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Intercultural Uncertainty Reduction: Synthesis And Strategies

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INTERCULTURAL UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION: SYNTHESIS AND STRATEGIES

SENIOR HONORS THESIS

BY: STEPHANIE YONKO

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If research hypotheses are supported in studies with very different populations, the findings can be taken more seriously than those hypotheses supported only in studies of homogeneous populations within one country.

Information transfer is faster and easier than it was five years ago and it is more likely that people from different cultures will meet each other. Most aspects of our lives, from business to television are affected by other cultures. Therefore, being able to establish a rapport with someone from another culture is becoming increasingly important. When we first encounter new people, there are many questions in our minds about them such as who they are, where they come from, what we have in common, whether our attitudes, opinions, and values are similar, etc. All of these questions combine to form uncertainty.

Our uncertainty about new people and how we find out more about them is grouped into a body of research called uncertainty reduction theory. The first stages of unified thought under this label applied specifically to intracultural communication, communication among people from the same culture. As time passed and intercultural meetings (between different cultures) became more frequent, uncertainty reduction theory expanded to include information about those meetings.

This paper will explain uncertainty reduction theory throughout its development; discuss communication competence (effective and appropriate communication) and attributional confidence as bases for creating interaction strategies; examine some cultural traits and customs which affect uncertainty reduction processes, and list basic differences between communicating within one's own culture and communicating interculturally.

DEVELOPMENT OF UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION THEORY
There are numerous justifications for the first formulation of uncertainty reduction theory which can be found in previous research. Some of these are Heider's (1958) work in attribution (assigning motives for other people's behavior), Jones, Kanouse, Kelley, Nisbett, Valins, & Weiner (1972), Kelley (1967), and Kelley's (1973) findings that we strive to make our own and other's behavior predictable.

Berger and Calabrese (1975) suggest that the primary goal people pursue upon first meeting is to increase predictability of the interaction. That goal is achieved by the process of uncertainty reduction which may be proactive or retroactive. The proactive process of uncertainty reduction involves prediction such as assuming that someone we meet in a basic communication class in the United States speaks English. The retroactive process is one of explanation and occurs after a portion of interaction is complete. People use retroactive uncertainty reduction strategies to explain what has happened in the communication event in light of what has been learned about the other communicator. The first formulation of uncertainty reduction theory proposed three phases of any initial communication transaction between strangers: the entry phase, the personal phase, and the exit phase.

The entry phase is governed by the rules and norms which dictate our behavior in everyday interaction such as responding to a greeting by saying hello. The communication content focuses on exchanging demographic information; information is exchanged equally; and the communicators begin discussing attitudes and opinions which are relatively inconsequential (What do you think of the
rain we have been having?). At the beginning of this phase, uncertainty levels are high, but they gradually decrease over time (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

The personal phase consists of communication regarding central attitudinal issues (e.g., religion, politics, family), personal problems, and value systems. The personal stage usually does not begin until interaction occurs a number of times and on different occasions. Each new interaction will be different simply because communication is dynamic or everchanging. No two communication exchanges will be exactly alike because experience with the other person changes and each communication event affects every other. Increased spontaneity and less restriction of communication due to social desirability of its topic (e.g., capital punishment, intimate topics, and negative aspects of the self) are also evident during the personal phase.

The final phase includes the decision to terminate or continue interaction based on retroactive analysis of the relationship. Specific plans for future interaction are made, indicating a decrease in spontaneity and stagnation of development. These phases combine to explain or track the first part of any relationship. Some people may call it getting acquainted, others: idle chit chat. Regardless of the name it is given, the initial phase of a relationship generally involves the process of uncertainty reduction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

Uncertainty reduction theory, originally developed by Berger and Calabrese (1975), identifies seven axioms and twenty-one theorems (Table 1) which represent a "theoretical perspective for dealing with the initial entry stage of interpersonal interaction" (p. 99). The axioms, inferred from previous studies, postulate reciprocal relation-
### Table 1: Uncertainty Reduction Theory Axioms and Theorems

**Axioms:**

1. Given the high level of uncertainty present at the onset of the entry phase, as the amount of verbal communication between strangers increases, the level of uncertainty for each interactant in the relationship will decrease. As uncertainty is further reduced, the amount of verbal communication will increase.
2. As nonverbal affiliative expressiveness increases, uncertainty levels will decrease in an initial interaction situation. In addition, decreases in uncertainty level will cause increases in nonverbal affiliative expressiveness.
3. High levels of uncertainty cause increases in information seeking behavior. As uncertainty level declines, information seeking behavior decreases.
4. High levels of uncertainty in a relationship cause decreases in the intimacy level of communication content. Low levels of uncertainty produce high levels of intimacy.
5. High levels of uncertainty produce high rates of reciprocity. Low levels of uncertainty produce low reciprocity rates.
6. Similarities between persons reduce uncertainty, while dissimilarities produce increases in uncertainty.
7. Increases in uncertainty level produce decreases in liking; decreases in uncertainty level produce increases in liking.

**Theorems:**

1. Amount of verbal communication and nonverbal affiliative expressiveness are positively related.
2. Amount of communication and intimacy level of communication are positively related.
3. Amount of communication and information seeking behavior are inversely related.
4. Amount of communication and reciprocity rate are inversely related.
5. Amount of communication and liking are positively related.
6. Amount of communication and similarity are positively related.
7. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and intimacy level of communication content are positively related.
8. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and information seeking are inversely related.
9. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and reciprocity rate are inversely related.
10. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and liking are positively related.
11. Nonverbal affiliative expressiveness and similarity are positively related.
12. Intimacy level of communication content and information seeking are inversely related.
13. Intimacy level of communication content and reciprocity rate are inversely related.
14. Intimacy level of communication content and liking are positively related.
15. Intimacy level of communication content and similarity are positively related.
16. Information seeking and reciprocity rate are positively related.
17. Information seeking and liking are negatively related.
18. Information seeking and similarity are negatively related.
19. Reciprocity rate and liking are negatively related.
20. Reciprocity rate and similarity are negatively related.
21. Similarity and liking are positively related.

ships between certain variables and uncertainty reduction. The variables are amount of verbal communication, nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, information seeking behavior, intimacy level of the communication content, reciprocity, similarity, and liking. Contained in the theorems are inferred relationships among all of the variables.

Berger and Calabrese's (1975) study served as a spring board for many other research projects in uncertainty reduction. Berger (1979) elaborated the model by adding three specific strategy groupings which might be used to reduce uncertainty: passive, active, and interactive. Passive strategies include comparing yourself to the social setting in which you interact and assimilating information for application to different situations. Asking people about a prospective communicator and restructuring the communication environment would be active strategies. Finally, interactive strategies are those in which both communicators participate (e.g., asking/answering questions, divulging personal information, or determining the truth of what you hear someone say). Berger and Bradac (1982) further expanded uncertainty reduction theory by emphasizing the role of language in uncertainty reduction processes.

Motivated by the idea that people try to reduce uncertainty about others when they are beneficial to know or the relationship is rewarding; behave in an unexpected manner; or may be encountered in the future (Berger, 1979), uncertainty reduction theory has expanded to include meeting someone from another culture (initial intercultural communication). There are several advantages to this expansion: increasing the scope, generality, and explanatory power of uncertainty reduction theory; explaining the concept of uncertainty
more fully (Gudykunst, 1985); refining the observation that uncer-
tainty is higher in intercultural encounters than in intracultural ones
(Thibaut & Kelley, 1959); and lending more credence to uncertainty
reduction theory in general (Brislin, 1983 in Gudykunst, Yang, &
Nishida, 1985).

While the basic premises remain the same, the differences
between intercultural and intracultural communication in general are
bound to affect intercultural uncertainty reduction processes. Some
of these differences are cultural traits, language, and intercultural
experience (Gudykunst, 1985). Many individuals believe that cul-
tural differences can be overcome simply by interacting with people
from another culture (the contact principle). That theory does not
stand in light of additional inquiry. Experience only increases at-
tributional confidence when intercultural contact takes place under
favorable conditions and cultural knowledge is gained during the
interaction (Miller & Brewer, 1984). In addition, ethnocentricity and
prejudice (see Brislin, 1988) actually tend to decrease the effect of
the contact principle by casting knowledge gained in a negative man-
ner (Gudykunst, 1985). Therefore, if only to dispell certain myths
like the contact principle, it is useful to develop and test hypotheses
concerning intercultural uncertainty reduction.

When incorporated into the uncertainty reduction theory, the
concept of interactive strategies (Berger, 1979) modifies the recipro-
cal relationships and generates sixteen new hypotheses (Table 2)
(Gudykunst et al. 1985) which lead to some interesting speculation
about creating new intercultural communication strategies.

Gudykunst et al. (1985) examined three cultures and three
H1: As the amount of communication increases, attributional confidence increases. (U.S.--F; Japan--F & D)
H2: The more interactive uncertainty reduction strategies are used, the greater the attributional confidence. (U.S.--A & F; Japan--A & F; Korea--A & F)
H3: The greater the similarity, the greater the attributional confidence. (U.S.--F; Japan--F; Korea--F)
H4: The greater the interpersonal attraction, the greater the attributional confidence. (U.S.--A, F, & D; Japan--A, F, & D; Korea--A, F, & D)
H5: The greater the amount of communication, the more interactive strategies are used. (U.S.--A; Japan--F)
H6: The greater the similarity, the more interactive strategies are used. (U.S.--A & D; Japan--D; Korea--A & D)
H7: The greater the interpersonal attraction, the more interactive strategies are used. (U.S.--A, F, & D; Japan--F; Korea--A & D)
H8: The more others self-disclose, the greater the attributional confidence. (U.S.--A & D; Japan--A, F, & D; Korea--A & D)
H9: There is a positive association between other self-disclosure and the use of interactive strategies. (U.S.--A, F, & D; Japan--A, F, & D; Korea--A, F, & D)
H10: The greater the amount of communication, the more others self-disclose. (U.S.--A, F, & D)
H11: There is a positive association between similarity and interpersonal attraction. (U.S.--A, F, & D; Japan--A & F; Korea--A & D)
H12: There is a positive association between amount of communication and interpersonal attraction. (U.S.--D; Japan--A & F)
H13: There is a positive association between amount of communication and similarity. (No support)
H14: Level of self-monitoring influences the use of interactive strategies. (U.S.--A & F; Japan--F)
H15: Level of self-consciousness influences the use of interactive strategies. (Japan--F)
H16: Self-monitoring and self-consciousness are positively correlated. (U.S.--A, F, & D; Japan--A, F, & D; Korea--A, F, & D)

A=Acquaintance; F=Friend; D=Dates

Table 2: Hypotheses of Gudykunst et al. (1985)

(Support of hypotheses)
types of relationships. The different cultures were located in the United States, Japan, and Korea; the relationship levels were acquaintances, friends, and dating partners, creating nine possible independent variables. Hypotheses were confirmed when the relationship was evident in all three cultures, partially supported if evident in two cultures, and not confirmed if supported in one or less of the cultures.

No relationship was evident between the amount of communication and similarity (H13), but the relationships between attraction and attributional confidence (H4); other self-disclosure and the use of interactive strategies (H9); and self-monitoring and self-confidence were supported in all countries and relationships (H16). Partial support appeared for the relationships between similarity and interpersonal attraction (H11); interactive strategies and attributional confidence (H2); attraction and interactive strategies (H7); similarity and interactive strategies (H6); and other self-disclosure and attributional confidence (H8). Only two cultures indicated relationships between amount of communication and interactive strategies (H5); amount of communication and interpersonal attraction (H12); and one indicated a relationship between amount of communication, self-consciousness, and interactive strategies (H15).

These findings lead to certain conclusions which will allow speculation about the interaction strategies that would be beneficial to intercultural uncertainty reduction. No matter how often people communicate, their perception of similarity will not change. In other words, the contact principle is flawed according to these findings. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence which indicates that
stronger interpersonal attraction will lead to stronger attributional confidence, higher degrees of self-disclosure will be associated with more use of interactive strategies, and people who are high self-monitors will usually be more self-conscious. These conclusions may lead to de-emphasizing the role of simple contact as a means for decreasing uncertainty while, at the same time, stressing appropriate self-disclosure and introspection.

The second level of support reflects an indication that attributional confidence can be increased through the use of interactive strategies. People who are attracted to each other tend to prefer the give and take of interaction. Similar people are also likely to be more attracted to each other and communicators who self-disclose more tend to have greater attributional confidence with their communication partners.

Although people’s predictions and explanations yield imperfect knowledge, this knowledge guides our total behavior toward others (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). So, whether right or wrong, people will act according to their predictions. Therefore, it is important to be aware of those predictions and to constantly reevaluate them. One concept which will help the intercultural communicator is communication competence. It is a tool people may use to enhance their ability to decrease uncertainty in intercultural interactions.

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Communication competence may be defined as “the ability to communicate in a personally effective and socially appropriate manner” (Trenholm & Jensen, 1988, p.11). Intercultural communication
competence would be communication competence in an intercultural context. Displaying communication competence in an intercultural encounter would most likely heighten perceived similarity, a variable of uncertainty reduction (Table 1).

Many studies have explored intercultural communication competence and Chen (1989) discusses the topic thoroughly. Communication competence has traditionally meant either communication appropriateness (the ability to demonstrate a situational knowledge of socially appropriate communicative behavior) or communication effectiveness (the degree to which a communicator's goals are achieved), but the concept should include both perspectives (Chen, 1989). This idea parallels the definition given above of competence.

Communication effectiveness may be conceptually approached by focusing on the characteristics of the communicator's effectiveness; observing the communicator's behavior; or combining the preceding approaches and examining both effectiveness and behavior. The last is “an integrative approach which can lead to better understanding of intercultural effectiveness” (Chen, 1989, 119).

There are several contexts which determine intercultural communication competence:

First, the verbal context requires individuals to make sense in terms of wording, of statements, and of topic. Second, the relational context requires individuals to be consonant with the particular relationship through the use of messages. Lastly, the environmental context requires individuals to consider the constraint imposed on message making by the environments (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980 in Chen, 1989, 119).
Chen (1989) offers a synthesis of the dimensions and components of intercultural communication competence which have become evident by combining the approaches and contexts mentioned (Table 3).

There are four dimensions of intercultural communication competence: personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adjustment, and cultural awareness. Personal attributes refer to competent communicators' high degree of self-knowledge and ability to foment positive attitudes in interaction. This dimension may be divided into four components: self-concept (how we see ourselves), self-disclosure (divulging personal information), self-awareness, and social relaxation. Competent self-disclosure is offered in the appropriate degree and is reciprocal (at least initially). Self-awareness is another term for self-monitoring. Self-monitoring is defined as "self-observation and self-control guided by situational cues to social appropriateness" (Snyder, 1974, p. 526). The concept is intrinsically related to uncertainty reduction through passive strategies (Gudykunst et al., 1987; Berger & Douglas, 1981; Berger, 1979; and Berger & Perkins, 1978). As Samovar, Porter, and Jain (1981) acknowledged, "perhaps the first thing we can do to improve our intercultural communication and resolve many of our problems is to know ourselves" (p. 202). This simply means that we are aware of our own attitudes, opinions, and biases which may affect our communication interculturally. Finally, social relaxation is feeling and displaying lower levels of anxiety in a public setting.

The dimension labeled communication skills includes both verbal and nonverbal communication abilities. The components of this dimension are message skills, flexibility, interaction manage-
Table 3: Communication Competence

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<tr>
<th>DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>COMPONENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural Communication Competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Attributes</td>
<td>Self-Disclosure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-Concept</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Relaxation</td>
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<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Message Skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Skills</td>
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<td>Psychological Adaptation</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interaction Management</td>
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<td>Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
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<td>Social Systems</td>
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</table>

ment, and social skills. Message skills are items such as linguistic skills, descriptiveness, supportiveness, and the ability to evaluate oral messages. Flexibility means developing a large repertoire of communication strategies and using them appropriately in different communication situations. Interaction management refers to turn-taking and social skills are basically human relations skills such as empathy and maintaining face.

Part of being able to acculturate and handle frustration, stress, cultural alienation, and cultural ambiguity is referred to as psychological adaptation. Acculturation, part of competence in general is explained thoroughly by Kim (1988):

Acculturation occurs through the identification and the internalization of the significant symbols of the host society. If we view acculturation as the process of developing communication competence in the host sociocultural system, it is important to emphasize the fact that such communication competence is acquired through communication experiences. The acculturation process, therefore, is an interactive and continuous process that evolves in and through the communication of an immigrant with the new sociocultural environment" (p.345).

Acculturation as a process leading to heightened communication competence in general would be a useful method of quickening intercultural uncertainty reduction.

Lastly, cultural awareness is composed of knowledge about social values, customs, norms, and systems. Specifically, it would be important for communicators to identify the dissimilarities between the host culture and their own in order to prevent misunderstandings and facilitate interaction. An example of this would be under-
standing another culture's concept of time and space. For example, it may be inappropriate for a person to back away from someone who approaches closely for conversation in an Arab culture.

The dimensions and components of intercultural communication competence are by no means clinically separated in practice as they may seem to be in theory. There is a significant interrelationship between communication skills and psychological adaptation;

![Diagram 1: Dimensions and Components of Competence](image)

Diagram 1: Some relationships among the dimensions of cultural communication competence
communication skills and cultural awareness; and between communication skills and some personal attributes (i.e. neuroticism and impulsiveness, indicate lack of communication attentiveness; neuroticism and social anxiety indicate lack of responsiveness; sociability is coincident with communication responsiveness; social anxiety indicates lack of communication receptiveness); (as consistent with Cegala et al., 1982 cited in Chen, 1989).

When communication competence increases in general, display of respect, empathy, ability to fulfill a function in relation to other people, interaction management, and tolerance of ambiguity increase also. Cultural awareness indicates the ability to adapt to different communication situations more easily and to respond well to other people's messages. Finally, the components of personal attributes, communication skills, and psychological adaptation and components of communication skills and cultural awareness all seem to be related (Diagram 1). This may be because the ability to develop such skills is closely related to the possession and/or development of the other components of communication competence communicators are generally competent in most areas. It would be most unlikely that communicators with good communication skills would not also tend to be culturally aware.

The correlations found between competence and social anxiety to display of respect, tolerance of ambiguity, interaction posture, relational role behavior, empathy, and interaction management provide us with specific communication skills for communicators to refine if they have problems acculturating. (Table 4 provides the results of previous, similar studies.)
Table 4: Basis of Chen's (1989) Findings

<table>
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<th>Relation between:</th>
<th>Support:</th>
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<tr>
<td>-Communication Skills and Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Hammer et al. (1978): Soujourner effectiveness in Intercultural communication necessitates interaction posture and interaction management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Communication Skills and Psychological Adaptation</td>
<td>Sewell &amp; Davidsen (1956), Deutsch &amp; Won (1963) Well developed communication skills (eg. fluency) lead to increased satisfaction and psychological adjustment in a host-culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Personal Attributes and Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Reuben &amp; Kealey (1979) Culture shock (difficulty with acculturation) is significantly related to empathy and interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smith (1956) does not support.</td>
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The importance of these findings to uncertainty reduction theory is unmistakable. They suggest practical applications for strategies of uncertainty. If communication skills are interrelated to psychological adaptation, cultural awareness, and some personal attributes, it follows that refining communication competence would correlate with decreased difficulty in intercultural uncertainty reduction through more rapid acculturation.

One of the faults of uncertainty reduction theory until now has been the lack of direction in correcting the difficulties people have with reducing uncertainty. While experience with another culture is a good suggestion for improving intercultural uncertainty reduction skills, it is also much more helpful to be aware of the specific mental and communication constructs which effect the different dimensions of communication competence, thus affecting intercultural uncertainty reduction.

Communication competence is one approach to developing strategies for improving uncertainty reduction in intercultural interactions. Another approach, sometimes called an operational definition of uncertainty reduction, is through attributional confidence.

ATTRIBUTIONAL CONFIDENCE

Uncertainty reduction as the theoretical construct proposed by
Berger and Calabrese (1975) is sufficient to explain the processes that people go through in an initial interaction. However, in order to further test the propositions of that primary study, the concept "uncertainty" may be operationalized as attributional confidence. "For the individual, reducing uncertainty and increasing attributional confidence become synonymous" (Clatterbuck, 1979, p. 148).

Although it may seem that too much weight is given to an individual's perception through attributional confidence,

in the long term, misperceptions and misinterpretations tend to be self-correcting because they lead to behavioral responses which are inconsistent with predictions and hence to increased uncertainty and to reevaluation of the situation (Clatterbuck, 1983, p. 148).

Clatterbuck (1983) hypothesizes about the relationship between retroactive and proactive attributional confidence and between attributional confidence and time people know each other, similarity, and interpersonal attraction. He identifies proactive and retroactive attributional confidence as unidimensional constructs, meaning "that relationships are perceived as a whole and that each bit of information affects the interpretation of each other bit" (p. 148). While we constantly try to predict the reactions of other people, we simultaneously revise those predictions as new information is gathered.

There is a high, positive correlation between retroactive and proactive attributional confidence. As proactive attributional confidence increases, so does retroactive attributional confidence. This finding supports Berger and Calabrese's (1975) claim that, although
finding supports Berger and Calabrese's (1975) claim that, although the two concepts are distinct, they are also intrinsically intertwined. It also suggests "pragmatically it is possible to measure the same underlying construct (uncertainty reduction) using different but related measures" (Clatterbuck, 1983, p. 153). Corresponding to Axiom 1 (amount of verbal communication), attributional confidence was shown to be moderately positively linked to the time people know each other.

Similarity (corresponding to Axiom 6, Table 1) has also been linked to attributional confidence. As perceived similarity increases, so does attributional confidence (Gudykunst, 1983; Chance & Goldstein, 1981, Simard, 1981; and Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Cultural dissimilarity, on the other hand, tends to increase uncertainty whereas knowledge of dissimilarity increases attributional confidence (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Berger & Bradac, 1982; and Rose, 1981).

Some factors which influence the relationship between perceived dissimilarity and liking are how a communicator expects to be evaluated by dissimilar others and message openness (which means that differences are openly expressed rather than hidden). One may think that the perceived intent of a dissimilar other might affect liking, but that was not found to be the case (Broome, 1983).

The final result of the Clatterbuck (1983) study pertinent to attributional confidence deals with interpersonal attraction. He found a modest possibility that as attraction increases, so will attributional confidence. This may be combined with the results of Gudykunst and Nishida (1984) and Gudykunst (1985) which show that the influence of uncertainty reduction strategies may be specific to intercul-
cedent to liking (Byrne, 1971; Duck, 1973; Homans, 1961; and Newcomb, 1953 & 1961) and that attitude similarity is related to interpersonal attraction (Berscheid & Walster, 1969 and Byrne, 1971) attributional confidence influences intercultural interaction strategies.

Communication competence and attributional confidence are discussed from the communicators' perspective. In other words, the preceding studies focused on what variables effect people as they interact in other cultures. Another equally significant approach is to focus on the broad differences between cultures themselves. The following two sections examine different continua of cultural differences: individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity (gender orientation). While it would be impossible to discuss all of the ways cultures may be different, these two are significant and representative of the other variables in form if not in content.

**INDIVIDUALISTIC/COLLECTIVISTIC ORIENTATION**

An individualistic culture would predominantly emphasize the goals of the individual over those of the collectivity. Responsibility would be relegated to individuals for themselves and their immediate families only. The United States is the common example of this type of culture. Samovar, et al., (1981) further identify individualism as:

a doctrine that the interests of the individual are or ought to be paramount and that all values, rights, an duties originate in individuals...As a member of a group they [individuals] presumably are pursuing their own self-
Collectivistic cultures are almost exactly opposite. Here, the goals of the group are hierarchically superior to those of the individual. People in these cultures belong to ingroups which satisfy their need to participate in exchange for their commitment to the group (Hofstede, 1980). Japan would be an example of this type of culture.

Gudykunst, Nishida, and Schmidt (1989) examined the effect of individualism/collectivism tested against certain variables related to uncertainty reduction. Specifically, they hypothesized that uncertainty reduction processes would differ among members of ingroups and outgroups in collective cultures, but not in individual ones. The variables tested were self-disclosure, attraction, perceived similarity, display of nonverbal affiliative expressiveness (those nonverbal behaviors which, when expressed, indicate affiliation to a group or other individuals), shared networks (interacting with the same groups of people), and attributional confidence. These variables were expected to be higher in ingroups than outgroups in the Japan sample but no difference was expected in the U.S. sample. The results confirmed the expected relationship in the areas of self-disclosure, attraction, networks, and attributional confidence. Only similarity was found to be more important in the United States.

This study is consistent with some conclusions from Chen (1989) in the intercultural communication competence dimension of cultural awareness and coincides with Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) Axioms: 1 (amount of communication), 3 (information seeking behavior), 4 (intimacy level of communication), 5 (reciprocity), 6 (similarity), and 7 (liking). It is likely that the individualistic/collectivistic
orientation of a culture affects uncertainty reduction. Therefore, in the area of the variables mentioned above, communicators can focus on strategies of acculturation (or uncertainty reduction) appropriate to the orientation of the host culture. If people from the United States were in Japan, they should be aware of the differences between ingroups and outgroups and know how to behave differently while interacting in one as opposed to the other.

A second significant finding regarding the individualistic/collectivistic orientation and uncertainty reduction relates to public self-consciousness. Public self-consciousness is related to Mead’s (1934) picture of the self as a social object and is a “general awareness of the self in relation to others” (Gudykunst et al., 1987, p.9). It was predicted and confirmed that a higher degree of individualism displayed by a culture would correspond with higher levels of public self-consciousness. (Gudykunst et al., 1987) separate self-consciousness into three sub-areas: public self-consciousness, private self-consciousness, and social anxiety.) Chen places self-consciousness in the personal attributes dimension of intercultural competence and labels it self-awareness.

Gudykunst et al., (1987) sampled students in the United States (individualistic), Korea (more collectivistic), and Japan (most collectivistic). This study first established that there are, indeed, cultural differences in self-consciousness, social anxiety, and self-monitoring. The United States was found to differ with Japan in public self-consciousness, social anxiety, and self-monitoring; and with Korea in social anxiety and self-monitoring. Japan and Korea only differed in social anxiety. Confirmation of this prediction leads us to believe
that increased levels of individualism evident in a culture will be associated with increased levels of public self-consciousness.

Furthermore, it was predicted and confirmed that individualism would influence self-monitoring. Higher degrees of individualism exhibited by a culture will be associated with higher degrees of self-monitoring exhibited by members of that culture. Self-monitoring is defined as "self-observation and self-control guided by situation cues to social appropriateness" (Snyder, 1974, p. 526). The concept is intrinsically linked to uncertainty reduction through passive strategies (Gudykunst et al., 1987; Berger & Douglas, 1981; Berger, 1979; and Berger & Perkins, 1978). Some specific variables
of uncertainty reduction influenced by self monitoring are intent to interrogate (Axiom 3 in Table 1); intent to self-disclose (Axiom 4); intent to display non-verbal affiliative expressiveness (Axiom 2); attributional confidence; and attraction (Axiom 7) (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987).

The preceding variables mentioned (self-consciousness and self-monitoring) were labeled as components of the Personal Attributes dimension of intercultural communication competence. Individualism/collectivism, on the other hand, would be considered aspects of Cultural Awareness. Therefore, though Chen (1989) finds no correlation between the two dimensions, it seems that one may exist. This area of analysis is unique to intercultural uncertainty reduction as specified by the operationalization offered by Chen (1989) in the form of competence. As stated earlier, knowledge of these differences would increase attributional confidence or, stated differently, would increase uncertainty reduction (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Berger & Bradac, 1982; & Rose, 1981).

GENDER ORIENTATION

A second continuum used to describe cultural characteristics is gender orientation. Specifically, at either end of the scale, one will find the labels masculine and feminine. According to Hofstede (1980), feminine cultures exhibit changing sex-roles and an emphasis on androgeny. Masculine cultures, then, would be those with distinct sex roles. It is important to remember that a distinction should be made between gender and sex. Gender may be attributed to a person regardless of sex in much the same way that it may be applied to
a culture. It is useful to picture gender on an axis of femininity and masculinity. High masculinity and low femininity would be called masculine; high femininity, low masculinity would be feminine; high femininity and high masculinity, androgynous; and low femininity and low masculinity, undifferentiated (Bem, 1974) (Diagram 2).

Based on these definitions, Gudykunst et al. (1989) predicted:

there will be differences in uncertainty reduction processes with members of same- and opposite-sex in masculine cultures, but not in feminine cultures. More specifically, it is expected that there will be less self-disclosure, attraction, perceived similarity, display of non-verbal affiliative expressiveness, shared networks, and attributional confidence in opposite-sex than in same-sex relationships in masculine cultures (p. 16).

They used Japan as an example of a masculine culture and the United States as a more feminine one.

The predicted outcome was generally confirmed. Although there is nothing in Chen’s (1989) analysis to compare this finding with specifically, it would fit in the broad category of cultural awareness as would any cultural generality. It would be prudent for an intercultural communicator to be aware of this continuum when preparing interaction strategies directed at gaining entrée into a new culture. The gender orientation of a culture would indicate how probable it would be to succeed in uncertainty reduction in same- or opposite-sex encounters in the new culture and in what form the reduction in uncertainty would most likely come.

Gender orientation has also been found to influence private
self-consciousness. Gudykunst et al. (1987) compare private self-consciousness to Jung's (1933) explanation of introversion saying that it is "concerned with attending to inner thoughts and feelings" (p. 8-9). (The reader should recall that public self-consciousness was linked to the individualistic/collectivistic continuum.) It has been established that among Japan, Korea, and the United States, Japan is the most masculine and Korea the least, with the United States falling somewhere in the middle (Gudykunst, et al. 1987).

With this scale in mind, the hypothesis was confirmed. Higher degrees of masculinity exhibited in a culture are associated with higher degrees of private self-consciousness or introspection. Japan and Korea were found to be significantly different in respect to private self-consciousness when linked to gender orientation.

These continua are helpful markers for intercultural communicators. Knowing where a culture is located on the individualistic/collectivistic scale and the masculine/feminine scale leads to more proactive uncertainty reduction and could establish a basis for further interactive uncertainty reduction strategies.

**ETHNICITY**

Many countries are known to have diverse ethnic populations. It is a mistake, then, to think the term intercultural communication refers only to communication across international political boundaries. The terms culture group and ethnic group have been used interchangeably for some time (Albert & Triandis, 1988). With this in mind, it is beyond question that certain studies of interethnic communication would be relevant.
Social identity is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). A social group is "two or more individuals who share a common social identification of themselves or... perceive themselves to be members of the same social category" (Turner, 1982, p. 15).

Social identity in the form of interethnic comparisons and in-group identification has a significant affect on uncertainty reduction processes (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988). More specifically, ethnicity, defined as characteristic behavior patterns and a particular way of viewing the social environment (Albert and Triandis, 1988), influences intent to interrogate (Axiom 3), intent to self-disclose (Axiom 4), intent to display nonverbal affiliative expressiveness (Axiom 2), attributional confidence (operationalization of uncertainty), and attraction (Axiom 7) (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987).

It is clear from these studies that ethnicity does affect uncertainty reduction processes and strengthens the case for development of an intercultural uncertainty reduction model.

DYADIC COMPOSITION

Most of the research presented thus far has been specific to initial interaction, following the suggestion of early work in this area. It would be beneficial to examine more intimate relationships also. "Relationships at different levels of intimacy involve varying amounts of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973), as well as different patterns of interrogation and deception detection" (Gudykunst,
1985, p. 812). This means that higher levels of intimacy are related to higher levels of attributional confidence which leads to greater accuracy of behavioral prediction.

High intimacy dyads (Japanese and North American) were found to have significantly higher levels of self disclosure, interrogation, shared networks, amount of communication and low-context attributional confidence than low-intimacy dyads. Dyads with different perceived levels of intimacy between partners were also found to engage in more self-disclosure and low context attributional confidence than low intimacy dyads (Gudykunst, Nishida, & Chua, 1986).

Another dyadic composition pattern which has been studied is same- and opposite-sex relationships. Females tend to gravitate more to same-sex partners than males (Sunafrank & Miller, 1981; Sunnafrank, 1983; and Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987). Females also tend to disclose more in same-sex than opposite-sex dyads, but males' disclosure seems to be unaffected by dyadic composition (Cline, 1983).

Though the information pertaining to females and males is not cross-cultural in nature, they may have far reaching consequences regarding sex-roles among cultures. If sex-roles could be accurately predicted to be similar in different cultures, they would be something familiar the intercultural communicator might be able to base interaction strategies on.

SECOND LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

Research indicates that cultural similarity heightens the ease with which people learn the language of another culture (Whyte &
Holmberg, 1956). Simard (1981) studied French-Canadian and English-Canadian interaction. She examined the initial stages of forming social acquaintances with special emphasis on social contacts formed across ethno-linguistic boundaries. It was found that language does indeed make a difference in the frequency of contact, post-interaction satisfaction, ease of initiation, and perceived similarity between dissimilar Canadian communicators. She found that when the subjects perceived themselves as being attitudinally similar, they were more inclined to engage in an initial interaction. Furthermore, only when subjects perceived that people of different ethno-linguistic backgrounds were more attitudinally similar to them than people with similar ethno-linguistic backgrounds would the subjects attempt to form an acquaintance with them. This directly applies to the first factor (language) Gudykunst (1985) proposed as distinguishing intercultural interaction. Even though it might be possible to nonverbally decrease uncertainty or to interact through an interpreter, uncertainty reduction most likely will not occur between cultures with dissimilar languages because people will avoid initial interactions (Simard, 1981). Therefore, uncertainty reduction leading to relational development seems to depend upon some sort of language competence.

This seems to indicate that the intercultural communicator would be well advised to study the phrases commonly used in initial interaction in order to facilitate communication. It would be unrealistic to attempt to be fluent in every language, but the effort it takes to begin a conversation in the host culture's language may be rewarded.
INTERCULTURAL VERSUS INTRACULTURAL INTERACTIONS

Every culture has different value systems, world views, and normative structures than each other culture group. Interacting within a culture would involve doing what people normally do, behaving the way people always have. An intercultural encounter would have to be different. That difference may be as simple as communicating in a foreign tongue, but the difference is there. This point is as relevant for uncertainty reduction as it is for cultural general interaction. Gudykunst (1983) found that people make more assumptions about strangers based upon their cultural background in initial intercultural than intracultural encounters. Whether more caution will be exhibited by a person in an initial intercultural or intracultural encounter seems to vary with the culture. Communicators would rather listen than talk in initial intercultural encounters, but the situation is reversed in intracultural interaction. Communicators tend to perceive greater difficulty when developing initial conversations with someone from another culture than with someone from their own. Amount of nonverbal activity does not seem to differ in intercultural encounters compared to intracultural interactions. Finally, people feel like they ask more questions of their interaction partners when they are from another culture. All of these conclusions made in the study were based on anecdotal evidence, but they are useful when thinking about initial intercultural encounters.

From the broad category of intercultural versus intracultural interaction to the smallest variable, uncertainty reduction is affected by diversity. Since 1975, the search to reduce communicative uncer-
tainty more easily has been fruitful and has evolved into a frame-
work for future development of a comprehensive intercultural un-
certainty reduction theory.

SYNTHESIS AND STRATEGIES

This has been an attempt at coalescing uncertainty reduction
theory and developing suggestions for development of interaction
strategies. Becoming competent as a communicator and reasonably
confident of attributions may be invaluable tools for intercultural
communicators and significantly reduce the time necessary for
acculturation. Being aware of the different orientations of a culture
and possible intercultural similarities could be equally useful. Fi-
ally, it is significant to note that generalizable differences between
communicating interculturally and communicating intraculturally
have been suggested.

Specifically, the focus in the future should be on interactive
strategies. The strategies included herein include deemphasizing
the role of simple contact as a means for uncertainty reduction and
stressing appropriate self-disclosure and introspection; being aware
of predictions about others and constantly reevaluating them; iden-
tifying dissimilarities between the host culture and one's own to
prevent misunderstanding and facilitate interaction; refining com-
munication skills and other dimensions of communication com-
petence to quicken acculturation; knowing the difference between
individualistic and collectivistic and masculine and feminine cul-
tures to increase proactive uncertainty reduction and create a basis
for future interaction. In addition to these strategies, it was also
suggested that sex roles might be one characteristic of humans which is independent of culture. Finally, it would be a good idea for intercultural communicators to familiarize themselves with the host language of their partners.

In the future, it would be interesting to empirically test some of the interactive strategies inferred by the studies cited herein. Empirical data would serve to confirm or disconfirm what may seem intuitive here. It would also be a useful test of the trends which seem evident in uncertainty reduction research. Also, while it is true that the literature included in this paper seems to be representative of the pool of research available on this topic, it is always difficult in any endeavor such as this to choose which studies should be included and which thrown aside. Therefore, it would be advisable in the future to more heavily emphasize cognitive theories or theories of attribution when generating suggestions for uncertainty reduction strategies.
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