# Intercultural Communication

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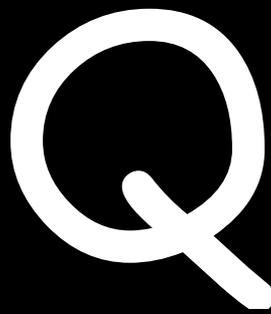
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# Intercultural communication

## Topic 1

1. <u>What is culture?</u>

What do these people have in common?

- English speaking male Jew raised in United States,
- His Yiddish speaking Jewish great grandmother who lived in Eastern Europe?
- And a modern Hebrew speaking Jew who lives in Israel?

They all share the same culture but there are some cultural differences → culture is not countries

Triandis → A cultural syndrome is:

- A pattern of shared attitudes, beliefs, categorizations, self-definitions, norms, rola definitions and values
- That is organized around a theme
- That can be different among those who speak a particular language. **Speaking the same language does not mean you're part of the same culture**
- During a specific historic period
- And in a definable geographic region

<u>Then what is culture</u>? → Multidimensional. Kroeber & Klukhohn → There are 164 definitions of culture, classified in categories → culture has many layers, hard to define

Triandis 2007 → 3 aspects of culture

A. Humans need to adapt themselves into changing environments. We need communication to face these environments.
B. Culture consists of shared elements
C. Culture is transmitted across time and generations

2. <u>Socioeconomic status, social class and culture</u>

Individualism different SES groups New York (Kusserow). Children are all taught to be individuals, but different kinds of individualism. The different groups have all different values.

| Upper class Manhattan | Upper-working class Queens | Lower working class Queens |
|---|---|---|
| - Each child is unique<br>- Cultivate success and happiness<br>- Encourage the feeling that everything is possible | - Personal success<br>- Achievement<br>- Success = hard work<br>- Tenacity and self-confidence | - Self-sufficiency<br>- Self-determination<br>- Surviving in a bad system |

Different views of agency depending on SES (→ capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices)

| High SES | Low SES |
|---|---|
| - More able to control their environment and to influence others<br>- They value control and agency<br>- Music: rock music → lyrics are about self-actualisation, putting your own personal touch in the song | - More likely they need to adapt to the environment and maintain integrity because they don't have any control<br>- Value flexibility, integrity and resilience<br>- Music: country music → they find the group-feeling very important |

How do you measure SES?

Combination of variables and subjective measure. How we put people into different boxes, can be different from how people see themselves.

3. Region of country and culture

Studies show differences between North and South USA → these differences come from the way people used to live.

| Southern | Northern |
|---|---|
| - Herding<br>- Harsh and dominant environment<br>- They attach more importance to honour and reputation | - Agrarian societies<br>- They are less competitive |
| - Society is willing to accept people who have done things wrong (went to jail)<br>- More violent reactions to insult → have to defend their reputation | - More individualistic than Southern parts (e.g Belgium)<br>- 'Amused' by insults |

**Collectivism vs. Individualism**→ The US is considered very individualistic, but islands such as Hawaii tend to be more collectivistic.

Comparing countries → in every country you have bigger and smaller cities; also noticeable differences here and they might be even bigger.

Region and culture X SES and culture → cultural differences in moral judgements.

- US and Brazil
- High and low SES
- There is a stronger effect due to the socioeconomic status.
- Moral judgements of acts that were disgusting but not harmful. Who judges this most immoral?

**What is religion?**

- As difficult to define as culture
- William James

- ❖ An individual's relationships with the divine
    - ▪ Divine = relating to, or proceeding directly from God or a god
- Durkheim
    - ❖ Religion unifies people into a community
- Geertz
    - ❖ Religions are cultural systems

## Religion creates diversity

- Members of a different religion even within one country, can be very different
- Religious cultures also differ in what it means to be religious. They have different things that they emphasise.
    - ❖ Focus on praxis
    - ❖ Focus on belief
    - ❖ Focus on both
- Religious cultures can have very different moral opinions. *Is it morally wrong to think about doing something bad/conducting a crime, but not actually doing it?*

## Culture in humans and other animals

Grant Ramsey → he tries to come up with a general definition that can be used in different fields → multidisciplinary approach.

- Anthropologists
- Psychologists
- Biologists
-
    - I.       Culture concepts in historical context

Culture as heredity. Culture is passed on from one generation to the next one BUT is <u>not</u> something genetic. It's not similar to genes. If you eliminate the genes, then that is what culture is about. By saying what it is NOT, you don't have an actual definition.

Culture as social learning. Whatever we see from other humans and start doing ourselves. Taking over a habit may be culture but in most cases it is not. All behaviour patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted.

Culture as behaviour patterns. Behaviour is always the outcome of genes and the environment. Culture can help explain behaviour but is not the same as behaviour.

Culture as belief. Culture is everything that goes on in the head of a person. Culture is not behaviour but culture is beliefs.

Culture as information. Information in the brain not due to genetic influence. There is a lot of information in the brain that is not part of culture (private things, not shared).

Culture as environment. There are elements of the environment that are not a part of the definition of culture. People (and animals) structure their environment and this influences ecology and evolution.

Desiderate in a concept of culture

We should narrow down everything that we can observe, to culture.

- Definition should be explicative, not stipulative[1].
- Culture should be able to be used to explain differences between individuals or groups, but culture is not the same as phenotypes
- Culture should not be a priori confined to the human species

III.        The definition of culture

Culture is information transmitted between individuals or groups → too general.

Restrictions → Culture is information <u>BUT</u>:

**R1**. The information must bring about the reproduction of a behavioural trait

Behaviour that forms tradition, something we pass on to the next generation. Tradition is everything that you can observe. Culture is a mechanism behind a tradition, may also exists in one generation and does not need to be passed on to the next generation.

What about children who do NOT do what their parents do → DOP (do opposite of parents). Every child goes through this phase. Mechanism behind the behaviour = culture.

BUT

- DOP may as well be in your genes. In this case DOP is not culture. Not transmitted but hardwired. Example : when someone becomes violent, you will become submissive (do opposite)
- DOP is not a behaviour.

**R2**. The information must flow through the behaviour

The way that we pass on information, must flow through behaviour. Behaviour is the copy machine and the culture is the paper you have to copy. This restriction rules out genes!! Behaviour may lead to genetic changes (smoking). Culture can be transmitted via epigenetics (very occasionally).

**R3**. The information must have a lasting effect on the form or timing of the resultant behaviours.

This restriction rules out mimicry.

➔ R1+R2+R3 – culture is information transmitted between individuals or groups, where this information flows through and brings about the reproduction of, and a lasting change in the behavioural trait.

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[1] Stipulate = als voorwaarde stellen

      IV.      The scope and mechanisms of culture transmission

- Culture vs. tradition
    - ❖ All culture is tradition but not all traditions are cultural
    - ❖ Culture is a subset of tradition

**Grant Ramsey:** tradition is a subset of cultural behaviour.

- ❖ Traditions = culturally-caused transgenerational <u>behavioural similarities</u>.
- ❖ Traditions are cultural in the sense that what makes a tradition is culture (the mechanism)
- ❖ Culture is not tradition → it is a kind of behaviour pattern
- ❖ Social learning is a mechanism that transmits the process of passing on information

Behaviour patterns vs. culture
- ❖ Behaviour patterns can be culturally caused. There is no problem with the class of behavioural phenomena that scientists classify as culture being labelled 'culture'.
- ~~Animal culture~~
- Human culture
    - ❖ Individual behaviour = an individual behaviour is sometimes taken to be cultural.
    - ❖ Group behaviour = in-group similarities and group-level differences.
    - ❖ High/low culture = how can we make sense of this distinction in light of the concept of culture according to Ramsey?
    - ❖ Cultural artefacts
        - ▪ Some human creations are taken to be cultural objects
        - ▪ A cultural object can be understood as an artefact resulting from cultural behaviour
        - ▪ But since not all human behaviours are cultural, not all artefacts are cultural
        - ▪ The more innovative a behaviour is, the less cultural it is

      V.      Is human and animal culture the same?

While some human mechanisms for cultural transmission are homologous with those underlying cultural transmission in other species, humans have some unique mechanisms as well.

      VI.      Conclusions

Culture is information transmitted between individuals or groups, where this information flows through and brings about the reproduction of, and a lasting change in, the behavioral trait.

# Topic 2

We know what culture is and how it becomes culture. Yet why does some information flow/spread more than others?

1. <u>Communication as behavioural flow</u>

Does quality guarantee culture?

- People, ideas and practices become and stay prominent because of their superior quality or performance

Common ground and cultural prominence

- Dan Sperber → "culture is the precipitate[2] of cognition and communication in human population"
- Communication is an important factor

What do people like to talk about?

- Shared knowledge!!
- Pursuit of common ground in conversations is strong
- The tendency to emphasize common information is often the result of a sampling bias
    ❖ Shared information is more likely to be sampled simply because there are more people who can bring it up
- However group members also tend to mention shared information that has already been discusses at higher rates than they mention unshared information, whether or not it has been discusses → indicates strong preferences for common ground

Why?

- We prefer common ground because
- It makes us feel more socially connected
- Feel better about ourselves
- Increases confidence that the information is valid and accurate

Thus

- Common-ground hypothesis of cultural prominence:
    ❖ People's desire to establish common ground
    ❖ This  should lead them to favor familiar  conversation topics,
    ❖ And this social rehearsal should make those topics even more prominent in society at large.

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[2] Result of stormy reaction

There are 2 studies:

**STUDY 1 → Experiment:** dyadic conversation

Choice between discussing:

- Familiar baseball players who had mediocre seasons or
- Less familiar players who had fantastic, All-Star worthy seasons

1.1 Quality hypothesis (economics) predict: Group 2 will win
1.2 Common ground hypothesis (we) predict: Group 1 will win

<u>Beware of the "Availability Hypothesis"</u> = familiarity could make a player prominent in conversations for reasons other than common ground

Availability bias in memory

- Players who are more familiar may be more likely to come to mind as worthy topics
- Then reason is not common ground, but; easy to recall something about

How can you resolve this?

- Let participants read detailed information about all 8 players before the conversation: then all 8 are AVAILABLE in brain; all in short-term memory
- Use email-style chatting
- Give sufficient time to write a message; not under time pressure
- Manipulate the PARTNER they will talk to
  - ❖ Person with LIKE for excellent players: expert
    - ▪ Will like to talk about less known good players
  - ❖ Or just random person like you and me
- And choose participants that are EXPERTS themselves
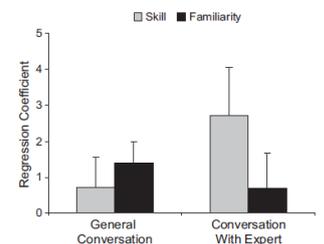  - ❖ Also like the very good less known players



Fig. 1. Results from Study 1: regression coefficients from a logistic regression in which players' skill and participants' familiarity with players were used to predict which players fans discussed in general conversation and in conversation with an expert. Error bars represent standard errors.

Thus

- We only looked at the responses of those participants who were baseball experts
- Quality hypothesis : experts should always discuss the players with the best performance.
- Availability hypothesis: experts should always discuss the best-performing players
- Common-ground hypothesis: experts should talk about the topics they were most confident they shared in common with their partner, favoring the less-familiar (but high-performing) players when talking with another fan and favoring the familiar (but underperforming) players when talking with an unspecified partner.

TABLE 1
*Results From Study 1: Familiarity and Performance as*
*Predictors of Which Players Participants Chose to Discuss*

| Conversation type | Player's familiarity | | | Player's performance | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | b | SE | Wald | b | SE | Wald |
| General conversation | 1.80 | 0.41 | 19.72** | 0.46 | 0.75 | 0.38 |
| Conversation with expert | 0.43 | 0.41 | 1.12 | 2.23 | 0.78 | 8.14* |

Note. Familiarity and performance were measured by participants' standardized ratings of each player. A separate logistic regression was conducted for each conversation type.
*p < .01. **p < .001.