Intercultural Communication: A Multicultural Perspective

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2005

A thesis of 85,000 words submitted as requirements
for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
I confirm that the work contained herein is my own original work and has not been submitted for examination to any other institution or for any other academic program.

Douglas Hall 2005
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Summary

Intercultural communication theory and research have largely been based on the assumption that dealing with cultural differences is the key element in intercultural encounters. This is applied particularly to encounters between people from different societies, either where a participant is visiting another country, or where that participant has recently migrated. Encounters between people who, though culturally different, live permanently together in the same society however, are not necessarily the same as encounters between people from different societies. In the light of this, intercultural communication theory should be reviewed and developed to better conceptualise the nature of intercultural interaction as it occurs within the same (multicultural) society. Such a review requires, as R. Atwood (1984) argued, a framing of intercultural communication episodes within a broader social perspective, a more thorough investigation of the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity as it affects intercultural interaction and a greater focus how communication processes help to create culture as well as how they are influenced by culture.

Work done by Anthony Giddens and Ulf Hannerz provides conceptual material that can assist in the development of the proposed multicultural perspective. They recognised first that the characteristics of a society are reproduced in its interactions. Second, they recognised that contemporary societies are characterised by an interplay of homogenising, or “centripetal” forces on the one hand and differentiating, or “centrifugal”, forces on the other. This suggests that a multicultural perspective should be organised around a view of interactions that are characterised by the same interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces.

An organising model for the multicultural perspective is therefore proposed based on three key elements. First it incorporates a system approach that recognises influences on communication, the interactive process and the outcomes of that process. Second, it incorporates, based on Giddens, a three-tiered approach that recognises the role played by structural processes in establishing the character of the society, the general patterns of interaction that emerge from these structural processes and the individual application of these processes in communicative episodes. Third, it incorporates, based on Giddens and Hannerz, a recognition of the interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces at each of these levels and the range of intercultural possibilities that this raises. The organising model is
then used to analyse intercultural interactions across four focuses: meaning, social relations, identity and behaviour.

The challenge of developing a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication, as indicated in the previous chapter, will be met by first developing an understanding of both the nature of the social context itself and the connections that exist between the social context and the interactions that occur within it. It is the task of this chapter to address how those understandings can be developed. In doing so, the groundwork will be laid for an elaboration of a multicultural perspective in subsequent chapters.

It was argued in the previous chapter that the broad character of intercultural communication research was established in the early to mid 1980s through a rush of empirical projects and theoretical discussions that focussed on the individual participant as the primary subject of research. This, it was also argued, has continued to be the broad character of the field to the present. It has been difficult, in the light of this, to find meaningful discussions within the field of the possible connections between intercultural interactions and the nature of social context which can help give shape to the discussion here. One notable exception was an article by Atwood (1984, p.68ff) which argued that not enough work had been done, at a conceptual level, to revise and update assumptions about the nature of culture and communication, the terminology that theory employs (for example, intercultural as opposed to inter-ethnic, inter-racial or international communication) and the types of focus that it adopts (for example, interpersonal concerns as opposed wider social concerns). Atwood’s article thus constitutes an important directive for the discussion undertaken here.

More specifically, Atwood proposed three areas where he believed intercultural communication theory was open to revision and development. First, Atwood was of the opinion that because the bulk of intercultural communication research has focussed on interpersonal interactions, it has tended to ignore the possibility of broader generalisable insights (p.70). Such insights, he suggested, might be gained by considering the wider socio-cultural and communication structures in which people learn to interact (p.84). Second, he observed that research assumes a direct link between homogeneity and heterogeneity of cultural background and homogeneity and heterogeneity in communication processes. This, he believed, needs to be revised by recognising the presence of “subjective
situational” culture and communication (p.79-83). This refers to the capacity of people to “communicate culturally at many levels” (p.80) and to the creative ability of individuals to be unique within cultural groups and even families. Atwood thirdly, observed that intercultural communication research has been based on the view that culture determines, and so socio-cultural variables are antecedent to, communication. This means therefore that “people of different backgrounds experience difficulties” (p.76). Atwood suggests that an alternative, “communication determines culture” view could be taken into consideration. Mass communication studies, for example, no longer see mass media as just a mirror of the world, but as an agent active in creating it. Cultural agencies therefore are determined by the communication system (p.78).

Each of these propositions raises issues that are valuable for examining the relationship between multicultural society and intercultural communication. Each of them will therefore be considered in turn for their contribution to laying the foundation for the multicultural approach to be developed here.

2.1 A Broader Social Perspective.

It is a primary assumption of this thesis that the multicultural society is a specific kind of communication context that generates intercultural situations which are significantly different to those that arise between people who are members of different societies. For this reason, Atwood’s argument that, rather than maintaining an exclusive (or at least narrow) emphasis on individuals as the focus of communication studies, intercultural communication theory could benefit from considering wider socio-cultural and communication structures, is an important starting point. His argument is a recognition from within the field of intercultural communication theory that further theoretical development can be achieved by giving greater consideration to the idea of “communication in context”.

2.1.1 Communication and Social Context in Theory and Research.

A greater focus of attention on the social context of communication means that communication theorists would pay more attention to the connections between the way communication occurs in a particular social context and the nature of that social context itself.
It would mean recognising that the way individuals define themselves culturally, relate and communicate interculturally, takes place within the context of particular types of social relations which are themselves connected to questions of how a society defines and organises itself politically, economically, culturally and structurally. Farrands (1996, pp1,2) puts it thus: “individual inner feelings are surrounded by a social and economic context.... questions of identity cannot be handled only by looking at the level of the individual person. They are social, economic, political and cultural questions.... this psychological framework is framed socially, culturally and economically. Both as individuals and as members of groups with a position in power hierarchies and interests, we are in touch with the sources of our identity....”.

What this suggests then, is that communication theory should incorporate an understanding of episodes of communication as “situated social practices”, based on what Giddens referred to as “the situated character of action” (1984, p.xxv), that is, “an understanding of the subtle, yet complex and profound, ways in which our lives reflect the contexts of our social experience (Giddens 1993, p.11). Similarly, Ong (1999, pp.5,6), in describing “Modern Practice Theory” - the view that everyday human practices embody, enact, endorse and reproduce that character of the social order in which they occur - says: “... an anthropology of the present should analyse people’s everyday actions as a form of cultural politics embedded in specific power contexts ... The regulatory effects of particular cultural institutions, projects, regimes and markets that shape people’s motivations, desires and struggles and make them particular kinds of subjects in the world should be identified”. Again, Ang (1992) described communication as “a social practice of meaning production, circulation and exchange” (p.197) suggesting that meaning production, circulation and exchange occurs among many people as part of their normal social living and forms part of the social milieu in which those people live.

This idea of situated social practices is also similar to what other social theorists refer to as “lifeworld”. Habermas (1994 pp.130ff), for example, describes “lifeworld” as involving the connections between culture, society and individual person. He says that the lifeworld “.. is given to the experiencing subject as unquestionable ... that province of reality which the wide awake adult simply takes for granted. The lifeworld forms the indirect context of what is said, discussed, addressed in a situation” (p.130). Further, he says: “In the communicative practices of everyday life, persons not only encounter one another in
the attitude of participants; they also give narrative presentations of events that take place within the context of their lifeworld” (p.136). The lifeworld then, is both a context for action, and a cognitive reference system, the “totality of socio-cultural facts” (p.137).

The first point to be emphasised here then, is that while episodes of communication do involve individuals with particular psychological make-ups, definitions of self, goals and motivations, those episodes also take place within particular contexts of action: they are socially situated. This then helps to provide some direction in developing a view of the intercultural communication that occurs between members of the same society as distinct from that which takes place between members of different societies. If the multicultural society is a particular type of context for intercultural communication to occur in, then the nature of that context needs to be explored so as to develop an understanding of the communication that occurs within it.

Although Atwood identified the lack of a broader social perspective as a weakness in intercultural communication theory, this does not mean that the social dimension is denied or overlooked completely. It is clear from a reading of the literature that studies of communication based on psychology and social psychology tend not to focus on issues related to the broader social context of communication. It is also clear however, that theorists and researchers do acknowledge the existence of that connection. Forgas (1985, p.11,12) notes that social interaction can be studied with reference to larger social, economic and political systems as factors that either determine or greatly influence social behaviour. He says: “factors such as social class, race, income or the ruling political system all influence our interactive behaviours”. Dodd (1981) comments that: “Intercultural communication is rooted in the social relationships that accompany our interactions (p. 27). Singer (1998, p.92) also observes that “the environment in which a communication occurs can be a major factor in determining how effective one can be...”. Jandt (1998, p.30) also refers to context as “the environment in which the communication takes place and which helps define the communication.”. Further, Jandt comments: “To be interculturally competent is to use those skills to select message behaviour both appropriate and effective in a given context that accomplishes the objectives of the source .... The two critical skills, then, are understanding the context and selecting appropriate and effective message behaviour.” (p.451).

A number of research projects also suggested the possibility of exploring broader
social questions. Berry et al (1984, p.21), Berry, Kim and Boski (1988) and Kim (1988, p.20, 21) for example, discuss the various types of cultural response that can occur in a society (e.g. assimilation, integration, marginality). Ruben (1983) considers such things as the nature of the boundaries that define a social system, the nature of the environment (the conditions in which the system operates) and the nature of the subsystems. He also notes that members of a social system share particular meanings, rules and habits (p.141). Padilla (1980, p.21) notes the significance of cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty (pride, perceived discrimination, social behaviour orientation). These authors certainly open up questions relating to the broader social context, even if they do not develop those questions to any great extent.

Hur and Jeffres (1985, p.53ff) discussed the relationship between communication, ethnicity and stratification in an introductory way. They suggest that ethnic identification is not always the same as the objective characteristics of ethnicity, that ethnicity is an alternative form of social organisation to class, and that ethnicity is a changeable status that may or may not be articulated at a particular place at a particular time (p.53f). Hur and Jeffres also outline some other research that is applicable to this issue. This includes Geer (1962) who suggested that social groups are coordinated by communication flows, Goldlust and Richmond (1974) who found that variables in reliance on ethnic mass media, ethnic social distance, dissimilarity of spouse and friends and economic achievement, affect levels of adaption. They note that communities (networks of supportive relations) are built around issues like common interests, organisational contexts and informal social groups. They see that relations are the key to forming collectives and that value systems influence the size, strength and movement of ethnic groups. Hur and Jeffres also observe that ethnic identities can be historical, that is, they are based on a shared history and are consistent regardless of social behaviour, or they can be participational, that is, based on behavioural similarities (from Gordon, 1964) and that the degree of ethnic consciousness should influence the degree of primary group interaction.

Gudykunst and Lim (1985) investigated possible differences in communication style which might exist due to the variables of ethnicity and gender. This was a comparison of the communication styles of black and white Americans, based on the contention, drawn from previous research, that “there are differences in the ways blacks and whites communicate” (p.69). Gudykunst and Lim suggest that “the influence of ethnicity on communicator
style may be mediated by social class. They noted that middle class blacks and whites differ little in self-perceptions of communicator style (p.73). They suggest that understanding differences and/or similarities in communication style may necessitate study of the social networks in which those observed are embedded (p.73). Here there is a call for research that addresses questions of social structure and class, even though the study itself does not address those questions to any great extent.

Other kinds of broader social question that have been acknowledged in intercultural communication literature include: identities related to sociological group, ethnic/racial group, nation, region and the world as a whole (Kim 1984, p.18), ethnocentrism (Rhine, 1989), social status (Hall 1984), marginalisation, stereotyping and discrimination (Madrid, 1984) and demography, ethnography and status (Pedersen and Pedersen 1984).

There is in this material, a clear indication of the potential for broader social, rather than purely interpersonal issues to be addressed in intercultural communication theory and research. The various research reports cited though, offer little by way of actual consideration of such issues. What is likely to be the case here, is not so much that social interactionists deny a connection between communication and social context, or that they are incapable of dealing with the issue, but that they do not see it as part of their agenda. Given that available theory and research as least acknowledges the presence of broader social concerns, it is certainly appropriate to suggest that a greater focus on issues of social structure can be incorporated into the way theorising is done.

It should be observed though, that despite an apparent conceptual divide between the “individual” and the “social”, to speak of communication at all is in fact, to speak of the social. This is because communication does not just concern the individual as individual, but it concerns the individual in relationship with another connected individual, or individuals. The use of the term “social interaction” itself suggests this. Similarly, to speak of culture as a determinant in communication is to speak of a connection between individual behaviour and a broader set of socio-cultural principles. It can be reasonably suggested then that communication studies are always in some sense “sociological”, and fit within the embrace of the term “microsociology”. What is at issue in this discussion is not so much a sociological view of intercultural communication, counterposed to a psychological view, but an exploration of the connections between a macrosociology that studies social totalities and a microsociology that examines specific interactions within those totalities.
For intercultural communication theory and research to develop the broader perspectives that Atwood called for then, there needs to be more attention paid to theorising the link between the socio-cultural context in which communication occurs and the communication episode itself.

In this regard, Wright (1984, p.33) argues that what intercultural studies needs to develop is a “schema linking particular persons and social situations on the one hand and particular social responses on the other.... theoretical models of the link between culture and social structure and communication”. For Wright, this would involve a greater focus on the nature of the social situation, which he considers a “key concept that links subjective experience and personal activity with the patterning, repetition and interdependence of such activity at a more general, social structural level.” (p.34). This is because “participants intersubjectively construct social situations through reference to shared understandings [i.e. drawn from the wider social context] about the nature of the situation” (p.34), and because the situation creates the necessity for participants to consider and compare their social identities (what he calls “interfacing”), so as to identify their respective statuses and roles (p.37).

A greater focus in theory and research on the nature of the social situation would constitute an important step towards developing a broader social perspective on the communication episode, as it would enable clues to be gained not only about the ways that the individual participants respond to the situation, but also about the way that situation exists as a product of the wider social context. From an intercultural perspective, participants can be seen not only as bringing a culture into the episode, but also as engaging on the basis of a wider shared knowledge (drawn from the socio-cultural milieu) about the social meaning of those cultures (e.g. the relative statuses of the various ethnic groups within the society) and the social meaning of their interaction (e.g. what roles people from different cultures should enact). The idea that people who differentiate themselves along cultural lines can still interact on the basis of a shared socio-cultural knowledge therefore represents an important shift from a view of intercultural communication which only emphasises the role of cultural difference in defining the interaction.

While Wright’s argument has identified the need for intercultural communication studies to develop a schema that is capable of theorising the link between episodes of interaction and the contexts in which they occur, his suggested focus on the nature of the situa-
tion represents only a partial development of a broader social perspective. A truly “social” perspective will also involve a schema that links the communication episode to the character of the society as a whole. To do this successfully, it will be necessary to identify a concept, or set of concepts, that can help clarify these connections.

2.1.2 Key Concepts in Giddens and Hannerz.

It was argued in the introductory section of the thesis, that to successfully accomplish the project’s goals, an interdisciplinary approach would need to be taken. As has already been seen, the field of intercultural communication studies itself does not provide extensive material that can be used to examine the connections between communication and social context or any particular concepts that can act as foundations for such an examination. It is rather in disciplines like sociology or cultural studies that such concepts can be found. Two theorists in particular, Anthony Giddens and Ulf Hannerz, offer a number of concepts that are valuable in helping to develop a more schematic approach to examining the link between the nature of the social context as a whole and the interactions that occur within it. Giddens’ emphasis on the relationship between social structure and social interaction and Hannerz’s examination of the relationship between socio-cultural complexity and meaning generation both constitute important exemplars for the model that is to be developed here. These emphases will now be explored in further detail for their relevance to this model.

Giddens takes the view that sociological analysis requires a dual focus: on the larger social structures that create the conditions for social interaction, and on the social interaction itself as a way of understanding how those underlying structures are influential, as well as understanding the underlying structural principles themselves. He says: “Macro-analysis is essential if we are to understand the institutional background of day-to-day life. The ways in which people live their lives every day is greatly affected by the broader institutional framework within which they exist.... Micro studies are in their turn necessary for illuminating broad institutional patterns.” (1993, p.112). Giddens’ comments here suggest something of the methodological approach that intercultural studies might develop: a combined “macro” and “micro” approach that sets out to clarify both the characteristics of the social context itself and the characteristics of the interactions that occur within it, on the
assumption that one is related to the other. Applying such a dual focus to intercultural communication in a multicultural context for example, would involve considering the basic principles of multiculturalism and how they help structure the broad social conditions. It would also involve considering how these principles might (or do) influence the nature of intercultural interaction, but also considering the nature of intercultural interaction to assess what it reveals about the nature of multicultural society.

For Giddens this connection between society and interaction is to be understood firstly in terms of the experience of modernity (or “high” modernity, as he puts it), and the implications of that experience for the individual self. He says: “the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self.... One of the distinctive features of modernity in fact, is an increasing interconnection between the two extremes of extensionality and intentionality: globalising influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other.” (1991, p.1). Giddens thus sees that living in the context of the institutions and structures of modern society involves a fundamental reflexive construction of one’s self-identity motivated by the need to come to terms with the multiplicities (of social experience, identity, thought forms) that modernity makes possible. He says: “The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continually revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems.... The more tradition loses its hold.... the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options. (1991, p.5). For Giddens then, the experience of modernity is the experience of plurality, diversity and choice. This is the key characteristic of society itself, the key problem that individual selves must confront in their own attempts to construct identity and therefore must also be a central issue in the interactions between individuals who share the social experience of modernity.

A key phrase that Giddens uses to describe this dilemma is “the dialectic of the local and the global” (1991, p.5). By this he means the often contradictory interconnections between influences towards coherence/unity/universalisation on the one hand and influences towards fragmentation/diversity/particularisation on the other. He says: “The world is in many ways a single world, having a unitary framework of experience, yet at the same time one which creates new forms of fragmentation and dispersal” (1991, p.5). Giddens argues that while the experience of modernity is characterised to a large extent by global-
ising tendencies these tendencies have, never the less, the capacity to produce “divergent and even contradictory occurrences” in local contexts (1991, p.21).

Hannerz (1992) also recognised that this interplay of contradictory tendencies is a key characteristic of contemporary societies. He observes that in complex societies there are both “unitary institutional phenomena which treat everyone the same” (p.93) and micro-cultural processes that people are involved in. This means that there are two social processes at work which need to be managed: “centrifugal” forces which promote fragmentation and isolation of subcultures, and “centripetal” forces which promote homogenisation and massification by means of cultural apparatuses (p.98). Hannerz believes that both have validity and need to be brought together, not kept separate.

For Hannerz, these forces can be seen operating for example, in the relationship between culture and sub-culture. Hannerz sees sub-culture in terms of an interface with wider culture (p.69), suggesting that while it involves a distinctive set of social relationships, it is only one “relational segment” of the overall social structure and is only differentiated by certain points of distinction (p.71). There is here a mixture of what is culturally distinctive and what is not (p.73). If an ethnic culture is understood in this way then it can be seen that those who identify themselves with ethnic groups are also involved in other sections of society and communication between people from different ethnic backgrounds must also be seen as a mixture of what is distinctive to each (values, attitudes, social location, language skill) and what is common to all.

Hannerz also understood the tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces to exist in a more general sense throughout a society, recognising that complex societies are characterised by a general tension between sharing and non-sharing. He notes that although complex societies are basically organised around forms of sharing between their members, ensuring predictability, similarity and complementarity in communication (p.40), they also build forms of non-sharing into their cultures, for example, through divisions of labour and divisions of knowledge. This means that communication can be uneven and fragmented, that interaction can occur between people who do not know each other or not occur even when people see each other and that the circumstances of interaction “promote ambiguity, while difference, distance and segmentation render the full context of cultural interactions opaque” (p.44).
This tension between sharing and non-sharing has some clear implications for intercultural communication theory. While the focus of theory has been primarily on the impact of cultural differences (or non-sharing) in communication, there is also a need for a focus on the amount of shared culture that exists between members of various ethnic cultures within a society. Explanations for the amount of shared and non-shared culture may for example, be related to the particular way in which sharing and non-sharing are built into the structures of a social context and how the various ethnic/cultural groups are affected by that structuring, as in the case of a clash between the broader culture and the specific ethnic culture, or where particular ethnic groups are socially located in particular ways. This idea of the “dialectic of the local and global” or “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces thus provides an important tool for developing an approach to intercultural communication in the multicultural context. Giddens (1991) suggests that the negotiation of the dual forces of unification and fragmentation, and through that process of negotiation the finding of coherence in the midst of multiplicity, is the essential problem of modernity. If so then this dilemma is also true of the “cultural self”, so to speak. Cultural pluralism is certainly one of the primary pluralisms that characterise contemporary societies, and the search for coherent cultural identities in the midst of such cultural pluralism, as well as the social management of cultural plurality, is one of the key problems associated with multiculturalism in its various forms. This being so, intercultural interactions as they occur within such multicultural contexts will be also be characterised by a negotiation of these contradictory forces and by questions of the cultural self-identity of the participants.

Giddens’ work is also important because of the centrality it gives to the idea of “social reproduction”. Giddens (like Atwood) sees the importance of “taking a much broader view of why we act as we do” (1993, p.8) and defines the purpose of sociology as to provide “an understanding of the subtle, yet complex and profound, ways in which our lives reflect the contexts of our social experience” (1993, p.11). He says “The ways in which people live their lives every day is greatly affected by the broader institutional framework within which they exist.” (1993, p.112). The social reproduction idea is the conceptual tool that makes explicit the link between individual action and social context.

The concept itself basically means that the characteristics of a social system are reproduced in, and also reproduced by, the actions of its members. Giddens puts it:

“Social systems are made up of human actions and relationships. What gives them their
patterning is their repetition across periods of time and distances of space. Thus the ideas of social reproduction and structure are very closely related to one another in sociological analysis ... The actions of all of us are influenced by the structural characteristics of the societies in which we are brought up and live; at the same time, we recreate (and also to some extent alter) those structural characteristics in our actions.” (1993, p.18).

Giddens’ view of social reproduction is based on a structuralist approach that identifies a paradigmatic dimension: “a virtual order of modes of structuring recursively implicit in such reproduction”, and also a syntagmatic dimension: a “patterning of social relations in time-space involving the reproduction of situated practices” (1984, p.17). Giddens sees the connection between the paradigmatic aspect and the syntagmatic aspect operating through what he calls “rules and resources” (p.xxxi). Rules involve normative elements and codes of signification, while resources are understood as either authoritative (deriving from co-ordination of human activity), or allocative (deriving from the control of material products or aspects of the material world). Giddens understands a social structure then as the organisation of rules and resources, while a social system is the reproduced relations organised as regular social activities (p.112). Giddens speaks of societies having “structuring properties”, that is, “properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them systemic form”. He described the most deeply embedded of these properties as “structural principles”. What Giddens calls “structuration”, the key term in his work, refers to the “conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems” (1984, p.25).

Giddens saw this reproduction as realised firstly in a series of links that connect structuring principles to actual interaction (1984, p.28f). He understood that structuring principles are realised in institutional forms that he refers to as “structures”. These institutional forms generate ways of operating, or “modalities”, which are used by individuals or groups in interaction. Reproduction occurs secondly, he sees, through reciprocity between groups or individuals. This means that because people exist in the same social context they use the available modalities to interact with each other and this becomes mutually reinforcing. As this reciprocity extends over time, and interactive practices are continually reinforced, it creates what Giddens “system integration”.
While Giddens views human behaviour as profoundly affected by the social context in which it occurs, he also makes it clear that social reproduction is not a form of social determinism. The idea of human agency is also important to him: “To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (1984, p.3). Giddens therefore warns against a “reductionism that fails to allow for the operation of autonomous social forces within institutions and that sees social life governed by currents outside actors control, and doesn’t allow for control by actors” (1984, p.5). He understands that “Human social activities, like some self-reproducing items in nature, are recursive. That is to say, they are not brought into being by social actors, but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible.” (1984, p.2).

Giddens’ concept of the relationship between social structure and social interaction is thus cyclical, or as he puts it, dialectical. It involves a dynamic process whereby the social structure creates the conditions for social interaction, is reproduced in that interaction and in turn is recreated by that interaction. It is because of purposive human agency that social interaction also has the capacity to change the social structure as it reproduces it. He says that the day to day activities of social actors draw upon and reproduce structural features of wider social systems (1984, p.18). But he also maintains that logically, if there were no individual agents there would be no collectivities, and that “one of the main propositions of structuration theory is that the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction”. (1984, p.18).

Hannerz developed a similar focus on the relationship between individual action, particularly in terms of the management of meaning, and social structure. His view is based on the idea that meaning creation, or what he calls “cultural flow” - “the externalisations of meaning which individuals produce through arrangements of overt forms, and the interpretation which individuals make of such displays” (p.3) - is an ongoing social process. He recognises that meaning is distributed socially, by which he means that a “cultural inventory of meanings and meaningful external forms is spread over a population and its social relationships” (p.7). This being so, he argues, there needs to be a recognition of the relationship of culture (which involves the process of meaning creation) to social
structure (p. 10). He suggests for example, that there are ideas and modes of thought which people within a social unit carry together (p.7), and that meanings and symbolic forms are predominantly generated in or shaped by social relationships. For Hannerz, symbolic order represents social order: “the social structure of persons and relationships channels the cultural flow at the same time as it is being, in part, culturally produced.” (p.15). What this suggests then, is that in any socio-cultural context there are, as it were, structures of meaning, that are linked (interdependently) to patterns of social relations, structures of power and cultural production. These structures are made overt through individual cultural production (or communication), but are also created through the same communication processes.

This recognition of the interdependence of culture and social structure, and its relationship to communication processes then, has a number of implications for intercultural communication theory. First, an understanding of the nature of intercultural communication (and perhaps any communication) would benefit from more attention being given to the way individual meaning creation operates within the social processes of meaning creation that surround it. This could mean for example, not only exploring the way meaning is created from out of the participants’ own cultural backgrounds, but also what meanings are available in society about culture in general and about those specific cultural backgrounds in particular. Second, intercultural communication theory could develop a greater focus on the way meaning creation operates in connection with the way social relationships (particularly those revolving around ethnic/cultural issues) are defined and developed in specific social contexts. The focus in this case would then shift from the individual as a bearer of culture, and the explanation of individual behaviour on that basis, to the way participants define their intercultural relationship and, more particularly, why they define it that way. Third, if we assume that a culture exists in relationship with a broad social structure, we can also assume that in a multicultural society, numerous cultures exist in relationship with a broad social structure. The way that individuals in such a society interact will not only depend on how they relate to particular cultures (for example, ethnic identity), but also on how they relate to the broad social structure (for example, through class, location or citizenship) and how intercultural relationships themselves fit within this social structure. Hannerz himself sees that the organisation of diversity is part of the fabric of complex culture. When culture is seen as an organisation of diversity, people must deal with other people’s
meanings (p.14). The question for communication theory to address is how people deal with other people’s meanings given the social conditions in which intercultural communication occurs.

Hannerz’s analysis thus encourages an approach to theoretical development that gives greater attention to the social nature of meaning creation. A society can be seen in a sense as a “world of meaning” within which individual meaning creation occurs and to which it refers. This is particularly so where the focus of intercultural communication theory is on interactions that occur within a society. Further, where the focus of theory is on culture, it needs to be concerned not just with the fact that participants have cultural differences which affect interaction, but that culture and cultural difference also have a certain social meaning in a multicultural society, and that interaction takes place with reference to that social meaning.

If communication theory though, is to take into account the nature of meaning creation as a social process, it will also need to give some attention to the social processes or conditions that make those meanings available to the individual. For Hannerz, this means recognising the role of a number of key elements. First, he sees the market as an important influence because it creates a situation where meanings and meaningful forms become commodities to be produced and sold (p.47). Second, he notes that the state, although primarily existing to manage material resources within a territory, also manages meaning, attempting to generate a flow from the centre outwards so as to achieve a level of cultural homogenisation and a certain stabilisation of meanings across the society (p.48,49). Third, he recognises that in every society the cultural flow is channelled through what he calls “cultural apparatuses”: “all the organisations and milieus in which the artistic and intellectual, and scientific work goes on, and the means by which such work is made available to circles, publics and masses” (p.82). Through these cultural apparatuses (such as the media and education systems) he argues, an “active few” are linked to a “passive many” in a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship, because only a few can own or control them. This allows such people and institutions to “meddle with our consciousness” (p.83).

Hannerz recognises here that, particularly in large complex societies, meanings are made available through top down processes that the majority of individuals have little or no control over. The significance of this for the development of communication theory lies in its recognition of meaning creation and distribution as part of the structural processes
that characterise a society. The development of a broader social perspective on intercultural communication will thus involve the development of schemas that account for the way structurally produced meanings about culture and cultural diversity can play a role in the intercultural interactions that take place within a society.

Having said that, Hannerz’s analysis, like Giddens’, does not propose a deterministic view of these meaning creation and distribution processes. He recognises for example, the role of “movements” in complex societies, that is, groups or organisations that exist to raise consciousness about various issues (p.50). More particularly though, he recognises that there is a dynamic connection between the broader structural processes of meaning management, participation in social relationships, the every day experience of the practicalities of living (or “form of life”, p.47) and the capacity of individuals to generate what he calls “perspectives” (p.65ff). This refers to the way individuals produce and organise meaning from where they are in the social structure (e.g. by recognising their social role/s). Perspective, Hannerz says, is “something which accumulates, organises and generalises experience”, a kind of “mediator between social structure and culture” (p.67). Communication is thus an intersection of these perspectives as people articulate their own, but also respond to those of others.

What this suggests is that individuals carry a sense of social location, that is, an awareness of the meaning and salience of the social relations in which they participate, and of the meaning and salience of the social structure as a whole. Further, it suggests that individuals in their interactions process meanings that are drawn from their current and ongoing social experience, not just their cultural background, although their cultural background still remains an important part of meaning creation. Hannerz himself makes this point by suggesting that the individual is not just a passive recipient of culture, but is actively involved in dealing practically, intellectually, emotionally with the present situation. People are concerned with meanings as they relate to such things as experience, relationships, needs or interests.

The implication for intercultural communication theory and research is that the building of communication models in particular could be improved by finding ways to incorporate the relationship between individual behaviour in communication and current social experience. It would provide a way of explaining why in any communication episode, there might for example, be similarities or differences in the degree to which various
factors (e.g. adaptability, linguistic ability) characterise the interaction, or why they may be either more or less important in the interaction, rather than describing that they are so.

Giddens and Hannerz both raise important issues that can assist in the development of a schema for addressing intercultural communication in a multicultural context. They recognise first, that individual action takes place in a set of social conditions that involve structured sets of social relations which shape the way interaction occurs. Second, they recognise that a society operates through broad institutional processes that give the society its character, that create a “world of meaning” and that direct the kind of interaction that takes place. Third, they recognise that contemporary societies are characterised by a negotiation of social processes that unify (centripetal or globalising forces) and social processes that differentiate (centrifugal or localising forces). This suggests that the development of a broader social perspective on intercultural communication, and the development of an appropriate analytical schema, should incorporate a linkage between a society’s structuring principles and the institutional processes that accompany them and the individual social encounters that reproduce them. It should also incorporate a view of institutional level and individual level processes as characterised by the negotiation of centripetal and centrifugal forces. This will enable a greater understanding of how episodes of social interaction constitute “situated social practices”. It is these concepts in particular that can form the basis of a schema that is able to place intercultural interactions within the kind of broader social perspective that Atwood called for.

2.2. Homogeneity and Heterogeneity in Communication.

The second observation made by Atwood in his assessment of communication theory and research was that it assumes homogeneity and heterogeneity of cultural background to be directly linked to homogeneity and heterogeneity in communication processes (1984, p.79). In other words, the assumption that underlies communication theory is that where the cultural background of participants is the same or similar, they will communicate in much the same way, share more common understandings and generate similar kinds of meanings. Conversely, where the cultural background of the participants is different, they will communicate in different ways, have divergent understandings and generate meanings that do not match. It is a greater level of homogeneity between participants that generates
greater “success” in communication, while it is greater heterogeneity that creates more problems in communication.

It is evident from a reading of the literature that this assumption is fundamental to the approach taken by current intercultural communication theory and research. Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981, p.24) for example, say: “culture is the foundation of communication. And when cultures vary, communication practices also vary.”. Similarly, Dodd (1981) states: “That communication exists in a climate of cultural differences is a presupposition for the entire range of intercultural principles. The whole process begins with the perception that differences exist. Consequently, we focus on the message linkage between individuals or groups from two different cultural situations.... it is bridging the intercultural gap that gives intercultural communication its fullest meaning.” (p.26). Gudykunst and Kim (1984, p.15) comment: “the crux of intercultural communication that distinguishes it from the rest of the field is the relatively high degree of difference in the experiential backgrounds of the communicators due to cultural differences”. Samovar and Porter (1991) say that “Culture is largely responsible for the construction of our individual social realities and for our individual repertoires of communication behaviour and meanings” (p.10). These repertoires, of course, vary from culture to culture, and so: “Messages produced in one culture change as they reach another” (p.12). Samovar and Porter suggest that because culture influences the way messages are encoded and decoded, interpretation of those messages by the respondent does not coincide with that of the sender because their repertoires are different. Scarbaugh and Asuncion-Lunde (1983) emphasise that intercultural communication theory focusses on cultural factors that impede communication, while Cushner and Brislin (1996, pp.7-12) frame their discussion in terms of how to prepare to encounter cultural difference and the potential problems (e.g. culture shock, stereotyping, conflict, perceptual and behavioural differences) that accompany it. Singer (1998, p.63) holds that similarities in perception are what make intercultural (in fact, all) communication easier while differences in perception are what make it more difficult. Jandt (1998, p.51) notes that assuming that another is similar rather than different is one of the main barriers to be overcome in intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication theory then, starts with the premise that cultural difference is a barrier to communication, and that this barrier needs to be overcome for communication to succeed. Theory and research based on this assumption tends to focus on how
individuals, as carriers of culture, communicate effectively or ineffectively with other individuals as carriers of different cultures. The purpose here is not to dispute that cultural difference is a problem but to consider the implications of Atwood’s comments for further theoretical development around this issue.

2.2.1 Individual Agency.

Atwood’s comments are unlikely to mean that homogeneity and heterogeneity in culture do not affect communication at all. What they do suggest though, is that it is possible to develop an understanding of the dynamics of intercultural communication that goes beyond the assumption that because two people are culturally different, their communication must inevitably be beset by “problems”. Atwood’s comments also serve as a warning against the temptation to make assumptions about the supposed compatibility or incompatibility of certain cultures with others. Atwood wants intercultural communication theory and research to recognise “the capacity of people to communicate culturally at many levels” and “the creative ability of individuals to be unique within cultural groups and even families” (p.80). Atwood refers to this as “subjective situational” culture and communication, implying that people are able to respond creatively to intercultural encounters without necessarily being locked into a system of difference (that is, a set pattern of culturally determined responses) that must always cause problems and prevent meaningful communication.

The idea of “subjective situational culture” implies that intercultural communication theory and research needs to avoid a cultural determinism that regards certain kinds of individual behaviour as inevitable simply because that is what their culture dictates. It needs rather to maintain a sense of individual agency in the communication process. Giddens (1984) argued this, recognising that human social behaviour is essentially reflexive (able to rationally monitor itself) and purposive (having particular reasons and motivations for its existence). To be human, he argues, “is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons” (p.3). Being a reflexive agent does not mean merely possessing self-awareness, but also means engaging in a continuous monitoring of action, because an individual has the capacity to be rational about his or her behaviour. The idea of agency could perhaps be
understood best, at least as far as its relevance to the current discussion is concerned, with reference to what Giddens called the ability to “act otherwise”. This, he says, “means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs” (p.14).

For intercultural communication theory and research this suggests that there needs to be taken into account a genuine capacity of individuals to “act otherwise” than what their culture might dictate. The capacity of individuals to monitor and reflect on their behaviour, means that allowance must be made for the ability of individuals from different cultural backgrounds to interact creatively and purposively, despite their cultural differences, rather than necessarily in some culturally predetermined way. Hannerz (1992, p.65ff) made a similar point when he suggested that individuals are not just passive recipients of culture, but are actively involved in dealing practically, intellectually and emotionally with a situation. He saw that while individuals in their interactions are influenced by their culture, they also process meanings that are drawn from their current and ongoing social experience, which must include the nature of the interaction itself and the situation in which the interaction occurs.

Atwood’s idea of “subjective situational culture” then, suggests that individuals have the ability to adapt and change their behaviour in response to the needs or requirements of a particular intercultural situation. A key element in the discussion of this so far has been the possibility that an individual might possibly act in a way that is contrary to the dictates of his or her cultural background. Three points of qualification however, should be noted. First, creativity and adaptability are not always necessarily contrary to one’s cultural background. There is a need here to recognise the capacity of cultures themselves to be flexible and adaptable. Cultural differences may well be an issue in a particular interaction, but particular cultural values or attitudes may also be activated that encourage openness to alternative perspectives, tolerance of (different) others or dialogue across differences. Second, the ability to adapt and change in intercultural situations need not be understood in terms of acculturation, that is the process of cultural change over time when in prolonged contact with a “host” culture (Kim, 1988, p.38). An individual may act creatively in a particular intercultural situation, even in a way contrary to their cultural background without necessarily feeling they have changed their culture itself. An international business representative for example, may find ways to accommodate local customs within his or her
repertoire of communicative behaviours, without necessarily feeling any cultural conflict, or on the other hand, necessarily feeling any less a part of his or her culture. Third, creativity and adaptability must also involve the capacity to identify areas of cultural similarity, as well as cultural difference, and interact on that basis. There are no doubt, numerous cultures where, for example, business transactions involve some form of hospitality (such as a meal or entertainment). While the specifics may vary across cultures, the essential concept is more or less the same and those who participate in such transactions will most likely feel quite comfortable, even if they are from different cultures.

2.2.2 The Importance of Negotiation.

There is perhaps a more fundamental point to be made here. If one maintains an understanding of communication itself as a process of negotiation, then one must also maintain at least some sense of the agency of the participants. Understanding communication as negotiation will, in the first instance, raise questions of the negotiation of meaning between the participants. Such negotiation may be from positions of homogeneity or heterogeneity, and it may be towards positions of homogeneity or heterogeneity. Positions of difference may even be apparently irreconcilable, nevertheless, because communication is a negotiation it must always be possible that the individual participants (as agents) can work creatively through that difference. To maintain an understanding of communication as negotiation then, should move us away from simplistic assumptions about the nature of homogeneity and heterogeneity in communication and towards an accommodation of the range of possibilities that negotiation creates.

There is also a second dimension to this negotiation. It can be seen not just as a negotiation of meaning based on particular positions of homogeneity and/or heterogeneity that the participants may take, but can also be seen as a negotiation of the meaning of homogeneity and heterogeneity themselves. The way participants understand homogeneity and heterogeneity may come for example, from the sense of identity that they have inherited or constructed. It could represent the articulation of a particular type of difference that is specifically relevant to that situation over against the need for homogeneity. Conversely, it might represent the articulation of a particular homogeneity that applies in that situation
above whatever heterogeneity might also be present. The issue that intercultural theory needs to explore in this regard is that the meaning of homogeneity and heterogeneity is not necessarily fixed.

Homogeneity may mean for some, recognising that people share the same territory, share in the same social experience or share certain common interests as members of the same society. For others it may have an association with general cultural uniformity or the need for certain beliefs, values or practices to be standardised across a society, or with national identity and the various loyalties and emotions that go with it (e.g. support for sporting, military or artistic activity associated with the nation). Ang and Stratton (1995) observe that articulations of Australian nationality identity were for a long time, driven by a perceived need for cultural uniformity, yet since the emergence of multicultural philosophy and policy, national identity (political homogeneity) is seen as a product of cultural plurality.

Heterogeneity may be understood variously in terms of different languages, different lifestyle choices, the necessity to preserve ethnic or cultural identity or the possibility of dual (or even multiple) national loyalties. Such understandings can also change depending on the time and circumstances. This can happen because people can have multiple and multi-dimensional social roles and identities, related not only to ethnic group membership but also to employment, interests, family and friendship networks and international links and associations (Tajfel 1981, Gudykunst and Kim 1984, Singer 1998). People’s sense of identity can also change over time or through changing circumstances and experiences (Hall 1987, 1990) so that the way one perceives oneself as “different” at present is not necessarily the same as the perception one had previously or the perception one will have in the future. The possible emergence of hybrid cultures and identities in contemporary plural societies (Bhabha 1991) suggests that the line between what is considered “similar” and what is considered “different” can become blurred.

What will be important for communication is that different participants can have different perceptions of what homogeneity and heterogeneity are and that these will need to be negotiated as part of the interactive process. Participants will also need to negotiate the salience of homogeneity or heterogeneity for the situation, or even negotiate the salience of specific aspects of their understanding of what homogeneity and heterogeneity are. The relationship of culture to homogeneity and heterogeneity in intercultural interaction there-
fore, must also be approached with an understanding of its adaptability, its uncertainty and its capacity to mean different things to different people in different circumstances. The way homogeneity and heterogeneity are themselves articulated can move and change over time.

2.2.3 The Impact of Social Context on Homogeneity and Heterogeneity.

The discussion so far has focussed on the danger of assuming too much about homogeneity and heterogeneity in communication processes. It has looked in particular at how individual agency must be accepted as playing an important role in intercultural interactions, alongside the influence of cultural background. The discussion has done so in an attempt to move away from a view of intercultural communication as a process that is structured by sets of culturally predetermined differences that make certain types of behaviour inevitable. It has, following on from Atwood’s notion of “subjective situational culture”, argued rather for a more flexible view of intercultural communication. It has proposed a view that allows for more complex interactions of homogeneity and heterogeneity between the participants as purposive and creative agents engaged in negotiation and that allows for the meaning of homogeneity and heterogeneity themselves to be to some extent uncertain and flexible. That said, this question of homogeneity and heterogeneity cannot be fully addressed unless questions are also asked about the extent to which the communication situation and the social context allow for such agency and negotiation, or whether there are contextual reasons why participants are locked into a system of differences.

As far as the communication situation is concerned, the point made here is that while an acceptance of the agency of the participants in the situation needs to be maintained, it must also be acknowledged that there may be factors in the situation itself that influence the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity. If the intercultural situation is for example, one of a business transaction where agreement is the reason why the communication needs to occur, then the participants may well have no choice but to work through cultural differences (or perhaps try to avoid them as much as possible) and work towards a situation of greater homogeneity. Alternatively, a situation may have a particular political relevance (for example, activism, ethnic rights, international diplomacy) where cultural
difference is what actually defines the situation. Here it may be the maintenance of heterogeneity that is the reason why the communication occurs.

Not only does the relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity need to be understood in the light of the communication situation but it should also (in keeping with the main theme of this research) be considered in view of the broader social context in which they occur. By doing this, in line with Giddens’ idea of social reproduction, it gives the opportunity to assess how socially structured relations of homogeneity and heterogeneity are enacted in the interpersonal intercultural situation. Cultural similarity and cultural difference may for example, have a particular social meaning. This social meaning might be articulated as a specific national ideology requiring commitment to a national macro-culture that must always take precedence over any micro-cultural differences. It might alternatively be articulated as an ideology that foregrounds cultural difference with a view to privileging particular cultural groupings. A society may also have specific ways of locating differentiated groups structurally, for example, by their place in the workforce, by access (or lack of access) to government services or by allowing, encouraging or promoting the identification of particular geographical areas as connected to specific ethnic groups.

Whatever specifics of a particular social context may be, it is to be expected that the way the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity is played out in the particular situation, by the particular participants, will have some connection to the way that relationship is structured socially. Communication theory and research should be able to incorporate discussions of how social conditions might account for relations of homogeneity and heterogeneity that emerge in intercultural situations. This ties in closely with Hannerz’s (1992) notion of “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces which could be used to analyse an intercultural situation in terms of what the culture producing institutions of the society might be, how influential they are in the intercultural relationship, how they are being managed and what the outcome of this is.

This can be seen for example, in the urban context of interaction, which, according to Hannerz (p.173ff) is characterised by flows of people, goods and meanings in and out of the city that bring together people who are unlike each other in their dominant forms of cultural expression. For Castles (1993, p.49ff) this means that in contemporary cities, homogeneity is impossible and meaningless. At the same time, the need for social organis-
ation and management means that processes of homogenisation are also evident. The common experience of urban life itself creates a shared context within which heterogeneity is also experienced. However, more structured processes of homogenisation can exist, for example, as Castles (p.53) observes, myths or discourses of homogeneity (such as nationhood) are often reinvented for polyethnic urban life (e.g. cityhood).

This presence of cultural difference within the same shared space of the city then, creates a mixture of homogeneity and heterogeneity which those who live there, as well as those responsible for managing the life of the city (governments, civic leaders, community organisations), must come to terms with. The cultural complexity of the urban context in a sense forces people to manage both homogeneity and heterogeneity in their social interactions in a way that might not be so necessary in less complex (or more homogeneous) contexts, such as rural or tribal communities.

The impact on homogeneity and heterogeneity of the economic conditions created by capitalist systems is another area that bears consideration here. The contemporary movement of labour and capital across national borders has made heterogeneous social experience a fact of life for many, creating what Ang (1993, p.194ff) called a “chaotic system” where uncertainty is a built in feature. For Ang, the world can no longer be understood in terms of an assured and culturally coherent capitalist modernity (which can evoke either wholesale acceptance or wholesale opposition), but an uncertain and incoherent capitalist postmodernity, that brings with it a mixture of resistance and complicity (p.202).

What is significant here is that Ang identifies the relationship of resistance and complicity, which can be understood as particular expressions of homogeneity and heterogeneity, as a “both-and” relationship, rather than as an “either-or” relationship. One expression of this is the current trend of large international corporations to develop localised versions of their operation that are more compatible with local cultures. This “global localisation” (Dirlik, 1996) means that corporations “domesticate themselves without forgetting their global aims and organisation” (Dirlik, p.34).

One further issue regarding the relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity and the nature of the social context bears consideration here. It must be recognised that in any particular social context, the way homogeneity and heterogeneity exist will be closely linked to the specific public policies that are espoused in that society. Multiculturalist policies in particular, help create social conditions that make the relationship between homo-
geneity and heterogeneity more complex than what will be the case with monoculturalist (or assimiliationist) policies. Stratton and Ang (1994, p.132) comment: “Multiculturalist policy marks a crucial moment at which the state took a more interventionist role in defining national identity…. the emphasis on a homogeneous imagined community [cf. Anderson 1990] has shifted from the nation to the ethnic…. now, the nation is conceived as the space within which many imagined (ethnically defined) communities live and interact.”. Multi-culturalism then, at least how it is understood in Western societies, is an approach to social organisation that affirms (or claims to affirm) both homogeneity and heterogeneity among the society’s population. It seeks to affirm cultural difference and plurality as legitimate, and even desirable, while at the same time stressing the importance of social cohesion and unity within certain common socio-cultural structures:

"[Multiculturalism is] a public policy perspective which has its roots in a pluralistic model of society. It has been advanced during the past 20 years as a strategy which prevents structural fragmentation of society by supporting the cultural aspirations of minority groups, particularly those based on ethnic collectivities, within a commitment to the contemporary political and economic order.". The stated goals of this policy are 1) Social cohesion 2) Cultural identity 3) Equal opportunity 4) Equal responsibility."

(National Advisory Committee for the Consideration of Multicultural Education, 1984)

Public policies of multiculturalism do of course grow out of particular ideologies of culture and ethnicity that are formulated, or at least articulated, at the level of the state, in Gunew’s words, “a top down imposition” (1999, p.10), or as Stratton and Ang (1994, p.151) put it: “a public fantasy” - a discourse that articulates cultural plurality in specific ways, giving an account of multicultural experience that may or may not reflect the realities of the experience itself. A “conservative” ideology for example, according to McLaren (1994, p. 47ff) will see cultural heterogeneity only as temporary condition on the way to cultural homogeneity, while a “left-liberal” ideology (McLaren p.50) is more likely to accept cultural differences as an authentic and legitimate part of social experience. In each of these cases, there are implications for policy formation that, in turn, have implications for the way homogeneity and heterogeneity exist and are managed.
A conservative policy environment for example, will most likely favour decisions that revolve around how to enculturate migrants. This may involve policy decisions about what criteria migrants need to meet in order to migrate in the first place (such as a perceived “compatibility” with the established culture), restrictions on the level of social participation they might have (such as length of residence determining access to services, opportunities), citizenship training, education of children (for example, learning the social myths and stories of the society through schooling), forms of surveillance and the promotion of language learning. Social interaction in such an environment would tend to assume the necessity of a movement towards homogeneity, understood as acceptance of, or compatibility with, the dominant culture.

A “left-liberal” policy environment could be expected to display a greater awareness of, and attention to, issues of inequality, access to public resources and services, workplace practices. On the other hand there may well be a tendency in policy formation to make assumptions about the nature of ethnic/cultural identity that do not necessarily reflect the self-understandings that members of ethnic groups have. Though multiculturalism here may be celebrated and promoted and attempts made to incorporate cultural heterogeneity into national identity, policy makers would still find it necessary to define the extent to which cultural identity can actually be “authentic” in the way that ethnic groups themselves might understand authenticity. Similarly, policies developed under this rationale might attempt to impose an assumed cultural “authenticity” on groups that are seeking to redefine their identity in relation to the host culture. It could also be possible that this kind of policy environment, while affirming and supporting particular cultural identities, may also create conditions where, for the sake of being politically correct, real social problems created by such things as genuine inter-ethnic conflicts (that have identifiable political and historical roots) or the aspirations of particular ethnic groups that conflict in some way with the established social order, are avoided, glossed over or explained in ways other than as ethnic/cultural issues.

The relationships of homogeneity and heterogeneity that emerge in any society then, will have a lot to do with the kind of cultural ideology that underlies public policy development. This is evidenced by the kinds of multiculturalisms that are currently operating in various nations. The multiculturalism that dominates in the USA for instance, tends to be framed within an overriding discourse of ideological Americanism. Martin and Encel
(1981) argue that ethnicity in the US remains a form of social identification, a label people place on themselves, but ethnic groups do not possess their original attributes: ethnicity is culturally subsumed by national ideology. The USA, according to Ang and Stratton (1994, p.132), has a unified national identity which cannot be multicultural: life in US they suggest, is plural and multicultural but multiculturalism is alien to the way US identity is imagined. Malaysian multiculturalism in contrast (Kahn, 1999) purports to uphold the equality and aspirations of three constituent ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. It does however, continue to practice the privileging of ethnic Malays over ethnic Chinese and Indians, while still seeking to articulate an ideological “Malaysianness”. This uniquely Malaysian identity is formed in a discourse that incorporates ethnicity (particularly malayness), religion (particularly Islam) and race (Asianness understood as non-Westernness). There is here a cultural particularism shaping both national identity and multicultural policy. In Australia, multiculturalism itself has become part of national ideology. Ang and Stratton (1994, p.148ff) observe that this is articulated in cultural rather than ideological terms. They suggest that while the acceptance of multiculturalism as the norm has made a homogeneous national culture impossible, Australia now articulates its national identity as multicultural.

What is being argued here then, is that the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity in multicultural societies is connected to a large extent with the success or failure of particular multicultural policies in defining national identities and in relating particular cultural identities to those national identities. It is also connected to the way the structures (both ideological and operational) that govern the acceptance or rejection of cultural plurality are organised and made explicit. Further, it will depend on the determination of those who are culturally different (as defined by the context in which they live) to accept or reject particular discourses of cultural pluralism and the structures that emerge from them.

In general terms then, a society that is organised according to multicultural policies, is one which assumes that its members will have a fundamental commitment to the society as a whole, but will allow for, and even encourage a parallel commitment to smaller cultural groupings, and their associated identities, within that social whole. A multicultural society involves simultaneous relations of homogeneity and heterogeneity (expressed in such phrases as “unity in diversity”) and sees these relations as what defines its social character. Understanding the nature of intercultural relations and intercultural communication within
such a society must therefore go beyond the understanding that different cultural groupings exist, and identifying what those groupings are. It must also embrace an understanding of the relationship between the smaller groupings and the social whole and the complex relations of homogeneity and heterogeneity that emerge as a result. Culture and communication in the multicultural context must thus involve a negotiation of this homogeneity and heterogeneity.

2.2.4 Analysing the Homogeneity-Heterogeneity Relationship.

So far, this discussion has explored the significance of individual agency, interaction as negotiation and the nature of social context for developing an understanding of the relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity in intercultural communication. It has done so in an attempt to develop further Atwood’s argument that simplistic assumptions about the homogeneity/heterogeneity connection and its role in intercultural communication are to be avoided. Emerging from this discussion is a view of intercultural communication as a negotiation of the various issues of homogeneity and heterogeneity that apply for the people in that situation. This suggests two further issues that can serve to guide analyses of episodes of intercultural communication and the way the homogeneity-heterogeneity relationship is worked out in them.

First, if the homogeneity-heterogeneity relationship is to be understood as a negotiated relationship, then in any specific episode of intercultural communication, homogeneity and heterogeneity will interplay with each other in particular ways, with particular results. Intercultural communication here is seen not simply as an encounter of cultural difference, but as an interplay between similarity and difference framed by the conditions of the broader social context, the conditions of the particular situation and the specific negotiation of meaning that occurs between the participants. This suggests that in any given situation there can be 1. a greater possibility that the interaction will be framed more by, base meaning creation more on and produce more, homogeneity between or among the participants 2. a greater possibility that the interaction will be framed more by, base meaning creation more on and produce more, heterogeneity between or among the participants 3. a greater possibility that the interaction will be framed more by, base meaning creation
more on and produce more of, a mixture of homogeneity and heterogeneity between or among the participants. When approached from this perspective, analyses of intercultural communication will expect more than a simple correlation between cultural difference and differences in communication. It will be assumed rather, that participants bring to the interaction a mixture of similarities and differences, that the interaction itself can exhibit a variety of characteristics related to both similarity and difference and that the outcome/s of the interaction may also be a mixture of similarities and differences.

Second, it is possible to approach analyses of intercultural interaction by assessing how the relationship of heterogeneity and homogeneity changes during interaction. This means recognising that while participants might have certain orientations towards either similarity or difference, those orientations can shift and change as the participants negotiate with each other during interaction.

Communication theory would thus need to take into account the factors that might influence such shifts. This would apply not only to interpersonal factors that influence the way participants negotiate, but also to contextual factors that might affect the salience of either homogeneity or heterogeneity for the participants. Hannerz’s idea of “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces (1992, p.93-98) provides a useful point of reference in this regard.

“Centripetal” forces refer to those forces that structure, influence or promote movement towards greater similarity, particularly by generating the shared social world that all members of a multicultural society are a part of, regardless of their individual culture. The particular elements which go together to form this shared social world include the general social environment, or type of society, the common language spoken in that society (albeit with varying levels of competence), media consumption, economic activity, national mythology, hegemony, the environment, bureaucracy and other government institutions, business institutions, recreational institutions, education, work practices, leisure pursuits and certain kinds of morality and ethics. The capacity of such centripetal forces to generate areas of cultural commonality is an important factor in assessing the degree to which an interaction might move towards greater homogeneity. It should also be recognised here that people of different cultural backgrounds are capable through interaction, of either discovering or creating shared cultural dimensions such as perceived cultural similarity, common goals and shared concerns.
“Centrifugal” social forces refer to those forces that structure, influence or promote movement towards greater difference. The types of social influences that can promote the maintenance of cultural difference include, positively, the acceptance of cultural difference within the wider society, or negatively, the persistence of racial stereotyping and prejudice, together with the desire on the part of minorities to preserve and maintain their cultures. Difference can also be promoted through things such as concentrations of ethnic groups in particular segments of the workforce, geographical concentration, local community organisations and institutions, the persistence of community language, migrant programs and services and the promotion of folkloric aspects of culture. The impact of such influences on the particular communicative styles, goals and attitudes of participants needs to be assessed when considering to what degree an interaction might move or is moving towards the difference.

When interaction occurs between people of different cultures in a multicultural society, it is possible therefore, that certain sets of factors may exert a greater or lesser influence in particular episodes. Factors may variously influence the participants to explore cultural similarity, or maintain cultural difference and may also shift and change during interaction. The particular strength or salience of either set of forces can thus be considered as an important dimension in how the character of that intercultural encounter develops. An analysis of the relationship of similarity and difference in an interaction would seek to identify if the interaction moves towards greater homogeneity or greater heterogeneity, or a balance between the two. It would also consider how and why that movement occurs.

This discussion of the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity has been motivated by Atwood’s contention that theory should move away from simplistic assumptions about the nature of that relationship and its bearing on communication processes. The development of intercultural communication theory would, in the light of this discussion, benefit from an acceptance of a more complex relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity, especially as it is expressed in multicultural situations. This would involve taking into account the way cultural identities are formed and the fact that they are unstable and changing, the way individuals act as autonomous and creative agents in intercultural interactions (albeit as agents profoundly shaped by their culture of origin) and the impact of the various social processes (e.g. urban contexts, economic conditions, approaches to policy) that shape the way homogeneity and heterogeneity are defined and experienced. Further,
the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity can itself be understood in terms of centripetal and centrifugal forces. Multicultural societies thus constitute contexts where social processes that seek to achieve a homogenisation of culture or identity exist in tension with those that promote a heterogenisation of culture or identity. If this tension characterises the structural processes that give multicultural societies their particular character, then it can also be assumed that it will be reproduced in the interactions that take place within it.

2.3. The Culture-Communication Relationship.

The nature of the relationship between communication and culture is the third area that Atwood believed needed attention in order to develop communication theory further. He observed that intercultural communication theory and research for the most part operates on the premise that culture determines, and so socio-cultural variables are antecedent to, communication. This means that theory tends to focus primarily on particular cultural elements that are carried by individuals into communication situations. These are thus held to be the causes of communicative behaviour and the source of communication problems that arise in intercultural encounters. Atwood argues though, that there is an alternative, “communication determines culture” view that needs to be taken into consideration (p.76). Atwood noticed in particular that the development of media studies has encouraged a view of culture as emerging out of communication systems that already exist. For media studies, these systems are media institutions and the practices of production and consumption that surround them. It can also be argued though, as both Hannerz and Giddens acknowledged, that the ongoing social interactions of a society as a whole constitute a communicative system out of which culture emerges. If this is so, then intercultural communication theory needs to develop ways, not only of examining how cultural difference affects communication, but also of examining the kinds of cultural outcomes produced as a result of intercultural interaction.

With the focus of this discussion being on multicultural society in particular, it will be important first to examine the implications of both views of the communication-culture relationship as it relates to interactions in a multicultural context.
2.3.1 The “Culture Determines Communication” View.

The idea that “culture determines communication” has been the key concept on which theories of, and research into, intercultural communication have been based. Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981, p.23f) for example, affirm that “culture is the form or pattern for living” so “what people do, how they act and how they live is both a response to and a function of the culture”. This means that “culture is the foundation of communication and when cultures vary, communication practices also vary”, so “cultural variance in how people encode and decode messages is the foremost problem in intercultural communication”. Samovar and Porter (1991, p.10ff) elaborate on this when they suggest that because culture is “an all-encompassing form or pattern for living”, it is therefore “largely responsible for the construction of our individual social realities and for our individual repertoires of communication behaviour and meanings” (which vary from culture to culture). This means that “messages produced in one culture change as they reach another” because culture also influences the decoding process. The interpretation of the message by a respondent does not coincide with that of the provider because the social repertoires of the participants do not coincide.

It is this view of culture as underlying behaviour, and thus communication practices, that also motivates the way the field of intercultural communication theory formulates its distinctive sets of problems. For Kim (1984) the key problem is that cultural differences create high degrees of difference in the experiential backgrounds of the communicators (p. 15). For Scarbough and Asuncion-Lunde (1983, p.47) it is the cultural factors that impede communication that is the central focus of theory. Applegate and Sypher (1983, p.63f) see that the main issue is how culture influences the development of cognitive schemes and, subsequently, the strategic organisation of action and thus communication processes (because it is cognitive schemes that guide interpretation and action choice). Pearce and Wiseman (1983, p.84) suggest that the key problem for intercultural communication theory is the influence of culture on social rules and how these are enacted in social interaction.

While each of these theorists has suggested a slightly different approach to the relationship between communication and culture, they are all based on the same assumption that culture is antecedent to communication and that the characteristics of a person’s culture determine, shape, influence or structure the way the person communicates. The
issue here is not whether or not culture influences communication, but the kind of influence on communication that is generated by a person’s experience of both common culture and particular culture in a multicultural society. This can be seen in a number of specific aspects of the culture-communication relationship.

The influence of culture on an individual’s cognitive processes was recognised by Korzenny (1991, p.46ff) who believed that cultures organise, integrate and maintain the psychological processes of the individual. Culture, for Korzenny, is a data field from which people learn and understand. It is through socialisation into a culture, he argues, that people acquire an understanding of its modes of response and thus know what to pay attention to and what to ignore. Similarly, Singer (1998, p.3ff) and Samovar and Porter (1991, pp.14-16) assert that culture conditions and structures the perceptual processes. It is therefore cultural similarity in perception that makes the sharing of meaning possible, while cultural differences in perception mean that different cultures produce different kinds of communicative behaviours. Applegate and Sypher (1983, p.63ff) argue that communicative behaviour is based on particular strategic choices of action which are themselves guided by interpretations that grow out of the organisation of thought processes around particular sets of constructs (or “cognitive schemes”). What is most significant for intercultural communication, they suggest, is the way in which culture shapes the development of those cognitive schemes.

Given that the way a person’s cognitive processes operate is dependent on their culture, the question arises as to what kinds of cognitive processes are at work in a person who has been socialised into both a common and a specific culture. Individuals in a multicultural society must not only deal with a plurality of different cognitive processes that others communicate on the basis of. They must also negotiate within themselves the ways of knowing that they have received through their particular culture and the ways of knowing made available in the common culture. Further, participants in communication must also come to terms with the interaction of their different ways of knowing as it occurs in relation to commonly available ways of knowing. The implication here then, is that in multicultural situations, it will be possible for structures of thought, understanding, perception and interpretation to be compatible at one level but, at the same time, to be disparate at another level. An individual may for instance, find that in social interaction there are certain aspects of cognition that remain different to others while other aspects of
cognition are similar to others. Alternatively, even though the individual’s own cognitive processes may be substantially different, he or she may have a greater understanding of or openness to those of others.

The same issue arises secondly, in relation to the way culture guides particular forms of behaviour in interaction. According to Gudykunst and Hammer (1988), culture forms an implicit theory that individuals use to guide their behaviour and interpret the behaviour of others. They see that individuals become conscious of their habitual behaviour when they enter new situations (p.110). Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981) say that culture manifests itself in forms of activity that enable us to live in a society (p.24). Culture therefore is a form or pattern for living (p.23) so what people do, how they act and how they live is both a response to and a function of their culture (p.24). Culture they suggest, conditions us un-consciously towards particular modes of behaviour and communication (p.25). In general terms then, the relationship of culture to behaviour is that culture, as a structuring system, specifies implicitly how one should act in particular circumstances, in particular types of relationships or in response to particular events.

This structuring of behaviour can occur through the provision of social rules (Pearce and Wiseman, 1983, Samovar and Porter, 1991), or through the specification of social roles and the expectations that accompany them (Gabrenya 1988, Pedersen and Pedersen 1991). In a multicultural context, individuals will have at least two sets of culturally determined rules and roles available to them, thus creating at least two possible influences on behaviour. Conflict between those rule and role specifications within the individual as well as between individuals is therefore highly likely. There is also the possibility though, that individuals may be able to switch rule-systems to meet the demands of the situation.

It is these possible correlations or non-correlations of expected rule and role behaviour and actual behaviour that are an obvious problem in intercultural communication. Participants will bring with them different kinds of rule and role definitions and expectations shaped by their respective cultures. The degree to which these do or do not correlate in interaction will have an effect on the way communication proceeds. This will be made more complex though, by the number of different rule and role definitions and expectations that an individual carries, given that in a multicultural society an individual may be exposed to a variety (Hannerz 1992, p.65). It is certainly possible that individuals may need to negotiate four different sets of rules and roles: those of the culture of origin (for example, with a
recent migrant), those of the culture as expressed by the ethnic community in its relationship to the host culture (role expectations may have changed from their original form to a form more specific to that community), those of the dominant culture (e.g. not only particular types of social role but also the way it defines the role that ethnic communities and their members play in society generally) and those of the other participant/s.

A third area that exemplifies the problems attached to the relationship of culture to communication in the multicultural context is the connection between culture and the meaning communication itself. Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981, p.25) for example, state: “what we talk about and how we talk about it is for the most part determined by the culture in which we have lived”. This suggests a recognition that communication itself is subject to the structures of the culture in which it occurs. If this is so then it cannot be assumed that people basically communicate the same way, for the same reasons and with the same results. The question needs to be asked as to what the meaning of communication is for any particular culture.

This issue was taken up by a variety of writers representing an “Asian” perspective on communication in the compilation work Intercultural Communication: The Asian Perspective (Dissanayake, Ed., 1988). The writers set forth what they saw as some of the key characteristics of communication in a number of Asian cultures. The examples used here allow us to see some of the possible ways that communication can mean different things to people from different cultures.

Dissanayake (p.13ff) for example, sees Indian communication as primarily geared towards giving the listener an opportunity to receive a “pratibha” or “flash of understanding”. While Indian communication, according to Dissanayake, is very much receiver-centred, it also has a tendency to be vague or ambiguous. This paradox suggests that it is more through providing clues to the receiver, rather than making explicit statements to make the meaning clear, that the receiver is then able to make the cognitive jump that leads to this “pratibha”. Chu (p.127ff) notes that for the Chinese, communication is understood primarily as a means for preserving social harmony. This means, he observes, that the maintenance of certain social rituals, particularly between elders and juniors or superiors and subordinates, but also among peers is important. Chu also observes that the personal expression of opinion and the importance of truth can often be given a lower priority than the maintenance of appropriate social relationships. Communication here can tend to be
indirect, even using third parties or go-betweens, with conversations carefully calculated and worded. With reference to Japanese culture, Ehrlich and Tonooka (p.139ff) and Yoshikawa (p. 152ff) note that communication is also about maintaining social harmony and unanimity. Japanese communication is therefore characterised a lack of self-assertion and a preference for unanimous agreement (as opposed to accepting majority rule in the face of open dissent). This creates a distinction between public and personal opinion and an awareness that there are appropriate and inappropriate places for either. Personal opinion tends to be expressed in the home, during social drinking or on the death bed but not at other times (Yoshikawa, p.163). This can often be interpreted by Westerners as a double standard yet for the Japanese it constitutes a fundamental part of their communication. Communication for the Japanese is also about feeling and intuition rather than the delivery of explicit information. Conversations for this reason can often be vague or indirect, with a regular use of silence as an opportunity to make intuitive connections with what the speaker is trying to communicate. Conversations are quite readily terminated if it is felt that the hearer is not getting the point.

The examples just discussed suggest that cultural differences in communication cannot simply be reduced to variations in style, but revolve very much around the way a culture understands the meaning and role of communication itself. Intercultural communication theory and research therefore need to examine more carefully the question of how the participants understand what they are doing when they communicate. An assumption for example, that communication is aimed at self-disclosure, truth and making meaning explicit will not produce an accurate account of intercultural interaction if the participants understand communication to be about withholding self-assertion, promoting social harmony or making meaning obscure or implicit. The former assumption will create an understanding of silence or obscurity as a communication problem, whereas they may in fact be an essential part of the way the participants approach communication. A multicultural perspective will also need to take into account the possible tensions between the way participants in communication understand communication based on their particular culture, as well as the kind of understanding of communication the dominant culture has and what kind of influence this has on the way the participants communicate with each other.

Fourthly, consideration needs to be given to the question of how culture frames the situation in which communication occurs. While the “culture determines communication”
perspective revolves largely around the issue of how individuals act on the basis of their culture, it is also important to look beyond the influence of culture on the individual and consider how culture, understood as the context in which the communication takes place, influences the communication situation. There are two ways in which this can be considered.

Attention can be given firstly, to how the prevailing culture affects the social circumstances in which the encounter happens. Consideration should be given for example, to the kinds of situations that are actually available in a particular culture. Such situations might include an office lunch table, work routines on a communal farm or sitting on the ground in a sacred grove. Further, the question of what kinds of communication can actually take place in those situations should also be considered. There may for example, only be certain situations where business can be discussed, where employees may address employers, or where members of the opposite sex can interact.

This suggests a second way that culture frames the communication situation: the way the prevailing culture defines the social relationship of the participants. Cultures will have a range of expectations, rituals, or concepts of appropriateness connected with particular relations such as age, gender, kinship, work, neighbourhood, status, or power. Cultures will define and organise relationships (through status and power differentials, taboos or prescriptions about what is preferable or acceptable) and the way the culture does this has implications for the way participants approach communication in a particular situation. It will be important therefore, when considering multicultural situations, to give attention to how the individual participants define and approach the social relationship generated in the particular encounter with reference to their own culture (and the possible conflicts that this implies), but also to how the perspective of the participants fits or does not fit with the way the common culture defines and understands that relationship.

Finally, if culture is held to be the basis of communication, then consideration should also be given to which culture it is that does the determining in the intercultural situation. The basic assumption that a person communicates on the basis of his or her culture, also implies the possibility of identifying a person’s culture and thus making assumptions about the way that person communicates. There are however, a number of factors that can make such assumptions problematic.
It can be recognised first that in an intercultural situation where one participant is a visitor to the society of the other participant/s, the likely tension between the prevailing culture of that society and the culture of the visitor’s society may cause the visitor to adjust his or her communicative behaviour to fit in better with the host society. Kim’s idea of cross-cultural adaption (1988) was that cultural changes will occur over time (particularly for migrants) as a result of prolonged intercultural contact. It is possible however, to conceive of such changes occurring in a short period of time, because even a short term visitor to the society will be influenced in some way by the prevailing culture (e.g. dress codes, forms of greeting).

It also needs to be acknowledged that in interpersonal encounters a degree of cross-influence is likely to occur. Theories of convergence suggest that participants can in their interaction, move towards or away from each other’s culture as they share information (Barnett and Kincaid 1983, p.174). This raises the possibility that participants in intercultural communication can in fact be influenced by the other’s culture to a greater or lesser extent, as part of that encounter. If this is so then the question should be asked as to how and to what extent this occurs.

Further, Atwood’s recognition of the capacity of individuals to respond creatively to situations and “communicate culturally at many levels” (p.86) and similar recognitions in Giddens (1984) and Hannerz (1992), that individuals are not passive recipients of culture, but active creators of it, is relevant here. Communication need not be seen as influenced, only by one specific, discrete and identifiable “culture”, but by the particular cultural formations that emerge out of the individual’s experience. In other words, it is not necessarily to a culture of origin or a prevailing dominant culture that participants refer in their interactions, but to a personal, or “subjective situational” culture formed out a variety of cultural experiences, such as immigration, adaption, community membership or social participation. The idea that individuals are creative agents with the capacity to respond to specific situations has already been raised in this discussion, and from this idea it is possible to develop a notion of a “culture of experience” as equally important in influencing communication to the influence wielded by common or specific culture.

The “culture determines communication” perspective then, can be summed up in three broad ways. First, because culture exists as a store of available knowledge, perceptions and meanings, it is out of this store that meaning is generated, that expression is produced and
that behaviour is (unconsciously) selected. Second, because culture acts as a kind of “filter” through which perceived knowledge, behaviour and so on must pass, then this affects the process of creating meaning itself. The way in which meanings “mean” is itself shaped and structured by the particular way that the culture in question allows them to be created. Third, culture also represents a context into which meaning is generated. Meanings only “mean” in relation to that culture. The culture in a sense “frames” meaning creation, that is, it limits what the possibilities for meaning creation are. Even the act of communicating is itself only meaningful in and for the cultural context in which it occurs, as Korzenny (1991, p.60) points out, knowledge of a culture provides tools for understanding, but one must act in a culture to respond appropriately.

The development of a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication, therefore needs incorporate an understanding of how meanings generated in, through and for one particular cultural context (cultures of origin) can be expressed in another, and what this implies for the interaction between participants. It will need to address the problem of understanding how a plurality of such cultural influences affects the way people communicate in the same social context. It will also need to address the problem of how this plurality of influences relate to the common social context (and its common culture) in which all participants share, in particular, the extent to which communicative behaviours emerge out of particular culture and the extent to which they emerge out of common culture.

2.3.2 The “Communication Determines Culture” View.

Although the importance of seeing communication as profoundly influenced, shaped or structured by the culture of the participants remains the central rationale in all intercultural communication theory and research, Atwood’s observation that the continuing reliance on this assumption in theory and research can lead to a neglect of the alternative “communication determines culture” approach to theory and research needs to be considered. Atwood argued that intercultural communication theory needs to give more attention to the way culture can emerge out of the existing structures of communication in a society.

Before exploring this proposition further it would be useful to point out that, as is the case with other issues raised in this discussion, communication theory does, in fact, give recognition to this way of understanding the communication-culture relationship. Yum
(1984, p.95ff) discussed the need for theorists to address the idea of “generative” rather than “functional” models of communication. He focussed particularly on the idea that intercultural communication involves creating new social networks or restructuring or augmenting existing ones, creating or maintaining cultural boundaries, but also bridging such boundaries. Similarly, Korzenny (1991, p.56) asserts that culture is a social product that emerges out of interactions. Intercultural communication, he suggests, may entail the modification of culture for more adaptive living.

The influence of systems theory in communication theory is another way that an emphasis on the way communication creates culture is made possible, because systems theory involves not only “inputs” into the communication process, but also “outputs” from it. Ward, Bochner, Furnham (2001, p.6) see systems theory as an important model for communication theory. They say “Underlying themes in this area relate to judgement about the degree of actual or perceived cultural diversity that characterises a particular society, whether such heterogeneity is desirable or undesirable, and whether it leads to positive or negative outcomes”. Theories of intercultural adaption (Kim 1988, Kim and Gudykunst 1988), in particular, represent an application of systems theory to the relationship between culture and communication. The fundamental principle explored in adaption theories is that through particular communication competences, on the part of both the host culture and the migrant, individuals adapt culturally to greater or lesser degrees. Essentially, it is as a result of communication processes that an individual’s culture is formed, changed, reformed or recreated.

The problem then, seems to be one of emphasis. It is not that current communication theory is unable to develop the idea of culture as the outcome of communication, it is that the bulk of research being done focusses much more on the way people communicate because of their culture. Atwood recognised this weakness and called for greater attention to be given to culture as a product of, rather than antecedent to, communication.

Atwood spoke of this shift in emphasis in terms of considering how culture emerges out of the existing communication structures of a society. He refers specifically to media studies and how it examines the ways in which the media contribute to the creation of culture. Atwood himself makes no attempt to explore how media studies might actually help to inform developments in communication theory, however his comments do warrant some further reflection here.
The capacity of the media as a communication structure lies primarily in their ability to deliver meanings to a population: “a one way flow of information from a single source to a large audience” (Applbaum and Chambliss 1995, p.486). This is significant for the creation of culture because, as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue, “our views of the world, and resulting actions, will be molded by our predominant source of information: the mass media” (p.59). What this implies, they suggest, is that media content is not only a manifestation of culture but is also a source of culture: “media content takes elements of culture, magnifies them, frames them and feeds them back to an audience.... Media impose their own logic in creating a symbolic environment.” (p.60). Similarly, Newbold (1995, p.328) argues that by presenting symbolic forms in particular ways, the media, in fact, “frame” the world, and thus influence “popular consciousness”.

The contribution of media to culture then, lies in its capacity, if not to create, then certainly to significantly influence, the character of the social world in which it exists. Studies into the media have explored the complexities of this capacity using a variety of approaches, and although an in-depth analysis of those approaches is not possible here, three key issues can be noted for their relevance to this discussion.

The first issue to be drawn from media studies is the role of the media as agents of socialisation. Croteau and Hoynes (2000, p.13) suggest that audiences learn and internalise values, beliefs and norms that are embedded in media content, although they note that the media also have the capacity to challenge established norms (p.16). To understand the media as socialisers then is to understand them as a means by which the shared culture of a society is made available to its members. If, as Watson (1996, p.95) argues, the media are representatives of “order” (that is, the current social order), then the media not only make shared culture available by describing it, they also make shared culture available by prescribing it. Further, even where the media seek to challenge the prevailing order (Croteau and Hoynes, p.16), they are still engaging in a form of cultural prescription that seeks to specify what kind of cultural change should occur.

Understanding the media as socialisers also means understanding them as a means of social participation and thus a means by which the members of the society gain access to shared culture. O'Shaughnessy (1999, p.255) for example, puts it that “we live in a media world”, seeing and experiencing the world through media images. Croteau and Hoynes also observe that “many aspects of social life are mediated” (p.16), that is, we do not part-
icipate in social life through face-to-face experience, but through what we see, hear or read in the media. To a large extent then, though not exclusively, the cultural life we participate in is the cultural life that the media provide us with. Further, the media constitute a means by which people’s opinions can be presented for reflection or discussion (Garnham, 1995, p.248). In this way, participation in the media allows the members of a society to also contribute to the shared culture, as well as participating in the culture that already exists.

The role of the media as agents of socialisation is significant for considerations of multicultural society firstly because the media are an important means by which all members of society, including members of ethnic groups, access and participate in the shared culture. It must be noted though, that the extent to which this participation occurs can vary, especially when the degree of linguistic proficiency that ethnic group members have is taken into account. Because the mainstream media usually use the dominant language of the society, those with less language proficiency will not necessarily be “socialised” in the same way, or to the same extent, as those with greater proficiency. People who are yet to develop proficiency in the dominant language may prefer information sources that use their own ethnic language, such as an ethnic newspaper or radio station.

The presence of such ethnic media organisations also makes it possible for there to be a plurality of socialisers in a society and for tensions to exist between them. It can be recognised that members of ethnic groups are socialised into the culture of their own group by means of ethnic media. Johnson (2003, p.274) for example, notes that ethnic media exist to serve the interests of their respective ethnic groups by being a means by which their culture and language are maintained, and by reporting and promoting the group’s own political and social agenda and social activities. It can also be recognised that members of ethnic groups are socialised into the shared culture of the society, mainly through the mainstream media, although ethnic media can also provide also information and perspectives on wider social occurrences and issues. This means that ethnic media can also play a role in socialising members of ethnic groups into the wider shared culture, albeit in ways that are different to the mainstream media.

Given the possible intersections and tensions that may occur between these different media agencies, it is clearly possible that the shared culture that is being generated out of such intersections and tensions may not necessarily be the one that the mainstream media seek to deliver. If the media are, as Hannerz (1992, p.82ff) put it, a “cultural apparatus” (a
homogenising force delivering a specific set of meanings on behalf of a society’s cultural producers), this still needs to be considered, as Hammnerz also recognised, in the light of the “micro-cultural processes” that operate in a multicultural society and which operate against such homogenisation. There may therefore be stark differences between the culture that those who produce and deliver media messages would like to create and the culture that actually emerges. Further, the shared culture will itself be characterised by a proliferation of differences, rather than an across-the-board homogeneity.

The second key issue that can be identified in studies of the media is that of representation, or the nature of the language and images that the media deliver to their audiences. Media representation is significant because, as Croteau and Hoynes put it, this has “the power to define social reality” (2000, p. 284), or in Newbold’s words, the media “frame the world” (1995, p.328). This means that the media do not just contribute to the creation of culture per se, but to the creation of particular kinds of culture. The media present audiences with a view of the world, or they interpret the world for them, presenting particular constructions of reality as natural (O’Shaughnessy, 1999, p.18ff).

What this highlights is the ability of the media to shape people’s perspectives on the world that they live in, and this has implications for the way cultural life in any particular society is organised. If a particular perspective on the world, life, self and others lies at the heart of culture, and the media have the capacity to shape those perspectives through their representations, then the media clearly have an influential role in the creation of cultural life. O’Shaughnessy (p.40) also argues that media representation always articulates a position, that is, media representations are not neutral, they are produced by someone (individuals, groups, organisations), for a reason. For some (e.g. Watson 1996, p.18), media representations function to help power elites gain and maintain consent, whether those power elites be governments or large commercial interests, through the delivery of ideology. Others argue that media organisations may not necessarily be engaged in delivering a dominant ideology, but will favour certain perspectives that serve their own particular (usually commercial) ends (Applbaum and Chambliss, 1995, p.491).

The implications of media representation for multicultural societies revolve around the way the media deliver representations of cultural difference. O’Shaughnessy (1999, p.220) argues that the media are important for giving us constructions of ethnic difference. They teach us how to understand ethnicity and ethnic issues. This implies that the media help to
position members of ethnic groups in specific ways within the broader socio-culture. O’Shaughnessy sees this positioning occurring primarily through stereotypical representations (p.228) that can depict different ethnic groups variously as exotic, dangerous, mysterious and so on. It may be possible for example, for certain ethnic groups, or certain areas that have a concentration of ethnic groups, to be represented in the media (such as through a proliferation of news reports) primarily as associated with crime or violence, even if the majority of people there have nothing to do with crime or violence. Members of those groups, on the other hand, may try to challenge such stereotypes by seeking opportunities for media interviews or producing media releases, so as to give their own perspective or by trying to get media organisations to report on occurrences other than crime and violence.

Ethnic media also have a role to play in ethnic representation. Johnson (2003, p.279) suggests that not only can ethnic media present alternative forms of representation to the ethnic group itself, but can also be involved in what she calls “cultural projection”: endeavouring to present new images of the group to other groups and to the general public. She sees this as a form of “symbolic empowerment” for ethnic groups. They are therefore not simply at the mercy of the forms of representation that occur in the mainstream media, but are able to contest the content of such representation.

This suggests then that the forms of representation offered in the media must engage with other forms of representation that are made available in the ethnic media and by ethnic groups in the mainstream media. We also need to take into account the fact that the media, as noted earlier, are themselves capable of challenging and changing stereotypical representations (Croteau and Hoynes 2000, p.16), and that media audiences, as will be discussed shortly, do not necessarily accept without question the representations that the media deliver. The kind of shared culture that will emerge from these engagements must therefore involve a variety of different, often opposing, perspectives about ethnicity, culture and cultural difference, motivated by the different forms of representation that are available to the members of society.

The third key issue to be drawn from media studies is the importance of seeing the audience as active and critical. This is in contrast to a view of audiences as passive receivers of messages which, if true, would mean that they are easily susceptible to forms of manipulation and control through the media. It should be noted here that if, as Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p.59) argue, “our views of the world, and resulting actions, will be moulded
by our predominant source of information”, then the willingness of an audience to accept
the perspectives delivered by the media will most likely be greater if there is only one
media source available. On the other hand, the ability of the media to influence audiences
needs to be seen as limited because people are also influenced by things like established
belief and value systems, or the social groups that they are a part of (Applbaum and
Chambliss 1995, p.488). Further, because in most contemporary societies there is a diver-
sity of perspectives available for consideration, even within the media, there is a greater
opportunity for people to choose between those perspectives, rather than just accept one
that has been delivered by the media.

An active and critical audience then, is one that makes judgements about media
content, either accepting, modifying or rejecting it. Croteau and Hoynes (2000, p.263)
suggest that because meanings are not fixed, but constructed, they require active
interpretation on the part of the audience. Not only so, they note that the meanings
delivered by the media are subject to scrutiny in social settings, because people can use the
media socially as well as individually (e.g. as a group activity like going to the cinema)
and because they use media content as the focus of interaction (e.g. people discuss the
news or talk about television programs). In the light of this, Croteau and Hoynes comment:
“The power to define social reality, of which the media are a part, is not something that is
simply imposed on unwitting audiences”. If media messages articulate versions of a
‘dominant ideology’, these messages are only the raw materials of meaning; they require
construction and are subject to revision” (p.284). Therefore, they argue, audiences are
capable of engaging in “interpretive resistance”, reinterpreting media messages (p.285).
This active interpretation, according to O’Sullivan et al (1994, p.239) can produce either a
“negotiated reading”, that is an acceptance of some parts of a media message but not
others, or an “alternative or oppositional reading”, that is where the audience rejects the
perspective delivered by the media and formulates it own. There is still though, the possi-
bility of an audience constructing a “preferred reading”, accepting the perspective that the
media delivers.

The significance of the active audience for the multicultural context lies in the way the
perspectives delivered by the media intersect with those generated within cultural groups.
Members of ethnic groups should be seen as engaging critically with the media as a con-
sequence of their specific cultural backgrounds. There may for example, be instances
where the values that are assumed or displayed in the mainstream media are contrary to values that are central to particular cultures. There may also be, as discussed previously, instances where members of ethnic groups react negatively to the way their group is represented in the media.

The role played by ethnic media in presenting their own media messages is also relevant here. Johnson (2003, p. 279) sees that ethnic media are an important source of alternatives to the content of the mainstream media, particularly where images of the group are concerned. In this way, they help members of ethnic groups to formulate critical views of the content of the mainstream media.

Two further reflections are possible here. It should be seen that members of the general population can also engage critically with media images and messages if they have had specific experiences with members of ethnic groups, or had access to alternative views and sources of information about ethnic groups. It can also be seen that members of ethnic groups are also capable of engaging critically with their own ethnic media. This makes it possible for them to accept the perspectives delivered by the mainstream media in preference to those of the ethnic media. It also makes it possible for them to create alternative perspectives to both the mainstream and the ethnic media. The kind of shared culture that may emerge from such engagements therefore, will again be characterised by a proliferation of perspectives rather than one generally accepted perspective.

It can be seen then that the mass media represent communication structures that present particular kinds of information organised as messages, meanings, models, representations, and constructions of reality for particular purposes. This information is received, interpreted, judged and used by audiences (both as autonomous, critical agents, and under various forms of influence) to organise their life in their social world. It is out of this engagement of media content and audience response that the character of cultural life is profoundly shaped.

The implications of this for considering intercultural communication can be seen firstly in the way that particular cultures, and interaction between cultures, are represented in the media. Consideration can also be given as to how this contributes to the ways in which members of particular cultures approach participating in a society’s cultural life and how they relate other members of society. Secondly, consideration needs to be given to how particular cultural groups use the media for group-specific purposes and how this contrib-
utes to their own social participation and the relations that exist with other members of society. Thirdly, the presence in a society of both mainstream and alternative (here, ethnic) media suggests that there is a complex relationship between these media and the way culture is constructed. Consideration should be given therefore, to the role of both the mainstream media and the ethnic media in constructing shared culture, the role of both in constructing ethnicity and ethnic culture and the role of both in shaping the forms of social participation (general social participation and ethnic community participation) in which people engage.

The media represent a significant communication structure, perhaps the most significant for large-scale societies, but they are only one such communication structure. There is a close relationship for example, between the media (as communication organisations or institutions) and communication technology. This relationship has produced a significant body of theory and research which argues that as the technology changes, and the requirements for using that technology with it, not only does the way people communicate change, but cultural life in general also changes.

This view of communication technology owes much to Harold Innis (1951), who argued that a society’s orientation to space and time derives (in part) from the nature and use of its dominant medium of communication, and that this also has implications for its social and institutional organisation. Following on from Innis, Marshall McLuhan (1964) argued that it is the form of media, as much as the content that affects people psychologically, and that the form of media technology structures a society’s patterns of daily living. Eisenstein (1979) developed a similar thesis in her examination of the introduction of print. She observed that the ability of print technology to make information widely available was influential in developing mass forms of society, a greater sense of involvement with the wider social world and a greater democratisation of social life. At the same time, she suggests, it promoted individual, silent reading rather than involved discussion, a sense of atomisation and a weakening of local communal ties. Ong (1982) also argued that profound changes in thought processes, personality and social structure were brought about by the invention of the printing press, because it created a shift from a primarily oral culture to a primarily literate culture. He went on to consider, in similar fashion how more contemporary forms of communication technology have also had an influence on the way people
think and live. He argued that the growth of audio and visually-based technologies is creating new forms of oral culture, which are different from a print-based culture.

The view of communication technology developed by these theorists then, holds essentially that a society has a “distinctive technological environment” (Nerone 2003, p.94), and that this environment impacts on the way social and cultural life are organised. Appelbaum (1994, p.55ff) for example, observes that the technology of global communication has created “a culturally diverse international universe” that also constitutes a “new communication environment”. The cultural life (degrees of contact, forms of interaction, types of relations), not only of local societies, but of the world as a whole, has changed in response to new global technologies of communication. McQuail (2003, p.43) suggested that there is a connection between current global communication technology and the way identity is constructed. This is particularly because this technology allows an easy crossing of national borders. McQuail also observed that there is a growing dependence on communication technology, computer systems in particular, for the operation of social systems (like welfare). Flichy (1995) noted that current technology has moved us increasingly towards “private” communication, for example the use of small portable radios or disc players, the use of mobile phones and the presence of multiple television sets within one household. Hallowell (1999) notes that the growing importance and use of computer-mediated communication (email, internet) is changing the way business and work are being done, but is also changing the nature of interaction in general by removing human contact from communication.

The general principle here is that technological change requires certain forms of cultural life to be organised around the particular technology. If this is so then the technological regime of a society can be considered a type of communication structure out of which culture emerges. A key issue for intercultural studies to consider in the light of this is the kinds of intercultural relations that are emerging at a local, national and international level as a result of current developments in communication technology. Satellite television and radio, and the internet, for example, can be seen as producing forms of global culture sharing that have not been possible before. Such technologies also make more possible the presentation and maintenance of forms of cultural difference through language-specific internet sites or international radio broadcasts. These enable members of ethnic groups in one country to stay in contact with their country and culture of origin more easily that what
has been the case in the past and this can be a strong influence against a total cultural assimilation into their new country. The current technological environment then, while making possible forms of contact and sharing across national and cultural boundaries, does not necessarily create a uniform culture. It can also be used to highlight and perpetuate differences.

A similar argument exists in connection with the relationship between language and culture, revolving around the question of whether language only refers to its social world or whether it in fact creates it, which was the central issue in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Sapir posited in the 1920s that language patterns are central to structuring distinct cultural worlds, while Whorf (1956) followed with the view that the structure of thought mirrors the structure of language (cited Keesing, 1981, p.86). Whorf argued that language determines a speaker’s perception of reality, so differences in language perpetuate differences in culture (Loveday, 1982). This hypothesis, Loveday (p.36) points outs, is the subject of continuing debate, however Loveday does observe that the use of particular linguistic forms (e.g. forms of address) does have the effect of positioning the referent of those forms socially. On the other hand, Loveday suggests that linguistic differences have not prevented philosophical, religious or scientific concepts from being expressed by a variety of languages (p.38).

More recently, social psychologists have developed the idea that people “use social categories to order their social environment” (Gudykunst and Schmidt 1988, p.1). While such categories can be understood as cognitive frames of reference, there must still be a fundamental relationship between those categories and the language that expresses them. Logic suggests that if language is the means by which such categories are expressed, then language also has an important role to play in ordering the social environment. Gudykunst and Schmidt (p.7) suggest for example, that language cues the activation of stereotypes and the particular social behaviour that accompanies them.

The purpose here is not to engage in an extended discussion of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, of social categorisation or of general linguistic processes, however these issues do have implications for exploring the culture-communication relationship. If, for example, language by its nature structures the cultural world of its speakers, then this means that to shift from one language to another must ipso facto involve a cultural shift. Similarly, language retention among ethnic groups usually indicates a concern for continuing cultural
maintenance or continuing ethnic identification, the assumption being that language loss will contribute to the loss of culture and identity (Crystal 1992, Gudykunst and Schmidt 1988).

Language then, can also be considered as a communication structure, certainly in terms of its social role, although if institutionalisation is what makes something a “structure” then we will need to speak in terms of the dominant language of a society rather than of language as such. Community languages may though, constitute institutionalised communication structures for the community in which they exist.

In the light of these considerations, it must be seen that language is more than just a means for expressing meaning. Language clearly has a role to play in generating and maintaining culture. It is because of this that governments engage in policy making over national languages and community languages and such policies can be the site of serious political struggles over the preservation of language. There have certainly been instances where Governments have engaged in attempts to destroy minority languages in an attempt to produce cultural homogeneity (Chinese language in Indonesia for example). Similarly minority groups have fought to preserve their language, for fear that loss of language means loss of culture. Gudykunst and Schmidt (p.5) point out that ethnolinguistic vitality has a large impact on an ethnic group’s existence and the preservation of its cultural identity. The ways in which a language, or a number of languages, are structurally located in a society (meaning not only their respective social statuses but also the institutionalised forms of language learning, or non-learning) can thus be understood to constitute a kind of communication structure that will have particular kinds of impact on the culture of its society: in its generation, maintenance and change. A fundamental question for intercultural communication theory to address then, is what kind of culture is emerging out of the linguistic environment of a society. What, for example, does the presence of multiple languages in general and the presence of particular languages in a social environment mean for the cultural life of the society?

Another area that could be considered in reference to communication structures is the particular contexts for communication that are available in a society and have in some way become institutionalised. One example of this would be the particular kinds of democratic processes that characterise a society. These could be compulsory voting at elections, regular participation in referenda or regular local community meetings. Another would be the
kinds of less formalised opportunities for voicing opinion such as writing letters to newspapers, speaking on talkback radio or using the internet.

Although these kinds of contexts may not be institutionalised in the sense of being legislated for, or having some kind of social expectation attached to them, they can be institutionalised in the sense of being established by convention and being the contexts for communication that are available in a particular society, as opposed to other contexts that are not available. If certain communication contexts are available in a society while others are not then this must have an impact on the kind of culture that is possible for that society. A village community, for example, where key decisions are made in response to discussion by the whole community, must develop a different kind of cultural life to a society where there is no context for communication by the general populace and key decisions are made by an elite class. Some of the implications of this for intercultural studies are: what are the contexts for communication that are and are not available to the general populace, to cultural groups within that populace? What contexts are available for intercultural interaction? What is the kind of cultural life that is emerging out of these contexts?

These then, are some of the possible communication structures that we could see culture emerging from. It must be said however, that a “communication determines culture” perspective involves more than identifying particular communication structures.

Another way of approaching this issue is to consider the relationship between lived experience and the articulation of that experience. What this means is that when a people (or individual members of a people) has some new kind of experience they will articulate (or communicate) that experience in some way and this articulation will, in turn, have an impact on the culture. The people will need to find ways of incorporating that new experience and its meaning into their cultural life. This could mean some minimal kind of cultural adaption that basically absorbs the experience into the existing cultural framework, or it could mean a radical shift that changes the culture permanently. If, for example, a tribal culture is exposed to an alternative religion (say through interaction with missionaries) this could mean a complete cultural change organised around that religion or a selective accommodation of elements of it, depending on how the people perceive, articulate and act on the new alternative. Similarly, the way migrants communicate about their experiences of migration and resettlement can have an influence on the degree of cultural change that they might be willing to accept.
Yet another way of approaching the communication determines culture perspective is to recognise that forms of communication can be employed intentionally to engineer a particular kind of cultural world. Here specific communication practices are set up and followed strategically by a power elite, with a view to producing a preferred kind of society and culture. The media, the arts and the education system can for example, be employed to promote preferred perspectives and preferred patterns of living. In this case those with political power engage in the deliberate creation of culture through planned, specific communication practices. Conversely, members of a society may encourage particular kinds of communication practice with a view to achieving particular kinds of cultural outcomes, with the emphasis on the process of communication rather than on power elites who attempt to control the process and the outcome. An example of this is where forms of dialogue (intercultural, interfaith) are encouraged, or even formally structured, with a view to creating a cultural life that is meaningful to all its members, despite their differences. Although those who encourage or structure such dialogue might have preferred cultural outcomes, it is the process of dialogue itself that is important. The outcomes that emerge from such dialogue may be the expected or desired ones, or they may be unexpected or even undesired. Whatever the case may be, the communication process here is being intentionally used to achieve a rethinking, reworking and recreating of culture. What these possibilities suggest is that communication theory and research in general might pay more attention to the way that particular groups within society employ communication strategies to achieve desired cultural outcomes.

There is a challenge here for communication theory to begin to incorporate such focuses as part of its agenda and begin to explore their implications for models of communication and communication studies. This should be no less so with intercultural communication. In international relations and in multicultural societies alike it can be recognised that members of different cultures can engage in strategic forms of communication with a view to achieving particular cultural outcomes. Communication theory and research would benefit by taking up these kinds of concern, for example by exploring the kinds of communication strategies that ethnic groups employ to have an influence in shaping culture in general and whether such strategies also shape the cultural outcomes of particular intercultural encounters.
In addition to considering the different ways in which a “communication determines culture” perspective can be understood or applied, it is important to recognise that the way the communication process itself is defined or understood will have an impact on how one understands the communication-culture relationship. Carey (1992) drew a distinction between a “transmission” view of communication and a “ritual” view of communication. A transmission view, he suggests, holds that communication is primarily about “the transmission of signals or messages over distance” (p.15). This way of conceiving communication is clearly more compatible with a “culture determines communication” perspective. If the focus is on the message and the way the message is sent and received, the focus is also, by implication, on the store of knowledge out of which the message can be created and also understood by the receiver, and on the available means by which a message can be sent. The successful interpretation of a message depends on shared knowledge (or shared culture) between sender and receiver. The transmission idea of communication thus links with the idea of culture as the basis for communication.

A “ritual” view of communication on the other hand, Carey suggests, is “directed not towards the extension of messages in space, but the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information, but the representation of shared beliefs” (p.18). The ritual view he says finds an archetype in the sacred ceremony that draws people together in fellowship and commonality. Sacred ceremonies enabled the construction of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that serves as both a control and container for human action. Although one might argue communication as “ritual” has to have something to represent, and this is found in the culture to which it refers (thus another way of conceiving the culture determines communication relationship), it is more so that the ritual idea suggests forms of communication as ways of creating or recreating culture, not merely representing it: it is through the ritual that the cultural world comes into being, the socio-cultural world lives and takes shape through communication. Carey suggests that forms of community, sharing and society are possible because people share meaningfully with each other. Communication is a therefore a process whereby reality is created, shared, modified and preserved (p.34).

Defining the communication process in this way then, links more closely with the idea of communication determining culture. If intercultural studies is to give more attention to a communication determines culture view, then it will also need to expand its understanding
of the communication process beyond questions of the creation or non-creation of meaning, based on some kind of common knowledge or common life and consider the implications of communication as a process by which common life is generated.

2.3.3 Intercultural Outcomes.

Recognising that there are numerous ways in which a “communication determines culture” perspective can be explored and developed, the challenge for communication theory is to develop a more comprehensive focus on the outcomes of intercultural encounters. This can mean firstly, looking at the particular outcomes of communication for the individual participants.

There has, in fact, been some attention given to this issue in current intercultural communication theory. Barnett and Kincaid (1983, p.173f) for example, suggest that through communication participants share information in order to reach a better mutual understanding of each other and the world in which they live. They see that through communication the cultures of the participants can either converge or diverge, suggesting four possible outcomes: 1) mutual understanding with agreement, 2) mutual understanding with disagreement, 3) mutual misunderstanding with agreement, 4) mutual misunderstanding with disagreement. Yoshikawa (1984, p.142f) discussed what he called “double swing”, suggesting that out of intercultural interactions participants can develop an ability to shift between cultures, that is the culture of origin and culture of resettlement. Out of the experience of intercultural interaction, Yoshikawa argues, individuals come to terms with the interdependence of cultures and the dialogic interaction between them, and are able to engage both similarities and differences in their ongoing cultural life. O’Sullivan (1996, p.6ff) observed that cultures change and vary over time, and that change for cultures in contact happens as a result of the interactive nature of that contact (e.g. borrowing from and influencing each other). This he suggests, means that through intercultural communication, members of cultures, and possibly whole cultures, undergo change. Cusher and Brislin (1996, p.11) saw that participants in intercultural communication have expected outcomes of their behaviour for themselves and for others. Some possible outcomes of
interaction include emotional upset, faulty attributions, and enquiring about how the other participant finds meaning. Kim (1988) focussed on individual psychological outcomes, such as psychological health, “functional fitness”, strength or weakness of personal cultural identity and closeness or distance of relationships to particular cultural groups. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001, p.6f) see in systems theory an important model comprising inputs, throughputs and outputs and so propose a number of possible outcomes of intercultural contact: 1. general satisfaction (adjustment, well-being), 2. changes in emotional adjustment over time, 3. development of social networks etc, 4. adverse psychological consequences of failing to adjust 5. management of the transition from one culture to another (i.e. for migrants), 6. achieving competence in the new setting. They also note that Communication Accommodation Theory assumes that participants will be driven to converge to their partner, to diverge from their partner, or to maintain their own style. They see that participants will use particular communication strategies to realise these motives (p.63).

Questions relating to the outcomes of intercultural communication (particularly in terms of individual participants) have then, been taken up to some extent in intercultural communication theory. The opportunity exists however, for theorists to work on developing more comprehensive and detailed schemas for examining and assessing such outcomes. There is scope for example, for considering the use of a basic model that examines communication outcomes in terms of convergence (that is, of one culture towards another), divergence (that is, sticking to one’s own culture) or emergence (where the participants produce new cultural forms either through arriving at a compromise position between the cultures in question, or in fact creating something that is different to the cultures in question). Within this general framework of analysis can be placed many other possible categories. Some of these possibilities include psychological outcomes such as personality traits, character qualities that might develop out of interaction, perceptual outcomes such as the changing or reinforcing of cultural stereotypes and cognitive outcomes like changes to knowledge or alternative ways of thinking about particular issues. There are also expressive outcomes like adjustments to the way language is used, the creation of new words phrases, linguistic routines, recourse to the use of visual means (like pictures or symbols) or adjustments in non-verbal communication. Behavioural outcomes of communication might include the adoption of different ways of doing things (e.g. trying a new
kind of food) or the creation of new kinds of social rituals to govern further interactions. There are also relational outcomes, examining how interaction influences the nature of the relationship that exists between participants and perhaps relationships between members of those cultures in general. Very little of this kind of detailed thinking about the outcomes of intercultural communication has been found in the theory and research discussed in this thesis, although the possibilities have certainly been suggested. The opportunity is there then, for more work to be done in developing this kind of outcomes focus as part of a more general communication determines culture perspective.

As well as a focus on individual outcomes there is a second focus that needs to be considered. If communication theory is to consider more deeply the implications of a “communication creates culture” perspective, then it must also consider carefully the issue of what kind of culture communication is creating. This means looking more broadly at what cultural outcomes are possible in a society as a result of the intercultural communication that occurs within it. It means considering the particular types of cultural practices or issues that emerge out of the interactions of different cultures. Ang (1993) for example believed that communication failure must be seen as normative in a social context of cultural difference. She says: “I would suggest .... that it is the failure of communication that we should emphasise if we are to understand contemporary culture.... What needs to be stressed is the fundamental uncertainty that necessarily goes with the process of constructing a meaningful order... failure to communicate should be considered normal in a cultural universe where commonality of meaning cannot be taken for granted ....” (p. 198). If this is so then can we see such communication failure creating a culture of intercultural failure (e.g. sustaining of cultural differences, token or superficial rather than meaningful interaction among cultural groups)? This is one possibility but there are also other possibilities. Particular intercultural communication practices within a society may also help to create cultures such as a culture of dialogue and cooperation across or despite difference, a melting pot culture (cultural cross-influence, openness of boundaries, movement towards a homogenised common culture over time), a culture of assimilation or a culture of separatism.

Another way of approaching this question is to recognise that the interplay between globalising and localising forces will see emerging out of intercultural interactions, various forms of accommodation and resistance. Local cultures can resist globalising forces by adopting various cultural strategies to ensure the vitality of their particular culture (art,
language, political action). They can also accommodate elements of globalising culture (for example language, pop culture). Similarly, globalising culture has ways of influencing local cultures, for example, where there is access to global media, but can also accommodate local culture (e.g. international companies that set up localised forms of business). If communication is seen in this way, then this suggests that, not only in individuals, but also in social groups, networks, organisations and communities, there can be movement towards cultural similarity (common or globalised culture) or cultural difference (localised culture), towards understanding or misunderstanding, towards “success” or “failure”.

Alternatively, if we also understand communication to be a process of negotiation (acceptance of dialogue as an intercultural skill), this can mean that participants will work creatively towards generating solutions through communication, despite the fact that communication is characterised by problematic cultural differences. Such solutions include culture sharing, third cultures, hybrid culture, compromise or agreement to disagree.

What adopting a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication will ultimately require, is a recognition that both globalising and localising outcomes of communication are possible at the same time. There will be a perceived cultural commonality at some levels and a perceived cultural difference at others, as Young (1996) puts it: “... it is possible and desirable for all cultures to change, but not change by blending with one another or being submerged by a single culture. Each culture must change to the extent necessary for it to recognise differences, to acknowledge the prima facie validity of other cultures, and to discover some common ground in the new intercultural space thus created: ground upon which a conversation about intercultural understanding and cooperation can be built” (p.3). This presents communication theory with a new challenge: to find ways of conceptualising the cultural outcomes of communication in ways that account for both the common and the diverse.

This for Young, means recognising that culture and cultural identity can no longer be understood as fixed. Intercultural interactions, he suggests, now allow the development of hybrid forms of identity, a forming of self out of the intersection of differences, and this possibility is he says “open-ended” (p.3ff). Young holds that intercultural encounter always implies some level of “incommensurability”, (ways in which common ground is impossible) but he sees in communication the possibility of moving beyond suspicion and towards a mutual understanding. He also argues that a sense of meaning as fluid should be
maintained. He sees that in intercultural encounters, meaning is capable of taking on forms that were not envisaged. He suggests for example, that meanings can be imposed, yet participants are also capable of accepting or refusing the meanings that others would inscribe in them. He also sees that participants are capable of engaging in “rare” behaviour (i.e. not what might be expected from a particular culture). This he says “points the way to as yet unrealised possibilities” (p.85). Young’s comments here then, suggest maintaining a sense of the unpredictable, that is, that meanings or behaviours that are original, or at least unexpected, can emerge from communicative encounters.

The intersections between what is held in common and what differentiates participants in intercultural encounters, therefore create a range of possible outcomes. These include the maintenance of differences, accommodations to the culture of the other participant/s, recourse to what is already held in common or the creation of new cultural possibilities. The challenge for communication theory is to develop ways of incorporating these possibilities, over and above its focus on the way cultural difference creates communication “problems”. A greater sense of what Young (p.116) called “intercultural learning” (a relationship of openness across difference that enables rational judgements to be made) and “intercultural hope” (a willingness to work towards mutually agreeable outcomes across difference), would help theorising about intercultural communication to meet this challenge.

What this examination of the “communication determines culture” perspective points to then, is the need for communication theory to explore four possible areas of development. First, it needs to develop a response to the question of what impact an intercultural encounter will have on the particular personal culture of the participants. Second, it needs to develop a response to the question of what impact intercultural encounters have on the culture of particular communities within society. Third, it needs to develop a response to the question of what impact intercultural encounters will have on the broader cultural world of the society in which those encounters take place. Finally, it needs to develop a response to the question of what communication structures exist within a particular society and how they contribute to the particular intercultural milieu of that society in terms of who uses them, for what purpose and with what effect. A range of possible ways of approaching these developments, particularly with regard to potential analytical categories, has been suggested in this discussion.
The communication-culture relationship lies at the heart of any theory of intercultural communication. It has been seen that, for the most part, communication theory relies on a view that culture determines the way people communicate and this needs to be affirmed as fundamentally correct. It has also been recognised here that culture should be equally understood as the product of communication. Giddens’ social reproduction concept encourages a view of culture and communication as involving both possibilities, in a cyclical process, whereby one produces but is also produced by, the other. Culture produces communication processes and the meaning creation that accompanies them. At the same time, communication reproduces the cultural order that is, but in doing so recreates it, sometimes intact, but sometimes changed. In fact, it might well be argued that every time culture is reproduced in communication, it is in some way changed, (however minute that change may be), first because culture itself is not a static structure, but a dynamic process capable of change, and second, because it is reproduced through the interaction of creative agents, none of whom will express their culture in exactly the same way. It should be seen then, that where there is intercultural contact (where the cultures that are recreated by the participants are different), each culture that is recreated must be more open to question, challenge, influence, variation, expansion or alteration. This highlights the importance of considering the question of what is being created out of such interaction of cultures and represents an important area of development for intercultural communication theory.

2.4 Conclusion.

This chapter has sought to set out the foundations on which a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication can be developed. By elaborating on Atwood’s argument that there is a need to incorporate a broader social perspective, a need to reconsider the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity and a need to review how the culture-communication relationship is understood, a range of concepts has been identified that will be used to shape and direct that development.

Central to this task will be the construction of a conceptual schema that incorporates, from Giddens and Hannerz, an understanding of social processes that are characterised firstly by an interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces and secondly by the reproduction of a society’s structuring principles in the interactions that occur within in. The prop-
osed schema will also incorporate an understanding of communication as not only influenced by culture, but as producing culture, that is, it will seek to emphasise the outcomes of communication as well as the influences on it. The general shape of that schema will be discussed in the next chapter, with a more detailed elaboration to be presented in the subsequent chapter.

3.1 Introduction.

Discussion so far has sought to develop three key issues raised by Atwood (1984) regarding the state of intercultural communication theory and where it might proceed. It has been proposed that intercultural communication theory would benefit by developing an understanding of 1. the relationship between communication and the social context in which it occurs 2. the relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity and 3. the relationship between culture and communication. It has also been observed in particular, that when cultural pluralism becomes an issue, the nature of these relationships becomes more complex and therefore many of the assumptions that communication theory has worked from need at least to be reexamined or rethought, if not directly challenged or rejected. What have been identified here then, are three key problematic areas.

The first problematic area is the question of how to place interpersonal intercultural encounters into a broader social perspective. In considering this question it has been important first to recognise that communication needs to be understood as a situated social practice, that is, it always occurs in relationship to a particular social context, or “life-world”, which involves particular kinds of social relations, institutional structures and standardised practices. This relationship, according to Giddens (1984), is a reproductive one, where the structuring principles of a society are reproduced in the social encounters and interactions of its members and these interactions, in turn, recreate the society and its structures. It has been recognised that this process of social reproduction is not a mechanistic process whereby individual behaviour is “determined” by social structure, but is a dynamic process that operates through the agency of those who participate in it and is thus capable of shift, change and development.

A key proposition here then, is that to understand how intercultural communication takes place in a multicultural society one needs first to understand that society. Out of that understanding will emerge a clearer sense of how its characteristics are, or might be, reproduced in particular intercultural encounters and thus how the nature of the context is influencing the nature of the interaction.
The second problematic area is that of how to understand the relationship that exists between heterogeneity (cultural difference) and homogeneity (cultural similarity) in intercultural encounters. It has been observed that a basic assumption of communication theory is that “success” in communication occurs where there is cultural similarity, so where cultural difference exists, communication problems must also exist and therefore communication must be geared to overcome the problem of such cultural gaps in order to achieve “success”. The argument here has been that, particularly where multicultural contexts are involved, the relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity is less clear-cut. The intercultural communication “problem” is not just one of overcoming cultural difference but is also one of negotiating the interplay between similarity and difference that occurs in an intercultural encounter. This view draws particularly on the idea that contemporary social experience is characterised by a tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces (Hannerz 1992). Communication therefore, will also involve a negotiation of certain kinds of homogeneity at some levels and certain kinds of heterogeneity at other levels and the varying degrees of value that might be attached to either at any of these levels. Intercultural communication cannot therefore be reduced to a simple matter of overcoming cultural differences.

The third problematic area is the question of how to understand the connection between communication and culture and, on this basis, how to develop an understanding of what constitutes the “process” of intercultural communication in multicultural contexts. It has been seen in particular that culture itself is not simply an entity that an individual possesses or carries. It is also (or perhaps more so) a creative process in which people engage and the outcome of that process can take different shapes and forms and have different meanings for individuals, even where they are ostensibly a part of the same culture. Culture is thus a way of contextualising experience, not only an existing context for experience. Similarly, it has been seen that culture does not simply “determine” how communication happens (although it certainly is to be understood as a determinant). It is also to be seen as something that emerges out of communication, both in terms of the specific outcomes for the individuals participating in an encounter and more general social outcomes that emerge from patterns of intercultural interactions across a society. In general terms it is suggested that participants bring into an intercultural encounter, particular cultural formations (rather than a culture), engage creatively in cultural behaviour and out of that encounter, produce
cultural products (referring here to behaviours, perspectives, attitudes, relationships and meanings as well as tangible products as such art, media texts or music).

With these various issues and problems in mind, the intention here is now to pursue more directly the relationship between multicultural society and intercultural communication. This will involve a consideration of the particular defining characteristics of multicultural society, framed especially within the centripetal-centrifugal perspective already proposed, and the ways in which these characteristics can be said to shape how intercultural communication occurs. The goal will be to develop a coherent conceptual framework that can be used in ongoing research into and theorising about intercultural communication.

The question that needs to be addressed now is what shape that framework needs to take. To begin that task, it is necessary to make three preliminary acknowledgements.

First, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is such a thing as a “broader social perspective”. This means that a rationale needs to be developed that sees specific acts of communication as taking place within a wider social milieu where its structures, institutions and processes have an impact on the interactions occurring within it (for example, the types interactions that can take place, the modes through which those interactions operate, and the boundaries within which they occur). This has been done to some extent by introducing Giddens’ idea of social reproduction, however the task here will be to examine the implications of that idea with regard to the relationship between the nature of multicultural society and the intercultural encounters that occur within it.

Second, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are particular types of social milieu, and that the influence of the social milieu on specific communication episodes will vary according to the type of society involved. It is assumed here, therefore, that a multicultural society is one such specific social milieu, and that to develop a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication will require attention to be given to the nature of multicultural society as such and further, to specific types of multicultural society.

Third, it is necessary to acknowledge that intercultural communication is a particular form of communication. While it shares the generally identifiable characteristics of communication per se, it also needs to be understood in terms of its own unique characteristics as intercultural communication. This means primarily that the role of culture in communication will always be the central issue to consider. More specifically, it means that the im-
lications of multicultural contexts for culture and its role in communication will be the key issue for the theoretical development being pursued here.

With these acknowledgements in mind, the theory building that follows will involve first, in this chapter, a consideration of the general guidelines that can frame a multicultural approach to intercultural communication. Second, it will involve in the following chapter, an elaboration of the various elements of a multicultural perspective indicated by those general guidelines.

The general guidelines to be developed here will conceptualise in particular the connections between the characteristics of intercultural communication and the characteristics of multicultural society. This is based on the assumption (from Giddens) that the general structuring principles of a society shape the way social interaction in that society is defined and managed and therefore we should expect the broad patterns of interaction that emerge from that systemic organisation to be reproduced in individual social encounters (while also acknowledging the role of individual agency in those encounters).

While this defines the broad direction in which theory building will proceed, there are also some basic questions to be addressed regarding how to proceed in that direction. To develop a set of guidelines for theory building here requires some discussion of the methodology by which the theory building will be organised. The following discussion therefore addresses three key methodological issues: 1. an approach to understanding communication as a process, 2. an approach to analysing the relationship between social context and situation in general terms and 3. an approach to organising analysis of the specific connections between social context and situation.

3.2 Communication as Process.

Regardless of what theoretical or philosophical perspectives are brought to bear on the current discussion, communication theory invariably conceives of communication in all its forms as a “process”. This may be a process of creating meanings interpersonally, a process of generating particular products (e.g. art, music) or a process of disseminating messages to a population. The idea of process implies a series of interrelated events or occurrences which produces particular results or effects, although in keeping with current communication theory, process is not understood here as a “series” in the sense of a uni-
directional or linear movement from point A to point B (as in the sender - receiver concept). It is understood rather as a continuing exchange between participants over time, in which specific elements (events, occurrences) in the process can be identified. Gudykunst and Kim’s intercultural model (1984, pp. 39 - 59), for example, describes a circular process of message encoding, decoding and response between sender/receivers who are influenced by various culture-related factors. Similarly, Samovar and Porter (1991, p.12) focus on issues of encoding and decoding between culturally-influenced sender/receivers. Even such circular models though, do not necessarily provide the most appropriate way of moving forward here, primarily because they focus on messages and/or on individuals as producers and interpreters of messages. The aim of this discussion on the other hand is to develop ways of understanding communication as process in connection with the nature of the broader social content in which it occurs. To do this successfully other approaches to understanding communication as process need to be engaged.

Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001 p.3), discuss the idea that an intercultural encounter is a kind of social system, which is characterised by inputs, throughputs and outputs, operating within a particular environment. By taking this perspective it is possible to shift the focus away from the individual as sender/receiver towards a more generic view of the process itself and how individual participation constitutes an element in that process, rather than the focus of it. As such, this represents a way of conceptualising communication that is more applicable to the particular concerns addressed by this discussion, particularly with regard to the way the “system” model places the process in connection to an environment. While some sender-receiver models (such as Gudykunst and Kim’s) are careful to include this as well, there is a tendency in the sender-receiver approach to focus on the way the individual participants generate and interpret messages rather than consider this in relation to contextual issues. A further strength of this kind of system model is that it allows for the outcomes of communication to be included as part of the process, where sender-receiver models do not necessarily address this issue. The main weakness of the system model though, is that it still tends to be set out as a linear structure, no doubt the legacy of the machine metaphor that generated it. This could suggest that there is only one source of input into the process, whereas in human interaction there are at least two sources of input (i.e. at least two participants) and potentially multiple sources of input. If then, the system model is to be used as a foundation for conceptualising communication as process, it needs
to be presented in such a way as to allow for such multiple sources of input.

Perhaps the key to successfully employing a system model here is to ensure that the
meaning of the term “throughput” is clarified. This element of a system is often referred to
as “transformation”, indicating that within the broader systemic process there is also a
micro-process that involves some kind of change to whatever input has been introduced.
Where a communicative encounter is conceptualised as a systemic process, this transform-
ative phase can be understood as the interpersonal negotiations that occur between the par-
ticipants and from which emerge the particular outcomes of the process.

To depict these fundamental ideas of process in diagrammatic form, a generic model of systemic process would look like this:

```
INPUT   THROUGHPUT   INPUT
       /            |
      /             |
     /              |
    /                |
   /                  |
  /                    |
 /                      |
/                        |
/                          |
/                            |
/                              |
/                                |
```

OUTPUT

To use the same basic diagram to conceptualise communication as a systemic
process, it would be presented thus:

```
PARTICIPANT   NEGOTIATION   PARTICIPANT
       /            |
      /             |
     /              |
    /                |
   /                  |
  /                    |
/                        |
/                          |
/                            |
/                              |
/                                |
```

OUTCOME

Given that system models usually place the input-throughput-output process
within an environment the model then should be presented thus:

```
PARTICIPANT   ENVIRONMENT   PARTICIPANT
       /            |
      /             |
     /              |
    /                |
   /                  |
  /                    |
/                        |
/                          |
/                            |
/                              |
/                                |
```

Given that system models usually place the input-throughput-output process
within an environment the model then should be presented thus:
One further modification of this system model would be necessary here. It has been recognised that episodes of communication also need to be related to the particular situation in which they occur. The diagram would represent this so:

A systemic view of intercultural communication would then be represented in this way:
This diagram lays out a way of understanding intercultural communication as a social system, depicting the important connections between the episode, its situation and the broader social context. This view of communication as process will be used to frame the further elaboration of a multicultural perspective on communication that will developed in subsequent sections.

3.3 Developing an Analytical Approach.

The second methodological issue that needs to be addressed in theory building is that of how to organise an approach to analysing communication so as to preserve the key features of the perspective being developed here (that is, the connection between episode and social context).

This can be achieved firstly by considering the levels at which analysis can be targeted. This is primarily a matter of combining a macro level analysis (concerned with broad,
generic characteristics) with a micro level analysis (concerned with specific instances of those characteristics) and in that regard a number of possibilities emerge.

Butts et al (2000, p.3ff) for example (in their discussion of textual analysis), say that texts occur within two contexts 1. context of culture, or all the meanings possible within that culture 2. context of situation, or the things going on in world outside the text that make it what it is, e.g. shopping in a particular place. These two contexts are realised in the content and expression of the text. This model, if applied more generally to communication, suggests that an instance of communication (which equates with the level of text) can be examined in relation first to its social situation and second to its socio-cultural environment. De Vos (1990, p.210), offered a four-level analytical approach that suggested a focus on 1. social structure, 2. social interaction, 3. individual identity and 4. the relationship between self and non-self in maintaining social distinctions. Young (1996, p.205) proposed that communication studies need to engage in a critical analysis of 1. the institutional integration of a social system as a whole, 2. the institutions that organise a cultural order 3. the interactive processes whereby meaning is inscribed in people and 4. coding systems whereby people either inscribe, or resist the inscription of, meaning. Each of these analytical frameworks demonstrates the possibility of linking significant macro concerns with significant micro concerns, although each has its own particular emphasis. What they suggest more specifically is that a general approach to analysis can consist of three broad levels.

First, it can consider the structural level, exploring the institutional processes through which a society establishes its fundamental character (e.g. De Vos’ social structure level and Young’s integrational and institutional levels). The institutions referred to here are not to be understood so much as particular organisations, but rather as institutionalised social practices (in line with Giddens’ view). Such institutions may of course be realised through specific organisational structures, but they may also be realised in particular codifications (universally binding documents such as constitutions or legal canons) or non-codified systems of standardised practice such as conventions and moral codes. The task of analysis at this level will be to consider the way these institutions make available to the members of society, certain possibilities for communication and conversely, the way they can preclude other possibilities.

Second, it can consider a social level, exploring the observable patterns of interaction
that occur, or can potentially occur, across a society (e.g. Butts et al’s contextual level, De Vos’ social interaction level and Young’s interactive process level). The assumption here is that these patterns represent the realisation, in broad terms, of a society’s institutions, across the membership of the society and in the lived practices of their day-to-day interactions. An important element in these patterns of interaction, especially where multicultural societies are concerned, is the contribution of the various social groups. This means that patterns of interaction will depend to a large extent on the way a group’s membership exerts an influence on the way people engage with each other socially.

Third, analysis can include an episodic level that examines the characteristics of a particular instance of communication (as in Butts et al, their reference to text). Analysis here will include both the characteristics of the social situation (as in Butts et al), the characteristics of the individuals involved and their relationship (as in De Vos) and the characteristics of the processes involved (as in Young’s reference to coding systems, but certainly not restricted to coding systems). Essentially, what is suggested here is an application of the communication process model offered in the previous section. At the situational level, factors such as the physical location, the social circumstances (e.g. in an organisation, in a family group, in a public place), the cultural circumstances (e.g. does one individual “own” the cultural ground?), the character of the situation (e.g. a chance meeting, a planned meeting) and any rules, norms or conventions that apply to the circumstances, need to be considered. At the interpersonal level, analysis will address the nature of each participant’s input (assuming that this involves the character of the participants themselves), the nature of the negotiation that occurs between participants and the nature of the outcomes of the negotiation, not only at an interpersonal level, but also at a situational, social and structural level.

A second issue regarding the way analysis should be organised is the question of the direction of analysis. Given that the key concept underlying this project is the relationship between social context and communication episode the question needs to be asked as to what the starting point for analysis should be. A deductive approach will examine the nature of the context and attempt to predict the nature of the interaction, while an inductive approach will examine an episode of interaction and infer the nature of the context. Butts et al (p.181ff) note that both have their merits: the examination of a text can give clues about the nature of the context, while knowledge of the context can indicate the type of text that
might be or should be produced. Given that the purpose here is to consider how the nature of a social context (especially a multicultural context) will impact on the nature of the interaction that occurs within it, the primary direction of analysis here should be deductive, however the value of an inductive approach to analysis should also be affirmed, particularly where issues of ongoing research are discussed.

A third question that needs to be considered here is whether there are any specific issues that need to be identified at each level of analysis. Three key issues in intercultural communication theory for example, formed the basis of the first part of this thesis: a broader social perspective, the relationship of homogeneity and heterogeneity and the relationship of culture and communication. The idea of developing a broader social perspective is what gives this project its overall direction and should be seen as the primary goal of theory building. The communication-culture relationship is really the fundamental concern of all intercultural communication and constitutes the unifying theme for this (and any) theory building. As such it will be an underlying and ongoing concern for all analysis. The issue of the relationship between homogeneity and heterogeneity, on the other hand, has been identified as the issue which, more than any other, will define the multicultural character of a society and its interactions. This suggests that at each level of analysis, particular attention needs to be paid to how the issue of homogeneity and heterogeneity applies, understood specifically, with reference to Hannerz’s terminology, as an interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces.

What is being suggested here then, is that analysis can be organised according to a three-tiered approach that identifies the structural, social and episodic features of interaction and that addresses the key issue of homogeneity and heterogeneity at each level. This approach is seen as the appropriate way of discussing communication as it occurs within its social context (specifically the multicultural context) and of applying the systemic model of communication suggested in the previous section.

3.4 The Context-Episode Connection.

A third methodological issue here is that of how to actually set out the connections that exist between the social context and the communication episode.

The key proposition being followed here, taken from Giddens, is that the structuring
principles of a society are reproduced in the interactions of its members. This has been identified as an effective way to give direction to a discussion of intercultural communication as it occurs in a multicultural context because it suggests that such communication has to be seen in the light of the social structures that produce it. It represents an important principle for theory building because the concepts of intercultural communication that dominate current theory apply primarily to what we have called “between-society” communication which needs to be seen as different in nature to what we have called “within-society” communication. It is asserted here that “within-society” communication has to be understood with reference to the society that it is “within”. To be able to do this the question of how to explore the connections between the broader social context and the communication that occurs within it needs to be addressed.

First, it can be recognised that a society provides an overall framework for what occurs within it. According to Giddens (1984), the structuring principles of a society are what give that society its overall character, that is, they set the limits, the “point of closure”, for what that society can be (p.29). These principles are, he says, “the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them systemic form” (p.17). Giddens sees that these principles constitute a paradigmatic dimension, that is, a prescription for what is possible within a society. The particular patterns of action that are reproduced in social situations thus constitute a syntagmatic dimension. Giddens’ use of the paradigm/syntagm model is a helpful way of conceptualising the relationship between social structure and social interaction, although it needs to be recognised (as in fact Giddens does) that this is not just a matter of a range of interactive choices being offered and members of society who then decide to make certain choices in their own social interactions. It needs to be recognised that the contents of the “paradigm” have values attached to them which the structuring principles generate. In exploring the nature of the social structure from this point of view, one can ask first the question “What is possible?” (what is part of the paradigm?) in that society. In identifying what is possible in a society, we must also identify what values are attached to such possibilities: are they prescribed, preferred, allowed, deterred or prohibited?

Second, we need to consider whether there are any aspects of social structure that have a particular significance for understanding the nature of the communication that occurs within it. It is proposed here that the context-episode connection can be explored
through four particular lines of enquiry, or four points of focus: meaning (understood as socially constructed), social relations, social identities and social behaviour.

Giddens (1984), for example, focussed in his discussion on three aspects of social structure: signification, domination and legitimation (p.29). He saw signification as realised institutionally in symbolic orders and modes of discourse and interactively in communication. While Giddens focusses on signification in terms of modality (a way of interacting), the idea of signification connects with broader questions of meaning in general, that is, signification systems are there to signify something and that can be understood in terms of a society’s meaning systems. Regarding structures of domination, Giddens saw that they are realised institutionally in economic and political systems and interactively in power relations. Once again Giddens’ focus here can be related to the issue of how a society organises its broad patterns of social relations, with issues of power being a key (but not the only) component of that organisation. Regarding structures of legitimation, Giddens saw that they are realised institutionally in legal systems and interactively in sanctions. The broader issue that surrounds the issue of legitimation is that of how a society organises the social behaviour of its members. Legitimation as Giddens addresses it, is certainly an important aspect of that organisation, but is not the only aspect.

Habermas (1996) followed a similar line of argument to Giddens, holding that the characteristics of the lifeworld, the “totality of socio-cultural facts” (p.132) are reproduced in the communicative action of individuals (because it connects new situations with existing conditions of the lifeworld), although his discussion represents a more specific focus on communication than Giddens. Habermas argued that communication is always embedded in particular relations to socio-cultural knowledge (which suggests a connection between communication and meaning systems), to legitimate orders of social membership, integration and socialisation (which suggests the connection between communication and systems of identification, social relations and social behaviour) and the particular inner world of the individual (that is, the individual as a socially acting “self”, with perceptions, feelings, intentions, which suggests the connection between communication and identification). Similarly, Young (1996 p.122f), suggested that communication is framed within normatively defined social relationships of speakers and hearers (relational and behavioural systems), and in a “constructed and perceived expressive authenticity” (or as a true representation of themselves, thus connecting with systems of identification).
Hannerz (1992) also explored a number of issues that bear out the importance of the four focuses suggested here. His discussion of “cultural apparatus”, the institutional producers of meaning that organise a society’s fundamental ideological structures (p.82ff), suggests that people’s consciousness and the personal meaning systems that infuse it are connected intimately to systems of meaning and meaning creation that characterise the society. His discussion of “perspective” (p.65ff) suggests that individuals draw on their experience of being located in a social structure to generate their particular meaning systems. This suggests a connection both with a society’s meaning systems and with the society’s system of social relations (because perspectives emerge out of a negotiation of the various social roles that individuals fill).

Hannerz’s four frameworks for analysing cultural flow (Form of Life, Market, State and Movement, p.47ff) are also instructive. The “Form of life” framework analyses meaning creation with reference to the everyday practicalities of production, reproduction, home, work, and neighbourhood and how such experiences and interests generate habitual and enduring points of view. This suggests that communication, or meaning creation, connects with particular social relations (as experienced in the neighbourhood, the workplace etc) and also with systems of social behaviour (as expressed in the every day, habitual and normalised activities of social life). The “market” framework (or a focus on meaningful forms as commodities) and the “State” framework (power-based organisational control over activities within a territory, with people are seen as “citizens”, and a certain level of cultural homogeneity engineered through a centralised flow of meaning) both indicate a connection between communication and systems of social relations (for example people as consumers or producers) and communication and systems of identification (for example, citizenship and non-citizenship). The “movements” framework (where meaning is considered with reference to organisations which exist for consciousness raising and the transformation of cultural meaning) connects with systems of social identification (for example, where identification with the meaning implies at least to some extent, identification with the label attached to the people who produce it).

Finally, Hannerz’s discussion of symmetry and asymmetry (p.58ff) recognises that people in a society exist in various kinds of equal or unequal relations which also affect the way communication happens. This could be in terms for example, of perceived status or social role at an interpersonal level (which would engage a society’s relational, identifica-
tional and behavioural systems), but in also terms of the general ways in which people have more or less input into meaning creation, more or less resources for communicating and more or less capacity for communicating on different scales (one to one, one to many). These also are connected to the broad patterns of social relations which characterise a society.

Indications from these various theorists are then, that relational systems, meaning systems, behavioural systems and identification systems constitute four key focuses that allow a more detailed consideration of the context-episode connection. It is proposed here then, that these four focuses, form the basis of an organising model for further theory building regarding intercultural communication. It will be important as a precursor to that further development, to consider how each of these focuses contributes to the organising model suggested here.

A focus on the structures of meaning that characterise a particular society requires, as Giddens suggests, a consideration of the available symbolic systems that enable signification to occur, but it also requires a consideration of the systems that are present which generate and disseminate meaning. This is a recognition that the organisation of meaning emerges not only out of the available systems of signification (understood here as language, non-verbal behaviour, visual symbols) but also the ideological systems that organise meaning on a societal level and the way that particular systems of production and dissemination generate access to those meanings (as organised knowledge and as ideology). These meaning systems can be understood to perform a referential function in communication (Habermas 1996, p.133). They provide a background to, or a basis for, the content of interaction. As participants seek to generate meanings through interaction, they make reference to (implicitly or explicitly) those meaning systems. The question to be asked here is how the particular meanings that are generated in social interaction reproduce the available meaning systems of the society.

Hannerz (p.82ff) also recognised that a society’s ideological underpinnings are realised institutionally by cultural apparatuses that are the producers of meaning for that society. While this does not necessarily imply that meanings are always imposed on the members of society, it does indicate that individual meaning creation (the syntagmatic dimension) takes place within the context of the meaning systems that the social structure makes available (the paradigmatic dimension). The range of meanings that are generated by a society’s
cultural apparatus may be limited or may be extensive, depending on the type of society. Habermas (1996 p.133ff) also saw that the shared lifeworld of participants forms the background to communication with the cultural milieu providing participants with patterns of interpretation “that make possible their interpretive accomplishments”. The lifeworld therefore is to some extent, already interpreted, although participants also engage reflexively with these interpretive patterns. This suggests then, that participants use these available patterns of reference and interpretation to generate meaning in their interactions. It will be the characteristic organising systems of a society that determine what range of meanings is and is not available to its members.

Hannerz (p.65ff) also argued that individuals, at any one time, are surrounded by a flow of externally available, culturally shaped meanings which influence their ordering of experience, although individuals (as agents) are actively involved in dealing practically, intellectually and emotionally with situations and may extend or modify meanings if necessary. The way individuals organise their response to this flow of meaning (and the congruence or incongruence of meaning with experience) is what Hannerz calls “perspective”. Hannerz saw that perspectives emerge out of a negotiation of the various social roles that individuals fill in a society, the particular situations in which they are involved and the flow of meaning/s that surround those roles and situations. Communication then, from this point of view, involves an engagement of these perspectives, and this engagement itself contributes to further generation of perspectives, as Hannerz comments: “one forms an understanding of others’ perspectives and puts one’s own perspective ‘into perspective’ .... knowingly or unknowingly one takes other perspectives into account in interactions” (p.67). What Hannerz encourages then, is a view that people generate meanings out of the total range of social experience they have in their society.

The idea here is that a society will have a particular system for directing meaning creation among its members. The collection of interpretive patterns that a particular system makes available may be large or small, but whatever the case may be, in specific episodes of meaning creation, participants will engage those available patterns. If for example, a social system is organised around the concept of individual autonomy (as opposed to say, social commitment), communication practices and the meanings that emerge from them will be directed towards specific individual outcomes rather than towards, say the maintenance of social harmony. What follows from this then, is a number of key questions that
will need to be addressed.

1. At the structural level, what structures of meaning (signifying systems, ideational systems, dissemination systems) emerge out of the structuring principles of a society?
2. At the social level, what particular kinds of meaning can emerge from these structures (within the contexts of social group, organisation, community and kinship network) and how might individuals generate their own specific structures of meaning (or perspectives) from within those socially generated structures of meaning.
3. At the episodic level, how are such perspectives organised and implemented in social encounters to generate interpersonal (intercultural) meaning?

A focus on social relations will consider the connection between the ways that people relate to each other as part of a social system, or the broad patterns of relating that exist in a society, and the way individuals relate to each other in an episode of interaction. What this means is that a particular social system will have ways of defining the types of social relations that can and do exist (e.g. employer to employee) and ways of indicating who does or does not (or can and cannot) fill particular positions or roles within those relations (e.g. through class distinctions). This also means that in general social interaction individuals will define themselves and others in terms of these social relations, and further that particular communicative relationships will also express the characteristics of these broad patterns of relations. This was recognised by Young (1996, p.122) who noted that communication is to be seen “in the light of normatively defined social relationships of speakers and hearers”, and this suggests that the way a social relationship is enacted in a given situation is understood (explicitly or implicitly) by the participants. These systems of social relations of a society can be understood as performing a framing function in communication, defining the ground on which the interpersonal encounter occurs. The interpersonal relationship of individuals in communication will have some reference to the way their social relationship is described or prescribed by the social system.

It will be important to consider then, what kinds of social relations can be examined in this regard. It can be recognised immediately that social relations can be described or defined in a variety of ways and that these definitions or descriptions are not mutually exclusive.
Social relations can for example be described in terms of its symmetry or asymmetry (Hannerz), that is, the balance or level of equality that characterises it. This symmetry or asymmetry can in turn, be described in terms of power, status, access and so on. Social relations may also be described, as in Schermerhorn (1970, p.20ff), in terms of integration or conflict. This means that people can relate to each other on the basis of interdependence or cooperation (because of the particular roles or functions they fulfill within an integrated social system) or on the basis of antagonism and non-cooperation (because of competition, for example, over resources or perceived inequalities). Relations can also be described in terms of various forms of participation, for example in social groups, in ethnic or other “communities”, in the society as a whole or in particular social activities.

The nature of social relations also depends very much on processes of categorisation and ascription which not only label individuals regarding their place in the social system but also attach particular values to those labels. Deschamps (1982, p.87ff) for example, notes that, in the case of social groups, the significance of a group only exists because of perceived differences with other groups and that groups exist only in the context of a common set of social values. These common sets of values and the perceived differences between groups (understood with reference to those values) structure those groups into particular types of social relations, such as dominant and subordinate. It is because participants categorise themselves and others by reference to things like group membership that social relations are activated in social interaction. Similarly, Hewstone and Jaspers (1982, p.111ff) note that social categories both provide a system of orientation for self-reference, but also lead to particular kinds of intergroup behaviour, such as in-group favouring and out-group discrimination. It can be recognised then, that together with the particular categorisations that define social relations will come stereotypical perceptions, attitudes and expectations which all play an important role in the communication process.

Fundamentally then, it is recognised that a society’s system of social relations will play a key role in defining the relationship that exists between individuals in interaction. Individuals will certainly be capable of engaging in behaviour that is contrary to the behaviour that might be expected within a particular kind of relationship, however it must still be recognised that those expectations exist because the particular structuring principles of the society have set them in place. The key questions that need to be asked then, are:
1. At the structural level, what kinds of social relations are identified and organised by the structuring principles?
2. At the social level, how does the structuring of social relations within a society emerge in the broad patterns of social relations through which people interact?
3. At the episodic level, how do these broad patterns of social relations influence the way a particular interpersonal relationship is organised and how does this frame the communication that occurs.

A focus on the issue of identity or identification suggests that episodes of communication need to be seen in relation to the sense of self that participants bring with them, but also that this individual sense of self needs to be seen as part of the wider processes of identification that characterise the particular social system in which the episode occurs.

This connection between identity and communication was recognised by Habermas (1996) when he pointed out that communication always involves reference to the particular inner world of the individual participant and that communication is a recognition and expression of a person’s own subjectivity. Further, he argued that through participation in interaction participants develop, confirm, stabilise and renew their identities (p.139). Similarly, Young (1996, p.122) argued that communication is embedded in an intentionality on the part of the participants, to represent, authentically, themselves as they see themselves. It can be proposed here that identity, or identification serves an orientational function in communication. This means that a person’s understanding of who and what he or she is, and who or what other participants are, will have a large bearing on the approach taken in a particular situation.

The issue of identity does not of course, only relate to how individuals identify themselves. It is also to do with how they are identified by others. This was recognised by Gudykunst and Lim (1985) who investigated possible differences in communication style which might exist due to the variables of ethnicity and gender. They focussed particularly on the perceptions of the participants about the “style” of those in these categories, but also recognised that the issue of social class may be involved as well. The broad issue of how people perceive each other connects ultimately with questions of social identity and identification.
It needs to be acknowledged also that the formation of identity is not just a matter of developing an individual self-awareness. Identity is also part of an individual’s experience of the social world in which he or she lives, formed, as Sarup (1994, p.102) notes, “as a consequence of a process of interaction between people, institutions and practices”. An identity then allows a person to be socially “marked” within a particular set of social boundaries (Sarup, p.103) or to be “located” within a social structure (Harris 1979, p.3ff). Harris also suggested that a perception of one’s place in a community is a common factor in all definitions of identity.

Giddens recognised this too, by proposing that the experience of modernity and the structures of (post)modern society produce a “duality of agency and structure” (1996, p.163), meaning that social life revolves around an intersection of individual agents and the social structures through which their experience is organised. This produces a “reflexive project of the self” where identity emerges as a “marker” (p.281) of one’s location in time and space (that is, in the social world). Self identity, he says “forms a trajectory across the different institutional settings of modernity” (p.14).

Second, it should be seen that that particular social worlds have ways of directing the process of identity construction. Anderson’s discussion of nationhood and nationalism (1990) suggests that where societies are organised as nation-states, participation in those societies is built around notions of an overriding sense of (imagined) community. Identification with this kind of “community” is couched primarily in terms of where the national boundaries are (setting up a dichotomy of “inside” and “outside”) as well as who can or cannot be within those boundaries (“friend or foe”, “us and them”) and in what ways (citizen, resident, visitor).

Stratton and Ang (1994, p.130ff)) point out that societies traditionally organised their identities in terms of cultural homogeneity (that is, those who are part of the society are essentially the same). This has meant that at various times, nations have prescribed that only those who fit the cultural criteria can be a member of society (for example, the “White Australia” policy), or if those who are culturally different are allowed in, then they need to forsake their original cultural identity and embrace a new one more compatible with the new society (assimilationism). Similarly, with the development of explicitly multicultural societies, systems of identification have shifted from an emphasis on one unified, homogeneous “imagined community” (as in Anderson), to the nation as a space in which many
“imagined communities” (usually, though not exclusively, defined by ethnicity) live and interact. There will still be however, particular kinds of prescriptions (implicit or explicit) about what constitutes a legitimate form of identification. Certain ethnic communities (where ethnicity is defined in terms of national origins) may at times have less legitimacy as point of identity reference than do other communities (such as during times of war or times of strained international relations), or than at other times (such as peace or friendly relations).

Hall (1991) notes that in postmodern conditions, although there is a clinging to certain forms of collective identification (such as ethnicity), in order to affirm a sense of “true” self, the meaning of these is constantly fragmented and eroded so that this “true” self becomes extremely difficult to stabilise. Identity in such conditions becomes a process of identification which never really comes to a conclusion. Similarly, Chambers (1994) observes that the ability to move across national (hence cultural) boundaries in the contemporary world, often encouraged by those in charge of state mechanisms, carries with it a movement of identity, so that identity itself becomes a story: a “fabricated reality” (p.26).

It is recognised here then, that identities are constructed both with reference to individual social experience and under the direction of social systems that set the rules for identification and identity construction. This has particular implications for the process of social categorisation: “the way an individual or culture identifies similarities and differences between persons and groups in their milieu” (Tajfel and Forgas 1981, p.118). People categorise themselves and others with reference to particular social identities and these categorisations, as Tajfel and Forgas note (p.115f), arise within particular socio-cultural milieus, reflect the dominant values and representation of that milieu and therefore are more than cognitive classifications: they are “impregnated with values, culture and social representation”. This means that members of a society categorise each other in terms of the system/s of identification, and thus categorisation, that are available in that society and so will reproduce those systems in their interactions. Such reproduction may be seen for example, in one group imposing an identity on the other, which members of the other group may either accept or reject (Louw-Pofgeiter 1988, p.106ff). The key idea here though, is that the way individuals identify and categorise themselves and others will serve to orient them in particular ways towards each other during interaction.

With this in mind then, the key questions to be answered here are:
1. At the structural level, what are the forms of identification, generated by the structuring principles and realised in particular institutions, that characterise the social system?

2. At the social level, what kinds of social identity are members of society able to construct out of their social experience and what particular forms of identity do specific groups of people attempt to construct in the light of this?

3. At the episodic level, what kind of social identity do the participants activate and how does this orient them to the interaction?

A focus on behavioural systems will seek to consider the way that the general structures for behaving or acting socially in any given society are reproduced in the behaviour of individuals in communication episodes. Such structures can be seen as institutionalised in things like legal systems, national constitutions and policy formulations, but also in less formalised systems such as moral and ethical systems, and cultural systems (both macro-culture and micro-culture as they exist in a particular society) that generate things like social rules, norms, rewards and sanctions. Such behavioural systems can be understood as having a directive function in communication, describing, if not prescribing, the kinds of behavioural options that are available to participants in a given situation. This has been recognised in such theoretical approaches as Rule Theory which holds that individuals apply their knowledge (implicit and explicit) of social rules in a particular situation (for example by conforming or not conforming). The purpose here of course, is to consider the nature of the system that produces such rules as well as the way individuals may or may not engage with those rule systems in social interaction. Communicative behaviour has to be seen as more than just an expression of individual psychology. It also needs to be seen as action that has meaning within and for the social context of its occurring.

This basic idea of communication as social action, according to Trosberg (1995, p.1), is that “in saying something a speaker also does something”, or (quoting Searle, 1962) that language is “a series of acts in the world”. Communication, from this perspective, is directed towards a particular purpose in that world. It achieves this social purpose, as Habermas (1996, p.117ff) points out, by reproducing the structures of the lifeworld, thus connecting a new situation with existing social conditions. These social conditions, he notes,
include “systems of rules according to which we produce complexes of social interaction”. Individuals (or “Actors”), can be understood then, as “acting” within this world, with reference to this world and in ways that reproduce this world. Such action, Habermas suggests (1996, p.11ff), both integrates actors into their social world and affirms their membership in it because through communication socio-cultural knowledge is continued (although it can also be changed and developed), social identities are stabilised and individual lives are brought into connection with collective life (1996, p.5ff).

Young (1996, p.20ff) also sees that communication constitutes a form of political-ethical action, because it occurs within “a flow of progressive and vital living” (or particular conditions of social life). He sees for instance, that while meanings can be imposed, cultural members can accept or refuse those meanings. Such agency (or autonomous social action), has implications for the way social identities are created, social relations are expressed and ultimately how meaning is created in interaction. In particular, Young sees that when communication is understood as social action it also needs to be understood with reference to its social effect. Meaning, he believes, is created rhetorically, or with a view to creating an impact, and this impact can be felt interpersonally or socially.

What is being suggested here then, is that an understanding of communication as action places the particular behaviours that are exhibited in a communication episode within the context of the systems of behaviour that a social system makes available (legal, moral/ethical, normative etc). In this way, communicative behaviour can not only be seen for its meaning in the interpersonal situation (e.g. appropriate/not appropriate) but also for the social context (e.g. does it reinforce or challenge the dominant behavioural system?). With this in mind, the key questions to be addressed here are:

1. At the structural level, how do the structuring principles define the ground for social acting or behaving and how is this realised institutionally?
2. At the social level, what are the possibilities for behaviour that are available for people to use in their social interactions and are there specific sets of behaviours that particular groups of people typically employ during interaction?
3. At the episodic level, how do individual participants organise their own interpersonal communicative behaviour?
This discussion has proposed four key focuses that can guide the development of a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication and they will be developed further in the next chapter. It would be helpful at this point though, to present, diagrammatically, a broad organising model for theory development based on the preceding discussion.

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The diagram sets out the four focuses and what they mean at each level of analysis. The focus on meaning sees a connection between the organisation of meaning at the structural level with the possibilities for meaning creation across the society. This then affects the way individuals produce and negotiate meanings in communicative episodes. The focus on social relations connects the way social relations are defined and managed at the structural level with the forms of relating that occur across the society, and then with the impact that has on the way individuals define and manage the communicative relationships that develop in specific episodes. The focus on identity links the processes of identification that are organised at the structural level with the kinds of social identities that are constructed among the membership of a society and how these orient individuals in specific communicative episodes. The focus on behaviour sees a connection between the processes that organise and monitor behaviour at the structural level and the behavioural possibilities that exist among a society’s members. The specific communicative behaviours in which individuals engage during interaction are seen as emerging out of these possibilities.

With the aim of the analysis proposed here being the development of a multicultural
perspective on intercultural communication, the framework needs to be adjusted to make that possible.

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The framework as proposed here offers a way of conceptualising the links between the multicultural social context and the intercultural interactions that take place within it. The structuring principles in this case, are those that guide the management of cultural diversity within the society. The structural processes of managing meaning, including meanings about culture and cultural diversity, are seen in relation to culturally generated meanings (especially among ethnic groups) and their impact on how members of those groups engage in individual meaning creation. The structures of social relations are seen in their connection with things like the particular patterns of inter-ethnic relations that operate within that society and how these frame communicative relationships between people who are culturally different. Structures of identification are examined in their relationship to the ways that members of a society (who are also members of ethnic groups) construct their cultural identities and what kinds of orientation these produce in intercultural encounters. A society’s behavioural systems are seen in connection to the particular modes of behaviour that characterise specific cultural groups and the behavioural choices that are then available to individuals.
Drawing on this conceptual framework, further theoretical development will therefore elaborate:

1. A consideration of how the organising principles of multicultural society might be reproduced in social interaction.
2. A three-tiered analysis that considers communication in its relation to the structural character of the social context, the patterns of social interaction that emerge from these structures and the character of interpersonal episodes that take place within these broad patterns
3. A consideration of the nature of social experience at each level of analysis, based on an understanding of social processes as characterised by the interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces.
4. A systemic model of communication that accounts not only for the things that influence communication episodes (inputs), but also for the types of interpersonal negotiation that occur during interaction (process) and the things that emerge from the episodes (outcomes).

This development will be the task of the following chapter.
4. Elaboration of a Multicultural Perspective

4.1 Introduction.

The previous chapter set out a conceptual framework for developing a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication based on a three-tiered approach (structural, social, episodic) that is applied to four areas of focus (meaning, social relations, identity and behaviour). Discussion will now turn to an elaboration of this framework.

To start this elaboration, a number of preliminary points need to be made. First, although each of the four focuses proposed constitutes a separate line of enquiry for the purpose of this discussion, they should all be seen as interconnected and overlapping. Issues raised in connection with one of the focuses will invariably arise in others. This means, secondly, that the model is only meant to represent a conceptual framework that will help develop a clear and coherent analysis. It is not meant to imply some kind of compartmentalisation of social and cultural experience. Finally, at each level and in each category of analysis, the issue around which all discussion revolves, in line with the theoretical foundations already laid out previously, is the relationship between “centripetal” (or homogenising) forces on the one hand and “centrifugal” (or differentiating) forces on the other. It is this that the analysis will particularly elaborate as the key to developing a multicultural perspective.

4.2 The Structuring Principles of Multicultural Societies.

The approach to analysing intercultural communication being developed here takes as its starting point the specific structuring principles that give a society its character. These “structuring principles”, according to Giddens (1984), are the sets of deeply embedded principles of organisation that set the range of social rules for a society and allow recognisably consistent forms of integration (or standardised social practices) to continue over time. In order to generate a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication then, the first point of discussion is to clarify what structuring principles define and organise a multicultural society.

It can be recognised firstly that a multicultural society is one which is organised
according to a particular understanding of its cultural life. The term “multicultural” means essentially that a society’s cultural life is one made up of many cultures. How these many cultures exist, and what these cultures mean depends, as has been noted previously, on the specific multicultural principles that define and organise cultural life in specific societies. This suggests a number of further issues that need to be explored.

It is important for example, to see a multicultural society as a particular kind of pluralist society. The idea of pluralism (as a principle for organising social life) revolves around the notion that a society carries within it a variety of independent associations which exist, among other things, to ensure that particular kinds of civil liberties are delivered to the society’s members (Breitling 1980, p.11). There is in this social pluralism, a basic opposition between the unifying mechanism of the state and the organised social groups that exist within it. This, according to Gahan (1990, p.6ff) creates competition between state and social group for the allegiance of the individual. Individuals though, tend to take the group rather than the state as the first point of reference for social and cultural identity. The state, on the other hand draws allegiance from individuals through broader points of reference, and by being able to encompass the many various social groupings within its overall political control. The state, to maintain cohesion, needs to exercise control through these broader structures and points of reference. Gahan sees this creating not a neatly unified “fit”, but relations of tension “horizontally” between competing group interests and “vertically” between group and state interests.

Multiculturalism expresses this basic principle of organisation by recognising the significance of particular ethnic-cultural identities as points of reference and bringing them within the control of state political structures. This means that a society’s cultural life will be defined primarily in terms of the diversity of cultures that exist within it, although there must also be a state-generated cultural unity in order to maintain cohesion. At the same time it must be recognised that there will be a concurrent tension existing between the cultural homogeneity that state mechanisms require to function as state mechanisms (the centripetal forces) and the cultural heterogeneity (centrifugal forces) that a plurality of culture-based social groups brings to a social system.

Another issue that needs to be considered here is that while pluralism represents the underlying principle for multicultural social organisation, pluralism itself can take a variety of forms.
Schermerhorn (1970, p.122ff), for example, identified four different types of pluralism: 1. *Ideological* pluralism, where members of a minority group seek to preserve their way of life even though it is different from the dominant or majority group; 2. *Political* pluralism, where a plurality of autonomous interest groups and associations bring pressure to bear on the political decision-making through lobbying or the media; 3. *Cultural* pluralism, where one or more ethnic group has language, religion, kinship or values embodied in lifestyle patterns that identify it as different from the dominant or majority group; 4. *Structural* pluralism where a society has plural and, to some degree autonomous, structural units, connected to certain broad structures of government control.

Any particular society can be identified then, with reference to any of these possibilities, although it should be recognised that a society’s particular form of multiculturalism will rarely fit neatly into any one category but is likely to contain elements of a variety of them. The type of multiculturalism that defines a particular society then, will grow out of the kind of pluralism that motivates it. A structural multiculturalism for example, may emerge where a number of independent ethnic groups have historically shared the same territory and have been brought under the control of a common state structure. A structural multiculturalism may also emerge as a result of an ideological multiculturalism where particular groups seek some kind of self-determination. In Western multicultural societies it is usually the case that the cultural pluralism that results from immigration policies will engender forms of political pluralism where the various ethnic groups seek to have their aspirations, needs, problems or grievances addressed through political decision-making. Multiculturalist policies can themselves be born out of this kind of situation.

Understanding multiculturalism as a structuring principle is partly achieved by understanding the type of pluralism that it expresses. It should be noted though, that there are other factors to consider which complicate the way multiculturalism operates as a structuring principle. Multiculturalism must, for example, be seen in the light of a reworking of cultural pluralism on a global scale.

This suggests first, a recognition that the nations of the world are moving away from an “us and them” relationship understood as distant and unconnected, and towards an “us and them” relationship understood as involved and interdependent. Such involvement can produce greater potential for international agreement but can also highlight a variety of antagonisms that revolve around how to understand and organise this global pluralism.
(Ang 1993, p.197). The emerging Asian economies for example, while incorporated into the global system of capitalism have at the same time attempted to present themselves to the world as a different, and potentially superior, version of it. They have done this by holding their economic and social success (e.g. law and order) to be evidence of a successful “Asianness” that stands in contrast to a declining “Westernness” (Ang and Stratton 1995). This narrative of Asianness sees, as Ang and Stratton put it, that “an empowered East, having appropriated and reconstituted Western modernity, now unsettles the established hegemony of the West by questioning its moral worth” (p.66). The Western view of itself as “free and democratic” against an East that is “authoritarian and despotic” is now being countered by a view of the East as “ordered and harmonious” against a West that is “decadent and selfish” (Ang and Stratton, p.67). Such ideological antagonism becomes more obvious because of the greater degree of connection and participation that exists between nations in the current global relations.

Such globalised relations imply secondly, that the way pluralism exists within societies is changing. The idea of a culturally plural society as a collection of culturally different groups that exist through a common commitment to social unity (usually defined in terms of national loyalty), is being disrupted by flows of labour and capital across borders. There is, as Jokinen (1994 p.209) puts it, “a weakening of identification with the nation-state because global capital allows a by-passing of national boundaries, thus changing the frame of reference for social life.”. People may, for example, live and work in a variety of societies while maintaining citizenship in another that they rarely visit. Others may change their citizenship for the sake of expediency, while still others may live permanently in one nation, either as a resident or a citizen but retain strong affective ties to their place of origin, thus creating dual national loyalties (Ong 1999, p.6). This means that multiculturalism as a way of structuring social life can no longer assume that cultural diversity will easily and naturally be contained within an overriding set of commitments to national unity. It faces the challenge of organising and managing the antagonisms and contradictions raised by the presence of those who participate in the life of the society but have no fundamental commitment to the society itself.

A second complicating factor is that the internal cultural processes of societies are also shifting in response to contemporary conditions. These serve to complicate the way pluralism itself is understood.
Such conditions for example, bring about a fragmentation of life experience, “to the point”, Jameson argues, “where the norm itself has been eclipsed.” (1992, p.196). This fragmentation, for Jameson, implies not a heterogeneity managed by common points of reference, but a heterogeneity that exists in itself without a common point of reference: “A field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm” (p.197). How far this fragmentation characterises social organisation is open to dispute. It is clear that forms of homogenisation and unification continue to exist as structuring principles, however it is also clear that the dominant discourses that have previously shaped national psyches are being challenged by a variety of “other” discourses that undermine the possibility for there to be one unifying set of values or discourses for a society. The “grand narrative”, Lyotard (in 1992, p.189) argues, “has lost its credibility, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or of a narrative of emancipation”. This proliferation of voices, styles and identities undermines the essential meaning of pluralism as a means of organising difference within an overriding unity.

Further, the uncertainty created by rapid change, the undermining of previously held norms and the fragmentation of life has produced an accompanying shift towards an affirmation of identity as a point of anchorage in the face of this uncertainty (McLaren 1993). The problem for multiculturalism, as McLaren argues, is that there is not always a simple and direct correlation between culture and identity. Multicultural philosophies and policies might be able to manage cultural diversity in some respects (for example, immigrants), but may not be able to account for other aspects of it, such as the activation of ethnicity as a form of political action or the capacity of cultures and identities to be reformed or recreated in response to changing social conditions. Pluralism, McLaren suggests (p.128), may therefore be more to do with a proliferation of identities rather than a proliferation of cultures as such. The challenge for multiculturalism as a structuring principle will be to find ways to account for the changing nature of culture and identity under changing social conditions.

The structuring impact of multiculturalism therefore, depends not only on an underlying rationale of pluralism that gives shape to it, but also on its capacity to respond to the various internal and external process and influences that are changing the way culture and cultural diversity are understood and experienced.

It is the contention here then, that multiculturalism represents a structuring principle...
that operates through an interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces. At each level of analysis (structural, social, episodic) it is this interplay that needs to be considered regarding its implications for meaning creation, relationships, identity formation and behaviour in social interaction.

In summary, a number of general observations can be made about the character of multicultural societies relevant to the issue of intercultural communication. It can be observed first that the primary difference between intersocietal communication and intrasocietal communication is that intersocietal communication operates on the basis of distance between the participants, while the participants in a multicultural context exist in connection rather than distance. Rather than speak of intercultural “gaps”, it may be more helpful to speak of an intercultural “interface”, a zone of connection where cultural similarities and differences intersect. Second, when people in a multicultural society interact they must deal with the dilemma created by a system which, on the one hand, advocates the legitimacy of all cultural formations, but on the other, assumes the importance of a homogeneous culture in order to function as a system and therefore expects particular cultural formations to be subservient to the requirements of the whole. Third, it is both cultural similarity and cultural difference that need to be negotiated in intercultural encounters. This means that communication constitutes an exploration of similarity and a dialogue across difference. One or the other may prove to be more the case in any particular episode but there will always be elements of both involved. Fourth, because the cultures of multicultural societies are in process, that is, they exist in an ambiguous relationship with their place of origin, involve responses to current social experience and are subject to influence from other cultural formations present in the society, it should be expected that intercultural encounters will produce a more powerful reflection on the nature and meaning of those cultural formations than would be the case within cultural groups, or between societies. The possibility of changed or new cultural formations emerging from these encounters must therefore be held as an important part of intercultural communication processes in multicultural societies.

The task now is to explore how these features of multiculturalism are realised in the four focuses: meaning systems, social relations, social identities and communicative behaviour.
4.3 Focus 1: Meaning Systems.

4.3.1 Introduction.

According to the organising model that has been developed for this analysis, the linkage between context and episode is understood as:

Meaning systems → Cultural meanings → Engagement of cultural meanings

Following this model, the focus on meaning systems will examine the connection between the ways in which a social system structures meaning and the particular meanings that are generated in a communication episode.

The term “meaning system” here refers to the means by which a social system creates, defines, maintains and controls the meaning generation process across society through its institutionalised practices (Giddens 1984). The term “cultural meaning” refers to the kinds of meanings that people can and do access and generate as part of the social system, both in terms of the common forms of meaning creation that apply to all and the particular meanings that people generate as part of cultural groups within society. The “engagement of cultural meanings” is therefore recognised as the process of negotiating meaning in a communication episode through reference to both common forms of meaning creation and culturally-specific meanings.

The focus on meaning systems here will be developed, as suggested in the previous chapter, with reference to three specific areas of consideration: ideational, significational and disseminational.

4.3.2 Ideational.

The ideational area is that which deals with the cognitive aspect of meaning creation: what goes on in people’s minds and how this creates the content of communication. This draws particularly on an understanding of culture as ideational, that is, as shared knowledge (e.g. Keesing 1972)
At a structural level, it will be recognised that social systems have ways of organising and articulating knowledge, as perspective and as ideology.

Perspective, as Hannerz (1992) pointed out, is the cognitive response people make to the flow of meanings that are around them. While a society may have as many such perspectives as it has people, it will also have a cultural apparatus (Hannerz, p.82) that operates to produce particular perspectives for the society as a whole. These will be presented to the members of society as preferred. A preferred or dominant perspective, or set of meanings, is distinguished here from ideology mainly in that ideology is usually understood to have a normative or directive force, either through being imposed by those in power for the purpose of social control or by collective agreement for the purpose of social organisation (O’Shaughnessy, 1999, p.158ff).

For the purpose of this discussion then a “dominant perspective” will be understood as a preferred set of meanings generated by a society’s cultural apparatus, while a “dominant ideology” will be understood to mean the organisation of those meanings into a coherent meaning system in order to direct the thinking of the society’s members. The key issue here for intercultural communication is the degree to which a social system emphasises the necessity of dominant perspectives (the centripetal force) over the possibility of a proliferation of specific, culturally-generated perspectives (the centrifugal force).

The strength of the centripetal force in this regard will depend on how strong the dominant ideology is, not only in defining things like national identity and membership but also in defining what multiculturalism is. National ideology, in other words, is not only about providing a standardised perspective on what it is to belong to the nation, but also on what it means to be a member of an ethnic community within the nation. Official discourses on multiculturalism will embody both an ideology of national membership and an ideology of ethnic membership.

It is likely that such dominant perspectives will be incorporated and activated at a bureaucratic level first to manage how immigrants are expected to see themselves when they arrive. Immigrants can be categorised for example, as refugees, residents, visitors, business people or employees and these kinds of categories can carry with them particular connotations. Similarly, they can be categorised with reference to certain ethnic or national categories which may or may not be meaningful to the immigrants themselves. Second, they
will indicate the kinds of cultural expectations being placed on immigrants, for example, by requiring immigrants to provide information about their nuclear rather than their extended families for bureaucratic purposes, the immigrants are in fact being expected to define their “family” as nuclear rather than anything else. Third, they will specify the degree of support offered during their settling in. This can be seen in things like the availability of grants, access to or exclusion from the welfare system, or continuing official support (as opposed to local support from local communities, charities, churches or ethnic organisations) once they are settled in.

The strength of the centrifugal force will be seen in the degree to which a proliferation of perspectives is in fact possible in the particular system. This relates (at an ideological level) to the degree of liberalness that motivates the particular political systems. Where it is believed that a variety of perspectives is valuable for the running of society, that proliferation will ensue. This will mean that it is possible for voices of opposition, voices of marginality, voices of alternative politics or voices which lobby for particular rights to be heard rather than silenced. The strength of the centrifugal force will also be related to the degree to which a system articulates the accommodation of cultural difference in order to maintain itself. Migrants and ethnic groups can be defined ideologically in various ways, (e.g. as necessary for population growth, as able to take particular types of jobs, as welcome, as tolerated) and this can serve to reinforce perspectives already held about migrants and ethnic groups. Alternatively, it can generate different kinds of perspectives that create debate or dissension among the society’s members. It can also have an impact on things like the way migrants and ethnic groups perceive themselves, the way they define their future in the society or the ongoing strength of their culturally-specific perspectives in the light of the dominant perspectives that they are presented with as part of the society.

In general terms then, the organisation of meaning at a structural level revolves around the ways in which those in power seek to achieve a standardisation of perspectives across the society over against their willingness to allow, or determination to promote, a simultaneous proliferation of perspectives throughout the society. The importance attached to either possibility will thus greatly influence the degree to which either possibility characterises the society in question. This structuring will then be realised in organisational or bureaucratic contexts such as those dealing with immigration, economics, education or social support, and the role they play either in standardising or proliferating perspectives. The
structuring force of these institutions however, will need to be balanced against the roles played by other institutions such as ethnic organisations, in supporting localised attitudes, ideologies or perspectives, and the degree of support, acceptance, tolerance or opposition they have from government, or other public institutions.

The key issue at the social level will be the ways in which dominant and commonly shared perspectives (centripetal forces) intersect with culture-specific perspectives to generate patterns of meaning creation within general social interaction. It should be recognised here that the relationship at the social level is not simply between the dominant perspectives produced at the structural level by those in power and the many perspectives generated by the various cultures in a society. It is also between the many specific perspectives that exist in a society and those that can be generated collectively by a society’s membership. The need for a population to deal for example, with current social, political, legal or moral issues that affect everyone, can help generate widespread sentiments about those issues. Such issues can also be a catalyst for the generation of specific responses from within particular cultural groups. The generation of meaning in the interaction among the various groups in society will therefore revolve around how those groups produce and articulate their own perspectives on the one hand, and how they access, consume and articulate dominant or common perspectives on the other.

A centripetal force will be generated when groups engage in particular strategies to have dominant or common perspectives foregrounded. This might be seen, for example, in communication strategies employed by a dominant group to impose an ideology on the rest of the population (as in propaganda, control of media content, education programs). Alternatively, it might be seen in forms of consultation that seek to generate particular perspectives by consensus. There may also be communicative activity within groups either to incorporate dominant or common perspectives within their cultural frame of reference (e.g. accepting aspects of a new way of life as good or necessary, accepting the need to speak the dominant language), or to incorporate their culture-specific perspective within dominant or common frames of reference (e.g. by promoting the acceptance of dual identifications).

A centrifugal force will be generated when groups engage in strategies to foreground their own culture-specific perspectives. This is likely to occur when intra-group communication reinforces their specific perspectives in the face of dominant or common perspec-
tives, for example, where there is a general agreement that their way of understanding a certain issue is preferable to any other, or where the maintenance of traditionally held ideas and understandings serves as a defence against group disintegration. Culture-specific perspectives can thus be used to engage critically with dominant or common perspectives, to challenge them or offer alternatives and to sustain and promote ethnic culture.

The strength and importance of culture-specific or dominant/common perspectives in the minds of the members of ethnic-cultural groups will clearly influence the way members of those groups activate and use these perspectives in their interactions with members of other groups or with other members of society in general. It will be expected then that the kinds of cultural meanings generated out of this relationship will also play an important role in shaping the interactions of individuals in any specific episode of intercultural communication.

Looking at the episodic level then, the key issue will be the way the culturally-generated meanings that participants bring into the interaction influence the negotiation of meaning that occurs during it.

The situation in which the interaction occurs can have an influence on what perspectives can in fact be activated. The situation may be specifically created to generate consensus out of a variety of perspectives (e.g. the meeting of an ethnic council, a public meeting in an ethnically diverse area), or it may be created to highlight different perspectives (e.g. a seminar to present a variety of views on a particular issue). The situation may be an informal setting for one-to-one interaction where the possibilities are open. It may also be a circumstance where a member of a specific group is alone among members of another group and where the pressure to accede to the perspective of the majority might either produce concession or stubborn resistance on the part of the one. What needs to be considered is the extent to which the situation itself predisposes the interaction to a foregrounding of dominant or common meanings or to a foregrounding of culture-specific meanings.

The type of input that the respective participants provide will be shaped by the perspectives that each have developed both as members of specific culturally-defined groups and as members of society as a whole. It may be possible for an individual to keep group-specific and dominant/common perspectives separated in his or her mind and activate whichever has more salience for the situation. It is also possible that the individual participant has chosen to prefer one perspective over the other or has found ways of synthesising
the two.

The way the process of meaning negotiation proceeds will depend partly on the way the particular perspectives introduced by the participants constitute a starting position for the interaction, that is, whether they foreground group-specific meanings or dominant-common meanings. It will also depend partly on the extent to which participants are willing and/or able to shift their perspectives during interaction. Meanings may converge, for example, if the participants are able to activate aspects of dominant/common perspectives that are seen as salient for the situation (such as the recognition of a common social purpose). On the other hand, meanings may diverge if (even despite the recognition of commonalities in meaning) group-specific meanings begin to take on a greater level of importance in the situation. This may occur, for example, where an idea that is central to group identity (such as a religious belief, a moral standard or a political position) is perceived to come under threat during interaction. The way the negotiation of meaning proceeds may, in that case, shift from being open or cooperative to being overtly defensive or aggressive in order to protect the idea in question.

4.3.3 Significational.

The significational area of meaning systems deals with the way meaning is expressed (or signified) through the various symbolic forms that are available to participants in interaction. The main form of signification in any socio-cultural system is its language (or group of languages) although there will be other symbolic forms (visual, non-verbal) available for use as well.

At the structural level, the primary issue to be considered is whether a society is monolingual or multilingual and what value is placed on either. It is possible for example, for a society to insist that one common language be practised to the exclusion of other languages. Those other languages, if not made illegal, can certainly be marginalised through ideological campaigns, through formal socialisation (e.g. compulsory education programs) and through lack of structural support for minority languages. It is also possible for minority languages to be “allowed” for specific purposes, for example as a support mechanism for immigrants while they learn the dominant languages. Minority languages can also be encouraged because of a recognition that they are of value for community cohesion and
participation, but also for international relations. Alternatively, a society may have a number of officially recognised dominant languages, for example where the society is made up of a number of recognised ethnic groups who structurally form the nation, or where the numbers who belong to particular immigrant groups are large enough to warrant such official recognition.

A centripetal force is generated for example, when immigrants are required or expected to learn the dominant language as a condition of their migration. A more powerful centripetal force though, lies in the fact that a dominant language is what is used, not only in official communication, but in general social interaction. For people to function effectively as part of the social system as a whole (to access information, to make use of the various dissemination systems, to participate in the various social institutions) some fluency in that language is necessary. Another centripetal function is the widespread and officially sanctioned use of universal symbolic systems, such as pictures or visual symbols that to allow speakers of other languages to understand things like directions and instructions.

A centrifugal force is generated at the structural level when minority languages are allowed, supported or even prescribed by those in power. This can be seen in the promotion of community languages through such things as the proliferation of language learning in school curricula or the official endorsement of community language schools. Further, these are not necessarily meant to be exclusively for members of those communities but also for speakers of the dominant language who are interested in learning them. Governments can also, for administrative purposes, institute mechanisms which allow people to use their community language to access services like interpreters or multilingual documents. A different kind of centrifugal force may occur at the structural level where governments adopt policies that expect people who are identified specifically with particular ethnic groups (i.e. where they are structurally marked off) to maintain their ethnic language.

At the social level, the signification issue revolves around the particular patterns of language usage by the various ethnic groups in society. This involves the relative level of importance that the groups attach to maintaining and using their community language, and to learning and using the dominant language. The level of importance attached to either language will influence a willingness or determination to use either language, the degree of reticence to use either language or a determination not to use either language.
Centripetally motivated signification then, can mean a number of things. It can mean that ethnic groups accept the necessity of using the dominant language as a standard practice for general interaction, or possibly for all interaction, even within the group. It can also mean that members of ethnic groups encourage, or perhaps force, their children to learn and speak the dominant language, even if they themselves are not so keen to learn it. It would be expected that the children will acquire the language anyway, as part of their socialisation, however it may be that, with newly migrated families for example, the parents try to start their children learning the new language as quickly as possible. Whatever the case may be, the children eventually become de facto interpreters for the parents, in order to help the parents communicate with speakers of the dominant language. Centripetally motivated signification can also mean the use of a common language (as distinct from the dominant language) as a means of bridging a language gap. This will involve the introduction of a third language option, beyond the dominant language and the particular community language/s involved as a way of communicating effectively. Members of a Vietnamese community for example, may discover that they can communicate effectively with members of an African community by using French rather than English (i.e. in an English-speaking country) as long as the members of both communities are not fluent in English. This may then become the standard communication practice for those communities.

Centrifugally motivated signification would see ethnic groups maintaining and promoting the use of their own community language as a standard communication practice among their own members. It would also mean that members of ethnic groups might exhibit a reluctance to adopt the dominant language, or at least show less enthusiasm for progressing in it. Ethnic groups will also seek to maintain a high level of community language learning and use among successive generations. The implications of this for intergroup interaction are first, that members of ethnic groups may be reluctant to engage in interaction because they believe they lack the necessary language fluency, or second, that interaction will always be difficult and will probably require the use of some kind of mediator (e.g. an interpreter). Another common occurrence is where members of ethnic groups use their own language deliberately in the presence of those who do not understand, as a means of excluding them.

Signification at the episodic level will involve the participants in a negotiation of the
use of common or dominant language over against the use of particular language.

The situation itself may prescribe either the use of a dominant language (e.g. a classroom, a workplace, a courtroom) or a community language (e.g. where a group of friends of the same ethnic background are holding a conversation). In either case, participants may have to weigh the pressure to use the prescribed language and the possible consequences of not using that language over against their own language preference, where that preference is something different to what is prescribed. In the case of the group of “ethnic” friends, if one who was not of that ethnic background wanted to join the conversation, a number of issues would arise. The newcomer would have to balance the desire to become part of this interaction against the likely feelings of exclusion that will arise from not being able to speak the prescribed language. It may be that the newcomer needs to wait for a different situation in order to speak to the group or any particular member of the group. On the other side, the group needs to balance its desire to continue conversing with each other in their preferred language against the need to communicate with the newcomer in another language. If it should be that the newcomer has some proficiency, or even much proficiency, in the prescribed language, the decision would still need to be made regarding which to use. Does the newcomer attempt to join the conversation by employing the prescribed language, however falteringly, or to join the conversation through recourse to another shared language, because the members of the group are fluent in that language?

The participants’ input as far as signification is concerned will be guided to large extent by their perceptions of the needs of the situation and their competence in the options that are available. The participants may feel that recourse to the dominant language or to an alternative shared language is the most appropriate way of achieving their communicative goals. On the other hand, where varying levels of competence are involved, a range of alternative possibilities may ensue. Participants may decide that they will do the best they can in the circumstances even if they do not understand much of what each other says. Alternatively, they may decide that communication can only occur through the use of a mediator. They may decide to use some kind of non-verbal signification or they may decide that it is better not to try at all. A lot will depend on the attitudes that the participants have towards themselves (e.g. the confidence to try to communicate regardless of the outcome), their attitude towards the other participant/s (e.g. the perceived lack of linguistic fluency can generate feelings of sympathy or feelings of antagonism) and their attitude towards the
interaction (e.g. is it important for these participants to communicate now or can it wait?).

As the participants engage in the interactive process it is expected that they will begin
to judge the relative merits of the various significational options available. If language
proves to be a source of difficulty in generating meaning, the interaction may shift either
towards a lack of linguistic engagement (or possibly a recourse to the participants’ own
language even though they know the other participant/s will not understand) or towards alt-
ernative significational strategies such as non-verbal signals, the use of writing (e.g. with
the aid of a bilingual dictionary) or seeking a mediator. Where the use of dominant or com-
mon language is seen to be an effective basis for interaction it would be expected that this
will continue, although it is theoretically possible that a participant could deliberately
choose, for some reason, not to communicate in the common language even though he or
she is fluent in it. The process may also involve interaction about language, where for ex-
ample, the participants use dominant or common language, or alternative forms of com-
mon signification, as reference points to explore each other’s language. This could result in
forms of language mixing where elements of common language are mingled with elements
of particular language for the purpose of arriving at a mutually agreeable method of ling-
ugistic exchange.

4.3.4 Disseminational.

In the area of dissemination (following Hannerz’s idea of cultural apparatus in partic-
ular), attention is given to the means by which meanings (organised as perspectives) are
made available to the members of a society and the means by which such access (that is, to
certain meanings) can be limited or prohibited.

At the structural level, the dissemination of perspectives is shaped largely by the ways
in which public and private discourses are organised, the degree to which free speech is a
fundamental tenet of a society’s existence and the mechanisms (and potency of such mech-
anisms) for censorship that are set up within a society. Dissemination occurs variously by
means of information media (such as news organisations, internet services), entertainment
media (e.g. television, radio, cinema) and other forms of entertainment (e.g. theatre, music,
dance), mechanisms of persuasion (e.g. commercial advertising, information campaigns,
public relations), mechanisms of socialisation (such as migrant education programs,
schools, tertiary institutions, religious bodies), and in broad terms, any of the available means of communicating (e.g. phone, internet, face-to-face, interpreter). What is to be considered here is the extent to which these dissemination systems allow, challenge or impose either conformity or non-conformity to dominant perspectives.

Dissemination systems can operate as centripetal forces firstly, by foregrounding preferred or dominant meanings. It will be possible, for example, for state-run media to offer only those which are consistent which those the government of the day wants offered. It will also be possible for commercial media to present a preferred set of meanings if it is in the interests of those who own or control them to do so. Secondly, dissemination systems can be tied to legal and other structural mechanisms that operate to exclude oppositional perspectives. There can be for example, organisational decisions about what is or is not to be included in a school curriculum. There can also be mechanisms like official censorship of oppositional perspectives or proceedings against organisations that allow such perspectives, or laws that prohibit organisations which promote alternative perspectives. It would not be expected that the more extreme forms of centripetal force would occur in pluralist democracies. Nevertheless, given that societies have a set of dominant perspectives, it would still be expected that those in power will find ways of using the society’s dissemination systems to foreground and promote those perspectives. The degree to which the members of society accept or question those dominant perspectives depends in part, on the extent to which dissemination systems can also act as centrifugal forces.

Dissemination systems can operate as centrifugal forces through their capacity to present a variety of perspectives at once. The media, for example, might define their role as one of making available the broadest possible range of opinions on a particular issue and of being an open forum for discussion of those opinions. There may also be dissemination systems that exist specifically to present alternative perspectives, for example independent media or media operated by interest groups (ethnic groups, gay groups, religious groups). The centrifugal force of such dissemination systems is likely be stronger where their existence within the social system is legally guaranteed, say through a freedom of speech, opinion or media clause in the country’s constitution.

The issue to be considered at the social level, is the way that perspectives spread across society having been generated from within particular sections of society (both dominant and non-dominant) and the kind of responses these perspectives generate among those who
are exposed to them.

A centripetal force will be generated when patterns of information consumption among the various social groups allow dominant perspectives to influence the organisation of perspectives within those groups. It is likely that this will occur where there is a high level of dependence on common forms of dissemination for access to information. Where ethnic groups are concerned, it may be that some groups are, for example, more open to the possibility of cultural assimilation because they find this society’s outlook more attractive than what they had experienced in their previous society. Similarly, it could be that an ethnic group, under exposure to a dominant perspective on a particular issue, will shift its position on that issue from one which is more consistent with their ethnic culture to one which is more consistent with the dominant culture.

A centrifugal force will be generated when patterns of information consumption within groups promote the centrality of group-specific perspectives. A well-organised and widely used ethnic press for example, or alternatively, more localised forms of communication like ethnic association newsletters, can be a means of maintaining and promoting particular ethnic perspectives on the happenings in society. They can be the means by which ethnic groups generate consistent patterns of ideological resistance or political action (i.e. against the current government or against the society’s dominant perspectives), particularly if they feel that their ethnic identity and culture is in some way under threat.

At the episodic level then, the question to be considered is what role dissemination systems play in the interaction and what their impact is on the engagement of perspectives that occurs during the interaction.

The situation, for example, may be one where interaction is organised around some kind of media content (a newspaper article, a television program, an internet site). In this case, the situation will necessitate some engagement of dominant and culture-specific perspectives in response to that media content. A clear-cut engagement of different perspectives may arise for example, where interaction is organised around the way the mainstream press report an issue compared with the way the ethnic press report the same issue, where that reporting is itself a presentation of significantly different perspectives. The situation may also be, in itself, an experience of the dissemination of perspectives, for example a classroom. Depending on what type of class it is, the interaction may involve a presentation (either explicitly or implicitly) of dominant perspectives, in which case those who are
members of particular cultural groups will most likely find themselves (either explicitly or implicitly) engaging culture-specific perspectives in response.

The role of dissemination systems in organising the input of the participants, will involve the participants’ own use of and response to those systems in their centripetal or centrifugal capacities. The perspectives generated and presented by a participant who is consistently exposed to culture-specific perspectives, will most likely be different to those generated and presented by a participant who is only, or primarily, exposed to dominant forms of dissemination. Dissemination systems thus become a resource (explicit or implicit) for participants to generate and present perspectives that are either similar or different, depending on the particular content of the interaction.

The interactive process will then revolve around the way participants draw on the various resources that are available to them, either consciously or unconsciously. Participants may be able to move towards shared perspectives, because they are able to, or willing to, refer to common information resources, like the main-stream media or educational experience. Alternatively, the participants may move towards different perspectives because of their reliance on, or deliberate choice of, information resources that prefer culture-specific perspectives.

4.3.5 Meaningful Outcomes.

In one sense, it can be said that all outcomes of communication are “meaningful”, in that some kind of meaning is generated when people interact. This is so even where cultural difference makes it difficult to achieve a correspondence of meaning. To speak of “meaningful” outcomes here then, it to consider what kinds of meaning episodes of intercultural communication can generate and what implications this has for ongoing intercultural interactions within a society. In general terms, what is under consideration is whether the meanings that emerge from an episode indicate a centripetal or centrifugal movement.

Meanings may on the one hand, indicate the dominance of one perspective over another (i.e. one side converges towards the other), a recourse by all participants to established dominant or commonly shared perspectives or the creation of a new common perspective for the purpose of that interaction (i.e. both sides converge). On the other hand, the meanings created may indicate the maintenance of different perspectives, the maintenance
by and large of group-specific perspectives but with some shifting of ground, or a movement away from shared meanings towards divergent meanings. Meanings may also indicate the value and effectiveness of either common or dominant forms of signification on the one hand or culture-specific forms on the other. There may, further, be an indication of the ongoing importance of the various available dissemination systems as resources for the generation of perspectives.

Outcomes can be considered more specifically, at the episodic level, to involve first, the maintenance of, or the alteration of, either the personal (culturally-generated) perspectives of the participants, or the common or dominant perspectives as far as they influence those participants. Second, the attitudes of the participants (either negative or positive) towards the importance of dominant language or community language can be reinforced or changed. As a result the willingness or determination of the participants to engage or not engage dominant, common or community language will also be affected. Participants may for example, be motivated to become more fluent in the dominant language, to learn a community language or to investigate the range of common languages that could be available for communication with members of ethnic groups. Thirdly, the value that participants place on either common/dominant or culture-specific dissemination systems can be affirmed if either prove to have a greater influence on meaning creation during interaction. Conversely, if the influence of either on the interaction proves to be less than what was expected (e.g. if another participant’s perspective proves to be more practical, logical or forceful), then the value placed on those systems can be undermined. The emergence of these various possibilities from episodes of interaction will thus be able to generate either a reinforcement or redefinition of the assumptions and expectations the participants have about meaning creation for that situation the next time it occurs.

The way meanings are generated in an episode will also have implications for the way participants continue to engage interpersonally. If little or no correspondence of meaning occurs because of language difference for example, participants may be motivated to explore the options for using a common language or other forms of signification. Alternatively, they may be motivated to explore each other’s own language to a greater extent. The way participants continue to engage in interaction may also be related to the role of the information sources they base their communication on. Participants may, for instance, become motivated to negotiate meaning around common information resources, if they feel
that the likelihood of greater correspondence of meaning will increase.

The possible flow-on effects of intercultural episodes to the social level, depend on the extent to which experiences of intercultural interaction are capable of generating either a validation and reinforcement, or re-evaluation and redefinition of existing patterns of meaning creation across a society. Groups may find for example, that the experience of intercultural interaction brings them into contact with alternative perspectives which challenge or call into question their own. This can cause them to be more open and willing to negotiate such perspectives, or it could motivate them to seek new ways to revalidate and reaffirm their perspectives in the face of question and challenge. Similarly, if experiences of interaction give groups a reason to see their perspectives as confirmed and validated, they may become more assertive in putting forward those perspectives in further intergroup interactions. Groups may also find that intercultural encounters have implications for the patterns of language that continue to occur within and between them. It may be that, for example, group members become more motivated to improve proficiency levels in the dominant language. Conversely, interaction may have the effect of increasing the determination of ethnic groups to maintain the use of their ethnic language. Further, experiences of interaction may affect the patterns of information consumption that occur within groups. If, for instance, experiences highlight or reaffirm the value of culture-specific dissemination systems as resources for perspective generation, an increased use of these resources among group members and further development of the systems themselves may occur. There may also be, across society, a greater value placed on the need to recognise the value of group-specific forms of dissemination alongside the dominant forms. If, on the other hand, experiences affirm the value of dominant or common dissemination systems as resources for the generation of perspectives, this may result in a greater recourse to such dissemination systems within ethnic groups and a possible devaluing of group-specific forms of dissemination across society.

The implications of interaction for the structural level depend on the extent to which patterns of meaning generation across a society, create a flow-on effect to structuring processes. The capacity of culture-specific perspectives to offer a significant alternative to dominant perspectives, for example, may be sufficient to generate a review and reworking of the dominant perspectives and the discourses that promote them. On the other hand, a greater level of incorporation of dominant perspectives by groups across a society may see
the articulation of those perspectives at the structural level, reaffirmed and strengthened. Similarly, where patterns of social interaction indicate low levels of dominant language proficiency among certain ethnic groups, this could be used either to justify a more concerted effort by policy makers to target language learning programs at those groups, or to justify greater structural support for multilingual services. Further, awareness at the structural level of the role of say, the ethnic press, in patterns of social interaction, may generate increasing or decreasing levels of official support depending on the perceptions that government agencies have of what that role is.

The nature of intercultural outcomes then, seen from a focus on meaning creation, is evidenced in the first instance by the meanings that emerge interpersonally, generated by the engagement of centripetal and centrifugal forces within and between the participants. It is evidenced further though, by the way these forces continue to engage beyond the intercultural episode, to generate patterns of meaning organisation within and between social groups or across a social membership as a whole, and motivate the structural processes that organise a society’s meaning systems.

4.3.6 Summary.

The significance of the focus on meaning systems for developing a multicultural approach to intercultural communication theory building rests on an understanding of the relationship that exists between centripetally and centrifugally motivated meaning creation in social interaction. This means recognising that all members of a multicultural society have access to a range of commonly shared meanings (structurally organised as dominant perspectives) through participation a dominant culture. It also means recognising that individuals carry particular sets of meanings (or perspectives) that are generated through participation in (ethnic) group-specific cultures and which form part of their specific cultural formation. Such perspectives impact on social interaction by means of the various (common and specific) forms of dissemination that make those perspectives available and through the cognitive and significational (primarily, but not exclusively, linguistic) strategies that participants adopt in response to specific situations.

What needs to be considered is the engagement that takes place between the organisation of meaning that participants bring into an episode by virtue of their cultural form-
ations, the kind of change (including no change) in the organisation and presentation of meaning that takes place during interaction and the kinds of meaningful outcomes that occur as a result of the interaction. The engagement that occurs between these three factors will in any specific episode and at any stage during the episode, be directed by varying levels of centripetal and centrifugal motivation, depending on what the situation is and how the participants perceive the salience of either force for that situation.

4.4 Focus 2: Social Relations.

A focus on social relations links the ways social relations are structured by the characteristics of the social system with the way particular relationships are defined and played out in a communicative episode. The basic organising model of social reproduction employed in this discussion sees the relevant interconnections for intercultural communication as follows:

Relational Systems → Intercultural Relations → Intercultural Relationship

It was argued in the previous chapter that the type of relationship that is assumed by participants, that is created by a situation or that emerges during the course of interaction, frames the way interaction occurs in that situation by generating certain assumptions, expectations, attitudes or motivations, about what should occur between them. This intercultural relationship arises in the context of patterns of social (intercultural) relations that exist as part of an overall system of relations that characterise the society. These relations are worked out through the interplay of centripetal forces that work to unify or homogenise social relations across the membership of society and centrifugal forces that work to differentiate social relations, in this case, along ethnic/cultural lines. This discussion will examine, three specific types of relationship: 1. integration and fragmentation, 2. symmetry and asymmetry, and 3. similarity and difference.

4.4.1 Integration and fragmentation.

This relationship suggests that people can relate to each other either in a way that pro-
motes their connectedness with each other as members of a society and integrates them with the structures of the social whole, or in a way that undermines this connectedness and separates them from the structures of social whole. Connectedness will be experienced through the “macro” relations of social membership (however that may be defined) and the dominant forms of economic, political and social activity in which people engage. A lack of connectedness to the social whole on the other hand will be experienced either where the social system itself alienates or marginalises certain people or where the “micro” relations of community, social group, sub-culture, friendship network or kinship network are held to be more important than broader social membership. This interplay of integration and fragmentation can be manifested in social relations in a number of ways.

First, social relations can be consensual or conflictual. In other words, the way people relate socially can be characterised by a fundamental agreement or by a fundamental antagonism. Schermerhorn (1970) recognised that a social system requires an overriding interdependence among its members in order to function effectively as a system and so will seek to bring its various parts together through “a system of interrelated activities that are mutually supportive if the society is to remain stable.” (p.28). He comments: “The sub-systems mesh together in a total system whose overall function is to maintain the identity of the society as a whole ....” (p.31). This suggests that social systems need to engender basic relations of agreement among their members (for example, as to their role, place, goals or how needs are met) in order to function effectively as systems.

Schermerhorn also recognised though, that within that basic orientation to complementarity and agreement there are always issues of conflict and contradiction which he saw as equally important parts of a social system (p34ff). Such antagonisms he suggests, often relate to the attempts of more powerful groups to legitimise their power and use this power to control resources and impose their will on less powerful groups. Less powerful groups, he argues, will struggle to resist such dominance, seek access to resources and strive to maintain the integrity of their existence and identity. Antagonism can also be generated, he suggests, by incongruence between the particular beliefs or values of the various groups and by what each group wants for itself, for others and from others.

A second manifestation of the integration/fragmentation relationship can be seen in the relationship of social proximity and social distance (Banton, 1967). What this refers to is the capacity for members of ethnic groups to participate more or participate less in comm-
on social life for various reasons. Such reasons, Banton suggests, may include social attitudes towards them, power-status relations or the level of common interests or experiences that groups have (p.317). Banton sees that ethnic groups can participate on a range of levels from peripheral contact, primarily through institutions (or “symbiosis” if the peripheral contact is a continuing state), to full social integration, or “acculturation” (p.64 - 78). The kind of symbiosis that Banton describes occurs mainly where there is a power balance between the various groups concerned but it should also be recognised that relations of social distance can be maintained by exclusionary processes on the part of the more powerful group/s or by separationist attitudes and behaviours on the part of the ethnic group/s involved.

Social proximity and distance can therefore be considered in terms of the extent to which particular ethnic groups and their members are able to participate in the common life of the society, either because of the outlook of the group and the particular choices its members make or because of the overall nature of society (e.g. its structures, attitudes) and the degree to which this allows participation to occur. It will also be possible that specific relations of proximity and distance characterise relations between specific ethnic groups. The nature of the relations of social proximity or distance that exist between groups, Banton suggests, can be seen in things like the possibility of marriage, the development of close friendships, acceptance into a neighbourhood, willingness to work together and the willingness to share hospitality.

Thirdly, the integration/fragmentation relationship can be understood in terms of belonging and non-belonging. This revolves mainly around the subjective feelings of the people participating, rather than an objective view of their position in a social structure, though obviously the way a social structure positions people in certain ways will influence the particular feelings of belonging or non-belonging that those people experience. Where for example, socio-cultural relations are defined by terms like “host” in contrast to terms like “immigrant”, “sojourner” or “stranger” (Kim and Gudykunst, 1988), a certain sense of belonging and non-belonging is implied. It is the “host” who truly belongs and those who are being “hosted” who really belong somewhere else. The degree to which a society enables the people in these categories to feel welcome and accepted then, will clearly affect the degree to which those people believe that they do actually belong. Further, the widespread attitudes and structures of the system towards immigrants, even where they
become citizens, can influence the degree to which those feelings of belonging or non-belonging are perpetuated over time. Stuart Hall, for example (1987, p.44), believes that the typical migrant experience is shaped by the answer to two questions: “Why are you here?” and “When are you going back?”. For Hall, the migrant is one who is always seen as belonging somewhere else. Similarly, Chambers (1994, p.6) saw the migrant experience as about making oneself at home in a place which is not “home”.

It should be expected then, that a society will have or will create ways either to make members of ethnic groups feel “at home” that is, that they belong, or feel that this place is not really their home: they do not belong. It should also be expected that the degree to which members of ethnic groups carry this sense of belonging or non-belonging (to the wider society) will influence the degree to which their feelings of belonging to the ethnic group, of maintaining “a common difference from others” (Tajfel, 1981, p.311), are central to the way they interact with others. This will be important for establishing whether particular social relations embody some sense of solidarity among members of society or not.

The relationship of integration and fragmentation can be manifested fourthly, in relations of cultural assimilation and cultural separation. Such relations are linked to the way a society defines and manages its cultural life, in particular, the kinds of pressures that are put on members of society to conform to preferred cultural models on the one hand, or to maintain distinctive cultural identities and practices on the other. This can mean, at one extreme, that members of society are forced to adopt a homogenous dominant culture, through such things as name changes and the cessation of traditional languages. At the other extreme it can mean that members of certain groups within society are allowed, helped, or even forced to develop cultural lives that are distinct from the mainstream culture.

Smolicz and Secombe (1979, pp.7-16) identified four possibilities in this regard. They saw that dominant groups can allow minority cultures to exist without any formal support or facilitation (“external pluralism”) or that dominant groups can actually be involved in the support and facilitation of minority cultures (“internal pluralism”). They also saw that dominant groups can either expect minority groups to adopt the society’s dominant culture (“dominant monism”) or can allow minority groups cultural auto-tomony in the short term, but with the expectation that cultural homogenisation will occur over time (“hybrid monism”).

How a specific society might be assessed in terms of these four possibilities is not nec-
essarily clear-cut and the use of these terms needs to be treated carefully. For example, a
society may be “internally pluralist” if it supports and encourages ethnic culture at a struc-
tural level, but “internal pluralism” might also mean that a social system creates an artificial
set of ethnic categorisations for administrative purposes, or it might mean that those in
power force people into ethnically defined enclaves for the purpose of social control. Simi-
larly, the idea of “hybrid monism” might imply that those who maintain their ethnic cult-
ure in the short term will, in the long term, still assimilate to the dominant culture. Alterna-
tively, it might mean that new forms of homogeneous culture may emerge in the long term,
that are different from what those currently in power expect. The challenge here is to consi-
der how the interplay between assimilationist forces and separationist forces creates the
particular form/s of cultural management that characterise a society and what this implies
for the way individuals relate to each other in intercultural interaction.

It is suggested here then, that an interplay between a movement towards greater con-
ectedness or integration (the centripetal force) and a movement towards greater disconnec-
tedness or fragmentation (the centrifugal force), manifested in these various forms, will
characterise intercultural interactions at the different levels of experience.

At the structural level, relations can be organised to integrate people into a social sys-
tem’s operations and meet the needs of the system as a whole, for example on the basis of
particular social roles like employer and employee, seller and purchaser, teacher and
learner, voter and voted for, taxer and tax payer. In this case, the social system does not
rely on ethnic/cultural categorisations to achieve integration. It may be though, that social
systems need to actively engage in strategies to integrate ethnic groups so as to avoid frag-
mentation along ethnic lines. Governments may for example, create forms of consultation
in order promote greater levels of consensus among ethnic groups. Things like officially
sanctioned means by which ethnic groups can participate in political processes (such as
special councils) or officially endorsed events (such as multicultural celebrations) can help
to build a greater sense of proximity among ethnic groups. Government agencies may also
take measures to ensure that newcomers are made to feel welcome and that their transition
to the new society is as smooth as possible. New agencies (e.g. a portfolio to cover multi-
cultural issues) may even be set up to cater for this.

Alternatively, the structures of the system can produce relations that sustain a basic
separation between particular groups or individuals and the social whole, for example by
pushing such groups towards isolation through separationist policies or by generating reactions from certain groups which result in them becoming inward looking or isolationist. It may also be that the attitude of a government towards immigrants or ethnic groups in general, is reluctantly tolerant rather than welcoming. In this case it is conceivable that such an attitude will carry over into the way the various administrative processes are carried out and in the attitudes of those who administer them. Structurally organised measures like immigration restrictions, residential criteria, the possibility for dual citizenship and the way particular groups are advantaged or disadvantaged, will affect the degree to which members of particular groups can feel that they truly belong in a society or whether they are being tolerated, marginalised or excluded in some way.

Structural processes can also serve to minimise or maximise cultural differences within a society. The way culture and multiculturalism are actually defined within policy documents, for example, will go a long way towards shaping the kind of cultural management that occurs. Where culture is defined primarily in terms of food, clothing or art forms, then it will be easier for a society to incorporate and promote these aspects of culture alongside the expectation that the various cultural groups will adopt the core aspects of the dominant culture. Where there is a greater recognition that things like religious beliefs, moral/ethical values or family structures are central to the existence of a culture then more work will need to be done to determine what is and what is not acceptable within the society’s broader socio-cultural framework. It is equally possible, that a society’s dominant ideology prescribes the elimination of cultural difference and the adoption of its dominant culture. Such an ideology can be realised in coercive practices that prevent certain types of cultural activity and impose others, or through the various agencies of socialisation that integrate migrants, and particularly their children, into the dominant culture.

Given then, that the nature of the social system will generate a range of possible experiences of integration and fragmentation for those who are part of it, it is to be expected that, at the social level, such integrative or fragmentative relations will be reproduced in the general patterns of social interaction that occur among a society’s ethnic/cultural groups.

Relations of consensus for example, may be manifested where there is a general desire within the membership of an ethnic group to create or maintain levels of cooperation and agreement with other groups, or with the broader society. In this case the typical behaviour
of members of that group will likely be consensual. This can be realised in things like positive representation on local councils, ethnic councils or other organisations where the representation of group interests is important or in group support of government or community action to bring ethnic representatives together for set purposes. There may also be circumstances where broader consensual interests take precedence over more group-specific interests, for example the support of sporting teams, or active involvement in social or political matters where some kind of common agreement is necessary.

If, on the other hand, an ethnic group seeks to generate or maintain antagonistic attitudes towards other groups or towards society as a whole, then a conflictual relation will be manifested and this will likely be realised in typically conflictual behaviour by the members of the group. More extreme forms of conflictual behaviour can involve inter-ethnic violence, singling out particular groups for particular kinds of treatment or aggressive protests in response to such treatment. At a less extreme level, an ongoing concern with group-specific interests (centrifugal motivation) over common interests (centripetal motivation) can result in continuing and potentially unresolvable inter-ethnic disputes in contexts where such group-related issues can be voiced (e.g. councils, community meetings, educational settings, clubs, sporting events).

Relations of proximity and distance can also be exhibited in a number of ways. The attitudes of the residents of local neighbourhoods, for example, may serve to distance or involve members of ethnic groups. Particular ethnic groups may also (as a whole) seek either to distance themselves from others, or may seek to encourage community involvement. There may also be particular degrees of proximity or distance that apply specifically to relations between certain ethnic groups, for example, one group might have closer relations with many other groups, but more distant relations with one particular group. Similarly, a society as a whole or a number of specific groups within society might target one particular group to be kept distant.

Relations of belonging and non-belonging will be realised socially most clearly when the social behaviour of the dominant group reflects the positions that are taken at the structural level regarding who does and who does not belong. It will, of course be possible for actual patterns of interaction to run counter to the way those in power would like them to run. The ongoing presence of ethnic groups in a society and the necessary interaction that takes place between members of those groups and members of the wider society, can gen-
erate greater levels of acceptance and thus greater feelings of belonging (centripetal motivation) in a society before significant changes occur at the structural level. It may in fact be those greater levels of acceptance that motivate structural change. On the other hand, interaction between members of the dominant group and members of ethnic groups can reflect, confirm and reinforce widespread attitudes of non-acceptance (centrifugal motivation) and so maintain feelings of non-belonging among members of ethnic groups. It will also be possible that ethnic groups who are more established and so perhaps have some greater sense of acceptance and belonging than more recently established groups, can exhibit the same attitudes of non-acceptance as anyone else. The various possible patterns of interaction, whatever they may be, will basically revolve around perceptions of who does and who does not belong in the society, that is, who can and who cannot claim the society as home and who must therefore be seen as having their “real” home somewhere else. Growing out of such perceptions will be the matter of how people accept or do not accept themselves and others as legitimate members of the society and so act towards other members of society and other groups within society as a result.

Relations of assimilation and separation can be realised in the kinds of social pressures that exist, which seek to move people either towards cultural conformity (centripetal) or towards cultural distinctiveness (centrifugal). There may be groups for example, that actively seek ways of conforming to the dominant culture, even though they continue to maintain an ethnic identification. Other groups however, may seek ways of maintaining a distinctive ethnic culture, trying to keep their participation in the common culture to a minimum. Interaction may therefore proceed on the basis of pressure to reject group-specific cultural forms in favour of common forms, whether generated within groups or across the social system, or on the basis of pressure to maintain cultural distinctiveness, again whether generated within groups or across the social system.

The intercultural relationship which is formed at the episodic level should also be expected to be organised around either by a willingness on the part of participants to interact in a way that promotes their connectedness or in a way that promotes the grounds of separation that exist between them, or perhaps by some intermediate position. It may be for example, that membership in a particular ethnic group predisposes the relationship to either consensus or conflict, because of the nature of relations between the groups concerned. Similarly, the presence of an intercultural distance between the groups concerned could
predispose the relationship to superficial interaction: whatever is necessary to achieve the communicative goals of the episode, but no more. A relation of inter-group proximity on the other hand may see the participants engaging at more intimate levels. Again, feelings about who does or does not belong, that the participants might have developed by virtue of their group memberships, can generate attitudes of acceptance or rejection within the relationship. Further, the preferences the participants have for cultural commonality or cultural distinctiveness can predispose the relationship to possibilities such as, a determination to foreground one’s own culture, an acceptance of each other’s particular culture with a determination to work together despite the differences, or recourse to a common or dominant culture.

These various kinds of integrative or fragmentary relations can also be built into the communicative situation. A meeting, for example, between representatives of an ethnic group and a local government representative, where the central issue is of particular concern to that ethnic group, may well predispose the participants to antagonistic attitudes. On the other hand, a situation like a migrant English class might have the effect of minimising the opportunity for inter-ethnic conflict and allow for greater levels of cooperation and consensus. Where a situation is organised around culture-specific forms of activity, it is likely that those present who do not share in that culture will immediately experience a level of distancing, especially if there are no real attempts on the part of the members of that cultural group to assist the others to participate. Alternatively, if a situation is such that it requires equal levels of participation from all involved, for instance on the basis of some common ground or some attempt to find common ground, then relationships of proximity are more possible. Again, if a situation is dominated by people who have exclusionary attitudes towards migrants, then members of migrant groups may not even bother to participate, even if they have the opportunity, because it will be clear that they will be made to feel they do not belong. Or if a situation is created specifically with a view to giving members of migrant groups the opportunity to contribute equally, those participants are more likely to feel an attendant sense of belonging. Further, if a situation exists to achieve some common objective among cultural groups, despite their differences, then a orientation towards commonality may be more likely. On the other hand, situations where group representation is an important factor, may increase the pressure on the participants towards group-specific behaviour.
The type of input that participants will provide for the interactive process will depend to a large extent on where the relationship starts from. It is possible, for example, for the terms of the relationship to be prescribed by the group-specific culture that the participants represent, in other words, members of group A believe that a relationship with a member of group B must always be a certain way. This could be to do with long-standing beliefs about the other group, generated for example, by a history of conflict or cooperation, or it may come from more localised experiences of intergroup relations, for example where current relations in a particular suburb or region are either strained or cooperative. Such perceptions of the way the intercultural relationship should be, or is likely to be, will have an effect on the kinds of relational goals that the participants develop, that is, whether they intend to treat the other participant/s with antagonism or cooperativeness. Of course, it is also possible for participants to enter a communicative relationship with the intention to be cooperative, even if, culturally, they have been led to believe that they should be antagonistic towards members of certain other groups, or vice versa. Such a case would suggest a perception on the part of the participant/s that, for this situation, and most probably based on factors other than group membership, the alternative is more salient.

It will also be expected that the participants will bring certain culturally-shaped perceptions, attitudes and expectations into the communicative relationship regarding the degree to which they can or should generate or maintain proximity or distance with the other participant/s. At the same time, it should be seen that the participants will also develop perceptions of particular communicative goals or preferred outcomes, relating to the particular situation and the relationship/s involved in it. The salience of either proximity or distance can create a greater willingness or intention to generate greater or lesser levels of interpersonal participation depending on which set of concerns is perceived to be as more salient.

The type of input that the participants provide for the interaction will also depend on the pre-existing attitudes that they have toward themselves and each other as far as who does and does not belong (in society) is concerned. If a participant enters into the communicative relationship already feeling a sense of non-belonging then that participant may feel that the relationship cannot do anything but reinforce that feeling. Similarly, if a participant enters the relationship with the attitude that the other person does not belong, by virtue of their membership in an ethnic group, then they are likely to treat the other participant accordingly. Conversely, if the participants bring with them a belief that they themselves, and
the other participants do belong, then the relationship is more likely to be characterised by attitudes of acceptance and involvement.

The participants can also be expected to bring with them certain attitudes and expectations about the salience of cultural commonality or cultural difference for the relationship. The participants can, for example, by virtue of their group membership, intend to relate to each other on the basis of their differences, or they can, by virtue of their common social membership, intend to relate to each other on the basis of their shared culture. The participants can, on the other hand, despite the attitudes or intentions they bring to the relationship, perceive a particular salience in the situation of shifting their intentions the other way. A participant, for example, who approaches an intercultural encounter with a preference for commonality-oriented interaction, may perceive that the other participant/s prefers to highlight their cultural differences and so decide to reciprocate.

The relational process that occurs during interaction will then revolve around how far the culturally-framed relationship of either integration or fragmentation is maintained or changed. It will be possible for the relationship, through the process of interaction, to maintain one side of the relationship throughout, to shift from one possibility as a starting point to the other as a finishing point, to move between the two possibilities or to start from a neutral position and negotiate which way it goes as it proceeds. Whatever character the relationship finally takes on, the negotiation of the intercultural relationship will involve either stable or changing perceptions on the part of the participants of the link between an integrative or fragmentary relationship and the various communicative expectations, motivations or goals that they have.

Participants may, for example, enter into an intercultural encounter fully expecting the relationship to be antagonistic because they expect the other participants to have different (culturally-defined) goals for the encounter. If in the process of interaction it is discovered that the participants in fact share certain common goals, say because of some common socio-cultural experience, then the relationship can be expected to develop a more consensual character. If, on the other hand, the interactive process confirms the presence of conflicting, culturally defined expectations or goals among the participants, then an antagonistic relationship will probably continue.

Participants may also start from a position of intercultural distance and discover factors for example in their shared cultural experience (like common workplace issues, common
social problems), that motivate them to generate a greater level of proximity despite their cultural difference. Conversely, participants may start their interaction with the desire to engage in a close, participatory relationship, but find during interaction that certain cultural differences begin to distance them, despite their recognition of the commonalities that exist between them. Participants may also find that their perceptions or expectations regarding the necessity of proximity or distance in the relationship are confirmed during interaction, so they maintain the relationship along those lines throughout.

It is also possible that even though the participants bring with them certain feelings of non-belonging, and expect those feelings to be maintained, that a willingness on the part of the other participant/s to display an accepting attitude can shift those feelings more towards “belonging”. On the other hand, the kinds of attitudes displayed by the participants may only reinforce the feelings of non-belonging that were brought into the relationship.

Finally, it is likely that the relational process will also involve the exertion of some kind of pressure towards either cultural conformity or distinctiveness and a negotiation of these pressures between the participants. This does not mean that the intercultural relationship must be characterised either by total conformity or total distinctiveness between the participants. It is equally, perhaps more, likely, that the participants will negotiate the areas of cultural commonality or difference that are significant for the particular encounter in question, but overlook others. The way the relationship is ultimately defined and managed can thus revolve around perceptions that there are certain levels of cultural sharing that are pertinent for the communicative purpose of the encounter, or conversely, certain levels of cultural distinctiveness that are also pertinent for that purpose.

The significance of the interplay between integration and fragmentation in intercultural relationships then, is that participants will be motivated towards, or experience, participation on the basis of the factors that create a sense of connectedness between them, based on their common social experience (centripetal forces) on the one hand, and factors that create a sense of disconnectedness, primarily because of their particular cultures (centrifugal forces), on the other. The character of the communicative relationship will be shaped by the ways in which these factors influence the attitudes and actions of the participants, how the various centripetal and centrifugal factors intersect in specific episodes and how the participants work with that intersection.
4.4.2 Symmetry and asymmetry.

The relationship of symmetry and asymmetry refers to the way in which social relations can be defined according to the level of equality that characterises them. This is connected with the differing levels of social power that the various members of a society possess and can be understood in a variety of ways.

First, the level of relational equality in a society can revolve around the question of who constitutes a majority and who constitutes a minority. The distinction that exists between groups, and the amount of power they have access to, is in this case determined by the number of people that belong to each identifiable group. While it would generally be expected that the majority group in any society has the greater social power, this is not always the case. Societies where colonisers arrived with more sophisticated technology (especially military) or greater material resources, is one example of where a minority has assumed power over the majority. Another would be a society where a group that was originally a minority has grown to majority status but has not gained any greater access to social power. Kinloch (1974, p.124ff) notes that relations of majority and minority can depend on things like the type of contact, population ratios, perceptions of relative inequality in power and status, levels of threat and competition and types and levels of racial hostility present. These, in turn, can be shaped by levels of personal frustration or aggression, personality types, institutionalisation, acceptance of social roles, group characteristics and situational patterning.

Second, the nature of social symmetry and asymmetry can revolve around relations of dominance and subordination. This means that one group, or perhaps a number of groups, in society are able to exercise forms of social control over others, determining, or at least greatly influencing, things like social status, levels of social participation, access to and use of social power, as well as how cultural identities are formed and what kinds of cultural relations exist. Relations of dominance and subordination can be organised through things like class or caste systems or through structural mechanisms which control the level of social participation available to particular groups (e.g. requirements for citizenship or residency). The specific situation that occurs in any particular society will depend on who the dominant group/s are, how dominant they are, what forms of dominance they employ and the degree to which they are determined to exercise or not exercise their dominance.
Third, equality or inequality can revolve around a relationship between centre and margin. This relates primarily to the capacity of groups to make decisions that affect the whole of society particularly by setting its social agenda. Understood in this way, the “centre” is the group that determines the dominant characteristics, makes the decisions and exercises authority either as lawful controller or legitimate expert. It is the group to whom others look to create and maintain order: the group around which the processes of society revolve. Shotter (1993, p.41) saw this in how certain forms of life and ways of talking are established as legitimate. These form the basis for judging other ways of talking and forms of life. Hannerz (1992) saw this as achieved through the “cultural apparatus” (p.84ff), the processes through which a core group does the key cultural work for the rest of society. Giddens (1984) also recognised that societies place a lot of trust in those it considers to be “experts”. If the “centre” then, is the group around which society revolves, then the margin includes the groups that do the “revolving”. It is those who do not set the agenda, make the key decisions or do the key cultural work. It is those who are judged and who must legitimise themselves in comparison to those who are already legitimate. The margin is those who offer competing voices and discourses, those who must claim a right to speak in the face of a voice that already has more authority, or those who struggle to bring about new forms of political/social life in the face of an established social order. Shotter (p.47) recognises that in contemporary social experience, it is these marginal voices that are becoming louder, claiming their own legitimacy, bringing the final authority of the centre into question and helping to create a more fragmented, less certain social world.

Fourth, relations of symmetry and asymmetry can revolve around questions of inclusion and exclusion. This suggests that there are varying ways in which certain members of a society are, or are not, allowed to be participants in social processes. Exclusionary practices can be based on the fact that certain people are not members of a particular social “in-group”, or “we” category, or that they are members of a particular social “out-group”, or “they” category (Allport 1979). Exclusion because of non-membership of an (ethnic) in-group (i.e. ethnocentrism) is usually an attempt to privilege that group and involves measures taken to ensure that this privilege is maintained, so others do not, or cannot, have the same level of social power. This kind of exclusionary practice will tend to apply across the board to anyone who is not regarded as a member of the in-group. Exclusion on the basis of identification with particular ethnic or racial categories (racism) is usually an attempt to
deprive those particular groups, primarily because membership in those groups usually carries with it some kind of negative ascription such as danger, inferiority or undesirability. It is more likely to apply to some ethnic groups and not others, although it can also apply across the board, for example where the term “ethnic” itself becomes an umbrella term for identifying anyone who is subject to such exclusion.

What can make such relations of inclusion and exclusion more complex however, particularly in multicultural societies, is that even where the attitudes that motivate exclusive or inclusive practices disappear, established structures can still perpetuate the practices themselves. Miles (1989) for example, observes that institutionalised exclusionary practices can exist which are either originally based on a racist discourse which is no longer present or originally based on a racist discourse which has since been modified to be less explicitly racist. This means that racial stereotyping and exclusionary practices can occur even within attempts to affirm, or promote cultural diversity.

A society may on the other hand, be characterised by a range of practices designed to promote or ensure equality among its members. These include things like anti-discrimination laws, systems to address claims to group-specific rights, legitimation of identities and lifestyles that were previously illegitimate, equal opportunity initiatives and forms of political correctness. Discourses of “tolerance” that have emerged in multicultural societies are particularly important for redefining social relations. To describe a society as “tolerant” suggests that it is attitudes of inclusion rather than exclusion which dominate. Hage (1993, p.4ff) however, cautions that such discourses should not be overly celebrated because they still imply an underlying structure of power inequality: those who are being asked to tolerate also have the power to be intolerant. The “tolerated” are still located within a particular power structure: “Tolerance then, is to accept and position Others in our sphere of influence within the specific limits we set for them.” (p.12). It should be recognised that tolerance, even if it does imply a relation of inclusion rather than exclusion, also implies, at the very least, that the relation is based on an attitude of condescension on the part of those doing the tolerating.

Before elaborating on the way this relationship is played out within intercultural relations, it is first necessary to clarify which side of this relationship represents centripetal or homogenising force and which is to be equated with centrifugal or differentiating force. It is possible to understand a centripetal force as that which supports the concentration of
social power in an elite, with an accompanying deference to that power by the less powerful (i.e. asymmetrical relations). This will tend to produce an inherently unequal, but globalised, power structure that applies across the board. A centrifugal force will be then be understood to mean that which supports a dispersal of power across the membership of society (i.e. relations that are more symmetrical). Alternatively, a centripetal force could be equally understood as that which creates a more homogeneous distribution of power across a society (i.e. symmetrical relations) while a centrifugal force could be understood to be that which supports the creation of power differentials within a society (i.e. asymmetrical relations). Given that the aim of this discussion is to consider the nature of power relations within the intercultural encounter, it makes more sense to use this second perspective as the basis for understanding the interplay of symmetry and asymmetry within the intercultural relationship. In other words, a centripetal force will be recognised where communication is framed by a more equal, or symmetrical relationship (i.e. the homogenising of power), while a centrifugal force will be recognised where communication is framed by a more unequal or asymmetrical relationship (i.e. the differentiating of power).

The issue for communication then, will be the way such relations of symmetry or asymmetry affect the types of intercultural relationship that may frame the interaction or emerge during it. Shotter (1993, p.39) for example, indicates that if communicative exchanges are located in asymmetrical relationships, then an important issue to consider is whose terms, rather than what terms, communication operates on. Similarly, Hannerz (1992, p.58ff) suggests that the levels of symmetry or asymmetry that are present in relational power will affect the ability of participants to provide input into the interaction process.

Relations of symmetry or asymmetry will be realised at the structural level in the means by which a system situates its various ethnic-cultural groups in terms of the degree of social power they have. A social system, or more specifically, those in positions of power in a social system, will have at their disposal, structural mechanisms which enable them to define and manage the less powerful, to maintain the existing power relationship and to allow or disallow access to social power. These may include government policies, laws or economic arrangements. The way this plays out in a particular society though, will depend on who is in the more powerful position (majority or minority), by what means they seek to normalise and legitimate their position (as centre) and manage alternative (or
marginal) voices and how they seek to exercise social dominance and keep certain groups in subordinate social positions. Powerful minorities may for example, maintain their position through control of the military and legitimise their position through threat. Alternatively, they may lock an economically less powerful majority into relations of economic dependence which ensure that the minority remains in a more powerful position. Powerful majorities may seek to marginalise minorities, or keep them in enclaves to minimise the level of social power they can develop. They may on the other hand exercise more paternal forms of power where they seek to address the needs of minorities as caregivers, incorporating those minorities into the broader social structure while maintaining their place as less powerful minorities. The socially more powerful then, can exercise that power over the socially less powerful either through relations of restriction and subjugation or through relations of management and support.

Asymmetrical (centrifugally motivated) relations then, can be seen where one or some groups are structurally privileged over others, for example in things like access to certain jobs, education, social services or where some groups are targeted for deprivation or exclusion in such areas. Policies can also be enacted which make it more difficult for members of some groups to run businesses or hold positions of social leadership, or even where they are disallowed the vote.

Social relations that are more symmetrical (centripetally motivated) are more possible where government policies and administrative mechanisms are designed to increase the level by which members of ethnic groups can participate fully in all aspects of social life. Such mechanisms include anti-discrimination legislation, officially sponsored services specifically designed for members of ethnic groups, community consultation and forms of ethnic representation. The degree of symmetry possible in a social system should also be assessed in terms of the structural possibilities for the dominance of the dominant to be challenged, modified, weakened, overturned or negotiated. A particular social system may for example, make it possible for any person or any number of people from less powerful sections of society to aspire to positions of social responsibility and influence. There may also be possibilities for subordinate groups to improve the degree of access they have to social power, for example in things like self-determination of cultural life and improving their social position and status through particular types of enterprise.

The reproduction of such structurally managed relations of equality or inequality in
patterns of interaction at the social level will be seen in the degree of equality or inequality that members of various groups are prepared to give each other. Members of dominant groups for example, may be encouraged structurally to view themselves as privileged and this will be reproduced socially, both in activity that tries to claim that privilege, and in activity that seeks to deny such privilege to members of other groups. Where perceptions of power, dominance and legitimacy/centrality shape the way particular groups characterise themselves, and therefore where their characterisations of other groups are dominated by perceptions of powerlessness, subordination or illegitimacy/marginality, then the social relations that occur between these groups are likely to be centrifugally motivated (asymmetrical). On the other hand, where there is structural support for all members of society participating equally in the various social processes and experiences, it is likely that the members of society will act accordingly, at least show greater levels of tolerance. Social relations between ethnic groups under such circumstances can display a much more centripetal (symmetrical) character. Such symmetrical or asymmetrical relations can be expressed in attitudes and actions that reveal assumptions about those who feel they have a right to speak and be heard, who are legitimate and authoritative or who can participate in decision-making and those who feel they must struggle to be heard, are disempowered where decision-making is concerned or are not seen as legitimate. Further, various forms of inclusion and exclusion will be evident in intergroup relations based on the balance of social power that exists between them.

The reproduction of relations of symmetry or asymmetry at the episodic level will be seen in the degree to which the relationship is defined by power-status differentials that are organised around particular group characterisations (such as majority and minority status, assumed relations of dominance and subordination or perceptions of centrality and marginality). Depending on precisely what kinds of attitudes, actions and responses these characterisations and perceptions engender, the relationship will exhibit various levels of openness or closure, exclusion or inclusion, tolerance or intolerance and equity or inequity. A centripetal force (or movement towards symmetry) will tend to be generated where such power differentiation becomes less salient in the light of overriding concerns for equal participation (e.g. a recognition of a common cause), or where the group characterisations themselves motivate the participants towards equal participation (e.g. a determination to claim equality in the face of inequality). A centrifugal force (or movement towards
asymmetry) will tend to be generated where power differentiation becomes more salient for some reason (e.g. members of one group believe they have more right to speak or to determine the outcomes of the particular interaction) or where group characterisations motivate participants towards unequal participation (e.g. the members of one group believe they need to keep the members of another group “in their place”).

The contribution of the situation to the level of symmetry or asymmetry in the relationship will be seen in the way it structures how far the relationship is based on specific manifestations of majority-minority status, domination or subordination, centrality and marginality or inclusion and exclusion. If, for example, members of one group have been responsible for setting up the situation in the first place they may believe they have more right to control what occurs within it, or they may set it up in such a way that their particular views or interests always privileged over others. Further, even if a situation is organised to give members of various groups an opportunity to participate in some issue of common interest, it can still be done in such a way that the organisers maintain control over the issue and members of the others groups are structured into a relationship of dependence on the organising group. The same situation can of course, be organised in such a way that guarantees members of the various groups an equal participation or at least that tries to counter attempts by particular groups to exert more control.

The input that the participants bring to the relationship will depend partly on the assumptions they have about the amount of power or control they are entitled to. Members of dominant groups may believe for example, that in any social situation that involves a member of a minority group, they are entitled by virtue of their social position, to exercise dominance or control over the other participant/s (centrifugal motivation). Alternatively members of more dominant groups may feel obliged to ensure they treat members of minority groups in a way that affirms their equal status in the relationship (centripetal motivation). Members of minority groups may also enter a relationship believing that they will be treated unequally and thus need to participate in a way that ensures they are not (centripetal motivation). On the other hand they may carry with them a perception of lower social power or status and as a result feel they need to defer to the higher power or status of the members of the more dominant group (centrifugal motivation).

The nature of such beliefs or assumptions will also carry over into the kinds of relational goals or expectations that the participants develop. Members of dominant groups
who believe they are entitled to greater degree of control over the intercultural relationship will probably expect the outcome of the communication to be a realisation of that entitlement, and probably also expect the other participants to accept their control. This is also likely to motivate them to engage in certain types of dominating action towards the other participant/s. Members of minority or marginal groups who believe they are entitled to equal participation in any intercultural encounter would be expected to set that equal participation as a relational goal and be motivated towards action that tries to counter any dominating or exclusive action on the part of the other participant/s. It is also possible for all participants to believe that the intercultural relationship should be characterised by equality of participation, regardless of perceptions about majority or minority status. In that case it would be expected that the participants will be motivated towards higher levels of inclusiveness, openness and cooperation within the relationship.

The relational process will then revolve around the degree to which the participants seek to activate and promote, or accept or reject the activation and promotion of, equality or inequality within the relationship. Interaction can be expected to generate an intersection of the relevant majority/minority, dominant/subordinate, centre/margin perceptions, concerns and attitudes among the participants, that either maintains or shifts the power relation. A centripetal (symmetrical) shift may occur, for example, if the participants perceive that a common interest is involved and therefore group-specific assumptions about the level of control they should have need to be modified. A centrifugal (asymmetrical) shift may occur if, for example, one participant perceives that she or he has less knowledge or communicative competence in this situation because of their culture, and so the other participant is in a better position to achieve the relevant communicative goals. This will mean that the first participant will defer to the other participant’s greater degree of participation and control within the relationship. Conversely, one participant may begin to perceive that he or she is in a better position, say because of greater cultural knowledge, to achieve the communicative goals, and so may begin to take on a more dominant role in the relationship. Whatever the case, the relational process will involve some kind of negotiation of the power relation that will see it potentially affirmed, reinforced, shifted, modified, redefined or rejected.

The interplay between symmetry and asymmetry in intercultural relationships then, frames the way participants interact by generating either a sense of equality (centripetal
forces), on the one hand, or a sense of inequality (centrifugal forces), on the other. The character of the communicative relationship will be shaped by the ways in which these forces influence the attitudes, expectations and actions of the participants and how these intersect interpersonally during specific episodes.

4.4.3 Similarity and difference.

The relationship between similarity and difference has already been identified as one of the key factors that defines the character of multicultural society. What is at issue here is the way this relationship can be seen to characterise social relations within a society, and how this is realised in the intercultural relationships experienced in particular communicative episodes.

Theorists have identified perceived similarity as a basic principle of relating (e.g. Newcomb 1968, Feather 1971, Byrne 1971, cited Forgas 1985, p.220ff). The idea of “cognitive balance” for example, proposes that a perceived similarity of attitudes, beliefs and values will influence the formation and development of relationships, evaluations of others and success in communication. This also means conversely, that perceived differences between people either act as a hindrance to the formation of relationships in the first place, or can be a major influence in creating difficulties in the maintenance and development of relationships that may form. If this is so, then it will be expected that the structures for and patterns of relating that occur within a society will also be connected to perceptions of similarity and difference. Socio-cultural homogeneity is still held by many to be the preferred model for social life, even, as Anderson (1990) points out, at the level of the nation-state, which is usually organised around a perceived similarity across a population (though Anderson notes that few nation-states, if any, are totally homogeneous: nation-states have always subsumed ethnic groupings).

Despite this, multiculturalism seeks a recognition and incorporation of cultural difference into the psyche of the society, albeit contained within a supposed structural unity. The various ethnic-cultural groupings within a multicultural society therefore need to negotiate the issue of how the perceived similarity that exists among their members and the perceived differences that separate them from other groupings influence the way the members of these groups relate to each other during social interaction. Wallman (1992, p.227) for
example, argues that where particular groups have an investment in the value and significance of the differences that characterise them, social boundaries will emerge and it will be the nature of these boundaries that shape the ways in which these groups relate to each other. The key notion here then, is that perceived difference or similarity is significant for the people who are interacting and so it is the relationship between the perception of significant difference and the perception of significant similarity that will play a major role in the nature of intercultural relations. It can be assumed on the other hand, that a perceived similarity or difference that is not significant for the participants will have little or no bearing on the way a relationship develops. A centripetal orientation will thus be one which seeks to focus on the perceived similarities between participants, while a centrifugal orientation will be one that seeks to focus on the perceived differences.

The way relations of similarity and difference are organised at the structural level will be closely linked to the way the meaning of similarity and difference for that society is understood and articulated by those in power. It is likely that a society will have a range of ideologies, myths or discourses that presume or promote ways of understanding what similarity and difference means for that society and what attitudes should be held towards those identified as either similar or different. Based on such structural level articulations it is also likely that a social system will have ways of locating those who are different (“not us”), for example, by formally depriving or excluding them, or alternatively by offering particular formal means of support. The specific policies that are formed for example, may either legitimise or delegitimise similarity or difference and/or may exert pressure either to be similar or different. A system may dictate that some kinds of difference are not to be accepted while others are, or it may seek to categorise people according to particular kinds of difference (like ethnic background) whether or not the members of society themselves attach any value to such difference.

At the social level the way groups establish and maintain relations of significant similarity or difference, particularly through the development and maintenance of social boundaries will have a large bearing on the patterns of relating in which their members engage. The degree to which similarity or difference is significant to the group as whole will affect for example, decisions about what kinds of relationships members of the group may engage in. The question of who to marry is one major example of where the issue of similarity and difference can be significant. Some ethnic groups may encourage or even
insist that marriage be only between members of the group, thus maintaining significant difference (centrifugal orientation) while other groups might have no such strictures, accepting that their members may seek marriage relationships with anyone of their choosing (centripetal orientation). More general patterns of relating though, can also be influenced or determined by attitudes towards similarity and difference. Some groups may develop a preference for intragroup interaction (centrifugal orientation) for reasons such as social support, cultural preservation, uncertainty about or mistrust or other groups, ethnocentrism or prejudice, lack of communicative competence or even the dominance of that group in a particular location. Other groups may, for example out of a desire to be seen as like everyone else, at least in some significant ways (citizens, members of local communities), develop a preference for intergroup interaction (centripetal orientation), even though they may still maintain certain significant aspects of group identity and culture.

Social relations then, will involve particular perceptions of similarity and difference among those involved, but the way this actually plays out may involve a variety of possibilities. The relations may develop an exclusionary character because the participants want to maintain their differences or they may they may develop a cooperative character because the participants want to overlook their differences or because they are interested in exploring their differences. Alternatively, relations may involve an attempt to suppress difference and foreground similarity (by either side). Whatever the pattern might be in any particular episode, it is clear that the communicative relationship that develops during interaction will be defined in some way by the perceptions of significant similarity and difference that the participants have of themselves and each other.

At the episode level then it should be expected that the relationship will be shaped by such perceptions of significant similarity and difference, generated either through broad social participation or through membership of cultural groups. These perceptions will then have the capacity to generate varying levels of openness or closure within the relationship.

The nature of the situation in which the relationship occurs can have an impact on the way the relationship of similarity and difference is played out, because it may foreground one or the other. A situation for example, which is dominated by members of a particular ethnic group may well have the effect of causing participants who are not members of that group to feel quite obviously “different”. This can be either because of the way members of the dominant group interact with each other (thus generating a sense of exclusion) or
simply because those participants are confronted with the fact of significant difference being a defining characteristic of the situation (centrifugal orientation). An ethnic wedding might be one such situation. On the other hand, the situation may be one where, even if there is a proliferation of cultural differences, there may be some unifying factor that creates a sense of significant similarity among the participants (centripetal orientation). Things like sporting events, school events, community events, elections and workplace functions may be occasions where such a circumstance is generated. The relational dynamics will be quite different in such cases.

The kind of input that the participants bring to the relationship will revolve around what the participants actually see as significant similarities or differences. A participant may for example, regard differences in dress style as far less significant than differences in religious belief or moral code, unless the dress style runs counter to the religion or morality. Further, participants may enter an intercultural encounter with certain attitudes of openness or closure towards those significant similarities or differences. Participants may be culturally motivated only to look for differences and highlight them (centrifugal orientation) or may be motivated to look for similarities and highlight them (centripetal orientation). The way then, that the participants define significant similarities or differences, and the kinds of attitudes they have towards those similarities and differences, will have an influence on the way they understand what kind of relationship can occur with each other (e.g. the level of intimacy possible), the basis on which it can occur (e.g. sharing of similarities, exploration of differences, maintenance of differences) and the kinds of relational goals and motivations that can be developed (e.g. love, friendship, close cooperation, distance, coldness).

The relational process that occurs will involve first, some kind of foregrounding of either similarities or differences and a development of attitudes towards them. The perception for example, that the participants share some significant set of beliefs, despite major differences in other areas, has the potential to create an attitude of cooperation among the participants. A recognition on the other hand, that there are major disparities in fundamental belief systems, might alternatively generate an attitude that the relationship cannot go anywhere or that despite those disparities there might be other grounds for developing the relationship, or even that those disparities themselves can be a motivation for engaging in a relationship. Second, the process will involve some kind of exploration of those
similarities and differences. The degree to which that exploration occurs is of course variable. It might include merely a recognition that the participants are different in some significant ways and go no further, or it might include a quite purposive and intensive investigation of what the differences are, why they exist and what the possible implications are for the relationship. Third, the relational process will involve some kind of movement towards openness or closure based on those perceptions and explorations of perceived similarity and difference. Although it is logical to assume that the more perceived similarities there are, the more the relationship is likely to be characterised by openness and cooperation, and the more perceived differences there are, the greater is the likelihood of closure and distance, this should not be taken for granted. The issue for the intercultural relationship will be how significant particular similarities and differences are and how they contribute to the overall relational goals. If for example, some kind of shared identity (e.g. national, communal, organisational) is most significant for the particular relationship, then a preponderance of other cultural differences will not necessarily prevent a cooperative and rewarding relationship from developing. Similarly, if, for example, there is a difference in belief systems and that is most significant for the relationship, then a preponderance of other kinds of similarity may not be enough to prevent distance and closure from developing in the relationship. Finally, the relational process should be seen as capable of encompassing movement between a greater focus on difference and a greater focus on similarity, depending on how and why significant differences and similarities emerge during the course of the relationship. A relationship for example, that experiences difficulties because of significant cultural differences among the participants, may still over the course of time find ways of negotiating those differences, discover new areas of similarity or develop alternative attitudes to those differences (such as seeing them as an enhancement rather than a barrier). Alternatively, a relationship that develops cooperatively because of perceived similarities may still have to confront the difficulties that can be created when certain kinds of cultural difference become more significant during the course of the relationship.

The significance of the similarity/difference relationship then, lies in the way the participants’ perceptions of each other’s relative similarity or difference generate a certain kind of relationship because of the attitudes, expectations, motivations and actions these perceptions influence. An interplay will arise between perceptions of similarity (centripetal forces) that arise from common social experience, common forms of identification, or
even the identification of similar cultural elements on the one hand, and perceptions of difference (centrifugal forces), related to the participants’ specific cultural formations, on the other.

4.4.4 Relational Outcomes.

The nature of the possible outcomes which may emerge from intercultural relationships revolves around the degree to which the characteristics of the relationship change during the course of interaction. In particular, it will be whether a dominance of centripetal or centrifugal motivation in the relationship is maintained, changed or modified, that will influence the kinds of flow-on effects that may occur.

Where a relationship for example, is dominated by an intercultural antagonism and this is maintained and reinforced through the particular episode, then such a relation of antagonism may also be reinforced in intergroup relations at the social level. On the other hand where a relationship successfully achieved a consensual character, perhaps despite more group-wide antagonisms, then this may encourage more members of the groups concerned to work for greater levels of consensuality and cooperation, possibly changing the nature of intergroups relations in general.

Individual intercultural encounters may also have the potential to create flow-on effects even to the structural level. A greater willingness or determination to work for equality in particular intercultural relationships for example, may not only encourage greater levels of intergroup equality at the social level, but may, if such patterns of social interaction become entrenched, encourage decision-making at the structural level which guarantees greater levels of social power and participation to groups which may previously have been deprived of this.

There is of course, no guarantee that individual intercultural encounters will have such flow on effects. Particular intercultural relationships may run counter to the general trends of intergroup relations and have no effect because of that. Even where general patterns of interaction run counter to the way ethnic relations are organised and managed at the structural level, decision makers may continue to resist change for as long as possible.

Further, the outcomes of intercultural relationships may be confined only to those directly involved. A degree of interpersonal proximity or distance, for example, may be ach-
ieved in a particular cultural relationship, because the participants hold that to be necessary for that relationship. The participants may have adopted communication strategies that seek to generate greater levels of openness, involvement or intimacy (centripetally motivated) or they may have adopted strategies that generate greater detachment or indifference (centrifugally motivated). If the relationship emerges from the interaction in a certain way, then this will also serve to frame way the relationship is conducted in ongoing encounters between those participants.

This also has implications for the intercultural situation. In the case of situations organised around culture-specific activities for example, the presence of non-members of the cultural group may generate a willingness to redefine the situation so as to allow more involvement from the non-members (centripetal motivation). This could be done by making the occasion itself less culture-specific. Conversely, if the culture-specific nature of the situation is seen as particularly important for those involved, they may take steps to intensify its culture-specific character, thus distancing, and probably ultimately excluding, those who are not members of the cultural group (centrifugal motivation).

The key consideration then, as far as the relational outcomes of intercultural encounters is concerned, is that in multicultural contexts such relationships are likely to develop in a variety of situations, and in many cases be ongoing. Not only will intercultural communication be framed by the way the relationship develops through the various centripetal and centrifugal forces, but this will also have implications for the way intercultural relationships are conducted on an ongoing basis.

4.4.5 Summary.

The focus on social relations set out here has sought to examine the ways in which intercultural communication is framed by the kinds of relationships that exist or arise between the participants.

It has been recognised that such relationships occur within the context of a system of social relations into which members of a society are structured. These social relations can be centripetally motivated so as to maintain the system regardless of the differences that exist among groups and individuals, or view to eliminating significant differences. They can also be centrifugally motivated so as to allow, encourage or prescribe forms of diff-
erence within the system.

The way the interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces exists within a system of social relations has implications for the way in which members of a society relate to each other generally, especially based on their membership of particular groups most significantly, ethnic-cultural groups. Such ways of relating will also have implications for the kinds of assumptions, attitudes, motivations and goals that individuals bring with them into a communicative episode. At the same time, it is also recognised that while the intra and intergroup processes that serve to clarify, define and activate particular social relations will be highly influential in interpersonal interaction, they are not necessarily determinative of the communicative relationship that will develop. Individual participants will also engage in an interplay that involves perceptions of connectedness or disconnectedness, equality or inequality and similarity or difference. Through this interplay, the nature of the relationship can shift and change, or remain the same, depending on which factors become more salient at the time and in the circumstances.

4.5 Focus 3: Social Identities.

4.5.1 Introduction.

A focus on social identity examines the relationship between the way participants define their identities and the way they communicate in particular situations, as Tajfel and Forgas (1981, p.114) suggest: “The way an individual or culture identifies similarities and differences between persons and groups in their milieu is the foundation on which everyday social intercourse is based.” This relationship revolves around the way the participants’ perceptions of their own and each other’s identity orients them to the communication process that will occur in a given episode. This means fundamentally that the sense of identity that participants have (who they are, what they are, where they fit in the scheme of things) will generate certain kinds of goals, expectations, motivations and attitudes (regarding themselves, others and interaction) that will direct to some extent, the way they interact. Where intercultural communication is concerned, it is the participants’ cultural identities (what they are and what they mean) that become the crucial factor in orienting the participants to the communication episode. This though, is not simply a matter of rec-
ognising the way individuals identify themselves as individual carriers of a culture. It is also to do with the way a social system structures the processes of identification that occur within it and with the way cultural groups within the system organise their own systems of identification in the face of that structuring. These both have implications for the way individuals enact their identities in a communication episode. Our basic organising model suggests that the connections can be understood in this way:

Identification Systems → Cultural Identities → Engagement of Cultural Identities

It is important first to recognise that in a pluralist society people identify themselves in a variety of ways: according to profession, according to social status, according to location, according to interests, according to lifestyle, as well as according to culture or ethnicity. According to Shotter (1993) such identifications are becoming increasingly important “in a modern, pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-ontological (varied lifestyle) society” (p.192) because they provide a way of “defining our loyalties and commitments” (p.188). They help members of society to create a clearer picture of who they are or can be, how they feel about their position in society and of the differentiated ways in which people participate in society. The challenge here is to consider the place ethnic/cultural identity has in the way people in such societies interact. It is a challenge because the way people identify themselves culturally and the meaning of that identity is by no means clear cut. The centripetal/centrifugal relationship frames identity formation and articulation and this must be taken into account when discussing social identities. The significance of the relationship can be seen particularly in two ways: in how identities are formed and in what identities are used.

4.5.2 Identity Formation.

The key idea to be considered here is that identities can be formed around either centripetal concerns or centrifugal concerns. In other words people seek to associate themselves with the common forms of identification that apply across society or alternatively, with the specific forms of identification that apply to particular groups within society, or some negotiated position between the two.

Moscovici (1981, p.186f) observes that the way societies define themselves always
stimulates collective consciousness accordingly (for example, as a loose associatio-}
{tion of independent individuals or as a highly integrated unit where each is expected to play a part). This suggests that social systems have ways of structuring, if not how identity is represented, then at least the conditions in which identity is represented. From a centripetal perspective this means that social systems can be structured in such a way as to steer people towards common forms of identification (e.g. nationalism). From a centrifugal perspective it means that social systems can have ways of directing people towards differentiated forms of identification (e.g. the use of ethnic categories, multicultural policies, separationist policies).

With this in mind, Harris’s comment that identity formation is largely organised around the identifications established in the socialisation process (1979, p.13) is significant. From a centripetal perspective this means that people are socialised into a system of identifications that apply across society, for example, common inhabitation of a territory or common participation in a social/cultural/political/economic system. From a centrifugal perspective this means that people, through socialisation into a particular socio-cultural group, take on the forms of identification that apply specifically to that group.

Forming a social identity basically involves distinguishing oneself in some way and organising a sense of who and what one is around that distinction. Weeks (1990) puts it: “identity is.... about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality” (p.85). Social psychologists see this occurring through a process of categorisation (“I belong to category A”), comparison (“I belong to category A but not category B”) and differentiation (“category A is different to category B because...”). These categorisations and comparisons carry certain value loadings which enable a process of inclusion and exclusion to occur and group membership to be defined and maintained (Tajfel and Forgas 1981, p.113ff). Differentiation also often carries assumptions about the place of a group in society, for example central/marginal, superior/inferior (Tajfel 1981, p.255ff).

Ethnicity and ethnic culture then, constitutes one important form of social identification that is organised around the way individuals are socialised into an ethnic group and the forms of categorisation, comparison and differentiation that surround that ethnic group’s presence and place in a society. The individual’s identification with that group
then, will have an impact on how the individual locates him or herself socially and how he or she is socially located by others (that is, by other ethnic groups or by the social system). This can be explored further with reference to three sub-issues.

First, it is important to consider whether a particular identity is formed through self-definition or through other-definition. Turner (1982, p.17) for example, recognises that social identification involves locating both self and others, within a system of categorisations. Similarly, Tajfel (1981) observes that social identities can be established by group consensus or they can be prescribed by other social groups, while Weinreich (1992, p.300) maintains that ethnic identity is a combination of internally recognised categorisations of self as being a member of an ethnic group and externally ascribed definitions by others as being a member of a social category. Harris (1979, p.20) puts this in terms of identity as something that can be claimed by a particular group or imposed by the dominant group.

Whether identity is formed through self or other-definition, or some combination of both, it must be recognised that there are centripetal and centrifugal concerns involved in either case. For example, an imposed identity (other-definition) can be motivated by assimilationist (centripetal) concerns that seek to exclude or minimise ethnicity as a form of social identification. On the other hand it can be motivated by separatist (centrifugal) concerns that seek to locate people socially in terms of their ethnicity, race or culture for the purpose of controlling their presence in the social system. Similarly, a claimed identity (self-definition) can be motivated by a concern on the part of the group to increase the level of participation the group has in social processes (centripetal). Alternatively it can be motivated by a concern to foreground and legitimise the group’s difference (centrifugal).

There will be a variety of factors that affect the way groups and individuals form their identity through self-definition. It involves first, a consensus about who is and is not a member of the group (Tajfel 1981, p.232ff) and further, the capacity of the group to establish and enforce identification and behavioural norms (Turner 1982, p.27). Such identification can be based on associations with things such as history, language, culture, appearance, place and nationality (Isaacs, in Glazer and Moynihan, 1975, p.32ff). This identification though, must also be maintained through group processes such as in-marriage and the preservation of transgenerational tradition (Parsons 1975, p.61). Weinreich though, (1992, p.303ff) recognises that ethnic self-identification is complicated by issues of disadvantage (material, informational), the problem of dual identifications (old and new culture), the
nature of ethnic bound-aries (how solid are they? do group members stay within them or cross them?) and the impact of secondary socialisation (as immigrants settling into a new society). What this suggests is that there is no fixed way that ethnic groups, as they exist in multicultural societies, form their sense of ethnic identity. It will depend on what points of identification each group holds as especially important in the particular social context they are a part of.

The way groups form identities through other-definition also involves a variety of factors. Weinreich (1992, p.300) for example, recognises that a complex society will have a “superordinate” ethnic community which establishes the “core” identity for that society and which organises and evaluates subordinate ethnic identities as part of its social control. This means that ethnic identity is assigned either positive or negative value in that society. Deschamps (1982, p.90ff) notes that dominant groups locate subordinate groups within a dominant (and common) symbolic universe. This means not only that ethnic groups are assigned an identity within that system of symbolisation but also that their self-identifications must contain an element of other-definition because they are signified by means of a symbolic system not of their own making. Deschamps comments: “it would appear that being placed in a minority or being dominated produces in individuals a heightened awareness of the social categories which determine their minority status” (p.91).

The second sub-issue to be considered is whether the distinctions that help form identity are flexible or rigid.

Here, it is recognised that although identities are formed out of a process of social categorisation and differentiation, the grounds on which those distinctions are made are not always clear-cut or certain. The boundaries that exist between groups can shift and change, they can be redefined as the nature of similarity and difference itself shifts and changes.

According to Barth (1970, p.9ff) it is how groups manage the process of inclusion and exclusion and the criteria on which this process operates that determines the nature of the boundary. He argues that there is no simple one to one relationship between ethnic groups and cultural similarities and differences, rather, it is only those things that members of groups themselves regard as significant that define an ethnic or cultural boundary: “it makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt behaviour - if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behaviour be interpreted as A’s and not B’s, they declare their allegiance to the
shared culture of A’s.” (p. 15). Tajfel (1981, p.46ff) similarly feels that it is the value assigned to social distinctions that influences how flexible or rigid they are. These distinctions can be more or less important to the group’s existence and this level of importance will influence whether group boundaries are sharply drawn or fluid. Weinreich (1992, p.313) also points out that because identities come into conflict, people re-evaluate themselves and others. This means that groups can redefine their identities and reset their boundaries to be either more or less permeable. For Wallman, (1992, p.227) the strength of ethnic boundaries depends on the number of signs of difference that are available.

What this suggests is that ethnic distinctions cannot be organised according to any final and stable set of criteria. They can change from society to society and from group to group within societies. Some groups may be very broad in their view of who can be a part of the group and share their identity. Others may have a much narrower view. Whatever view specific groups might take, they will also have to negotiate this in the light of how other groups draw their boundaries and how the social system as a whole marks, or attempts to mark, ethnic distinctions.

The third sub-issue to be considered is whether identity is understood as given or constructed. Cultural theorists have long argued that identities must always be seen as constructed or invented. What is at issue here is not so much whether they are or are not, but how much this is true for participants in the real world.

There can be little question that many people believe that to have a certain ethnic identity is to possess something that is natural: a vital part of what they are by nature. Their identity is something they see as given, as sacrosanct or as the truth about who and what they are. This kind of common sense essentialism can perhaps be understood in terms of what Bourdieu called "habitus" (discussed by Bottomley, 1992, p.211f). “Habitus” is "the process whereby those who occupy similar positions in social and historical space tend to possess a sense of place, including categories of perception that provide a commonsense understanding of the world, and especially of what is 'natural' or even imaginable" (p.211). Although these perceptions are formed through socialisation, that is, through specific social processes of enculturation and learning, people will also tend to view their identity as natural or given. This may be simply because there is not, in practical terms, any alternative identity available in the social context where ethnic identity is originally formed, as Isaacs (1975, p.30) notes, ethnic identity is bound to "primordial affinities and attach-
ments" which are acquired at birth. If the idea of a natural or "essential" ethnic identity is rejected in theory, it must still be recognised that perceptions of naturalness or givenness of identity still exist in the minds of those who so identify themselves.

Having said that, it can also be said that as ethnic groups continue to exist in the multicultural context, their perceptions of the nature and meaning of their identities are likely to change. If ethnicities are for the most part, treated as natural, they are nevertheless shaped by factors which make a "natural" ethnicity impossible. The location of ethnicities within a multicultural society will mean that this "essence" is disrupted, shaped and changed. The person who moves from one social context, which structures and assigns meaning to ethnicity a certain way, must negotiate the experience of entering a different social context which structures and assigns meaning to ethnicity (or ethnicities) in a different way. Any perception of ethnicity as natural must become problematic, even if that perception of naturalness persists in the mind of the person concerned. Hall though (1987, p.45ff), recognises that ethnic groups can become fully aware that their identity is no longer given when it is situated in a multicultural society. He asserts that “identity is an invention” and that ethnic groups can invent and reinvent their ethnicity in the light of particular experiences of migration, particular kinds of social experience or particular moments in their history as a group. For Hall, ethnic identity is not about what one is, but about what one is at the moment. It is about forming an imaginary community around particular points of identification that may have changed from what they were in the past, and will most likely change again in the future. Similarly, Mercer (1990, p.50ff) recognises that coherence of identity comes from a reconstitution of the self in the light of the prevailing social conditions. It is an “imaginary unity”, constructed “out of the diverse and heterogeneous positions which individual and collective subjects actually occupy in their lived experience (p.57).

What needs to be recognised then is that in any society, both the social system and the groups within it can generate forms of essentialism that seek to fix or see as fixed, who and what those groups are, or they can engage in forms of assessment and evaluation that re-negotiate and redefine who and what they are in response to the prevailing social processes.

The significance of social identity formation for intercultural interaction then, revolves, in general terms, around the processes of (cultural) identification that characterise a society at the structural level (e.g. the meaning of ethnicity, nationhood, citizenship etc),
the way that ethnic groups identify themselves in relation to other groups and to the system at the social level and the way participants activate their own identity and engage with the other’s identity, and how this orients them to interaction at the episodic level.

A society’s structuring processes can be seen on the one hand, as able to prescribe one common identity for all (e.g. nationhood) or to exert pressure on ethnic groups to subordinate their ethnic identity to that common identity (the centripetal force). This can be achieved for example, through the production of official discourses (such as national myths or ideologies) that valorise the common identity and make it socially desirable to prefer such a common point of identification. Such discourses can also make it socially undesirable to prefer ethnic identifications, for example, by denigrating those identifications or by calling into question the loyalty of those who prefer them.

On the other hand, the structuring processes may act as centrifugal forces by prescribing certain ethnic identities for certain groups of people (even if they are not meaningful for those so prescribed). This could be seen for example, in the use of only certain ethnic categories for administrative purposes, or in forms of racial identification used to locate people as part of specific groups for the purpose of social control. Alternatively, bureaucracies may leave the matter of what ethnic categories to use and how to use them, entirely in the hands of those who do use them or may encourage members of ethnic groups to maintain those identifications for things like social support or psychological well-being.

The key issue then, will be the extent to which ethnic distinctions are important for defining and maintaining the system and how this influences the construction and maintenance of ethnic boundaries throughout society. Does the system structure relations which maintain ethnic distinctions or which try to dissolve them? Does it use ethnic distinctions that are realistic descriptions of the way different ethnic collectivities actually exist or are the distinctions imposed on the various ethnic groups even though those groups may not distinguish themselves in that way? A social system’s structural mechanisms will thus make certain types of identification available (or impose them), based on assumptions about those who fit, or should be placed within those identifications, although even at an official level, the meaning of those identifications will always be open to negotiation and review.

The patterns of interaction that occur at the social level will revolve around how the various ethnic groups manage the processes of self and other-definition which in turn,
shape the process of group identity formation and maintenance. If the centripetal force of the social system is such that groups feel it important to shift their identifications towards common concerns then this will create a different orientation towards social interaction than would be the case if the group responded to that force by reinforcing group-specific identifications (e.g. being outward-looking versus being inward-looking). On the other hand, the centrifugal force of the system may be such that groups can form their identities in ways that are meaningful to them. This will create a different set of orientations than if the groups have certain kinds of ethnic identification imposed on them, either structurally or by other groups in the system. This also has implications for the degree to which particular groups seek to rigidify their boundaries or allow them to be permeated e.g. through intermarriage and the extent to which groups and their members are open to the possibility of negotiating the content of their identity, or are perhaps determined to do so, in the light of particular social experiences.

The way identity formation is realised at the episodic level will have a lot to do with the salience of the various centrifugal or centripetal concerns for the way the participants identify themselves and each other during the interaction. This means that the way participants are oriented towards interaction will be influenced by the perceived relative importance of self-definition or other definition, of the givenness or constructedness of their identity and of the necessity to be rigid or flexible about how their identities are defined.

The situation itself may be such that it predisposes the interaction to certain kinds of identification. If for example, a member of one ethnic group is alone among a number of members of another ethnic group, and that group imposes a certain identification (such as a stereotype) on the one, that person may be moved either to fit in with the majority’s perceptions and expectations (a centripetal motivation) or alternatively adopt a defensive orientation to try to resist that imposed identity and maintain a self-defined identity (a centrifugal motivation). A situation may also be dominated by the specific cultural practices of a particular ethnic group (a wedding, an important cultural festival, a religious event). In this case, the members of that group may be more disposed towards maintaining a rigid definition of what it means to be part of the group and who is and is not part of the group, than what might be the case in situations where those cultural practices are not involved.

The way input is generated by the participants will also be closely linked to the kinds of identity formation they carry with them, the way those identities have been formed and
to the degree of investment the participants. A participant may for example, have a very
clear-cut self-defined ethnic identity that has been reinforced through intra-group process-
es, and have no desire or intention to see that identity in any other way. The way such self-
identification orients the participant to the interaction will be quite different to a case
where a participant carries some uncertainty about the meaning of his or her ethnicity, or
where that participant has been heavily influenced to see his or her ethnicity only in the
way others see it. In the first case, the participant may be motivated towards greater levels
of assertiveness and self-assurance, or towards close-mindedness or an unwillingness to
consider alternative ways of seeing things. The participant will probably bring to the inter-
action certain assumptions about the other participant/s and certain expectations about how
interaction with them will take place. There may even being a greater defensiveness of att-
itude if the participant believes the interaction might possibly challenge or threaten his or
her identity formation. In the second instance, the participant may be motivated towards a
less assertive or assured approach to the interaction. There may be a tendency to greater
deferecence in the interaction, or a tendency to behave in ways that meet the expectations of
an imposed identity. Alternatively, the participant may be motivated to a more open or
flexible attitude towards the other participant/s and the interaction that might take place.
Where then, the participant carries a greater emotional investment in maintaining a partic-
ular identity formation over against other possible formations (a centrifugal motivation), it
is likely that the participant will develop attitudes and expectations, and engage in commu-
nunicative behaviours, that seek to foreground and/or protect that identity during interaction.
Where the participant has less emotional investment in maintaining a self-defined, rigidly
delineated identity, it is likely that the participant will be less concerned with defining the
interaction only in terms of that particular identity and will develop attitudes, expectations
and behaviours that reflect this.

The process of interaction then will involve an intersection of the participants’ respec-
tive identity formations and the attitudes or expectations that accompany them. The en-
gagement that takes place in the interaction can be manifested in a variety of ways.

Where all participants carry a rigidly self-defined identity as well as rigid definition of
the identity of the others, this may mean firstly, that all the participants behave as they ex-
pect themselves to behave and as they expect each other to behave. This can mean in turn,
that, on the one hand, communicative goals are achieved without difficulty because every-
one interacts as expected. On the other hand, it can mean that there is a great potential for conflict, particularly if the way that the participants see each other is incompatible with the way they see themselves, for example, where members of two ethnic groups both see themselves as in some way superior and the other as in some way inferior.

Another possibility for the interactive process is where one participant has a rigidly defined view of the identity of the other participant/s (that is, an imposed identity) and the other participants tend to accept that imposed identity. In such a case, it is likely that those who have the identity imposed on them will be oriented towards fitting in with the expectations of the participants who do the imposing. There is a good chance that such an interactive process will have little culture-generated conflict, because one participant is essentially deferring to the other. On the other hand, it also likely that it will only be the goals and motivations of the dominant participant that are realised through the interaction.

Thirdly, interaction might involve one participant being prepared to be open and flexible about him or herself and the other, while the other participant is only prepared to maintain a rigid definition of his or her own identity and that of the other. In this case, an interactive dynamic would develop where one participant is oriented towards only certain goals and expectations, while the other may be oriented towards a variety of possibilities emerging through the interaction. This certainly creates the possibility of the more open participant becoming frustrated with the other participant. If the dynamic being generated here does not lead the participants to experience conflict, then it will certainly mean that a satisfactory realisation of the participants’ communicative goals will be difficult to achieve.

In the case, fourthly, where both or all participants have an openness about themselves and each other, this can create a process where the supposed distinctions that separate them are negotiated, or where there is a questioning of particular kinds of identification as the basis for interaction. They may for example, develop a preference for focussing on common areas of identification (citizenship, social participation) or on alternative kinds of identification (politics, work, locality, possessions).

The significance of identity formation for interaction then, is seen in how the the participants see themselves and each other, and how this has the capacity to generate certain interpersonal dynamics revolving around the assumptions, attitudes and expectations that emerge from those identity formations. These dynamics will, of course, take as a starting point an orientation that is either centripetal (e.g. an imposed common identity) or centri-
fugal (e.g. rigidly defined group-specific identification). The interplay of those forces however, will enable the dynamics to shift and vary. Depending on kinds of identity-based motivation that are involved in the actual interaction, the dynamics can then create a greater or lesser reliance on self or other defined identifications, a shift towards a greater rigidity or greater flexibility of identifications or a reinforcement of the sense of givenness or constructedness of those identifications.

4.5.3. Identity Choice.

It should be recognised that in a plural society, individuals have a plurality of identities available to them because of the variety of social roles and relationships that they participate in, as Weeks (1990, p.95) put it: “We have a variety of potentially contradictory identities”. What individuals need to determine then is “by what criteria we choose between the conflicting claims of different loyalties”. Ethnic-cultural identity is to be seen as one of those identities, albeit a very powerful one, which, as Harris suggests (1979, p.11) can only be understood if it is viewed as a multi-faceted, selective process rather than a unidimensional static characteristic.

There can be no final way of deciding which identity takes precedence over another or how a particular form of ethnic identity is chosen. This, as Patterson (1975, p.309ff) points out, depends on the context of a particular ethnic experience, although Patterson does suggest there will be a tendency to choose that which maximises material and social gain. Bell (1975, p.171ff) believes that with a greater mingling of peoples, syncretistic macro-culture and bureaucratic social structure, a desire for primordial anchorage is intensified and so ethnicity is readily available as such an anchorage. He also suggests that complex societies create a political need for group organisation and ethnicity is a ready means for this. Ethnicity for Bell then, is a strategic choice. The implications of this for interaction are significant. Not only will it be possible for any of the various identities available to a person to be more salient in any given situation, but at any point during interaction the salience of each identity could change. The key issue for a consideration of intercultural communication is the relationship ethnic/cultural identity has to other types of identity in the situation: why it is more or less salient and whether it is open to change.

Identity choice, in the context of this discussion, needs to be understood more specific-
ally in terms of the relationship between “macro” and “micro” identities. The term “macro” identity is used with reference to forms of identity that apply generally across a population, or that tend to broaden the terms of identification (the centripetal force). The term “micro” identity refers to forms of identification that apply to specific groups within a population, or that tend to narrow the terms of identification (the centrifugal force).

These identities can be understood firstly, to be organised a various levels. Kim (1984 p.18) in particular, suggested that identities can be specified according to a hierarchy of cultural memberships: world, region, nation, ethnic or racial group, sociological group and individual. On face value, these levels involve a decreasing size of group membership, thus it will be assumed that the larger the group, the more “macro” the identity that is associated with it. This however, is more complex than it appears. It needs to be recognised that identity formation at most of these levels can take on either a macro or a micro character depending on what other kind of identification it is seen in contrast to.

National identities for example, are the most obvious expression of a macro identity. The forms of identification connected with the structure and organisation of the nation usually carry a certain homogenising force designed to create an “imagined community” by subordinating other forms of identification to that broader national identity (Anderson, 1990), as Tooze (1996, p.xvi) puts it: “we are continually confronted by appeals to nationality and nationalism”. This applies equally (or perhaps especially) in multicultural contexts where multicultural discourses continually foreground the need for national unity or cohesion as the overriding set of concerns which frame and organise cultural difference. National identities thus constitute macro identities when juxtaposed to ethnic or cultural identities, sociological group identities (e.g. age, lifestyle, interest, family) or individual identities, which are thus micro identities in contrast.

On the other hand, national identities can constitute micro identities when placed in contrast to global or regional identities. This is especially so in the context of increasing international interdependence and the globalisation of economics, politics and culture. The current language of “international community” certainly implies the possibility that people can be connected and involved with each other across national boundaries and thus discover points of global identification which transcend national identifications. Krause and Renwick (1996, p.xii) comment: “... globalisation has disrupted the links between identity and the territorially-based nation-state ... In recent decades the assertion of placeless identities
has challenged the ‘nation’ as the essential expression of collective identity.... encouraging a radical rethinking of the relationship between the processes of identification and global political space.”. The increasing ease by which people cross national borders and the increasing sense of involvement that they have with people in various parts of the world can be seen as both weakening the power of the nation to contain people geographically and undermining its symbolic power in identity formation.

Similarly, national identity can become a micro identity in contrast to regional identity. This is increasingly so with economic regionalism gaining in strength (e.g. ASEAN, the European Union, OPEC etc) but also with the emergence of what Huntington (1999) called “civilisation consciousness”, that is, a recognition of the cultural connections that bind groups of nations. Huntington recognised that there are growing perceptions among nations that there are particular points of identification that distinguish “Western” societies from “Islamic”, “Asian” (or “Confucian”) and “African”.

Where such global and regional forms of identification become important, national identities are not necessarily subsumed, for people involved in international and regional relations will still act as representatives of their nation-states. However, national identities do become subordinated to international and regional concerns and thus become micro identities.

Having said that, it is also possible to see regional identities subordinated to national identities. Categorising people according to geographic region may, for example, be a convenient way of organising immigration and settlement (i.e. immigrants are seen as coming from Asia, Africa, South America and so on). They may also be the categories used to determine who can or cannot migrate or to regulate the numbers of migrants. Such categories can also be used as convenient descriptive labels (e.g. “of Asian appearance”, “of Islander appearance”). In these cases the regional identity operates as a micro identity because it is a way of narrowing the terms of identification in order to distinguish those concerned from national identity.

A variety of different macro-micro identity relationships can thus be set up by contrasting the different levels of Kim’s hierarchy. An ethnic identity can be a macro identity in contrast to a sociological group identity (for example, a youth sub-culture within the ethnic group). Conversely, it may be a micro identity in contrast to a sociological group identity, for example, where a sub-culture involves people from a variety of ethnic back-
grounds and those ethnic identities are subordinated to the group identity. The key issue is to determine whether the terms of identification are broadened so as to be more inclusive or narrowed, so as to become more exclusive.

The relationship between macro and micro identities can be understood secondly with reference to the particular categories that are used to organise identification. In the context of this discussion this applies specifically to the way ethnic/cultural identities are organised in a multicultural society. With that in mind it it suggested that four categories are especially important: migrant, ethnic, culture and community.

The category “migrant” is important for considerations of identity in multicultural context, not only because it is the migrant who brings cultural difference to a society, but also that multiculturalism itself is primarily a response to the presence of migrants in a society and a way of organising the cultural difference they bring.

When people categorise themselves or are categorised by others as “migrant”, this is basically a recognition that they have come from a place other than where they are now. Both the place that they have come from and the experience of journeying from there can then serve as points of identification either for the migrants themselves or for those who (willingly or unwillingly) accept them into the new place.

The way these points of identification actually come together to form a migrant identity as such is however, far from clear-cut. Trinh (1994) argues that the experience of journeying for the migrant is paralleled in their identity formation. Identity is also on a journey: “having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there and an elsewhere” (p.9). For Trinh migrant identity is about being caught between a home and culture that was known as fixed and secure, and the present experience of not being at home. Chambers (1994) also agrees, suggesting that migrancy means that identity is formed on the move: “The sense of place and belonging that we construct ... is always contingent, in transit, without a goal, without and end... The subject that emerges is a provisional, contingent, historical figure composed in the speech of becoming” (p.25). For Trinh and Chambers, migrant identity is always uncertain because it involves being at home in a place that is not home, as Chambers put it, “understanding dwelling as a mobile habitat, as a mode of inhabiting time and space, not as fixed and closed , but as open and to be questioned” (p.4). Sarup (1994, p.93ff) however, while acknowledging the same uncertainties in identity formation,
also recognises that migrant identity revolves around crossing a border to make a “new start”. As part of this crossing, there is the pain of separation and loss and the response of
the incumbent population to deal with, yet there are also forms of identity fixing in which
the migrant engages (and which the migrant is subject to). These can involve such things
as an identification of social position, a defensive posturing in the face of hostility, assim-
ilation into the new society (one powerful symbol of which would be a change of name) or
forms of collective identification. Migrant identities therefore can be seen as involving
both the uncertainties created by the experience of journeying and the meanings of older
certainties related to the place of origin and the newer certainties related to the place of
relocation.

The category “migrant” then will operate as a macro identity primarily when it is used
as a way of grouping all who come from elsewhere. This means that an individual, rather
than identify him or herself, or be identified by someone else, according to a specific place,
region, culture or reason for migrating (which would constitute forms of micro identity), is
simply categorised “migrant”. This may be for convenience, because of laziness or because
the term has a certain social meaning. Whatever the reason, the word in this case broadens
the terms of identification in contrast to others which narrow them. In other contexts,
“migrant”, even where it is used as an umbrella term, can operate as a micro identity if it
signifies a differentiation of the person from a more encompassing macro category, for ex-
ample, “citizen”. The key issue for intercultural communication then, will be the extent to
which participants seek to identify themselves or each other as migrant (or any sub-categ-
ory of migrant: business migrant, tourist migrant) for the purpose of broader (centripetal)
or narrower (centrifugal) identification within that particular interaction.

The use of “ethnic” or “ethnicity” as a category of identification involves the percep-
tion that an individual belongs to or has ongoing affinity with an identifiable group of
people. The question of what actually constitutes an ethnic group is the subject of ongoing
debate across a number of academic fields, however, the common themes that emerge in
such discussions are those of shared history, territory and culture as the basis for construct-
ing a sense of affinity. Smith (1994, p.382) for example, defines an “ethnic” (or ethnic
community) as “a named human population with shared ancestry myths, historical mem-
ories, common culture, a homeland (association with but not necessarily possession of) and
sense of solidarity”.

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Ethnic identification on this basis does not seem too problematic where a population actually lives in their “home” territory, maintains historical continuity (both biological and social) and lives their particular culture. Certainly from the perspective of the population itself, a sense of affinity will be easily maintained. What needs to be considered carefully though, is what capacity to define ethnicity these points of identification continue to have once members of that group migrate and resettle.

This is particularly so when one considers the ways in which ethnicity is defined by the dominant group/s in the immigration country. It is clear, for example, that ethnicities in these contexts are often defined more in terms of nationality than anything else. Yet, as Davies (1996, p. 79ff) points out, all nations are made up of multiple ethnicities which can be defined as much in terms of minority politics, marginalisation, self-determination or religion as they can in terms of language/dialect, specific cultural differences or racial characteristics. To define migrant ethnicities only in terms of national origins is to overlook the underlying veracity of more specific points of identification such as these. At the same time national origin can be an important identity marker for migrants and they may well find value in accepting nationality as such a marker, despite the fact that they may have other more specific points of identification to which they can refer. The question will be how much they accept or reject the markers of ethnicity that are imposed on them over against those they claim for themselves.

Further, the experience of migration and resettlement will cause some kind of disruption to the way history, territory and culture are engaged in self-identification. It would be expected, for example, that members of ethnic groups will carry their histories with them when they migrate, yet the sense of continuity they have with those histories must be affected by the migration experience. Migrants can maintain continuity with their biological history by sending their children back to the place of origin to find a marriage partner but it is likely that the majority of migrant children will find marriage partners in the new society and these may not necessarily belong to the same ethnic group. The children of such marriages will then be faced with the problem of negotiating some new kind of ethnic identity, if indeed they want to see themselves in “ethnic” terms at all. Similarly, the kinds of historical experiences that might have shaped an ethnic group’s sense of peoplehood will intersect with new kinds of experiences generated by migration, resettlement and integration into the new society. Members of ethnic groups may, on the one hand, try to cling onto
their former experiences as points of identification, or, on the other hand, they may find ways of redefining and reconfiguring such identification in the light of new experiences.

Again, where identification with a particular place is concerned, the problem for members of ethnic groups is that while there may be some continuing emotional connection with the place of origin, they are in reality no longer there. The real and immediate connection with a particular place as a point of identification will be lost and so some form of identification with the new place needs to be negotiated. Migrants and their succeeding generations may well have the opportunity to return to their place of origin for a visit, but the natural and intimate connection with that place that served as a marker of ethnic identity has been lost and has been replaced by a connection with a new place.

Ethnic culture too, must be understood as having gone through some level of transformation as a result of the migration experience. It has been argued previously in the thesis that the migration and resettlement experience brings about a rupture which means that the culture is to some extent (in Williams’ words) “residual”. It also means that new forms of cultural life must be developed in response to the dominant culture of the new society and the migrants’ perceptions of their place within it. Ethnic culture therefore, although it may retain much similarity with its original form, can never be lived in exactly the same as how it was lived in the place of origin.

Despite these problems in ethnic self-identification, ethnicity remains an important point of reference for organising identity, certainly for migrants, but also beyond the migration experience. Why this should be so is a matter of much debate and discussion. For some it is because ethnicity provides a kind of “anchorage” in the face of the uncertainty that characterises contemporary experience: “a stable identity in unstable times” (Davies, 1996, p.79). For others, ethnicity functions as a form of resistance to the homogenisation of culture and identity that globalisation threatens to bring. Wojciechowski (1977, p.53) puts it: "We live in an era of a universal super-culture based on science, technology and in particular on the mass media.... At the same time, as if a counterbalance for these homogenising forces, there is all over the world a revival of ethnicity.". Ethnicity for Isaacs (1975, p.30) means "a massive retribaliz-ation running sharply counter to all the globalizing effects of modern technology and com-munications". For still others, ethnicity represents a symbolic point around which forms of community can be organised, defined, as Hall (1990, p.225) maintains, “not by falseness or genuineness but by the style in which
they are imagined". This means that ethnic identification involves the selection of particular points of significance which may be to do with a connection with the place of origin, or may equally be to do with curr-ent social experience. There are also those who regard ethnicity as a kind of rallying point for political action. Davies (p.87) notes that this can be for the purpose of seeking legitim- ation by those who dominate, and who tend to frame the ethnic group as in some way ill-egitimate, or it can be for the purpose of pursuing particular interests, such as particular rights, support mechanisms or even privileges. For Giroux (1990, p.3) ethnic identities are not just about gaining rights, but also about generating new forms of assertion and social power: “part of the struggle to construct counter-narratives and create new critical spaces and social practices”.

Smith (1989) recognises that ethnicity often implies a dual attachment. On the one hand, there is a loyalty to the political unit, the state, expressed in terms of citizenship rights and obligations. On the other hand, there is a sense of affiliation and solidarity with the ethnic community into which they were born and socialised (p.150f). Smith sees that many ethnic members remain deeply attached to their communities while seeking to organise their lives and careers according to the norms and practices of the national state, often trying to enhance political influence of their own ethnic group (p.151).

Ethnicity as a form of identification in a multicultural society then, involves questions about the strength of identification with the place, history and culture of origin in the light of new connections of place, history and culture formed through the migration experience. Emerging out of these issues will also be a sense of how people who share such identifications can create, maintain and perpetuate a sense of group connection and involvement. The continuance of an original language for example, may be one such strategy. The strength of these identifications in the children and grandchildren of migrants and the degree to which “in” or “out” marriage changes or does not change perceptions of ethnic ident-ification will also have important implications for the way ethnicity operates as an identity choice.

Such problems of defining what ethnicity is also carry over into the social use of the term as a marker of identity. The use of a word like “ethnic” as a macro-identity implies some broadly applicable way of grouping all such people together, distinct from specific ethnicities like “Vietnamese” or “Bosnian”, which then operate as micro-identities. At the same time, even the broad category “ethnic” tends to be used in contrast to what is held to
be the majority or mainstream of a population (those who are “not ethnic”). In this case “ethnic” becomes a micro-identity within a broader, typically national, macro-identity. Similarly, even ethnic designations that seemingly constitute micro-identities, such as “Asian” or “Islander”, are often used as umbrella terms that do not account for more specific forms of identification contained within them (e.g. Samoan as opposed to Fijian, Vietnamese as opposed to Thai). This problem can in fact operate at many levels where ethnic identification is concerned. One can for example, use a designation like “Malaysian” as a micro-identity, yet fail to account for Chinese, Indian or Malay ethnicity within that designation. Even a designation like “Malaysian Chinese”, does not necessarily account for the fact that there are a variety of dialect groups within the Malaysian Chinese population, or that there can be varieties within those dialect groups depending on the area they come from. The problem that members of ethnic groups face in a multicultural society is that of trying to reconcile the identity choices that are made available to them with the choices they would want to make for themselves.

The importance of culture as a point of identification relates to the way in which members of ethnic groups organise their lives but also symbolise that organisation. It is what members of groups live on a daily basis and where they find the most obvious and readily accessible indicators of their particular identities. The problematic nature of culture in multicultural contexts has already been addressed in a previous section, however a few key points can be highlighted for their relevance to this discussion.

First it must be recognised that culture changes no matter where it is. The potential for change though, is particularly strong in multicultural societies, because members of cultural minorities must negotiate the culture they have, the culture they are a part of, the culture they want and the cultures others want them to have.

Second, culture as a form of identification arises out of the interplay that takes place between the commonly experienced culture of the society (or macro-culture) and the specific culture that characterises groups within the society (micro-culture). This can create a problem both for first generation migrants (assimilation or differentiation) and for succeeding generations (e.g. dual socialisations).

Third, cultural identity is usually organised around things like specific observable behaviours (food, dress, lifestyle), the organisation of social networks (e.g. family and friendship definitions or obligations) and the maintenance of language, value and normative sys-
tems and world views. Multicultural societies will, on the one hand, encourage ethnic
groups to maintain these elements of culture but on the other hand, expect that what they
do will not contravene the dominant cultural system.

The question to be considered here then is how ethnic groups organise their cultural
lives within the context of a broader cultural system. Smolicz and Secombe (1979, p.7ff)
identify four possibilities. They suggest that there are two primary kinds of cultural
response from minority groups. They can either conform, that is, adopt the dominant cul-
tural system (centripetally motivated), or separate, that is, become a cultural enclave that is
concerned with maintaining a distinct cultural life (centrifugally motivated). Between these
two extremes though there are two other possibilities. What Smolicz and Secombe refer to
as “dual system interaction” indicates that members of a minority can act on the basis of
their particular group culture when with members of their group but act on the basis of the
dominant culture when in contact with members of the dominant or group (or perhaps
other minorities). The other possibility they suggest is “synthesis”, where elements of
different cultural systems are combined. This is similar to Bhabha’s concept of hybridity:
taking on certain cultural forms without necessarily accepting their original value. Bhabha
says: “It is difficult to try and fit together different forms of culture and to pretend that they
can easily co-exist. There is much incompatibility between cultures, yet as ‘culture is a
signifying or symbolic activity’ there is always some kind of relation between all forms of
culture.” (1991, p.210). Further, “Hybridity” he says “is precisely about the fact that when
[you face] a new situation..... it may demand that you should translate your principles,
rethink them, extend them.....” (p.216).

Members of a multicultural society therefore, constantly need to negotiate the hom-
genising impact of a dominant macro-culture and the differentiating impact of specific
micro-cultures. Culture will operate as a macro-identity when commonly shared forms of
life or forms of symbolisation become the focus of identification. Common acknow-
ledgement of the symbols of national identity is one obvious way this would work. Individ-
uals may also, for example, identify themselves as members of organisations, as resi-
dents of localities, or as supporters of a sporting team, without these necessarily having
any connection to ethnic identity. Conversely, culture becomes a micro-identity when
group-specific symbols and forms of life become the focus of identification. This may in-
volve for example, the organisation and promotion of activities like multicultural festivals
where members of ethnic groups are encouraged to wear traditional costume or perform
traditional dance. Micro-identification can though, operate in less contrived or more com-
monplace ways, for example, where an individual choses to wear a certain style of clothing
to work, or seeks to maintain certain culture-specific practices (such as food restrictions) as
part of their normal patterns of daily living.

The idea of “community” as a point of identification is perhaps the most complex and
most elusive of the four categories dealt with here. At the same time, the idea is increas-
ingly being used across society as a signifier of social location and group membership, as
DeMayo (1997) puts it: “Community must be one of the most over-used words of the last
decade.... among the prize cliches of our age” (p.19). DeMayo comments: “The great irony
is that, as fewer people really experience community, the use of the word seems to have
risen dramatically” (p.19). The word itself (from the latin “communis”- a holding in com-
mon) basically implies some kind of common life or experience shared by a group of
people, as Allbrook et al put it: “the sum of the relations between individuals and group-
ings in their day by day contact at work, in their neighbourhoods, at the meetings of their
unions, political parties and social clubs, as shopkeepers and customers.” (1989, p.20). It
often brings to mind images of a particular locale where people engage in forms of social
interaction and so develop some sense of participation in a common social life. The people
of a particular suburb or even a smaller area within that suburb can thus speak of “our
community”. “Communities” can also be taken to mean smaller groups of people partic-
ipating more intimately in daily life and where commitment, service and sharing are held
as the principles on which community operates (Woodrow, 1997). A group of families
living together, for example, would be a “community” in this sense of the word. The ques-
tion to be considered here is the extent to which this kind of community is characteristic of
the many “communities” that we now refer to in popular speech. More specifically, is this
kind of community what generates particular forms of community identity or is it some-
thing else?

When phrases like “ethnic communities”, “the ethnic community”, “the Greek com-
munity” or “the migrant community” are employed it is extremely difficult to see how they
can mean community in the sense just discussed, especially when used as broad categories
of identification that are meant to apply to large numbers of people within a national popu-
lation. It is possible, as Castles (1993, p.48ff) points out, that ethnic communities may be
organised around geographical location because members of ethnic groups congregate in particular suburbs or areas for a variety of reasons (proximity to work, income levels, social support). Local ethnic associations or businesses may develop and the people of that area can experience forms of common social life. The sense of community generated in such circumstances though, is related more to a localised experience of community, albeit intimately connected to ethnicity, rather than a sense of participating in some more broadly defined ethnic community. This broader sense of community is more likely to be organised around some perceived symbolic unity, or what Anderson (1990) referred to as “imagined community”.

This “imagining” of community (whether at a national level as in Anderson’s discussion, or at a sub-national level) does not mean that the sense of community is built around a falsehood. Smith (1989, p.24ff) for example, observes that ethnic solidarity is motivated primarily by a perception of shared descent that can animate the group and create a communal attitude across its membership (p.61). This shared descent is obviously real and creates a sense of community that is in a sense familial, and that others who do not share the same descent cannot be a part of. On the other hand, it must be recognised that the broad communal identity that is generated is organised around the perception of shared descent (and so of belonging to the family) across the ethnic group, rather than around actual face-to-face (and family-like) relationships and interactions. Shared, descent, shared origins or shared language thus become key symbols around which ethnic unity is built. Such symbols are what Whitt and Slack (1994) called “relations of significance” which, they say, “may be operative where relations of solidarity are not” (p.17). They comment: “To perceive them is to affirm solidarity, to acknowledge that there is a relatedness in the midst of difference which binds the members of the community together as a community” (p.17). For Whitt and Slack then, “community” is a kind of imagined solidarity that exists between people across a society who share some kind of significant difference.

If the essence of “community” then, is a common participation experienced in face-to-face relationships then such community is difficult to experience in complex societies, whether for the population as a whole or for particular sections of the population identified as “communities”. It can be experienced in localised forms such as neighbourhoods, or where sub-cultural, social and ethnic groups are concerned, in things like regular meeting places, associations and culture-specific activities. Beyond that, the possibility of real org-
anic participation on a large scale diminishes. Community becomes symbolic and will more than likely be experienced through communication media rather than face-to-face relationships. Specific “communities” (gay community, business community, Chinese community) within a society do not exist because all members actually interact with each other, but because there are significant points of identification that those who claim membership in the communities recognise as their own.

If defining community and understanding how it exists is in itself a problem, then it is easy to see why “community” as a category for identification is also problematic. On what grounds does an ethnic group perceive itself as “community”? How does it experience community? Is the label “community” something which is imposed on them where they may not have claimed it for themselves? Do ethnic communities experience genuine face-to-face participation in ways unique to that community, or is ethnicity a symbol which provides a point of common orientation, thus making “community” more imaginary than organic? As the scope of inclusiveness broadens (that is, the numbers of people able to claim connection to a community, and their spread across society), the ground for inclusiveness becomes narrower, involving more specific and less numerous points of symbolic orientation. Participation moves from real to imagined connection to those points. Where there are localised concentrations of ethnic groups, strong family and friendship ties allow face-to-face forms of community. However, because ethnicity as a signifier of social identity cuts across geographical, social and class boundaries, this also creates an imaginary participation in various points of orientation. To own the signifiers is to be part of the community.

If then, it is an awareness of participation and connection with similar others that constitutes an identification with a community, it will be a sense of participation and connection with the greatest number of people across a population that creates a macro-communal identity within that population. It will be the things that signify unity among that population that become significant for their understanding of who they are. On the other hand, it will be where perceptions of participation and unity among smaller groups within that population become more significant that micro-communal identities will emerge. There is a fairly obvious distinction between an individual’s perception of their symbolic unity with the nation in which they live (a supposed “national community”) and that individual’s sense of unity with a group that say, speaks a particular language. What may be less clear
cut is how individuals work out the identity choices that exist between the supposed communities that they belong to, for example, whether identification with an ethnic community is more important than identification with a professional community. Further, it may be the case that communities exist within communities, as in the instance of dialect groups within broader language groups. Here the language group becomes the macro-community, while the dialect group becomes the micro-community. What individuals will need to address is the degree to which participation in either set of communal relationships becomes more significant at a particular time.

The operation of identity choice at the structural level revolves around the issue of what choices the system actually makes available. A system may, for administrative purposes, identify people only in terms of say citizenship or non-citizenship (a heavily centripetal approach), whereas another system may employ a highly detailed set of ethnic subclassifications for its members (a heavily centrifugal approach). The key issue will be the extent to which a social system operates to emphasise its own macro-identities (such as nationality or dominant culture), to emphasise its constituent micro-identities (ethnicities, sub-cultures, administrative regions) or to develop ways, structurally, of embracing micro-identities within its broader macro-identity (e.g. multiculturalist ideologies).

Complications may arise in such systemic identification, particularly along ethnic lines, when, for example, census activity collects information on certain ethnic backgrounds, or linguistic backgrounds, but not on others. Similarly, administrative processes aimed at assisting migrants might be based on ethnic designations couched in terms of nationality but not in terms of significant ethnic groupings within that national identity (e.g. tribe, region, dialect, sub-culture). Further, structural processes might have difficulty incorporating ethnic identities that cross national boundaries, for example, where an indigenous people inhabits a locality where two or three national boundaries meet, or where an individual might use a broad ethnic category like “Chinese” or “Indian”, without actually being a citizen of China or India. These kinds of complications will make it difficult for individuals to answer the question of what their ethnicity is. If the answer the individual gives cannot be accepted within the structural process that currently exists, then that individual will have to accept a different kind of ethnic category to what they would prefer.

Structural processes may also operate according to certain assumptions about the relationship between culture and identity. Policies may be developed, for example, which,
encourage or promote certain elements of cultural life (such as food, dance, music or costume), but not others (such as ways of identifying family relationships). In a case like this, some of the more important elements of micro-culture, may at the structural level, be subordinated to elements of macro-culture (a centripetal motivation). An alternative scenario would be where policies are developed that allow for key elements of micro-culture to remain intact, for example, where the rule of traditional law is upheld among indigenous groups (a centrifugal motivation).

The way structural processes articulate concepts of community will also have an impact on the forms of identification that take place within in. Official discourses can emphasise notions of national community which are expected to apply across the membership of the society (a centripetal motivation). On the other hand, they may acknowledge and promote more particular forms of community in order to uphold their specific aspirations (a centrifugal motivation). What social systems will need to account for though, is firstly, the degree to which members of particular communities are willing and/or able to accept and be influenced by notions of macro-community that those at the structural level might articulate. Secondly, the way micro-communities and their particular aspirations are identified and described at the structural level may or may not be compatible with the way those communities articulate their own existence and aspirations.

The reproduction of these identity choice issues at the social level will be tied closely to the relative value that ethnic (and other) groups place on both their micro and macro-identities. The general patterns of interaction that occur across a society will thus involve people who, on the one hand, are capable of recognising and identifying with their participation in a common social system and, on the other, carry and enact forms of identification generated by their participation in specific groups or communities. It is possible then, that members of some groups will always place more value on their group-specific identity, for example, because they see the continuation of their culture as vital. It is equally possible that other groups, while still seeking to maintain a distinctive group identity, are more motivated to embrace the forms of macro-identity that the society makes available to them. Those who have migrated in order to start as new life for example, even though they may maintain important elements of their cultural life, may actively seek to break identification with their country of origin and embrace identification with the new country as a place of freedom, opportunity, escape or safety.
The relative value that the members of groups place on these macro and micro-identifications then, will have an influence on the way people are oriented to communication across groups. Where groups are motivated towards placing a high value on macro-identity it is likely that their members will be oriented towards emphasising or exploring areas of commonality in intercultural encounters. Where groups are motivated towards placing a high value on micro-identity, it is likely that their members will be more oriented towards emphasising areas of difference. It is also possible that the relative value of macro or micro-identity can vary depending on who is interacting with whom. Certain groups may be more inclined to want to emphasise their distinctive identities when interacting with each other because of things like previous experiences of inter-group antagonism or conflict, the recognition of fundamental cultural (e.g. religious) incompatibilities or awareness of competing aspirations (e.g. dominance of business in a local area).

The relative value that individuals place on their macro and micro-identities, by virtue of their participation in group processes and their participation in common social processes, will thus have implications for how they are oriented to intercultural encounters at the episodic level. If it accepted that individuals have a range of identities available to them, with ethnic identity prominent among them but not always necessarily determinative, then the issue for communication will be which identity an individual chooses to activate in a particular encounter and why. While in intercultural encounters, it will be identifications organised around the recognition of culture and ethnicity that are fundamental to how interaction proceeds, there will also be factors that complicate this. Individuals may find during interaction that more specific forms of identification are best subordinated to more common forms of identification (centripetal motivation), or that they become more important and need to be emphasised (centrifugal motivation). Individuals may also find that particular aspects of ethnic-cultural identity are more important than others in certain situations, for example, elements of culture rather than ethnic group membership, migrant status rather than national origin, local dialect rather than national language.

Certain forms of identification may be prescribed by the situation. A meeting of ethnic representatives for example, while it will certainly involve specific ethnic identifications among the participants who speak on behalf of their respective communities, is also likely to be organised around the necessity to explore more common forms of identification like participation in national life, sharing a local area or the joint resolution of important com-
munity issues. An interview for some kind of migrant service, on the other hand, basically ensures that the participant is identified specifically as a migrant.

The kind of input that participants bring into the interaction will depend on the identity choices that they carry with them as well as the perceptions, values and motivations that are organised around those identities. Participants who, for example, enter interaction with a clear perception of themselves as representative of their ethnic groups will develop a different orientation to participants who perceive their ethnicity to be unimportant for this episode (because things such as national loyalty, organisational membership or shared problems take precedence). In the first case, the participant is more likely to be motivated towards highlighting differences and maintaining a sense of distinctive identity during the interaction (centrifugal motivation). In the second case, the participant is more likely to be motivated towards interacting on the basis of commonalities and shared identifications (centripetal motivation).

The extent to which the participants actively and consciously choose certain identities over other does need to be considered here. It would be unwise to assume that all participants in intercultural encounters are always conscious of the identity choices that are available and make deliberate selections from them. It may be that the nature of certain encounters makes it more likely that participants will be conscious of their identity. In other encounters, questions of identity are more likely to constitute underlying assumptions that the participants have about themselves. The participants may or may not become more conscious of such questions as the interaction proceeds. Certain areas of identification may though, be perceived to be more significant as participants enter the interaction and these will still have the capacity to shape the way participants orient themselves towards the encounter.

The interplay of identity choices during the interactive process will be seen in the degree to which participants shift their identities from macro to micro, or vice versa, or have certain kinds of identification reinforced and maintained. Where participants perceive for example, that a satisfactory realisation of communicative goals depends on greater levels of sharing, a shift from a dependence on differentiated identities towards common identities (a centripetal shift) will probably occur. Or where the participants perceive that the interactive process is generating a challenge or threat to forms of identification that are important to them, they may begin to emphasise and strengthen their respective group
identities as a way of dealing with the threat (a centrifugal shift).

The impact of identity choice on the participants’ orientation to a communicative encounter then, will revolve around their perception of what identities are available to them and what the salience of those identities for the encounter is. More specifically, ethnic-cultural (micro) identities will be perceived as salient relative to the presence and salience of common (macro) forms of identification.

4.5.4. Identity Outcomes.

The interplay of the various centripetal and centrifugal concerns that shape the process of identity formation and choice and their impact on intercultural interaction, also has implications for the outcomes of that interaction where identity is concerned. This relates primarily to whether identities are confirmed, reinforced and maintained or questioned, re-evaluated and changed because of interaction.

Participants may, at a personal level, become more resolute in their beliefs about who and what they are, or about who and what they other participants are. This suggests that in ongoing intercultural interactions, the participants will most likely develop a fixed set of assumptions and expectations about what that interaction will involve and be oriented towards interaction accordingly. They may, alternatively, discover areas of uncertainty or flexibility in their beliefs about their identity and that of others which may in turn, bring about a re-evaluation of their assumptions about and expectations of interaction in future episodes. Similar possibilities can be generated regarding the way particular identities are chosen and engaged in interaction depending on how the experience of an episode either confirms or challenges the significance and salience of those choices for that episode.

The way participants are motivated to engage with each other or similar others interpersonally in future interactions can also be affected by the experience of dealing with identity issues. Where types of shared identification are successfully pinpointed and developed, this can lead to a greater motivation to keep using interactive strategies that seek greater levels of shared identification in subsequent episodes. Similarly, where the importance of differentiated identities has been supported by an experience of interaction, the participants may be motivated to base subsequent interactions on those differentiated identi-
ties. The same applies to the way the nature of the situation prescribes or influences the meaning of identities. This can either be reinforced and maintained as a result of interaction, or it can be re-examined, modified or changed.

The possible flow-on effects of interaction to the social level revolve around the extent to which patterns of identification within and between groups are maintained or changed. Experiences of interaction where participants have been able to explore the multi-faceted, flexible or constructed nature of their identities may have the effect of encouraging a more generalised willingness to make group boundaries more permeable and more open to redefinition. Conversely, experiences where participants have felt it necessary to affirm, reinforce and maintain rigidly defined and differentiated identities may have the effect of encouraging groups to harden their group boundaries or be more determined to perpetuate a sense of givenness about who and what they are.

This also applies to patterns of identity choice across groups. Where experiences of interaction generate an awareness of the significance of certain identities over others, groups may be encouraged to make greater use of those identities in a more generalised way. A group for example, whose members have tended to place greater importance on aspects of their culture, may begin to place greater emphasis on say, their migrant status, if they find through their experiences of interaction that their migrancy takes on a greater prominence. Alternatively, members of a group who have tended to make their ethnicity a key factor in interaction, may begin to place greater value on their broader social identity if their experiences of interaction enable them to feel that it is to their advantage to do so. It must of course, be acknowledged, that groups may maintain the kinds of identity preferences they have always had, if their experiences of interaction confirm that it is important or necessary for them to do so. The meaning and significance of the various identities available to groups, and the patterns of identity choice and engagement across groups, can thus be influenced by the way these issues are played out in particular episodes of interaction.

There will also be a potential for patterns of self-definition and other-definition to be affected. Members of dominant and subordinate groups for example, who have always defined each other in stereotypical ways, may find they want to re-evaluate this in the light of their experiences of interaction. Negative stereotypes may be discarded, or positive stereotypes may be reviewed if enough episodes of interaction are experienced to raise ques-
tions about the validity of such stereotypes. Interaction, on the other hand, may confirm and reinforce such stereotypical identifications. Similar patterns can emerge regarding the way groups define themselves. A group’s self-identification may be linked for example, to assumptions about their social status (whether that be high or low). If members of the group have enough experiences of interaction which cast doubt over those assumptions, then the way the group as a whole identifies itself will most likely begin to change. Experiences where those assumptions are confirmed and reinforced on the other hand, will most likely encourage group members to maintain that form of identification.

The way such patterns of identification emerge across a society can then have implications for the way processes are organised at the structural level. This can apply for example, to the systems of categorisation that are used to identify and organise diverse groups. If at the structural level, people tend to be categorised by a certain ethnic category, but in actual inter-ethnic interaction those people tend to identify themselves according to sub-categories within that broader category, then the way that category is used in structural processes may need to be changed to accommodate the sub-categories. The broader category may in fact be dispensed with. Similarly, if a social system is organised so that social boundaries are meant to be maintained between certain groups, but in fact the clarity of identity distinctions between those groups has begun to diminish, then that process of social organisation may itself need to be changed.

4.5.5 Summary.

A focus on identification systems highlights the fact that participants in intercultural communication carry with them certain identities and these influence the way participants are oriented to a particular encounter. It is clear that while ethnic-cultural identity is central to episodes of intercultural communication, this is not the only identity available to participants in a multicultural context. Further, the presence and influence of group-specific, narrowly applicable identities exists in tension with that of broadly applicable identities. Again, the way those identities are formed, identified and articulated also emerges from the tension between the structural processes that act to impose both common and particular identities on the members of society, the intra and inter-group processes through which members of society identify themselves and others and uphold or negotiate those id-
entifications, and individual responses by which identities are activated, affirmed or re-defined.

4.6 Focus 4: Behaviour.

4.6.1 Introduction.

A focus on behaviour is concerned with examining the relationship between the structures of behaviour that characterise a socio-cultural system and the types of culturally motivated behaviour that characterise a communication episode. This recognises essentially that members of a society will have a range of behavioural options available to them that come from their socialisation into the broad socio-cultural milieu but also from their socialisation into particular socio-cultural groups. These options serve to direct the way that participants act in a communicative encounter. Our basic organising model depicts the connections thus:

behavioural system       behavioural sets       communicative behaviours

4.6.2 Behavioural Systems and Interaction.

A society’s behavioural systems define and organise what is normative for that society. A society’s culture, as Keesing (1981 p.69) points out, involves shared ideas about what is, what can be, how to feel about it, what to do about it and how to do it. This can be expressed as conventions (weak norms whose violation is not generally held to be serious), mores (strongly held norms whose violation would offend the standards of acceptable conduct), taboos (forbidden, highly offensive or unthinkable behaviour) and laws (norms that have been legislated by a governing body) with conformity to these regarded as essential for the society to function (Appelbaum and Chambliss 1995, p.63ff).

A society’s system of norms will be instilled in its membership through socialisation, but also through mechanisms that reinforce them (such as systems of rewards and punishments). This behavioural system then, forms a set of guidelines which people use to direct their social interaction: “the shared rules of a particular culture that tell its members how to
behave in a given situation” (Appelbaum and Chambliss, p.62). Bredermeier and Stephenson (p.30) observe that these rules apply to relationships, roles and status obligations. Parsons (1968, p.44), comments that rules also have to be interpreted in the light of concrete situations. Moscovici (1981, p.187) suggests that there is a proper socially acceptable behaviour and style for each circumstance.

Although a society’s behavioural system will basically set the agenda for behaviour in that society, it must also be recognised that systems of norms also apply within social groups. Turner (1982, p.27) argues that as people become aware of common category membership, they then form or learn the stereotypical norms of that category and assign these norms to themselves. Identification with the group and conforming behaviour tend to be closely linked. This is also influenced by internal group processes that reinforce or reward conformity and discourage or punish deviation. The challenge for groups is to negotiate their internal system of norms (the centrifugal force) with those of the broader society (the centripetal force).

For ethnic groups especially, because their members are socialised into the group from birth, the tension can be more marked. Other kinds of social group may be better able to mark off group-specific behaviour for group-specific contexts and see no necessary tension with broader sets of behavioural norms. Ethnic groups on the other hand, will tend to see their norms as applying to the whole of life. These must then be seen in the light of the society’s broader behavioural system that also applies to the whole of life for its members. The problem for members of ethnic cultures will be to decide if one set of behaviours takes precedence over another in any given situation. This tension can be exacerbated where children born (and thus socialised) in a multicultural society, are also born (and socialised) into a strong ethnic culture. It may be possible for those children to develop dual (or even multiple) behavioural systems that can be applied in different contexts. It may also be the case that those children go through periods of struggle trying to work out which set of norms has the strongest claim on them.

In general then, an understanding of a society’s behavioural system will be gained from identifying 1.what people are obliged to do (e.g. by law, or strong social custom) and what are people prohibited from doing (by law or custom) 2.what people are expected to do or not to do (e.g. in particular rules and conventions) 3.what people are encouraged to do or discouraged from doing (e.g. through moral and ethical systems) and 4.what people are
permitted to do (even though there may be a level of opposition) and permitted to refrain from doing (even though there is general support or expectation).

From a centripetal perspective this means that a society will have a range of behaviours that are, as Denison and Wahrman (1983, p.19) point out, either accepted by general agreement on the “rules”, or are imposed by those in power and enforced by a system of rewards and punishments, whether all agree or not.

From a centrifugal perspective this means two possible things. It can mean that the social system itself can have different sets of expectations or obligations for different sections of society. It can also mean that people have available to them sets of behavioural options that apply within the context of particular social groups. The problem for interaction is that of deciding which set of behavioural options should be enacted in a given situation.

At the structural level then, we are concerned with the particular structures of normalisation that define a society’s behavioural system. This will be most clearly seen in codifications of these norms, such as laws and regulations, but there will also be articulations, at an official level, of certain values and expectations. These may be couched in terms of a dominant ideology (e.g. socialist or capitalist), religion or morality, which may or may not be accompanied by codifications, but which still creates within the social system, prescriptions for desired behaviour.

The behavioural system will be realised in particular institutional arrangements such as court systems and legislative bodies as well as the advisory organisations that serve to inform those institutions. Legal systems can encourage or discourage certain types of behaviour or people can be more likely to behave in certain ways because the penalty is less and avoid certain behaviours because the penalty is more. The ideal of course, is that the members of a society will act in a way that is consistent with structural requirements because they accept the underlying value system, seeing it as being for their own good and the good of society or seeing that there is no danger of penalty if they do.

The problem at a structural level is how to manage divergence from what the dominant behavioural system prescribes. Normative systems are usually linked to value systems, ideologies or perspectives on what is acceptable or not acceptable for the people to whom it applies. Where a social system however, recognises the presence of potentially divergent behavioural systems within its overall scope it needs to be able to clarify how far diver-
gence from the dominant norms can go before they cross the bounds of acceptability. Some societies may for example, legitimise revenge killings or polygamy, while others make them illegal. Some societies may accept exposure of the body as normal, while others are outraged by it. Some societies will reward individual initiative and autonomous behaviour while others will punish it. The question that decision makers must grapple with at a structural level is what kinds of action are possible for people in this society. Centripetally motivated systemic activity will attempt to bring about levels of behavioural conformity across society, while centrifugally motivated activity will attempt to legitimise a range of behavioural systems to the extent that they do not contravene what is held to be the central norms for the society. The more forms of differentiated behaviour that are recognised within the system of course, the more likely it is that those central norms will be redefined (e.g. decriminalisation of homosexuality, recognition of de facto relationships).

At the social level it should be recognised first, that group-specific cultures will have their own ways of defining and prescribing what is acceptable or unacceptable unacceptable in various contexts (e.g. work, school, sport, public places). The challenge that these groups face is how to negotiate the demands placed on them by both their own group-specific norms and those of the wider society. There will be circumstances where group behaviour needs to conform with structurally-defined behavioural norms (centripetal), for example, where questions of legality are involved. There will be other circumstances where members of groups feel obliged or are expected to or choose to behave according to group-specific behavioural norms (centrifugal). This can be especially important where specific types of behaviour are used to signify group membership (such as dress codes, religious activity, greeting rituals). A tension is thus generated is between behavioural sets generated out of a knowledge of the society’s central and dominant normative system and a knowledge of the culturally-specific normative system.

At the episodic level participants will thus have to make behavioural choices (either consciously or unconsciously) from the various behavioural sets that are available from the society’s dominant behavioural system, the particular cultural system that the participants embrace and any individual perceptions of necessary behaviour in the situation.

Most situations will have some kinds of social rules or expectations attached to them. These will define what should or can occur in it. For less formal social situations rules or expectations may be to do with things like greeting rituals, inter-generational or inter-
gender behaviour. In other situations there may be very specific requirements for how things should be said, what clothes should be worn or how people’s statuses should be acknowledged. The issue will be whether the rules being enacted are from the broader social norms or from culture-specific norms. If, for example, a person is invited to a wedding that follows a certain ethnic tradition, is that person obliged to follow the customs associated with it (e.g. a certain kind of dress, a particular way of giving gifts) or will it be acceptable to follow their own wedding customs? The nature of interaction that takes place will thus depend to an extent on whether the situation generates any particular kind of pressure for the participants to conform to specific behavioural norms and how this squares with the participants’ own cultural assumptions about what is appropriate for this situation.

The input the participants generate will depend on the behavioural sets (made available by their cultural formations) that they are able to choose from, either consciously or unconsciously. These behavioural sets will give the participants an awareness of the rules that may be enacted, the appropriateness of certain communicative modes (e.g. listening or talking, assertiveness or reticence, directness or indirectness, self or other-focus, verbal or nonverbal). Out of these behavioural sets participants will be motivated for recourse either to commonly shared behaviours (centripetal motivation) or group-specific behaviours (centrifugal motivation), depending on their perception of the salience of either for the interaction. Where for example, a number of people from a variety of cultural backgrounds are together, there may be a greater recourse to shared behavioural modes in order for interaction to proceed successfully. Alternatively, where issues of significant cultural difference or group identity are perceived to be central to the interaction, there may be more recourse to group-specific behaviours in order to highlight the fact of significant difference among the participants. At a more conscious level, recourse to either common or group-specific behavioural modes, may become part of a communication strategy that is adopted so as to achieve communicative goals. A participant may for example, choose to speak a community language and use an interpreter, rather than speak the common language poorly, if preciseness of information is an important communicative goal. Or, a participant may adopt a common mode of dress, rather than a group-specific one if fitting in with a group is an important interactive goal.

The interactive process will then involve the engagement of those behaviours, strategies and reactions as each participant responds to the other/s. As each participant becomes
aware of how the others are acting and reacting, there will be some level of negotiation of what is appropriate or not, what is important or not, or what is successful or not for that particular encounter. Where it is perceived that there needs to be greater compatibility between modes of behaviour, participants may shift their emphasis more to commonly held norms, or one participant may possibly defer to the other’s mode of behaviour (a centripetal shift). Where, on the other hand, it is perceived that behavioural differences are important (for example, where a moral code needs to be upheld) participants may maintain their behavioural modes or shift to an even stronger differentiation of behaviour, despite the possible problems that may occur (a centrifugal shift). These shifts can also occur strategically, where participants deliberately try to shift their behaviour or that of the other participants in order to achieve certain communicative outcomes.

4.6.3 Behavioural Outcomes.

The nature of the behavioural outcomes of the interactive process will then be seen in the extent to which modes of behaviour recur in or are modified for subsequent episodes of interaction.

At a personal level, participants may develop a preference for certain modes of behaviour, if they have found those to be successful or rewarding in previous episodes. Where recourse to commonly shared behaviours has proved to be a successful way of engaging interculturally, then it is likely that that this will continue. Participants may find, alternatively, that recourse to group-specific behaviours has been an important or necessary approach to interacting with members of certain groups, so they will be motivated to continue this approach in subsequent encounters with those people.

Similarly, at an interpersonal level, experiences of engagement on the basis of either common or group-specific behaviours can influence the kinds of interpersonal strategies and forms of engagement that participants continue to use. If, for example, an individual’s experience of interaction has called into question the value of him or her maintaining group-specific behaviours, then that individual may be more open to exploring commonly shared behavioural options in the future. If the situation should be though, that the individual has attempted to explore common behavioural forms and found this not to be a successful approach, then he or she may be more inclined to adopt a strategy of foregrounding be-
havioural differences in future interactions.

If such intercultural experiences are sufficient or significant enough to create a flow-on effect to the social level, then a number of possibilities emerge. Firstly, in a more generalised way, members of groups may become more willing to explore and engage commonly shared behaviour sets, or conversely, they become more determined to maintain their own norms during inter-group interaction. Secondly, the meaning and importance for a group, of particular kinds of behaviour, may become open to re-evaluation on the one hand, or confirmed, reinforced and maintained on the other. This could see the frequency of those behaviours either increase or decrease during inter-group interactions. Thirdly, it is possible that groups may become more able to incorporate elements of the commonly shared behavioural sets, or possibly of the behavioural sets of other groups, into their own on the one hand, or more determined to keep their own distinctive behavioural sets intact and inviolate on the other. This could create a greater convergence and homogenisation of behaviour across a society, or alternatively, generate a greater incompatibility between groups in terms of the way they act within their own group relationships and towards members of other groups.

The nature of outcomes at the structural level will be seen in the degree to which a society’s normative systems are affected by patterns of behaviour occurring across the society. Where members of society for example, become more alike in their dominant modes of behaviour, despite the presence of other significant differences, this is more likely to signal a confirmation of the dominant normative systems. If, on the hand, there is a significant degree of violation of dominant norms because of culture-specific behaviour, the normative system itself may have to come under review and be adjusted. Such adjustments could take the form of official discourses about the capacity of the society to cope with divergent norms. It could also mean that codifications need to be changed to allow for multiple normalisations (e.g. laws that allow for polygamy on religious grounds).

4.6.4 Summary.

This focus on behavioural systems has sought to explore the ways in which the behavioural options that are available in a social system serve to direct the way interactions are played out. It has highlighted in particular the fact that a tension exists between the
kinds of normative systems that are dominant in a society and the way that ethnic-cultural
groups in particular (though not exclusively) develop their own particular sets of behaviour
based on their cultural formations and the socialisation of their members into them. This
interplay of centripetally and centrifugally motivated behavioural systems occurs at the
structural level where the structural processes that shape society need to find the balance
between norms that are imposed on all members of society and the level of divergent
norms that can be allowed within the system. It also occurs in general patterns of inter-
action where members of society are called on to balance their acceptance and practice of
commonly shared forms of behaviour with their practice of culturally-specific forms of be-
aviour. When individuals engage in intercultural encounters then, they too must negotiate
both the commonly shared forms of behaviour and the divergent forms of behaviour that
will be enacted interpersonally.

6.7 General Summary.

This chapter has set out the fundamental theoretical structure that can be used to ela-
borate a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication.

It has suggested that the structural processes involved in defining the nature of a soci-
ety’s intercultural interactions, will be reproduced in both general patterns of intercultural
interaction across the society and in specific episodes of intercultural communication. This
is because the structural processes create the conditions in which such interaction occurs.

It has proposed that episodes of intercultural communication in multicultural societies
can be understood as emerging from and being conducted within a broader, shared culture
and a particular group-generated culture at the same time, though they are also enacted by
autonomous individual agents. It is the interplay of these centripetal and centrifugal cul-
tural forces that gives multicultural communication is distinctive character. It is this interplay
of centripetal and centrifugal factors, contained within the intercultural communication
process, that intercultural communication theory and research has an opportunity to ex-
plore and develop further, both in the intrasocietal context and increasingly, in the intersoc-
itetal context.
5. Conclusion.

5.1 A Multicultural Model of Communication.

The fundamental concern that has been addressed throughout this discussion has been whether the established models of intercultural communication can sufficiently account for the intercultural communication that takes place within a multicultural social context. It has explored a range of issues that can be brought to bear on an understanding of intercultural communication in order to give such an account. This range of issues is extensive and complex, which means that incorporating them all into one comprehensive and fully integrated model of multicultural communication may prove extremely difficult to achieve. That said, a number of key approaches to modelling intercultural communication have still been introduced.

First, the communication process has been depicted, using a systems approach, as consisting of participant input, negotiation and communication outcomes, taking place within the specific social context of a multicultural society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT CULTURE</th>
<th>INTERCULTURAL NEGOTIATION</th>
<th>PARTICIPANT CULTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERCULTURAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTCOME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Social Situation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multicultural Context
Second, by incorporating Giddens’ analysis of how the structuring principles of a society are reproduced institutionally, socially and situationally, with four key focuses, an organising model for analysis was developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Episodic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning Systems</td>
<td>Cultural Meanings</td>
<td>Engagement of cultural meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structuring</strong></td>
<td><strong>Inter-cultural Relations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intercultural Relationship</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles</td>
<td>Identification systems</td>
<td>Cultural Identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Behaviour Sets</td>
<td>Intercultural Behaviours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third, because the overall rationale of the approach followed here has been based on the importance of the relationship between “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces, the nature of communication has been conceived of in terms of its capacity to move between centripetal and centrifugal motivation. This can be modelled so:

```
 Centripetally motivated (CP)       Centrifugally motivated (CF)
```

As already suggested, integrating these three models into one overall model may go some way towards depicting the nature of intercultural communication in the multicultural context, but because of the complexity of the various elements, such a model can only be used as a starting point with further elaboration needed. Nevertheless, an integrated model could be constructed thus:
### Patterns of Social Interaction
- Cultural Meanings
- Intercultural Relations
- Cultural Identities
- Cultural behaviour sets

### Multicultural Context
- Meaning Systems
- Relational Systems
- Identificational Systems
- Behavioural Systems

PRODUCE INTERCULTURAL OUTCOMES
Generation of meanings
Relationship development
Personal identity construction
Behavioural choice

CP --- CF

INTERCULTURAL EPISODE

Preferred meanings or meaning creation strategies
Definition and activation of intercultural relations
Formation and activation of socio-cultural identities
Formation and activation of behavioural sets

CP --- CF

GENERAL PATTERNS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

Formulation of meaning systems
Formulation of relational systems
Formulation of identificational systems
Formulation of behavioural systems

CP --- CF

SOCIAL SYSTEM
The model presented here has as part of its underlying rationale a number of key propositions. It rests firstly, on the understanding that multicultural societies are characterised by an incorporation of cultural difference into an overall social unity. This means that while interactions in a multicultural society are still affected by the presence of cultural difference, the members of society still communicate with each other on the basis of an essential connectedness: an interface so to speak, rather than a gap. This further generates an interplay between globalising and localising forces within the overall social milieu and so dictates that any understanding of intercultural interaction within that society must incorporate both sets of forces. It sees secondly, that both culture and communication are dynamic processes that involve change, negotiation, redefinition and reformation in response to the ongoing social processes of the society. Thirdly, it holds that culture and communication are mutually influential, that is, culture impacts on the way communication occurs, but communication is also the means by which culture is created and recreated. These basic propositions guide the way that communication itself needs to be conceptualised, but also guide the way the connections between communication and social context can be traced and the way that the relationship between individuals and their respective cultural formations during interaction, can be understood. The model presented here seeks, in the light of the explorations, developments and discussions that have preceded it, to encapsulate these key elements as indicative of a multicultural approach to intercultural communication.

5.2 Applying the Model.

It was noted in the introductory stages of the thesis that communication models are devised to provide a conceptual framework which can be applied to real-life situations in a variety of ways. These applications fall broadly into three categories. First, models are used as a basis for analysing communication practices. This means that models provide the basis for examining particular case studies so as to understand what communication situations and practices were involved, or for devising empirical studies in order to focus on particular kinds of practices. Second, models are used to develop communication training programs. Intercultural models in particular, have informed training programs for people travelling overseas for either business or diplomatic purposes, but have also been used to
inform home-based multicultural programs. Third, models can be used to plan communication strategies, taking into account the variety of factors that the model presents. The model that has been developed here is also held to be applicable to these broad categories. The following discussion considers some of the ways in which this might be seen to work.

The possibilities for applying the model in an actual research project are many and varied. Past projects have examined such things as intimate relationships between people of different cultural backgrounds, the communication practices of overseas students, the cultural characteristics of racial or ethnic groups and comparative studies of communication practices between host nation and visitor cultures, particularly in the context of international business communication. Some of these areas would also lend themselves to investigation under the terms of the multicultural model proposed here. Relationship studies, for example, would not only address the impact of cultural difference on the relationship but examine the connections between the participants, their respective ethnic groups and the broader socio-cultural context so as to consider how both diversity and commonality are a part of the relationship. Studies of overseas students would similarly examine the degree of shared culture as well as cultural difference that either already exists or develops through interaction, also taking into account such things as their political positioning as overseas students and any relationships that might develop with locally existing ethnic groups.

There are also research areas that lend themselves specifically to examination within a multicultural frame of reference. These would include the communication dynamics of culturally diverse classrooms, communication in a culturally diverse workplace, training programs for those involved in culturally diverse contexts and communication strategies geared towards culturally diverse locales.

The culturally diverse classroom, has been a research area for educational theory for some time, but would also constitute a valuable research area for communication studies. Studies conducted under the terms of this model would examine not only the classroom situation itself, but such things as the political and institutional factors that guide or determine the respective roles of the students and teachers, the purpose of education, the level of access and support the students have to resources and programs and the legal status of the students as well as their relationship to particular ethnic groups and the shared culture of the society.
Studies into culturally diverse workplaces would be useful for considering the impact of intercultural communication in the workplace on such things as conflict levels, employee solidarity, employer/employee relations, productivity levels, job satisfaction, organisational culture and organisational goal achievement. This model would guide research into such things as structural factors that position workers and the ethnic groups they represent in certain ways, group specific attitudes about work in general or certain kinds of work in particular in relation to more broadly available perspectives on the same issues, as well as individual communication practices in the workplace. The results of such studies would have implications for management practices and courses or training programs related to them.

The implications of the model for training programs lie in the first instance, in the kinds of assumptions that define the motivation for the program to be developed and the particular communication issues and skills that are identified as the focus of the program. Management training programs guided by this model for example, would assume that cultural commonality is as important a factor as cultural diversity. This means that the program would not only address the issue of how to manage cultural diversity in a workplace, but would also explore the idea of shared culture, both as something that is brought into the workplace and something that can be created in the workplace.

The relevance of the model for the development of communication strategies in culturally diverse locales can also be seen in its attention to the interplay of commonality and diversity. Communicators guided by this concept would consider for example, how message construction can engage elements of shared culture to present messages that are meaningful to all, as well as considering what kinds of messages can be targeted towards specific groups. Use of the four focuses would also enable communicators to plan both message construction and dissemination strategies that are applicable to the particular social dynamics of the locale in question.

These suggestions set out in general terms some of the possibilities for applying the model to real life circumstances. To use this model to guide such projects, requires a consideration of both the structure and the content of the model.

Structurally, the model comprises three major elements (the focus, the level of analysis, the centripetal-centrifugal relationship) which can be understood more clearly if set out in tabular form as follows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning System</th>
<th>Relational System</th>
<th>Identificational System</th>
<th>Behavioural System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural Level</strong></td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Level</strong></td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Episodic Level</strong></td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
<td>Centripetal Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
<td>Centrifugal Factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This tabular version of the model allows us to see the range of strategic options available when considering how to apply it. The model can be used vertically to analyse the nature of one focus at three levels. This approach would be preferred when looking to elaborate the relationship between the characteristics of a communication episode and those of the broader social contexts in which it occurs. The model can also be used horizontally to analyse four focuses at any one level. This approach would be preferred when seeking to develop a broad understanding of the situational elements that may be relevant to a particular analytical project. Within each focus, and at each level, the model also directs the user to consider what centripetal and centrifugal factors are relevant. Further, the model may also be used as a guide to examining the relevance of any particular...
communication concept, for example, competence. Such a concept could be matched with
the segments of the table where it seen as most relevant or assessed for its relevance to all
segments of the table in turn. This overview table also allows users to choose which seg-
ments they want to focus on, be it all segments, be it one level, be it one focus at one level,
or different focuses at different levels. Whatever the particular strategic choice may be, the
model holds the relationship between the centripetal and centrifugal forces that operate in
each focus and at each level to be the key analytical concern.

The full range of elements that have been elaborated throughout the thesis are not
covered in this general table. It is meant to be a rough guide as to how one’s thinking about
the model can be guided when using it for any particular project. Each of the four focuses
can however, be further examined to see how their specific elements can be applied. With-
in each focus, the three levels of analysis and a variety of subject domains are available to
further specify the possible areas of analysis or development. As was the case with the
model as a whole, the elements of the four focuses can be taken in their entirety or used
selectively.

The meaning system focus was divided into three topic domains set out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning System</th>
<th>Ideational</th>
<th>Significational</th>
<th>Disseminational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural Level</td>
<td>e.g. dominant ideology/perspective</td>
<td>e.g. language status, policy</td>
<td>e.g. media law industry regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Level</td>
<td>e.g. group ideology/ perspective</td>
<td>e.g. perpetuation of community language</td>
<td>e.g. ethnic media V mainstream use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic Level</td>
<td>e.g. personal world view, belief system</td>
<td>e.g. personal language use</td>
<td>e.g. personal media use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When using the model, a relationship study may for example, consider the ideational
domain at the structural level to explore the kinds of dominant ideologies or perspectives
that a society may have regarding the meaning of intercultural relationships and their
acceptability or non-acceptability. These would include for example, official discourses
about racial purity or ethnic separation, or alternatively, the subordination of ethnic group
integrity to broader social integration or the freedom to choose what kinds of relationships
one enters. At the social level the emphasis may be on how the particular social groups
involved generate and perpetuate attitudes toward intercultural relationships, and whether

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these groups have particular attitudes towards each other. At the episodic level, the nature of the relationship and its communication can then be considered in terms of how the individual perceptions of the relationship fit with the attitudes of both the ethnic group and the broader society. Have the participants for example, decided to reject non-accepting ethnic-group attitudes because of a more accepting attitude within the broader society? Things such as the amount of risk or defiance involved in starting and continuing the relationship would be important elements for analysis.

A classroom study could use the significational domain to guide considerations of the meaning of language in classroom communication. At the structural level attention would be given for example, to specific laws regarding language competence, such as those related to visa requirements or qualification for jobs. The study may also consider institutional requirements relating to the language of instruction and language use, for example, whether the class requires the teacher to be monolingual, bi-lingual or multi-lingual or whether the language being taught is the only one to be used in the classroom. Social level analyses would consider the degree to which the relevant ethnic groups encourage or discourage second language learning or seek to maintain first language use among their own members. At the episodic level, the individual student’s motivation for learning or use of first language with other members of the same ethnic group may be considered in the light of the information acquired at the other levels of analysis.

A strategic communication plan might emphasise the disseminational domain, with particular attention given to the social level of analysis. This would mean, for example, investigating the types of media usage that are characteristic of the ethnic groups that a represented in the target area. Communicators would consider whether members of those groups read local papers or listen to local radio, whether they use the internet or whether they prefer community language publications. Such investigations would be instructive for developing dissemination strategies.

The relational system focus comprises three topic domains, described in terms of three key centripetal-centrifugal relationships.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational System</th>
<th>Integration V Fragmentation</th>
<th>Symmetry V Asymmetry</th>
<th>Similarity V Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural Level</td>
<td>consensus conflict</td>
<td>majority minority</td>
<td>“us/them” designations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proximity distance</td>
<td>domination subordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>belonging non-belonging</td>
<td>centrality marginality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assimilation separation</td>
<td>inclusion exclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Level</td>
<td>consensus conflict</td>
<td>majority minority</td>
<td>“us/them” designations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proximity distance</td>
<td>domination subordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>belonging non-belonging</td>
<td>centrality marginality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assimilation separation</td>
<td>inclusion exclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic Level</td>
<td>consensus conflict</td>
<td>majority minority</td>
<td>“us/them” designations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proximity distance</td>
<td>domination subordination</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>belonging non-belonging</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assimilation separation</td>
<td>inclusion exclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying this focus in say, a study of overseas students, might focus specifically on the integration/fragmentation relationship, considering for example, how particular perceptions of belonging or non-belonging affect the way the students interact and communicate. A structural level analysis could consider what impact such things as the ease or difficulty of obtaining a visa, or the way students from different countries are treated by the immigration department, have on the way the students feel welcomed or not. The reasons for these differences would need to be investigated. At the social level, the role of the ethnic group in creating a sense of belonging or non-belonging could be analysed. This means that the nature of the relationship between overseas students and residents originating from the same country would be investigated for its positive or negative impact. The way students seek out and maintain relationships with other students from the same country would also be an important consideration. At the episodic level, the particular communicative styles, attitudes, levels of participation or levels of satisfaction would be considered in the light of how the belonging/non-belonging issue is dealt with by individual students and what significance the broader social and structural processes have for this individual negotiation.

A workplace study might focus more on the symmetry/asymmetry relationship looking at how issues of equality form part of communication processes in the workplace. A structural level analysis could investigate whether immigrants are positioned as subord-
inates by virtue of their level of language competence, their lack of recognised qualifications or their acceptance into the country only to undertake certain types of work. A social level analysis could examine the position the particular ethnic groups represented in the workplace have within the broader society. This may ascertain whether any of these groups have more social power than others, whether they all exist in relations of subordination and why, and whether these relations are reproduced in the workplace. Episodic level analyses would then consider whether the intercultural communication that takes place in a particular workplace is characterised by the same relations or not, the kinds of interactive patterns that may perpetuate or work counter to, those relations and the types communication practices the individual workers adopt within that workplace context in view of those relations.

The identification system focus comprises two key topic domains, presented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identificational System</th>
<th>Identity Formation</th>
<th>Identity Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural Level</td>
<td>self-defined rigid given</td>
<td>other-defined flexible constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Level</td>
<td>self-defined rigid given</td>
<td>other-defined flexible constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic Level</td>
<td>self-defined rigid given</td>
<td>other-defined flexible constructed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The identity focus can be readily applied to a relationship study. Questions of identity formation could be investigated at the structural level by considering the degree to which national or common identity is defined in narrow racial, ethnic or cultural terms (or rigid definition) as opposed to broader, inclusive terms (or flexible definition). A social level analysis would similarly investigate the degree to which the ethnic groups concerned close their identity, for example through territorial, religious or linguistic terms, or open their identities, for example by accepting racial mixing or non-speaking of the community.
language. Investigations at the episodic level would then consider how the constructions of identity that individuals bring into a relationship are motivated by group attachments, the influence of broader structural processes, or the individual negotiation that occurs between the participants, for example, they may see their identities more in terms of their attachment to each other rather than their respective families or ethnic groups.

Using the identification focus to inform a training program may require more emphasis on the identity choice domain. Management training for example, could be enhanced by a greater awareness of the differences between identities organised migrant experiences, perceptions of ethnic grouping, aspects of culture and experiences of community. Understanding how members of a culturally diverse personnel might define themselves in such ways would assist the trainees to understand how personnel might position themselves in their relationships with each other. It would also help to clarify what kinds of sensitivities need to be taken into account in the relationship of management to personnel by allowing assumptions about cultural diversity and ethnic/cultural identity to be revised.

The *behavioural system* focus is understood with reference to four topic domains as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural System</th>
<th>Obligation Prohibition</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Encouragement Discouragement</th>
<th>Permission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural Level</td>
<td>e.g. law dom. norms</td>
<td>e.g. contribute to society</td>
<td>e.g official discourses</td>
<td>e.g. departmental or organisational policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Level</td>
<td>e.g. cultural custom</td>
<td>e.g. behaviour with other group members</td>
<td>e.g. individual effort</td>
<td>e.g. organisational membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic Level</td>
<td>e.g. personal sense of obligation</td>
<td>e.g. expectations of self and others</td>
<td>e.g. sense of motivation or non-motivation</td>
<td>e.g. sense of freedom or restriction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying the behaviour focus to a relationship study would be one area where there could be a large amount of cross-comparison between the different domains at different levels. An investigation of what the common culture of a society allows, and is perhaps
stated in law or accounted for in bureaucratic policies (permission domain, structural
level), might be seen in comparison to what particular social groups expect from their
members (expectation domain, social level). The behaviour of individuals at the episodic
level can then be seen in the light of these two contextual influences. They may for
example have an influence on what the participants encourage each other to do or
discourage each other from doing.

A classroom study may similarly compare the kinds of expectations on participants that
are formulated at the structural level (e.g. minimum attendance patterns) with the kinds of
obligations that ethnic groups might maintain at the social level (e.g. communal celeb-
trations, religious observances). Episodic level analyses would consider how classroom
behaviour, for example, actual attendance, may reflect the way participants negotiate these
two sets of behavioural requirements. Another example might be the comparison between
what participants are encouraged to do at the structural level, compared with ethnic group
formulations about what members are allowed or not allowed to do. Educational policy
may for example, be geared towards encouraging individual expression of opinion, partici-
pation in group discussion, participation in a range of creative activities or discussion of a
range of topics. Group norms on the other hand may not allow certain kinds of interaction
or discussion of certain topics. Individual behaviour at the episodic level of analysis would
then be seen in the light of the interplay of these two sets of influences. Individuals may
choose not to participate in certain activities, may choose to participate despite group
norms, may behave differently if other members of their ethnic group are also in the class
or may feel free to participate in any activity.

A study into workplace communication might investigate how structural requirements
such as industrial laws or regulations direct the kinds of workplace behaviour that are seen
as necessary. These could be compared to the kinds of work practices that are encouraged
or assumed to be normal, within an ethnic group. Individual workplace place behaviour at
the episodic level could then be assessed in the light of the interaction between these two
factors. Organisational expectations of the employees (e.g. union membership, work
contracts, participation in certain activities, dress codes) could also be compared to social
group expectations about the same things and the degree to which group pressure is present
or absent in the workplace. Individual behaviour would then be assessed in terms of the
interplay between the two sets of expectations, but also in terms of the degree of individual choice and freedom that is exhibited in the participants’ behaviour.

The preceding discussion has offered a variety of suggestions as to how the multicultural model can be applied to actual projects. This is clearly not an exhaustive list of possibilities, nor have all the suggestions made been developed to the extent they could be. These hypothetical examples, do however give some indication of the way the structure and content of the model can be used to guide and shape research, training and strategic planning where the multicultural social context is a factor in communication.

5.3 Further Development of Intercultural Communication Theory.

The approach adopted throughout this thesis has been overtly conceptual, seeking to explore and lay out the fundamental issues and concepts that give direction to a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication. It is clear that such issues and concepts lend themselves to much more detailed elaboration both for the development of communication models and the development of research projects. In this regard, a number of suggestions are offered.

First, further consideration can be given to the nature of socio-cultural change in contemporary societies and what this means for intercultural interaction within them. Assuming that ethnic cultures can be easily defined and will always remain as they are is unwise. To understand ethnicity and culture as things which change over time as part of ongoing social processes will, on the other hand, enable a more accurate estimation of how intercultural processes might operate within a society. Accepting that such change will occur also raises the question of how multicultural societies themselves will change in the future. Will the current multicultural nature of society eventually be replaced by a homogenised socio-culture where ethnic identity and cultural distinctiveness have become meaningless? Will forms of localisation continue to gain strength in opposition to globalising forces, thus making ethnic or sub-cultural identities more important for social organisation and interaction, even if the content of those identities changes? The exploration of such questions will enable communication theory and research to generate further meaningful developments in the social perspectives that need to surround theories of interpersonal intercultural communication. Identifying specific social processes for example, may allow a level of
prediction to occur about the effect those social processes could have on communication processes. This could be seen in things like a society’s policy on migrant intakes and its implications for the kinds of communication situations that may arise as a result. It may mean that there are more or less migrants arriving each year. It may mean that there are more or less of one kind of migrant (refugee, skilled, business, student) or that there are more or less migrants from one nation or region. Whatever the specifics may be, if communication researchers are able to engage in an ongoing monitoring of such social processes, then this will enable them to develop relevant approaches to the ongoing study of intercultural communication within the context of those processes.

Second, while the focus of this discussion has been specifically on the nature of intrasocietal communication, there is clearly scope to develop further the implications of this approach to intersocietal communication. If a local-global dialectic (Giddens) is increasingly applicable to the world as a whole, because of greater internationalisation and globalisation, then this dialectical nature of intercultural communication between societies must also be increasingly acknowledged. This will mean considering a number of issues that could have a bearing on the way communication occurs.

It will mean considering the kind of shared culture that exists across societal boundaries, driven by such things as international media organisations, economic interdependence and commonly available technologies and products. This will need to be considered alongside ongoing cultural differences that exist by virtue of cultures that are already in place and cultures that can be created in direct opposition to globalising processes. It will also mean considering the kinds of common problems that exist across societal boundaries, and which require common solutions, as well as those problems that exist for specific societies and which may help to frame the way communication occurs between societies. Further, it will mean considering the ongoing nature of international movement for such things as work, leisure, asylum and diplomatic relations and how this can create a greater sense of connectedness across societal boundaries as well as a more frequent confrontation of cultural differences. These kinds of issues have implications not only for the way intercultural communication is modelled, but also for things like the kinds of intercultural skills that are needed for various communication contexts, which in turn has implications for things like intercultural training programs.

Third, there is an opportunity for theorists to develop a more detailed elaboration of
the concepts introduced here at each level of analysis. The aim of this thesis has been to explore the implications of a range of broad concepts that can give shape and direction to a multicultural perspective on intercultural communication. Some elaboration of those concepts has been offered but there is clearly scope to engage in a much closer examination of them. Studies of structural level processes for example could seek to produce detailed descriptions of specific kinds of processes that involve the management of cultural diversity and the possible impact those processes could have on the people they are applied to. Studies of social level processes could be directed towards a greater understanding of the relationship between how ethnic/cultural groups understand their place in society and their existence as a group, how individuals understand their participation in the group and their participation in society and the kinds of interaction dynamics that are created as a result. Studies directed at the episodic level could seek to develop a range of more specific analytical categories to be applied to particular communicative encounters. Such categories could cover the psychological characteristics of the participants, the use of language, discourse, how the relationship of the participants can be described, how identities are being defined and presented what kinds of behaviour are being exhibited as well as what attitudes, motivations, strategies or outcomes are evident.

Fourth, it would be valuable to develop actual research projects based on the models suggested here, to explore their implications at a practical level. This could include for example, constructing forms of observation and analysis that seek to document the centripetal and centrifugal movements that take place during an intercultural encounter. The focus of empirical research would then shift from only describing cultural differences, to things like considering what motivates participants in their preference for or reliance on similarities or differences and what kinds of communication strategies they use to foreground either similarities or differences.

Finally, further development is certainly possible in the application of the basic concepts to practice. Where programs for training people in intercultural skills, or methods for managing a multicultural classroom, for example, may have focussed on how to deal with issues of cultural difference, they could be developed by considering the implications of cultural similarity, shared experience or common goals for intercultural behaviour. There is also the opportunity to consider the implications of the centripetal-centrifugal relationship process for specific contexts like business, diplomacy, migration, or tourism. Further, rel-
ationship development is another area that could benefit by a greater consideration of the centripetal-centrifugal concept, with more friendships, marriages and acquaintances, taking on an intercultural character.

These suggestions then, constitute areas where further development of the approach proposed here could be undertaken.

5.4 Final Summary.

Increasing global interconnections, travel and migration are now part of the typical contemporary experience. This means that interaction between people of different cultural formations, whether within societies or between societies has now become commonplace.

Within this context of increasing intercultural interaction, intercultural communication theory and research has identified the necessity to negotiate cultural difference as the foundation of intercultural communication, whether between or within societies. While accepting that this is so, it has also been maintained throughout this discussion that intercultural communication that occurs within societies, in particular multicultural societies, can be distinguished from between-society communication in a number of important ways. One fundamental distinction is that within-society intercultural communication occurs on an ongoing basis, as part of everyday life and experience, rather than on a one-off or short term basis. Secondly, and most importantly for the perspective developed here, participants in intercultural communication discover, negotiate or create areas of commonality, by virtue of their shared social experience, while also accepting the points of fundamental difference that exist between them. The central issue for intercultural communication in such contexts is not merely the matter of overcoming cultural gaps. It is also about working within an interface: a zone of connection where commonality and difference exist in tension and where the outcomes of communication are never certain, even if so-called intercultural skills are applied.

Where intercultural social experience is going in the future is open to debate. Whether over time and generations, societies will emerge with new hybrid or homogenised cultures, or whether they more develop resilient forms of cultural differentiation is yet to be seen. For now though, the tense and uncertain interconnection between socio-cultural commonality and particular cultural differences is one of the defining elements of contem-
porary social experience. It is this interconnection that intercultural communication theory and research needs to explore and develop if it is to adequately account for the nature of intercultural communication in the multicultural context.
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