always constant; even seemingly inflexible categories such as ethnicity can shift in terms of who belongs and who does not.

Fredrik Barth's concept of boundaries

In an essay examining ethnic groups, Fredrik Barth (1969) focuses on the creation and maintenance of boundaries that define who does and does not belong to certain ethnic groups. He emphasizes "the fact that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves" (p.75). He argues that culture is a result of ethnic grouping that is usually done as a form of social organization. Barth stresses the social importance of the boundary itself and *not* the culture that it encloses. This is important because what is considered the dichotomous behavior to divide in-groups and out-groups is constantly in flux; what usually persists is that there *is* a boundary to divide them. What members of a group may view as appropriate in-group

behavior may change, but as long as the group members ascribe to certain characteristics that are socially distinct from other people, boundaries between that group and other groups are maintained. Barth's concept of boundaries is especially important to the subsequent discussion of identity and group membership because the divisive characteristics between groups, ethnic or otherwise, are neither universal nor permanent. What remains is the boundary between groups, but it is important to note that boundaries themselves are not impervious to fluctuation. Boundaries can emerge and diverge in various social contexts, and it is usually the members of different social groups who dictate what characteristics or behaviors have become definitive of inclusion or exclusion to the group. The voluntary ascription of group members to certain behaviors and characteristics is not only a form of social organization, but also a form of social identity.

Chapter 3. The relationship between identity and groups

This chapter will explore the complex relationship between identity and groups, both how people define themselves and others in terms of group membership. Barth's concept of boundaries is important to group membership and identity, because the groups to which people belong and by which they define themselves are always shifting. Thus, the determination of who are in-group members and who are out-group members is rarely constant. Another important relationship between identity and group membership is how people choose to define themselves when coming into contact with another person. As will be shown, how others define themselves in terms of group membership can affect the social identity of those with whom they communicate. In the process of examining identity and group membership, group relations will also be explored: namely, the relationship between the individual and the group, interpersonal relationships, and intergroup relationships.

The individual and the group

Social identity. Tajfel's (1978b) social identity theory suggests that being part of one or more social groups helps to form the part of one's identity that is known as the social identity, "that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p.63). Social identity is usually considered as only *part* of people's self-concept that is supplemented with personal identity (that is, individuals' own sense of personal attributes and attitudes). While the present discussion will focus on social identity, it is important to recognize that people's personal identities may also affect the development of their social identities.

Turner (1987) says that people's behavior is a function of the interplay between people and their environments; that is, individuals' behavior is influenced by group

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membership. Individuals are most likely to be members of more than one social group or categorization; for example, they may be members of social groups based on their nationalities, ethnicities, religions, genders, professions, social statuses, etc. How salient one particular social identity is at any particular time may depend on a number of factors, such as the context of a given situation or the importance of the social identity. The context of the situation may also determine the social role that is appropriate to a certain social identity and may therefore govern behavior. For example, how people perceive the social role of "professor" will usually dictate their behavior when they are in a classroom context. Singer (1998) suggests that "the importance of context determining identity—and therefore behavior—cannot be overstated" (p.83). Someone who identifies herself as both a "mother" and a "professor" will behave very differently when at home or in the classroom.

People can have many "selves," and they construct and define those selves through self-presentation. Self-presentation involves presenting who we are (or who we want other people to think we are) through "our words, nonverbal behaviors, and actions" (Aronson et al., 1999, p.183). Sometimes, this involves impression management, defined as "our conscious or unconscious orchestration of a carefully designed presentation of self so as to create a certain impression that fits our goals or need in a social interaction" (Aronson et al., 1999, p.173). To go back to the woman who is both a professor and a mother, self-presentation may involve using different behaviors in different contexts. In the classroom, if she wants to impress upon her students that she is a serious and dedicated educator, she may have stiff posture, a stern expression, and a focused lesson. In her home, if she wants to impress upon her child that she is a loving and nurturing mother, she may hold her son when he cries, give him a loving smile, and rock him to sleep. This is not to say that she has more than one

personality—rather, she has very distinct social identities that will become more salient to her given the context.

The importance of one social identity over another may also vary with the situation. For example, if the professor's child becomes sick, she may have to make a choice between her role as a mother and that as an educator. Alternatively, she may have to look to a third identity group to make her decision. If she sees herself as a breadwinner for the family as well as an educator, she may choose to teach her class to earn funds to support her family (and to presumably pay someone to mind her child). She might also see herself as a humanist who needs to take care of a sick person and choose to stay with her child instead. Which social identity becomes salient to people may depend on the strength of that identity to a particular group and how important it is to maintain membership in that group. If the woman wants to be perceived, above all else, as an effective educator, she will probably choose not to go home and take care of her sick child, because to do so would go against the social norms of being a professor. It is possible that her peers would not approve a decision *not* to teach a class; therefore, conformity to the social norms of being a professor would dictate that she stay and teach the class.

The independent self. The previous discussion on social identity has presumed that people have, to some extent, a perception of themselves as independent agents. For example, Tajfel (1978b) regarded social identity as only *part* of a person's self-concept; their own personal identity was thought of as a separate entity. The assumption that people have a part of themselves that is not based on group membership is an example of inherent Western views present in the field of social psychology. A discussion will follow that addresses this assumption, but it is necessary to recognize the predominant individualism associated with Western society that has resulted in inherent cultural

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biases within the field of social psychology. Even the terms "individualism" and "collectivism" can be argued to be culturally biased, as many people who live in supposedly "collectivist" societies do not perceive themselves in that manner.

The preceding paragraphs discussing social identity and possible selves are most applicable in Western societies. The woman who has a choice over what group identity is more important to her, that of professor, mother, humanitarian, or breadwinner, can be seen as inherently individualistic because she has a *choice*, which implies control over her social identity and possible selves. Myers (2002) says that the "psychology of Western cultures assumes that your life will be enriched by defining your possible selves and believing in your power of personal control" (p.44). Thus, people are assumed to have independent selves over which they exert some degree of control, allowing them to choose with which group they most identify in various situations. The difference between independent and interdependent selves must be explored in order to determine whether concepts such as social identity and possible selves are relevant in non-Western cultures.

Interdependent selves. The concept of interdependent selves, or the definition of oneself primarily in relation to others, is usually associated with Eastern or communitarian cultures. I use the term "communitarian" instead of "collectivist" because some scholars argue that the maintenance of social relationships, not concern for a general collective body, is definitive of those cultures (Yum, 2000). Having social relationships with others is not only part of people's lives; rather, it is primarily how they define themselves. For example, according to Kiyoshi Midooka, a Japanese educator:

> [T]he Japanese concept of a human being is not an individual but a 'contextual.'
> That is, the minimum unit of the Japanese society is not an individual but an
> interpersonal relation and Japanese communication behavior changes drastically

in accordance with the person they are interacting with or the situation where the interaction takes place (1990, p.479).

According to this definition of Japanese identity, there would be no individual without the group. This is drastically different from the Western notion of the group (i.e., that it is comprised of individuals). Myers (2002) argues that the goal of social life in communitarian cultures is not to enhance one's individual self but to harmonize with and support one's communities. In a sense, people with interdependent selves have more social identity than people with independent selves; the main difference is that in communitarian cultures, people's identity as a whole depends much more on social relations than in individualist cultures.

The individual and the nation. The relationship between individuals and their respective nations is both unique and universal—unique because no two nations are identical and universal because Reicher and Hopkins (2001) argue that "nationhood is the predominant form of social organization in the contemporary world" (p.50). Most people, when asked to define themselves, will include their nationality as part of their self-concept. Indeed, when exploring cultures in either a cross-cultural or intercultural context, the discussion inevitably relies on discernable differences between national cultures. A true "national identity" or "national culture" seem to me impossibilities; the constructs used to define such terms with respect to particular nations rarely, if ever, apply to all members of the group. Reicher and Hopkins (2001) suggest that establishing national identity depends "upon embedding it within an essentializing historical narrative" (p.51). The problem, then, is to find a historical narrative that has meaning for the majority. Hollinger (1999) points out that much of the United States' history contains the exploitation of nonwhites and the weakness of egalitarian ideals. Therefore, one can infer that the relationship between African Americans and European

Americans and their national identities would be markedly different. Extraordinary events, such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Jr., and the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, have followed with periods of increased national identity. George W. Bush, the president of the country during the September 11 attacks, addressed a joint session of Congress and the American people on September 20, 2001, saying "We will come together" as a nation in the aftermath of the tragedy (Bush, 2001). However, even extraordinary events that unite many people behind a national culture can marginalize others: Japanese Americans were interned at camps during World War II and the number of domestic racist attacks against Arab Americans increased after September 11.

Nationalism as a belief system may be viewed as peoples' devotion to or interest in a particular nation. After World War II, nationalism was viewed as a relic of the past, reminiscent of the era of colonialism and wars before 1945. It was widely believed that as the 21st century approached, globalization, seen as "a form of closer integration of states and societies" would result in increased identification that transcended national borders (Halliday, 2001, p.441). However, the 1980s and 1990s saw an upsurge of nationalism that resulted in the emergence of new nation-states and conflicts between peoples who were formerly grouped together under the same national identity. Nationalism is also considered a political ideology that is a form of social organization, which, as a result, may elicit responses from individuals included in national groupings. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve more deeply into the complex relationship between individuals and their respective nations; it is sufficient to acknowledge that in most people, part of their identity derives from membership in a larger group which is usually a recognized nation, although this is not always the case.

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Group membership and self-esteem. Returning to Festinger's social comparison theory, which suggests that people learn more about their own attitudes and abilities by comparing themselves to other people, social psychologists have found that if people compare themselves to others and find there are similarities between them, they are likely to form an in-group. Usually, being part of an in-group enhances self-esteem (Aronson et al., 1999). This is because people may, in part, define themselves by membership of a certain group, and there is a tendency "to define one's own group positively in order to evaluate oneself positively" (Turner, 1984, p.347). Therefore, one could conclude that people seek to form in-groups to enhance their self-esteem. Often, people will make further comparisons between their in-group and other out-groups; usually, they will see their own group as superior. When people experience in-group bias, they have positive feelings for those who belong to their in-group and favor their own group over another (Myers, 2002). Psychologists have shown that exhibiting in-group bias is such a strong feature of group membership that people will do so even when the group formations are tenuous and temporary (Turner, 1978). For example, in a well-known psychological experiment, subjects were divided into groups by the toss of a coin. Subjects were then asked to allocate funds to members of their in-group and those of their out-group (in the study). Even such a superficial grouping was enough for groups to experience in-group bias, shown by the fact that most of the subjects allocated significantly more funds to members of their in-group (Turner, 1978). If subjects in a psychological experiment will experience in-group bias (after being assigned to groups at the toss of a coin), it is a small wonder that most social groups all over the world experience some sort of in-group bias.

Scholars in fields other than psychology have generalized the research on in-groups and out-groups to suit their arguments: for example, sociologists suggest that

people in a certain socio-economic class will view people from other classes negatively and intercultural theorists claim that most people will view other cultures as inferior. Often, academics will rely on in-group and out-group effects without maintaining the underlying psychological issue of self-esteem. People want to see themselves in a favorable light; therefore, they will see those with whom they identify in a positive manner and those with whom they do not identify in a negative manner. The need to have high self-esteem, which often results in an in-group bias, can be an obstacle to intercultural communication, both interpersonal and intergroup.

<u>Interpersonal relationships</u>

<u>The concept of the "stranger."</u> As Festinger's social comparison theory suggests, people need something with which to compare themselves in terms of both personal and group identification. Thus, the people used for comparison purposes who are *not* members of one's in-group may be referred to as "strangers." Simmel (1908) first introduced the use of the term "stranger" in such a context in an essay where he says that the stranger's "position as a full-fledged member [of the group] involves both being outside it and confronting it" (p.38). In other words, to a certain extent, groups function on the assumption that some people are included in its membership and others are not. If it were not for people outside the boundary of the group, would the "group" still exist? If there were no others to which groups could compare its members, the very definition of the group would be ambiguous. The stranger is an integral part to group formation because, in part, defining who is *not* a member of a group helps formulate what the group identity represents. Indeed, being a member of one group will sometimes mean *not* being a member of another group (Vivian and Brown, 1995). For example, usually people belonging to the "female" social group will inherently mean not belonging to the "male" social group (although this is not always the case).

Gudykunst (1998) uses Simmel's concept of the stranger in the context of intercultural communication. He says that strangers are "people who are not members of our own groups and who are different...on the basis of culture, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, social class, or other group memberships" (p.4). He suggests that in order to facilitate effective communication with strangers, people must understand what influences them when communicating with others who are not members of their groups. Gudykunst (1998) suggests in addition to culture, there are five other major group memberships that affect people's communication with others: ethnicity, gender, age, social class, and the presence or absence of disabilities. He argues that strangers are, by definition, part of people's out-group, and that people will use what they know (or think they know) about the strangers' group membership in order to communicate with them.

Singer's theory of perceptual identity. Singer (1998) terms the group memberships that people use to form their social identity as "identity groups." Identity groups can also be seen as the in-groups to which people belong. Singer suggests that all individuals are members of a myriad of different identity groups simultaneously and that no two people are members of all the same groups. Singer considers each of these identity groups to differ in culture; thus, communication between two people is more than interpersonal—it is, in fact, intercultural. Aside from this claim, Singer (1998) also suggests that more identity groups that two individuals have in common, the easier communication between them is likely to be. He says this is because "the more group perceptions we share with people, the greater will be the range of subjects on which we can communicate easily" (p.65). It is also possible that, in certain situations, one particular identity group will be equally important to both individuals, which will facilitate communication between them. For example, many students who study abroad in other countries will make more friends with other students studying abroad (who may

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be from a variety of countries) than with students of the host country. Presumably, this is because when a Canadian and a Spaniard meet as foreign students in England, their identity group as "foreign students" is most salient in that context. The inclusion of each other in a common identity group will facilitate communication between them, even if their other identity groups may not overlap. Singer's main point about interpersonal communication is that the shared groups between individuals will dictate how they interact.

<u>Intergroup relationships</u>

Many scholars consider the difference between interpersonal and intergroup relations to be very subtle. Relations that occur between individuals are usually termed "interpersonal," although the previous section discussed how Singer perceives communication between individuals to be intercultural. Tajfel (1978a) differentiates between interpersonal and intergroup behavior by saying that when the behavior of two individuals "toward each other is determined by their membership of different social groups or categories," it becomes an intergroup exchange (p.41). This suggests that communication between members of an in-group is interpersonal, but the interaction between an in-group member and an out-group member is, by definition, intergroup. It is important to recognize that such an exchange only becomes intergroup if the individuals relate to each other in terms of different group memberships; it is possible that they could relate to each other as members of a third group to which they both belong. For example, Japanese and Irish students in a classroom context may see each other as part of the student constituency as opposed to members of different national cultures.

Another form of intergroup relations is the creation of subgroups within a group. Sometimes, a culture, group, or other institution may apply external criteria to certain

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types of people that will identify them as a collective group (Tajfel, 1978a). The external criteria may then be used by *other* groups in the society to further give definition to the new group. For example, in the United States, people of mixed racial descent used to be classified by only part of their racial background. Usually, if someone was half African American and half European American, they were technically classified as African American, although many people would refer to them as "mixed." As interracial and interethnic marriage became more common in the country, the group of people considered "mixed" began to increase in size. Now that group of people has accepted as its own criteria that in order to be part of the group, one has to be of mixed racial or ethnic descent. Tafjel sums up this process well when he says that "the consensus may often originate from other groups and determine in turn the creation of various kinds of internal membership criteria within the group" (1978a, p.31). This is an important form of intergroup relations, especially in the field of intercultural communications, where certain groups' impressions about a collection of people can result in a subgroup which accepts those impressions as the foundation of their membership.

The nature of intergroup relations, whether they occur between the in-group and out-group or between members of a subgroup, depends heavily on the context of the contact. When the behavior of individuals toward each other is based on different group memberships or identity groups, they will most likely rely on preconceptions they have of the others' group. These preconceptions may be in the form of stereotypes or mental heuristics, and sometimes these devices can lead to prejudice and racism, both of which greatly impact intergroup relations. Prejudice and stereotyping will be discussed in the next chapter, as well as the potential consequences they have for intergroup behavior.

Chapter 4. Stereotypes and Prejudice

When people communicate at the interpersonal, intercultural, or intergroup level, they often rely on the group memberships of both themselves and the other parties involved as a guide to their interaction. People, for the most part, will have different communication styles with others from their in-group than with those belonging to an out-group. When people rely on preconceptions they have of others' group memberships, and therefore, their social identities, they risk constricting their communication to previously defined roles. Understanding how devices such as stereotypes and heuristics are developed and their function in terms of communication can possibly alleviate misunderstandings in future interactions. In addition, this chapter will examine how stereotypes can lead to discrimination, prejudice, and racism, and what steps may be taken to decrease such behaviors.

Function of stereotypes

The definition of stereotypes that I will use is provided by Cinnirella (1997), who says that stereotypes are "belief systems which associate attitudes, behaviors, and personality characteristics with members of a social category" (p.37). I agree with Cinnirella that stereotypes can be both positive and negative; for example, a common stereotype of volunteers is that they are good-willed and self-sacrificing, which are positive traits. The term "stereotypes" is often used to mean negative stereotypes, but it is important to consider that there can be positive stereotypes as well. The use of stereotypes when interacting with a stranger is generally frowned upon by society; the previous discussion about diversity within any given social group would seem to indicate that it would almost be offensive to have any sort of predictive power of others' behavior. I argue that people rely on stereotypes in order to make sense out of the world, as do other scholars (Cinnirella, 1997; Aronson et al., 1999). If, when coming

into contact with strangers for the first time, people had no forethought as to how they should behave, they could arguably cause more offense than they would if they relied on credible information about the strangers' social groups. In short, people rely on the use of stereotypes in order to have some predictive power when coming into contact with other people.

Heuristics

In social psychology, heuristics are considered as "mental shortcuts people use to make judgments quickly and efficiently" (Aronson et al., 1999, p.81). I would consider stereotypes to be a type of heuristics because stereotypes are used in order to make decisions about how to interact with other people. There are many kinds of heuristics, but the two that are pertinent to the present discussion are the representativeness and availability heuristics. I believe that examining the mental processes associated with the use of these heuristics will give more insight into how they come to govern people's behavior.

Representativeness heuristic. Myers (2002) defines the representativeness heuristic as "the tendency to presume, despite contrary odds, that someone or something belongs to a particular group if resembling [or representing] a typical member" (p.110). How people develop conceptions of what are "typical members" of a group will be discussed later in this chapter, but the representativeness heuristic can also be seen as something that people develop due to experience with certain social groups. For example, my experience in Ireland may have caused me to associate certain characteristics of Irish people as "typical" based on my interaction with them over the past year. In the future, when I come across Irish men and women, I may use the representativeness heuristic to make a quick decision about whether or not I consider them to be "typically Irish" based on my conception of what that means.

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Availability heuristic. The availability heuristic is "a mental rule of thumb whereby people base a judgment on the ease with which they can bring something to mind" (Aronson et al., 1999, p.82). The fallibility of the availability heuristic is the fact that often, what is easiest to bring to mind is not typical of a normal situation. For example, the recent events of September 11, 2001 were devastating to the airline industry; many people did not feel safe flying after the attacks. The majority of airline passengers do *not* hijack planes and fly them into buildings, but the ease with which people can bring the example to mind and the pervasiveness of the memory continues to significantly decrease the amount of air travel. Myers (2002) suggests that people are "slow to deduce particular instances from a general truth, but they are remarkably quick to infer general truth from a vivid instance" (p.111). Thus, an infrequent but compelling negative stereotype people hold in their minds will more likely dictate their behavior than incidental positive stereotypes. When people rely on negative stereotypes, they are more likely to exhibit prejudiced behavior.

Prejudice

A definition of prejudice by Aronson et al. (1999) says that it is a "hostile or negative attitude toward people in a distinguishable group, based solely on their membership in that group" (p.501). Negative stereotypes and prejudice are *not* interchangeable terms; negative stereotypes are beliefs about a group of people but prejudice is a negative attitude toward members of that group. Racism may be considered as prejudicial attitudes or behaviors toward people belonging to a certain racial group. Prejudice may be related to both individual and collective self-esteem, and negative attitudes toward other people may, in turn, cause them to be negative in response. When prejudice governs behavior, it is known as discrimination.

Self-esteem. Most of the time, a group that compares its collective characteristics to other groups will do so in a manner that makes the out-groups look unfavorable, thereby bringing collective self-esteem to its members. This is important to remember when groups of cultures interact, because the comparisons made between the groups will tend to favor the respective in-groups so that the group members will maintain the sense of self-esteem. However, groups of people that are subject to relentless prejudice usually have low self-esteem. For example, in the late 1940s, when given a choice, African American children preferred playing with white dolls rather than black dolls, most likely because they had already been inculcated with society's notion that it was more desirable to be white (Aronson et al., 1999). It is very likely that because these girls had already been taught that it was more desirable to be white, their self-esteem suffered because they were members of the African American community. Thus, they held negative attitudes towards members of their own in-group, which lowered their own self-esteem as a consequence.

Discrimination. While prejudice is a negative attitude, discrimination is a negative behavior. Aronson et al. (1999) define discrimination as "unjustified negative or harmful action toward the members of a group, simply because of their membership in that group" (p.506). People will sometimes discriminate against others because of prejudiced beliefs, but it is important to recognize that prejudice does not lead inevitably to discrimination because attitudes do not always determine behavior (Myers, 2002). If two groups are in competition for something, particularly resources such as employment, housing, or social prestige, the more likely prejudice is to occur. This is known as the realistic conflict theory, which holds that limited resources lead to conflict among groups and also to prejudice and discrimination (Aronson et al., 1999). When this happens in the most extreme of case, it is referred to as scapegoating. The group

identified as the scapegoat may be blamed as the source of other groups' problems and thus subject to intense discrimination. One of the most famous and extreme examples of scapegoating is Hitler's treatment of the Jews in World War II. Although the Jews were not to blame for Germany's problems, they were an easily identifiable and relatively powerless group on whom Germans could displace their aggression. As one German leader explained, "If there were no Jews, the anti-Semites would have had to invent them" (Allport, 1958, p.325). When intercultural conflicts arise, it is important to keep in mind the existence of the realistic conflict theory and the role of the scapegoat. It is possible that due to frustration from economic, social, or political problems, cultural groups blame each other as a result. For example, in the United States, it has been shown that during periods of economic instability, violent acts towards minority groups increase (Aronson et al., 1999). The minority groups are not usually causes of the economic instability but receive displaced aggression from the majority group.

Self-fulfilling prophecy. The self-fulfilling prophecy is a phenomenon in social psychology that serves as an explanation for the perpetuation of certain beliefs and behaviors. A self-fulfilling prophecy is "the case whereby people (a) have an expectation about what another person is like, which (b) influences how they act toward that person, which (c) causes that person to behave in a way consistent with people's original expectations" (Aronson et al., p.527). Therefore, people's expectations of others' behavior based on their prejudices may help perpetuate the expected behavior. For example, common negative stereotypes of Germans are that they are forceful, persistent, and unemotional (Bond and Smith, 1999). If an American woman having these prejudices came into contact with a German man, she might unintentionally act in ways that would elicit behavior from the man that fit her stereotypes. She might act coldly toward him, assuming he would be unemotional in his interaction, and her

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aloofness could actually perpetuate detached behavior from the man, reinforcing her prejudice of the Germans as unemotional.

The self-fulfilling prophecy can also work with positive stereotypes. Jennifer Lambert is a white woman from South Carolina who spent her first four years of school in a predominantly African American institution. She felt that many of her black classmates and teachers expected her to be intelligent and determined, so that she was looked to as a natural leader (Lambert, 2002). The positive expectations placed upon her by others were a motivation to develop leadership skills; those leadership qualities subsequently gave her an academic advantage over her peers. Thus, the self-fulfilling prophecy is not always negative in all aspects; however, the extra attention given to Lambert due to the expectation of her potential was attention that was diverted from others in the class who may have benefited from it. Other children who were expected to do poorly by their peers and teachers may have gotten cues from their environment to follow the lead set by students such as Lambert instead of being encouraged to develop leadership skills themselves. The danger of the self-fulfilling prophecy is that it determines social roles for people that are sometimes negative, strengthening the power of stereotypes and prejudice.

Formations of stereotypes

Stereotypes are an undeniably strong force in communication, and it is extremely important to consider how stereotypes are formed and perpetuated. Understanding how people come to have preconceptions of others may provide the knowledge needed to help increase the positive portrayals of other groups.

Media representation. A major source of stereotypes is the mass media. This is especially important to consider in intercultural communication because individuals may be exposed to representations of members of other social groups whom they have never

met (Cinnirella, 1997). How members of a culture are portrayed in news reports, both written and broadcast, and in films has the power to significantly impact other peoples' perception of them. For example, in the 1980s and 1990s, many terrorist films came out of Hollywood that showed either Arabs or Arab-Americans as the cause of terror (Corbett, 2001). Thus, many Americans who were not members of the Arab community inherently associated Arabs with terrorists. The events of September 11 unfortunately served to strengthen many people's stereotype because the attacks were seen as typical for that group of people (representativeness heuristic) and the severity of the situation made it easy to bring to mind (availability heuristic). It is very probable that most Americans, when asked to think of a typical terrorist, would picture an Arab or Arab American as a result of prolonged exposure by the media in such a role. Most would probably *not* picture someone like Timothy McVeigh, a white American who was responsible for the devastating attack on a federal building in Oklahoma in 1995. His behavior was seen as atypical because there is a not a strong stereotype of white American terrorists present in any form of the media.

Discourse pragmatics. Blum-Kulka (1997) defines discourse pragmatics as "the study of linguistic communication in context" (p.38). Discourse pragmatics are important to consider with respect to prejudice and racism because how people talk about members of their out-groups may reflect, either subtly or overtly, negative stereotypes they associate with others. Examining the ways that groups talk to and about each other may reveal other things about the society in which they live, such as who has the dominant social power. For example, choosing the word "terrorists" instead of "freedom fighters" to describe a group of people implies negativity associated with the group. Similarly, those who participate in "violent riots" are perceived more harshly than those who participate in "demonstrations." Another example is

collocations, or words with which a particular word is associated. Collocations that result in negative phrases, such as "illegal refugee," "refugee trafficking," and "bogus refugee weddings," may lead to an inherent negativity associated with the word "refugee." Van Dijk et al. (1997) argue that groups with social power "enact ethnic conflict, polarization, and dominance by presenting the others in negative terms and us in positive terms (while at the same time denying or downplaying our negative characteristics, especially racism)" (p.165). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go into greater detail about the complexities of discourse pragmatics and other forms of linguistic analysis, but it is worthwhile to consider that the language used in media representations of other cultures (and minority groups within a larger culture) may greatly affect the way those groups are perceived.

Intercultural literature. Authors such as Edward T. Hall, Fons Trompenaars, Charles Hampden-Turner, and Geert Hofstede have defined aspects of culture they consider to be universal; that is, they are issues common to the majority of national cultures and are thus useful in comparative cultural studies. They then assess different cultures using their parameters for both comparative purposes and to increase effective communication between them. Hall (1966, 1976) introduced the idea of categorizing cultures in terms of context and their use of time. Thus, cultures are either high-context or low-context, and people in those cultures either perceive time as polychronic or monochronic (previously discussed on page 17). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) have seven dimensions that they use to assess cultures; five of the dimensions address interpersonal relationships, one dimension concerns people's use of time, and the last dimension examines people's relationship with the environment. Hofstede (1991) looks at four dimensions of culture, which are power distance, collectivism and individualism, femininity and masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance.

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These authors are concerned about presenting dimensions of culture as objectively as possible. Hofstede's (1991) study examines values of IBM employees in 50 countries around the world. He claims that his study is different from others because the only distinction between the people in his survey is their identification with various national cultures. The comparisons of culture made by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) use information from over 1000 cross-cultural training program materials as well as cultural information gathered from 30 companies with departments spanning over 50 countries. Hall has been considered one of the forefathers of the field of intercultural studies, as he was one of the first to define ways with which to categorize and compare cultures. Thus, the authors' knowledge about various cultures and sources of data has made their works popular and reliable.

Even so, I argue that their work can be a source of stereotypes about other cultures. Although the authors make disclaimers about the generalizability of their works, it remains that people may read their studies and form conceptions about people from other cultures based on that information. For example, I have never come into contact with Japanese people, yet from the data provided by Hall, Hofstede, and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, I have already formed an idea of what characteristics "typical" Japanese people possess: I think of them as people who are high-context, who perceive time as polychronic, as people who display little emotion, as people who respect and rely on institutional and societal hierarchies, as people who are inherently communitarian, and as people who strive to be in harmony with their environments. I would not say that I have developed a prejudice against Japanese people; rather, I have developed an expectation in my mind of what kinds of behavior I should exhibit when I do encounter them to minimize miscommunication. Thus, intercultural literature, while striving to provide accurate and informative depictions of

culture, may actually foster the formation of some stereotypes. The next chapter will begin to explore how stereotypes, prejudice, and other aspects of social psychology previously discussed affect intercultural communication. People's perception of strangers will affect how they communicate with them, and it is also possible that their own self-concept may be altered as a result of the interaction.

Chapter 5. Intercultural Contact

Psychological aspects that affect intercultural communication also have the potential to affect cross-cultural adaptation. Areas of social psychology previously discussed, such as in-groups, out-groups, stereotypes, and prejudice, mostly address how perceptions of the other can affect communication. Another important process to discuss is how contact with other groups can alter people's own self-concepts. Although the purpose of this dissertation is to explore how knowledge of social psychological concepts can increase effective intercultural communication, it is important to explore the psychological consequences of such communication. While there is only room in this discussion to briefly mention some of the main features of cross-cultural adaptation, I feel that is it important to acknowledge how the process (and the psychological features associated with it) may affect intercultural communication. I will also examine situations where intercultural contact is likely to occur, thus fostering intercultural communication, while describing the social psychological features that I feel are particularly relevant to those situations.

Cross-cultural adaptation

When people are introduced to a new environment, they usually go through an adaptation period to adjust to life in the unfamiliar surroundings. Similarly, when major life events occur, people go through behavioral and psychological transitions in order to incorporate the changes into their daily routines. Cross-cultural adaptation is the "process of learning to live with change and difference—in this instance, a changed environment and different people, different norms, different standards, and different customs" (Anderson, 1994, p.299). Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) point out that although a lot of research has been done using intercultural contact that occurs in the between-society context (people from two different countries), those who experience

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intercultural contact in a within-society context (for example, by living in a culturally diverse nation) may also develop the need for cross-cultural adaptation. In intercultural literature, cross-cultural adaptation is still primarily viewed as a recuperative process from "culture shock" or culture-related stress. Recently, intercultural theorists have begun to view cross-cultural adaptation as a less negative and reactive process by focusing on positive aspects also associated with the adaptation, such as greater self-awareness and increased complexity of character (Kim, 1988). Scholars are now beginning to view the psychological aspects of cross-cultural adaptation as similar to those experienced as a result of any major life event.

Culture shock. The term "culture shock" was first used in the late 1950s by Kalervo Oberg to describe "feelings of disorientation following entry into a new culture, feelings often so strong as to degenerate into physical symptoms" (Anderson, 1994, p.294). Ward et al. (2001) critique Oberg's formulation of culture shock as a "negative, passive reaction to a set of noxious circumstances," whereas they consider the concept to be "people's responses to unfamiliar cultural environments as an active process of dealing with change" (p.270). People experiencing culture shock are generally agreed to exhibit signs of frustration, stress, anxiety, paranoia, grief, lowered self-esteem, and depression (Bennett, 1998; Anderson, 1994; Kim, 1988). The term culture shock, like so many in the field of intercultural studies, has a variety of definitions and usages—in fact, "culture shock" has been applied to situations outside of intercultural contact, such as the transition to married life or a new work environment. Many scholars have suggested that the term itself is misleading and vague; Anderson (1994) suggests that "change shock" is a more accurate description of the process and Janet Bennett (1998) says that culture shock is a subset of the general category of "transition shock."

Bennett (1998) argues that transition shock encompasses life experiences that involve loss and change, such as death or divorce, loss of a familiar frame of cultural reference, or the reshaping of values due to social innovation. Once the predictability of life has been disrupted, people have to go through an adjustment period that requires a redefinition of what is familiar and typical. When life transition involves adaptation to an unfamiliar cultural context, culture shock is likely to occur.

Adjustment vs. adaptation. Anderson (1994) differentiates between the terms adjustment and adaptation, suggesting that adjustment is a short-term response to environmental obstacles (which she uses in a generic sense to represent a state of psychological dissatisfaction that needs to be reduced), whereas adaptation is a long-term process necessary for survival that requires individuals to come to terms with validating aspects of another culture to which they have adjusted. For example, many American women who move to Saudi Arabia have to adjust to new socially acceptable standards of dress. Instead of having the ability to choose clothing based on their personal preferences, they must adhere to the strict Islamic laws of the community, which dictate that women be very modestly covered. American women may alter their choice of clothing based on the country's laws, but they do not adapt to the new standard until they have recognized it as a valid, albeit different, way of life.

Psychological aspects. The psychological aspects most commonly associated with cross-cultural adaptation are related to people's sense of identity. For example, Anderson (1994) says that "identity crises [are] more or less [the] natural outcome of contact with an alien culture (p.294)," and Kim (1988) says that intercultural contact "facilitates the development of an identity that reaches beyond the original cultural perimeters" (p.170). There are many psychological aspects related to identity, but the

two I have chosen to focus on with regard to intercultural contact are self-awareness and cognitive dissonance.

Self-awareness. Myers (2002) defines self-awareness as "a self-conscious state in which attention focuses on oneself" (p.89). When people are in familiar situations or interacting with members of their in-groups, they are not likely to be focusing their attention on themselves. Of course, there are times that warrant increased self-awareness, even when in a familiar environment, but it is more likely that people will focus their attention on other aspects of the interaction. However, when in a new cultural environment, Bennett (1998) suggests that people's self-awareness is significantly increased because of the need for introspection. She says that people must reexamine their abilities to form relationships and their communicative skills, while also trying new norms and values and experimenting with new behaviors. In an unfamiliar cultural environment, where previous experiences and knowledge may not be meaningful, people's self-awareness increases as they adjust and adapt to the new environment. It has been suggested by scholars that people who experience a high degree of culture shock when they first enter into a new cultural environment will be the ones who actually adapt to the culture more effectively in the long run (Bennett, 1998; Anderson, 1994). This could be because they are made very self-aware of differences between them and their environment, thus prompting introspection and adjustment from the outset.

Cognitive dissonance. Bennett (1998) argues that in transition experiences, people experience cognitive inconsistency because "what was once a coherent, internally consistent set of beliefs and values is suddenly overturned by exterior change" (p.218). I suggest that in the process of cross-cultural adaptation, people experience frustration and lowered self-esteem due to internal cognitive dissonance, which is

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tension that arises when "two simultaneously accessible thoughts or beliefs are psychologically inconsistent" (Myers, 2002, p.148). For example, the American women who have to adhere to Saudi Arabian dress standards might experience cognitive dissonance when deciding what to wear. The two accessible cognitions might be American and Saudi oriented; that is, one value system held by the women says that they are free to dress however they deem appropriate, while the other value system they are exposed to says that they must follow Saudi law. Frustration may occur when the women feel that they have to choose to act on the cognition that is not a true image of themselves; therefore, wearing long, dark clothing on a hot and humid day may reflect a choice made on a value system with which they do not primarily identify. However, through the adaptation process, the women can come to accept the Saudi dress code as a different, but valid, component of their lives, thus reducing the cognitive dissonance they experience.

Cross-cultural adaptation is an important part of intercultural studies; however, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to devote more discussion to the subject. It is important to recognize that components of cross-cultural adaptation are relevant to intercultural communication, because the process of redefining oneself can significantly impact communication with others. The remainder of this chapter will address situations in which intercultural contact and communication take place, focusing on the elements of social psychology that are relevant to such interaction.

Intercultural Relationships

The business context. The increase in international business in the last 50 years has significantly broadened the scope and interest of intercultural communication. It has also increased the funds spent on research in the field, as it is beneficial for both parties in a business relationship to communicate effectively with each other. Also, the

increased mobility of people has resulted in more multi-cultural work environments, which also operate optimally if employees are able to communicate well with each other and with their superiors. What is especially important to consider in the intercultural business context is that differences in culture do not only mean differences in communication, but in methods of doing business as well. Without effective communication between the cultures, the variation in business operation may be even more of an obstacle. For example, whether or not a culture relies on the idea of an independent or interdependent self will affect how employees view themselves in the business environment. People who have a sense of an independent self will view their social role as employees as one of their social identities. When they leave their place of employment, they are more likely to step into another social role. People who have a sense of an interdependent self are more likely to internalize their role as employees as part of their personal identity. Misunderstandings between business associates may occur when they encounter each other *outside* the workplace for this reason; people with an independent self may not understand why others still relate to them in their work role outside of the office. Conversely, people with an interdependent sense of self may not appreciate others who disregard the work hierarchy outside of the business environment. In this sense, interaction that occurs outside the formal business context may still affect the business relationship! Understanding to what extent people define themselves by their social roles in the work environment is a small but crucial component of intercultural business.

Immigrants and emigrants. The increase in global mobility has resulted not only in a great number of immigrants and emigrants, but technology has advanced the speed with which they can be displaced from one environment to another. Immigration and emigration are certainly not new phenomena; examining their processes of self-

identification and cross-cultural adaptation are fairly recent developments in intercultural studies. Immigrants are particularly susceptible to prejudice and discrimination, as they are usually an easily identifiable group in a new environment. Different languages and different skin colors are aspects against which a majority group can make comparisons, thereby strengthening its identity. For example, many immigrants to Ireland come from non-English speaking countries and may be people of color. This has possibly caused the Irish identity as white people who speak English (or Irish) to become even more pronounced. Although the government has taken steps to diminish racism in Ireland and declare it a "multicultural society," the information is mostly coming from white people who speak English. It is probably that immigrants who come to Ireland suffer a decrease in their self-esteem, as it is not at present acceptable by most of Irish society that people be considered "Irish" who are not white English speakers. I would argue that American society experienced a similar situation at the beginning of the 20th century, and in the 21st century is now left with a big question mark as to what "being an American" means.

Contemporary immigrants to the United States are not immune to prejudice and racism, although the country prides itself on being a multicultural society. Immigrants to the United States often have to change their social roles in a number of capacities, which can be damaging to their self-concepts. For example, many illegal Cuban immigrants are qualified doctors or engineers in their country of origin, but are not able to work in their suited environments because they are not legal residents of the United States. Thus, many of them have had to work washing dishes, doing construction jobs, or cleaning people's homes for little money. The pervasive exploitation and discrimination of illegal immigrants constantly defines their role as an out-group to American society.

The intercultural classroom. Increased mobility, immigration, and emigration have also led to multicultural classrooms. Multicultural classrooms are not implicitly intercultural classrooms; there needs to be consistent effective interaction between the members of different cultural and social groups for this to be the case. Paradoxically, students are more likely to have intercultural interaction if they *don't* view themselves primarily in terms of their cultural groups. If children in a classroom identify themselves with the social role of students, they will view other children as students and therefore members of their in-group. This is difficult if pervasive prejudice or discrimination exists in the larger society against a certain minority group; often, such prejudice is passed onto children by their parents and the media. For example, Arab American students were recipients of more racial attacks and discriminatory behavior after September 11 because the negative stereotypes of Arabs became overwhelmingly prevalent in American society. Arab American students who were previously members of an in-group with other students were suddenly made members of an out-group because their ethnic identity became more salient to others with increased global attention to that particular group. It is important for educators to realize that effective intercultural communication is becoming vital to many classrooms, especially if the cultures of the teachers are different from the cultures of the children. Perspectives other than those of the majority culture must be acknowledged so that ideally, children who are part of an intercultural classroom have the potential to develop into effective intercultural communicators.

Second language learners. People who learn a second language voluntarily differ from bilingual children because they usually have a strong motivation to learn another language (Gardner, 1979). Scholars have argued that learning another language involves learning another culture as well (Gardner, 1979; Cole, 1998; Goodenough,

1964). Thus, people who are motivated to learn another language are usually motivated to learn the appropriate social and cultural aspects of that language. Gardner (1979) argues that "the student's harmony with his own cultural community and his willingness or ability to identify with other cultural communities become important considerations in the process of second language acquisition" (p.194). Through learning a second language, some people actually come to modify their own self-identities and identify with another cultural group, especially if they are willing to integrate and interact with members of the target group. I argue that motivated second language learners are more likely to develop intercultural communicative competence than bilingual children because they have to have a conscious motivation to acquire not only linguistic proficiency, but also the appropriate social and cultural behavior. Such motivation is not always inherent in bilingual children who may become socialized into two linguistic groups as a result of circumstance instead of desire.

Gardner and Lambert (1998) argue that if people are ethnocentric, they are less likely to be successful in acquiring a second language and the appropriate behavior of that linguistic-cultural group. The difference between ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism is relevant to the development of intercultural communication competence, but the concepts are also related to the development of intercultural sensitivity. Cultural marginals are argued to have an inherently ethnorelativist perspective as a result of their peripheral societal position, possibly predisposing them to become effective intercultural communicators. The next chapter will examine the role of cultural marginals in more detail, including the identification of marginals and characteristics associated with them.

Chapter 6. The Cultural Marginal

This chapter will examine the unique role of the cultural marginal by exploring

the characteristics of cultural marginality and the different levels of the concept. I will

compare constructions of the cultural marginal by various scholars, and I will also look

at how cultural marginals themselves define their identity, using examples from

textbooks and information obtained through personal interviews. Both advantages and

disadvantages of being a cultural marginal will be addressed, as well as the suggestion

that cultural marginals usually develop a unique perspective regarding cultures and that

this perspective can be useful in intercultural communication. Aspects of social

psychology that have been deemed relevant to intercultural communication will be

reexamined with respect to cultural marginals, as they are constantly redefining their

social identities.

Definition of cultural marginality

In his well-known essay "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," Robert Park

(1928) describes marginal man as "one who lives in two worlds, in both of which he is

more or less of a stranger" (p.166). The concept of marginality thus made its entrance

into the field of sociology in the 1920s in the context of immigrant adjustment. In the

past 50 years or so, the term has become increasingly used to describe people other than

immigrants, such as members of a minority culture in the presence of a majority culture,

people who lived abroad as children, or children in a biracial or bicultural marriage.

Today, these people are commonly known as cultural marginals—"marginals" because

they are on the periphery of two or more cultures without being bona fide members of

either one. Cultural marginals are a growing constituency in today's world. At one

point in time, they may have considered themselves consistently as members of out-

groups because they had no identifiable in-group. In recent years, more attention has

been given to cultural marginals and more research has been dedicated to understanding their development. It could be said that the term itself has given people in these situations an in-group. There is even a formal organization called the Global Nomads that people may join—perhaps doing so would validate people's self-concept and boost their self-esteem as members of the in-group. Many terms have been added to refer to people in specific situations of cultural marginality: third culture kids (TCKs), adult third culture kids (ATCKs), missionary kids (MKs), and military brats.

Third Culture Kids. Pollock and Van Reken (2001) define a third culture kid as:

> ...a person that has spent a significant part of his of her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background (p.19).

The term "third culture" comes from the notion that people belong to a "culture between cultures" or in a "third space." Pollock and Van Reken cannot define a specific amount of time one has to spend in a position of cultural marginality to identify with others in that position, as it differs for everyone. However, they do argue that between birth and the age of 18, children form their sense of identity, their relationships with others, and how they view the world, and if they are in a position of cultural marginality, they will become a TCK. They argue that adults who go to live overseas may be affected by the experience, but they have already formed their cultural and social identities and will not define themselves in terms of that experience. ATCKs are simply TCKs who have grown into adulthood but retain their identity in terms of their third culture experience.

Third culture children may be influenced by the parents' culture simply because that culture shaped their parents, who in turn instill their values in their children. TCKs do *not* experience their parents' culture directly and therefore cannot identify themselves using the same parameters as their parents. For example, I identify myself as a TCK

from having lived in Saudi Arabia for the first fifteen years of my life, but my parents identify themselves primarily as Americans. I did not experience American culture in the same way that they did—until I moved to the United States, my conceptualization of American life was based on information my parents gave to me. When I began attending high school in Michigan in 1994, I found my cultural difference to be quite different from theirs because American culture had changed significantly since 1979, when my family moved to Saudi Arabia. Thus, the cultural information my parents passed on to me was no longer valid or reliable when I entered the United States. Another good example of a TCK is Guillermo Morote, a classmate of mine in Saudi Arabia, whose parents are originally from Peru but became naturalized citizens of the United States. They moved to Saudi Arabia to work for an oil company in 1975, and he was born a United States citizen in Saudi Arabia in 1979. His parents retired to Florida in 1993 and he has not been back to Saudi Arabia since then due to the nation's strict visa requirements.

When Morote lived in Saudi Arabia, he didn't consider himself a member of any discernible minority group of the expatriate community because there was no discernible majority group in the community. However, when he moved to Florida, he attended a school that was primarily composed of white students. For the first time in his life, he was a minority student. Most of the other minority students were of Hispanic descent, and there were also some African Americans. Morote says that he didn't really identify with the Hispanic students, in spite of his Peruvian roots, because he felt that his experience with the expatriate community in Saudi Arabia gave him a different life perspective than any of the students in his Florida school. To this day, he says that he maintains a "special bond" with other students in our Saudi Arabian community because they "share a life experience. Other people don't understand where I'm coming from

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because they haven't been there" (Morote, 2002). In terms of identity, Morote said, "I never felt like I clung to any certain group. I can't categorize myself."

Domestic marginals. TCKs are not always necessarily children who grow up outside of their parents' home nation—they can be what I call "domestic marginals," people who grow up in one country but who still have no identifiable roots within that country. Children whose parents are in the military are most likely to be domestic marginals, but there are other careers that cause families to move frequently, thereby preventing a strong identification with any particular region or community. Kelsey Phipps is an American woman whose parents were in the military, and they moved around enough times in her lifetime to feel that she doesn't have any regional or state roots within the United States. She defines herself primarily as an American, and when people ask her where she's from, she usually answers the last place she lived (she is now currently answering, "California") instead of divulging more detailed information about her domestic marginality. She said, "I always feel like a guilty or phony when I tell people where I'm from. I feel like they're going to find me out and expose me or something" (Phipps, 2002).

Even though she did not live abroad during her formative years, she feels that she can more easily identify with TCKs than with other Americans. Phipps says most Americans have a regional identity that she lacks, but she can relate to peoples' broader identification as Americans. She feels that due to her parents' involvement with the military and her frequent moves during her childhood that she is more patriotic than most Americans— she is identifying most strongly with the social group that has been consistent and immune to change, her nationality. She is currently studying at University College Dublin in Ireland, and she says that she feels that she has missed out on some national formation of American identity that is taking place in the country in

the aftermath of September 11. "It's as if I'm going to be a phony in that aspect as well because I wasn't around to experience what everyone else was experiencing" (Phipps, 2002).

Cultural marginality and social identity

The social group with which cultural marginals identify at any given time is in a constant state of flux. By definition, the identity of the marginals themselves is fluid; therefore, their relationships with others are usually not dictated by predetermined roles. Pollok and Van Reken (2001) developed a model that depicts four ways that TCKs relate to their surrounding culture, but I believe the model is appropriate for most cultural marginals, whatever the situation. The relational patterns are termed *foreigner, adopted, hidden immigrant,* and *mirror.*

Foreigner Looks different Thinks differently	Hidden Immigrant Looks similar Thinks differently
Adopted Looks different Thinks similarly	Mirror Looks similar Thinks similarly

The authors suggest that the *foreigner* relationship is traditional for most TCKs, who often differ in both appearance and worldview from members of the host culture. The *adopted* relationship may apply to TCKs who appear different from members of the host culture, but who have immersed themselves in the culture to the extent that their behavior and worldview are the same as the hosts. The *hidden immigrant* relationship may refer to TCKs who return to their home culture—they physically resemble people in the culture, but because of their marginal experience their worldview is markedly different. The *mirror* relationship occurs when TCKs or cultural marginals are in an

environment, whether it is a home or host culture, where they physically resemble other people in the environment and have a shared worldview.

Cultural marginals may shift from one relational pattern to another when in different environments. For example, I am an American who spent most of her childhood in Saudi Arabia. When I am in the United States, I am a hidden immigrant because I look American (which in itself is a debate beyond the scope of this dissertation), but my upbringing causes me to think in a very different manner from many Americans. When I am in Saudi Arabia, I am in the adopted model of relating because I understand many of the cultural practices of the country and act appropriately, but I look very different from most Saudi Arabian women. I would not go so far as to say that my belief systems are the same as Saudis, but in their culture I can act appropriately. The way I interact with people changes from context to context, depending on my relationship with the culture.

Many cultural marginals consider their peer group to consist of other cultural marginals. Pollen and Van Reken suggest that a woman of Indian descent who was brought up in England and attended school in Australia would identify more with someone like myself or Morote rather than an Indian woman who was born and reared all of her life in India (2001). Our social identities as cultural marginals would enable us to communicate effectively. I agree with their suggestion, since most of my life I didn't feel that I belonged to any specific cultural group. It was a relief to find there were others who felt the same way I did. Once I could define myself as a member of a specific in-group, I felt a greater sense of social identity, perhaps even a boost in self-esteem!

Characteristics of cultural marginals

Janet Bennett's definition of "encapsulated" and "constructive" marginals. Janet

Bennett (1993) outlines some characteristics that cultural marginals are likely to exhibit.

She differentiates between levels of cultural marginality on the basis of how people

respond to the inner conflict they experience because of having two or more cultural

frames of reference. She identifies an encapsulated marginal as one who has "a

compromised ability to establish boundaries and make judgments" and who "is buffeted

by conflicting cultural loyalties and unable to construct a unified identity" (1993, p.5).

She claims that encapsulated marginals identify themselves as so unique that they

cannot envisage a peer group with whom they can identify. In contrast, constructive

marginals see their peers as fellow marginals with whom they have more in common

than any other group. (J.M. Bennett, 1993). In addition, constructive marginals

experience "comfortable movement between cultural identities such that an integrated,

multicultural existence is maintained, and where conscious, deliberate choice making

and management of alternative frames prevail" (p.10). Janet Bennett (1993) views

constructive marginals as a positive formulation of an identity that was traditionally

considered deviant in society. Cultural marginals, especially TCKs, usually do not

make a conscious choice to become members of that social group. Often, parents make

decisions that affect the groups into which their children socialize or circumstances

force people to make decisions or come into contact with others they normally would

not have. But, if desired, could one consciously strive to develop characteristics

associated with constructive cultural marginals? Milton Bennett argues that yes, one

can.

Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. Milton

Bennett's model may be viewed as a linear progression from one stage of intercultural

sensitivity to another; however, it is possible for one to skip stages or regress to an

earlier stage of development. He refers to the first three stages of the model as "ethnocentric," or "assuming that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality." (1993, p. 6) The ethnocentric stages of development are denial, defense, and minimization. The next three stages of the model are "ethnorelative," or the "assumption that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context." (M.J. Bennett, 1993, p. 15) The ethnorelative stages of development are acceptance, adaptation, and integration.

Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
|_____|	_____|	_____|	_____|	_____|	_____|	_____|

Ethnocentric Stages   →   →   Ethnorelative Stages
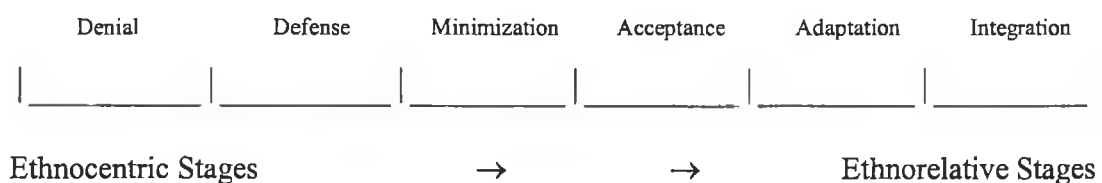
There is not enough space in this dissertation to review Milton Bennett's model at a more in-depth level, but I want to examine briefly the last stage of the model, which Bennett labels "integration." The challenge of this stage is to "integrate disparate aspects of one's identity into a new whole while remaining culturally marginal." (M.J. Bennett, 1993, p.22) At this final stage of intercultural development, those in integration are able to evaluate cultural differences in a contextual manner without reference to such absolutes as "right" or "wrong." The arrival of people at the integration stage of intercultural sensitivity development seems an almost theoretical and unattainable goal, as they are "outside all cultural frames of reference by virtue of their ability to consciously raise any assumption to a metalevel (of self-reference)" (M.J. Bennett, 1993, p.24). Thus, one can develop attitudes, beliefs, and skills of constructive marginals, which have been presented in Milton Bennett's model as characteristics of a fully integrated and interculturally sensitive person.

Advantages and disadvantages of cultural marginality

While the previous discussion of characteristics associated with cultural marginals focused predominantly on positive traits, it remains that there are both advantages and disadvantages to cultural marginality. For example, the expanded worldview of cultural marginals is usually seen as a benefit to their lifestyle; indeed, they often have first-hand experience of situations that other people experience second-hand through the media. A negative counter to the expanded worldview is the confusion of loyalties cultural marginals sometimes experience (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001). I find myself not as patriotic or nationalistic as most of my American friends (who are not cultural marginals), and I wonder if my more objective view of American beliefs and values makes me "less" of an American.

While most cultural marginals have been in close contact with people of other cultures, their identification as marginals implied a somewhat transient lifestyle. Indeed, another term almost synonymous with a cultural marginal is a "global nomad," someone whose home is the world and moves about in it freely. The consequence of a culturally nomadic lifestyle is the lack of a concrete home or identifiable roots. Phipps (2002) says that she wants to return to the United States and make a home for herself somewhere. She desperately wants to be able to claim that she is "from" a specific place. Morote (2002) has resigned to identifying Florida as his home because he is unable to maintain a nomadic lifestyle while making major life decisions regarding his education and career.

The very existence of the cultural marginal depends on the existence of concrete boundaries (flexible though they may be) of cultures with which the marginal cannot predominantly identify. If the characteristics of cultural marginals are held up as ideal, it is possible that people that are fiercely loyal to their identification with one culture

and its perspective will be seen as limited in their thought processes. Thus, I would argue that while there are many advantages to being a cultural marginal, in terms of both experience and ideology, there are also many advantages to belonging to a specific culture and defining oneself in terms of a more stable identity.

Cultural marginality and intercultural communication

Cultural marginals may naturally have a higher level of intercultural communicative competence than those who only identify with one culture because they are, by definition, accustomed to being in contact with more than one cultural group. In order to function well in their cultural groups, cultural marginals need to be effective communicators. They can communicate effectively with members of other cultures by using their knowledge and experience to guide their behavior so that it is appropriate across most, if not all, contexts. Cultural marginals are possibly effective intercultural communicators because they are constantly redefining their social identities in relation to any given context. The fluidity of their identity allows them to embody a number of beliefs and behaviors that they access when desired and when they are socially appropriate. Since cultural marginals have usually internalized more than one cultural perspective, they can move between those perspectives or add more to their mindset in order to be as ethnorelative as possible.

The number of cultural marginals is steadily increasing as the world continues to shrink and the global village expands to include more people in its ideals. I think that if being a cultural marginal somehow becomes the norm as a social identity, there will no longer be the need for measurements of intercultural communication competence because the majority will, by definition, be comfortable shifting between different cultural mindsets. The problem will be the loss of the cultural perspectives to supposedly "higher" orders such as ethnorelativism and cultural marginality.

Ethnorelativism and cultural marginality can be seen as ideological goals that clearly do not embody the boundaries needed to maintain the presence of many varied and distinct cultures. Some have argued that this is the paradox of the 21st century: as the world "shrinks" and cultural diversity is celebrated and encouraged, people increasingly yearn to construct boundaries and divisions so that they can identify themselves as part of a discernable group. I think what will most likely happen is that Barth's concept of boundaries will manifest itself in the redefinition of many people's cultural identity— the identity itself may change, but the fact that there is a group to which people can belong and identify themselves will remain the true ideological goal.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion viewed aspects of intercultural communication through the lens of social psychology, thereby providing a more in-depth understanding of some phenomena present in intercultural interaction. I believe the overarching social psychological concept that needs to be considered in intercultural communication is people's inherent need to belong to a group. As has been shown, belonging to groups can provide members with definable social norms, roles, and identities; thus, there is psychological need to belong to an identifiable group. However, what defines accepted members of a social group concomitantly excludes other people from being identified with that group. The very process of group formation implies that there have to be people outside of its membership against whom its members can compare themselves. Part of identifying people as members of a group involves conceptualizing characteristics they do *not* have (and presumably may be attributed to people outside that group).

Cultural marginals have a unique role in the field of intercultural studies because they do not identify with any particular cultural group; they are on the periphery of cultures. Traditionally, cultural marginals have been primarily viewed as people who lacked identity and suffered from negative psychological effects due to their marginality. Before the term "marginal" was conceptualized to describe people in their position, cultural marginals were chronic strangers to societies' in-groups. People who are socialized into a marginal societal role have used their inherent need for social identity to create their own in-group. Cultural marginals have, in fact, become a discernible group to which people can belong. They are no longer only viewed as people without culture; in the field of intercultural studies, they are usually considered people with a unique cultural perspective. In recent years, the role of the cultural

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marginal has been redefined as a potentially positive, even desirable one. Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993) reflects a linear progression of intercultural competence, and the last attainable stage embodies ideologically positive characteristics of cultural marginality.

The increase in intercultural movement, contact, and communication has resulted in the role of the cultural marginal becoming more commonplace. The positive characteristics of their group identity have become ideals to which monoculturals can strive in order to more effectively communicate across cultural boundaries. Celebrating and validating other cultures has become a societal goal. People are encouraged to learn about unfamiliar cultures in a non-judgmental fashion. Levi-Strauss suggests that problems arise because "one cannot fully enjoy the other, identify with him, and yet at the same time remain different" (quoted in Geertz, 1986, p.108). This observation is at the heart of the 21st century paradox mentioned before: as people are encouraged to think of the world in terms of a global village, they lose the boundaries and sense of difference that helps maintain their *own* sense of social identity. Although it may be socially desirable to develop an ethnorelative perspective, Rorty critiques this trend by commenting, "We have become so open-minded that our brains have fallen out" (1991, p.203).

The aim of society has become to transcend group and cultural boundaries in order to more effectively communicate and understand each other, but the psychological danger is losing the sense of difference and contrast that is necessary to maintain group identity. People rely on their group memberships as constituents of their social identities, which contribute to their overall sense of self-concept. I argue that the social psychological aspects discussed in this dissertation support the claim that people need to have concrete group conceptualizations in order to have stable social identities. They

also rely on group categorizations when interacting with strangers; being able to categorize others as members of one social group or another will increase people's predictive powers. Members of groups rely on stereotypes (both positive and negative) and mental heuristics in order to dictate their behavior towards members of out-groups. Thus, the concept of the group is central to how people interact.

When comparing in-groups to out-groups, it is natural for people to see their in-groups in a more favorable light. However, it is not socially acceptable for people to dismiss other cultural groups as "primitive" or "backward;" to do so would exhibit extreme ethnocentrism. Thus, aspects of other cultures are now "validated" and "accepted." Differences, while still present, are not thought of as sharply as they were fifty years ago. Geertz (1991) suggests that such contemporary softening of cultural contrast means that anthropologists "will simply have to learn to make something of subtler differences" (p.105). I think that the psychological reliance on difference as a means of constructing identity will result in the subtleties of cultures emerging as new group boundaries. People will still have to go through the process of cross-cultural adaptation, because although the boundaries themselves may fluctuate, the psychological need for their presence will prevent them from dissipating altogether. People will continually strive to find others with whom they identify and others against whom they compare themselves. Kluckhohn and Murray (1948) summarize the categorization of humans well by stating that "Every man [woman] is in certain respects a) like all other men, b) like some other man, c) like no other man" (p.35).

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