

# Chapter 8

## Ideology and culture

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Journalists cannot ignore that they are not operating in a vacuum, immune to environmental influences. “[T]he social environment – consisting of a specific national setting as well as a certain type of media system – has an influence on journalists’ professional ideology, which in turn affects journalists’ behaviour” (Ginosar, 2015, p.290). Moreover, the interpretations of any investigation require a self-awareness in terms of ideological, culturally-biased, perspectives. The COVID19 crisis has highlighted the importance of transparent knowledge sharing across countries, and how this may be limited by ideological motivations. In a study of 1800 journalists across 18 nations, Hanitzsch et al. (2010) concluded that “traditional western ideals of detachment and being a watchdog of the government flourish among the standards accepted by journalists around the world” (p.8). But what is “western” or any cultural influence and how does one measure it?

Starting with a case study on comparative approaches to media, in this chapter we will propose potential theoretical and methodological approaches from the field of cross-cultural psychology that may extend and complement our current understanding of the impact of ideology and culture in journalism. We will start off by describing extant comparative research on media systems to relate it to ideology and culture. We will then suggest that cross-cultural psychology can give both theoretical and methodological contributions to the field, and help us design and interpret more effectively studies aimed at understanding the role of ideology and culture in journalism. In order to achieve that, we will first define ideology in relation to social psychological research and news values. The chapter then focuses on Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1981) and explores a specific “value” within group dynamics, i.e., tolerance, as an example. The section on culture reviews the historical conceptualisation of this “system of shared meaning” and how it differs from ideology. This leads to the development of the importance of cultural values as a “currency” for measurement in comparative research. As people, organisations and nations evolve over time, the aim of a cross-cultural psychologist is to compare and contrast across-cultural contexts.

## CASE STUDY: COMPARING MEDIA SYSTEMS IN SEARCH FOR UNIVERSALITY AND SPECIFICITY IN NEWS PRACTICES AROUND THE WORLD

Scholars interested in news media and their role in democratic societies now recognise the important role played by culture in influencing the way in which news are provided, accessed and interpreted by the public. While the vast majority of studies on news environments generally focus on a single country (Aalberg & Curran, 2012; Hallin, 2015), there is a growing awareness that in order to understand news and journalism, and their role in society, it is important to recognise that these do not exist in isolation and are shaped by the social structures within which they exist (in line with what is suggested by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956). From this perspective, comparative research – that is cross-cultural research within psychology – becomes an important tool. Hallin and Mancini (2019) stress that comparative research allows us to refine our understanding of media and their influence by rendering us more sensitive to universal and culture specific aspects of news production and provision. In particular, these authors state (ibid, p.168) “Important aspects of media are assumed to be ‘natural’, or in some cases are not perceived at all”.

A comparative approach helps us to move away from this perspective and “denaturalise” our understanding of the phenomenon we are interested in (for example, how news media talk about politics) and identify its culture-universal and culture-specific aspects, while also allowing us to “test hypotheses about the interrelationships among social phenomena” (ibid, p.168). In a similar vein, Tiffen and Gittins (2009) argue that cross-country comparisons allows firstly to see the phenomenon we are interested in (“ourselves” in the case of reflections concerning one’s country) and to “expand our universe of possibilities” (p. 2). At the same time, they argue that comparative research is the “social scientists’ substitute for the experiment” (ibid p.2), as it allows researchers to assess differences on factors we cannot really manipulate by comparing countries which differ along those dimensions.

There are however important obstacles to conducting comparative research. As Tiffen and Gittins (2009) state, one of the main difficulties is that much of what we understand as culture defies quantification. We offer in this chapter some potential solutions to this issue in the section dedicated to measuring culture. Moreover, (and in line with what is discussed later in this chapter), issues of reliability and equivalence of measures are quite significant when trying to draw comparisons between countries. Furthermore, scholars have recognised the dangers of making sweeping generalisations in classifying countries along the western/non-

western dimension, and that this does not account for fundamental differences in the media environment between countries.

Particularly successful in this field in terms of its rigour, systematicity and influence in the more general field, is the model developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). In their work, the authors were interested in identifying different types of “media systems” within “western” media. A media system is “an internally complex, autonomous entity being part of a greater whole, such as a country, also treated as a system. The media system is comprised of institutional structures and final products which recipients use directly and frequently as they are addressed to them (newspapers, journals, radio and TV programmes), as well as entities (such as press agencies, distributors) with which people are less familiar with but which, nevertheless, are crucial to the functioning of the media system” (Stonczyk, 2009 p.1).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) operationalised media systems along four dimensions: the history of the development of the media market; the relationship between the media and the political system (in terms of the extent to which there are clear parallels between the media and the political system in the country); the extent to which journalism is professionalised; and the role of state in regulating media content and outputs. Adopting these criteria, the authors identified three broad models of media systems which could be applied to the 18 countries across Europe and North America considered in their work. Firstly, a Liberal model, characterised by a wide development of a media market with a strong dominance of commercial media, relatively (but varied) small political parallels, and a strong tradition of journalistic professionalism. A second model was particularly characteristic of Northern European Countries. This model, called Democratic Corporatist, is characterised by a strong circulation of both commercial and party newspapers, a long tradition of political parallelism between press and political parties, stronger state intervention in the media and a strong journalistic professionalism. The third model – which can be found more frequently in Mediterranean countries) – is the Polarised Pluralist model and it is characterised by a closer connection of media to political (as opposed to market) forces, a high political parallelism, relatively interventionist role of the state and a lower level of journalistic professionalism (Hallin, 2015).

Scholars have drawn on this classification to explore the extent to which the classification of countries along the dimensions identified in these models resulted in differences across countries in the amount and quality of information provided, as well as in patterns of media use, knowledge and political engagement in the population. For example, a series of studies (Curran et al., 2009; Curran et al., 2012; Curran et al., 2014) were conducted

in four, six and eleven nations in which content features of the news (press, TV and websites in the latter study) were considered alongside survey measures on representative samples of the population. In the development and completion of these studies, it was interesting to notice the emergence of many of the issues to be discussed in this chapter.

For example, initially assumptions were made on the universality of the concepts of *hard news* (i.e., that which plays an important role in providing the audience with information which is relevant to their role as citizens in a society) and *soft news* (i.e., information not directly related to citizenry issues). In other words, researchers made the assumption that these labels (hard and soft news) meant the same for everyone. However, this had to be reappraised when, in the first study (Curran et al, 2009), it emerged that – for example – news concerning culture in certain countries was considered hard, whereas in others it was considered soft. After consultation with all researchers and coders involved across the four nations, it was decided that in order to allow for comparison there should have been a multistep classification, whereby the topic of the news item had to be combined with the extent to which the item was contextualised within social and/or political debates, before it would be classified as hard or soft. Cross-cultural differences emerged throughout the studies and were addressed in a way which recognised different approaches to the issue, while also attempting to collect some information on the culture-universal features of content which we could usefully adopt for comparison.

Hallin and Mancini's (2012) proposed classification overall did find some support, in that by and large, countries with a stronger “public service” tradition (i.e., Democratic Corporatist) usually provided higher quality news (in terms of the proportion of hard vs soft news – see below), accompanied by higher levels of knowledge in the citizens compared to countries which more closely matched the Liberal model. The studies however (and in line with Hallin and Mancini, 2012) highlighted how the models can be better understood as broad interpretative frameworks as opposed to rigid classifications. Indeed, Hallin and Mancini (2019) explain how the proposed models do not fit perfectly to any particular country, but they constitute “ideal types” which can be useful analytical tools to understand the development of *media ecosystems*<sup>1</sup> within and across nations.

At the same time, Hallin and Mancini (2012) acknowledge the fact that media systems are not static, but in constant flux so – while it is useful to have guiding dimensions along

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<sup>1</sup> We define the term media ecosystems as the combination and interaction between people, information, and technologies within a particular (physical and social) environment

which these can be identified and classified – the typologies and classifications derived can and do change across time and space. Moreover, the proposed model seems to be less effective in accounting for media systems as identified in their book as “Beyond the Western World” (Hallin & Mancini, 2012). In subsequent years, there have been attempts to extend the 2004 model, for example by proposing a classification of six media systems (Atlantic-Pacific liberal model, the Southern-European clientelism model, the Northern European public service model, the Eastern European shock model, the Arab-Asian patriot model and the Asia-Caribbean command model (see Cushion, 2012 for a detailed explanation of the models and different accounts of media system classification). In general, cross-national research seems to suggest that in countries where media have a strong public service mandate and Public Broadcasting Systems (PBS), research tends to find better quality news provision and a corresponding higher level of informed and engaged citizenry (Cushion, 2012).

What is important, however, is to query the underlying values that drive such cultural differences, and to consider how journalists can delineate their own value-based practice to be aware of the cultural lenses with which they observe the world, whilst not fall into the trap of relativism. In other words, a journalist may want to consider what values drive their interest in their work, such as search for truth, liberalism, entertainment, conservatism, political support, and so on. These values and ideological positions and their correlates with the way we think about – and act within – our social context have been extensively explored in psychology.

## THE ROLE OF CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is a science that is rooted in western culture and its theories and practices have spread widely across the globe, sometimes without the necessary regard for local cultural circumstances or needs (Berry et al., 2002). Journalism is not dissimilar, and it may serve any field of research to be critical of both from where ideas originated and how they are disseminated. When considering the range of psychological processes affecting journalistic practice in the modern era, it is important to think of the role played by ideology and culture. Indeed, both these concepts have been explored widely in psychology, and this chapter will review the literature by linking it to journalistic practice. The key message is that since ideology and culture influence the ways in which news is provided, a psychological perspective may help to shed light on the processes underpinning media communication. Moreover, while ideological thinking is often viewed in a negative light, and the link to culture is easily made, in psychology, cross-cultural theories and methods are important tools to differentiate between universal and subjective norms that explain the thinking and behaviours of groups in specific

contexts without prejudice (see also Chapter 6 for a discussion of norms and roles in journalism).

As described in Chapter 2, journalism is in flux, with new types of independent media platforms like MediaPart, De Correspondent, Tortoise and NewsHero espousing beliefs that are not bound by national borders, launching across the globe. This kind of entrepreneurial, citizens-of-the-world journalism goes hand in hand with technological developments, with democratic and positive results such as Wikipedia and Bellngcat, but also with negative ones framed as “surveillance capitalism” (e.g., McNamee, 2019). Deuze (2005) distinguishes micro-level challenges, such as the role of the journalist, from macro-level challenges. The latter he further defines as: multiculturalism and new media (social), corporate colonisation of the newsroom and media concentration (economic), and localisation versus globalisation, press freedom and media law (political). Micro-level and macro-level challenges are linked to individual norms and organisational and national ideologies. Psychology can provide some clarification by delineating values underlying existing differences across the globe, that may cause some of the complexities currently faced by media communication. In other words, a psychological perspective may not only identify commonalities and differences in the structure, forms and content of news provision (as illustrated in the case study above), but also in how these translate into differences in the ways in which news producers and news recipients construct their profession and the world around them. We argue that ideology and culture play an important role in the construction process and can help bridge the gap between structural differences and professional practice.

### **Ideology**

It is of little surprise that journalism is strongly linked to ideology – readers often know the political leaning of the source they consult for information. Many individual journalists and, moreover, the media company for which they work are accused of biased reporting by each other, government leaders and readers. Still, organisations like the Nieman Foundation in association with Harvard University profess to elevate standards of journalism, and a recent study in the USA claims that there is no “liberal media bias” in what journalists choose to cover as they aim to avoid ideological bias (Hassell, Holbein and Miles, in press). The key here is to engage in critical thought and to query such studies because, as will become evident below, ideological thinking is closely linked to cultural upbringing, which is deeply embedded in the self and difficult objectively to control.

Ideology in journalism is linked to journalists' vocational devotion, and can be defined by how journalists give meaning to their work (Deuze, 2005). In Deuze's view, ideology is "a collection of values, strategies and formal codes characterising professional journalism and shared more widely by its members" (p. 444). This definition is similar to the way in which psychologists would understand and explore culture. The key element here being the incorporation of aspects of practice, which is noticeably absent in psychological approaches to ideology.

Ideology in mainstream psychological research is often assumed, and rarely defined, perhaps because it is deemed more suitable for sociology or politics. For example, Gordon Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice* (1956) discusses ideologies and research methods to explore their role in prejudice but does not seem quite to attempt to provide a definition. However, ideology has been defined as a set of persistent and pervasive belief systems (Jost & Amodio, 2012), and mostly explored in political and religious contexts. Hogg and Vaughn (2008) further clarify the relationship, function and purpose of these beliefs, by adding that it concerns "a systematically interrelated set of beliefs whose primary function is explanation. It circumscribes thinking, making it difficult for the holder to escape from its mould" (p. 578). It is interesting to notice the negative slant adopted by the authors with their use of the "mould" metaphor. This might point to the work of Augustinos and Walker (1998) and their critique of mainstream social psychology as an approach that has scientifically tried – at least in the case of stereotypes and stereotyping - to disentangle itself from the "mouldy" study of ideology by focussing on the cognitive aspects of the phenomenon, without taking in account the broader context in which the phenomenon takes place.

As Tajfel (1979) pointed out in his review of Eysenck and Wilson's (1978) book on ideology, most social psychologists treat ideology as an individual difference variable that is predicted by or can predict other psychological factors, but very few actually consider ideology as a superordinate factor that shapes and informs the (physical and social) environment within which we live, as well as a way in which we interact with and within it (see also Weiss & Miller, 1987). Although there have been attempts (described below) to move away from this approach, we argue that this still applies to a significant portion of the literature. An attempt to provide a psychological definition of ideology that acknowledges its social nature is provided by Homer-Dixon et al. (2013), who define ideology as "systems of socially shared ideas, beliefs, and values used to understand, justify, or challenge a particular political, economic, or social order" (p. 337). The authors provide a comprehensive review of the ideology literature

in the social and political sciences, highlighting the complexity of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of ideology within psychological and political science.

Within psychology, Homer-Dixon et al. (2013) argue that biological approaches attempt to explain individuals' tendency to adhere to a particular ideology in terms of genetic or neurophysiological factors. Similarly, other researchers, such as Pratto, Sidanius, Stalworth and Malle (1994), looked at ideology as a personality type (for example in relation to authoritarianism), which implies that it is an unconscious cognitive bias, and difficult to eradicate. Within social cognition, researchers have looked at the antecedents and consequences of ideology, while discursive analysts have looked at ideology as a "filter" through which we understand and relate to the world, or rather a tool we use in constructing our understanding of reality. Cross-cultural psychologists, as will be discussed later, alerted psychologists to their own ideological positions in conducting research whereby they imposed certain values on the people they evaluated (e.g., Berry et al., 2002). Not dissimilarly, journalism too is subject to specific values that form a socially desirable journalism culture (see also Chapter 6 on Norms and Roles). BBC journalist Rajan (2020) argues that journalism has three main functions: to inform a citizenry, to apply scrutiny to power, and to enlighten a culture through the editing of events (making decisions regarding what is newsworthy). This links to cognitive biases such as the "availability heuristic" – people remember more what they see everywhere, and it colours their version of reality (e.g., Thomas & Peterson, 2018).

### **Ideology and news values**

Researchers in the area of journalism have explored the ways in which ideology relates to journalists' and audiences' attention to news and events. In the research literature, the criteria adopted by journalists in order to select particular events as newsworthy are often called news values. According to Stuart Hall (1973, p.181):

'News values' are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society [...] Journalists speak of 'the news' as if events select themselves. Further, they speak as if which is the 'most significant' news story, and which 'news angles' are most salient are divinely inspired. Yet of the millions of events which occur daily in the world, only a tiny proportion ever become visible as 'potential news stories': and of this proportion, only a small fraction are actually produced as the day's news in the news media. We appear to be dealing, then, with a 'deeLyp structure' whose function as a selective device is un-transparent even to those who professionally most know how to operate it.



News values can be summarised as the set of criteria used by journalists to select news to be covered (see, e.g., O'Neill & Harcup, 2009; Deuze, 2005). It is not surprising therefore that ideology can play an important role in shaping news values. If we understand ideology as a set of beliefs used to interpret, understand and explain reality, then this may have an impact on decisions about what is important and what is not, as well as on our understanding and interpretation of the events (e.g., see Hall, 1973).

Deuze's (2005) work in general illustrates an important point about the complexity of ideology as a structure of beliefs about one's professional identity. Thus, studying ideology does not only mean studying the dimensions along which journalists evaluate an event in order to determine its "newsworthiness", but entails also considering why those choices are made. In other words, it becomes important to understand how journalists (and their audiences) answer the question "what is journalism?", and what values drive news communication (see Chapter 6 and the section on "culture" below for a more in depth discussion) .

If we assume that ideology provides a framework on the basis of which we evaluate reality, it becomes apparent how different ideological positions will guide us in the way in which we answer the question above, and how we attend to, perceive and evaluate events. Thus, in line with literature on motivated cognition (see Chapter 3 on Perception and Attention), we can expect people who uphold a certain ideology to be motivated to scan the environment differently from people upholding a different ideological position. Moreover, we can expect them to interpret stimuli in the environment differently. For example, it is likely that the journalists who report on tragic events (e.g., a shooting of young people at protests, riots or just on street corners by police) or an ongoing crisis (e.g., the war in Syria) have not actually visited, let alone lived in such environments, yet they have to report on it. They can do this, of course, but they must be aware of their ways of seeing the world. The reasoning in this case is similar to that underlying the use of projective tests in therapeutic settings: human perception of ambiguous/unfamiliar stimuli will be driven by interpretative frameworks in our minds, ideology being one of these frameworks.

But while ideology is mostly defined in terms of systems of beliefs, it is also important to explore how these beliefs are translated into practice. The behavioural element, in our mind, is an important distinction between studying ideology and studying culture. Culture provides behavioural scripts by which to regulate one's relation with the outside world. Cross-cultural psychology is primarily concerned with the question of whether psychological findings have universal validity and what aspects of thinking and behaving varies across cultures. So, in the case of journalism, a cross-cultural approach will explore similarities and differences in

journalistic practices across cultures. Journalists too may want to consider their methods of investigation. As much as they may report on unfamiliar environments, as described above, they may ask questions that the interviewee does not understand or misinterprets, in a similar manner to the distinction between hard and soft news for the researchers in the case study reported above. Journalist Luyendijk (2010) cautions journalists against the pressures of speed and word limits, as it does not allow for contextualising complicated cultural differences (see also Chapter 2). In psychology, methods that were seen as unambiguous were questioned by cross-cultural psychologists for their evident cultural bias. For example, when a psychologist uses the Christmas story to measure whether a child is at the level of her ability to tell details back, is it not unfair to apply this to children in a country where Christmas is not celebrated? Furthermore, are we comparing apples with oranges if we measure the spatial awareness of two groups, when, for example, one group, as Segall and colleagues (1999) described so well, grew up in a “carpented world” and the other in the round huts in the Kalahari desert? In fact, Ruparelia, Abubakar, Badoe et al. (2016, p.1024) argue that the use of tests can have dire consequences for a child or adult, depending on the cultural context and journalists may need to evaluate their own methods of enquiry.

Previous research in cross-cultural assessment clearly shows that stimulus unfamiliarity is likely to contribute to poor performance in tests. Reading is yet another example of task that may lead to bias. Some cultures such as the African cultures are largely oral. Therefore children may grow up with very limited access or familiarity to picture books; if requested to participate in this task and they perform poorly, teachers may not be sure if the poor performance reflects their ability levels or their lack of familiarity with the task,

## **Culture**

In general, psychology adheres to the Platonic assumption sometimes referred to as the principle of “psychic unity”. This implies that all mental functioning can be attributed to a “presupposed...processing mechanism inherent...in human beings, which enables them to think..., experience..., act..., and learn” (Shweder, 1990, p. 4). This mechanism is believed to be fixed and universal, as it exists within each individual. However, once one commences to learn, cultural issues come into play, even in cognitive psychology.

Traditionally, culture was defined behaviourally, in terms of actions, rituals, and customs. One imagined people in a culture; culture (like the group) was something out

there. [Researchers] have become to conceive of culture more in cognitive terms, as a [cognitive structure] in people's heads (Miller & Prentice, 1994, p. 451).

Fiske et al. (1998) argue that social psychology cannot ignore culture in its analyses due to the fact that “basic” psychological processes, such as self-enhancing biases characterising the self, the “fundamental attribution error”, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic rewards, avoidance of cognitive dissonance, and moral development, “depend substantially on cultural meanings and practices” (p.915). They concluded that cultural differences effectively may make psychological generalisations void, or at least applicable only in the region of social research: “social psychology must consider the idea that psyche and social relations are culturally contingent” (p.963). To ignore culture empirically when performing social research and then treat the outcomes as conclusive universal evidence, is to omit an essential variable, which subsequently affects the generalisations of the results. Culture is thus a crucial component of the psychology of human behaviour.

However, in order to understand culture as a concept and ensure it is not a tautology, capturing everything, it is necessary to define it in a way that is useful for comparative analysis. The work of Hofstede (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010) has been paramount in this context through the identification of six dimensions, whereby cultures can be compared and contrasted. This work is ongoing and two more dimensions (Long Term Orientation and Indulgence) were added to the original four (Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, and Masculinity)<sup>2</sup>. Hofstede's dimension scores (available online) may be used like economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The original four dimensions enabled researchers to map cultures and categorise them to facilitate the understanding of differences. For example, North America was found to be highly individualist, just like most of Western Europe and Australia, whereas Guatemala, Ecuador, and Panama were the most collectivist. Furthermore, Greece, Portugal, and

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<sup>2</sup> As per the official website, Hofstede Insights, the dimensions are defined as follows: Power Distance is “the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”, Individualism/Collectivism is “a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families versus a preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty”. Masculinity/Femininity is “a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success versus a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Uncertainty Avoidance is “the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity”. Long Term Orientation is a preference for “a pragmatic approach ... [to] encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future”. Indulgence “stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun” (<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/>)

Guatemala were the most uncertainty avoidant cultures, whereas Denmark, Jamaica, and Singapore were the least uncertainty avoidant. One conclusion from this brief analysis could be that Guatemala is thus a highly group-oriented country with a need to plan ahead. Hofstede's work has been replicated, adapted, and reviewed to the extent that he is one of the most cited non-American researchers in the field of social sciences (Economische Statistische Berichten, 2001). His dimensions have been used to explain phenomena not only in the field of cross-cultural psychology, but also in management, economics and politics.

Like any tool, the Hofstede dimensions are useful up to a point. As mentioned, they can be used to compare countries at a macro-level, much like GDP (wealth) or other economic indices but one cannot use them to make inferences about individuals. Just because America is a wealthy nation, does not mean every American is rich. Similarly, just because America is an individualistic nation, does not mean every American holds that value strongly, they may, in fact, be collectivistic. Therefore, the models of cultural values are not suitable for understanding the personal values of individuals.

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that any cross-cultural comparative research, of which Hofstede's work is one example, is criticised (Bull, 2015; McSweeney, 2002). The unit of analysis is the nation state but cultures may be fragmented across groups and national boundaries. A further criticism is that the research work cannot be effectively implemented in an era of a rapidly changing environment, international convergence and globalization. Still, the COVID19 pandemic shows that cultural divergence still exists when it comes to the response to and reporting on this global crisis by governments and the media.

### **A brief historical reflection**

At the onset of the development of cross-cultural psychology as a field, two anthropologists argued that "in explanatory importance and generality of application it [culture] is comparable to such categories as gravity in physics, disease in medicine, evolution in biology" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p.3). Organised and cooperative research on cultures started to take shape only in the mid-1960s (Berry, 1969) and (cross) cultural perspectives became a visible force in psychology both conceptually and methodologically (Lonner, 1999). The main difference between general and (cross) cultural psychology is that in the latter's "process of extending the range of variation as far as possible, researchers are confronted with differences in behaviour patterns that fit neither Western 'common sense' notions about behaviour nor their formal and almost entirely Western theories" (Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997, p.53). A major limitation of social psychological research was that it was conducted in North America, potentially making

many of the findings valid for that culture only. However, in order to facilitate more universally valid comparisons, an agreement on its conceptualisation as a tool became a much-debated issue.

Culture contains man-made objects (e.g., different types of houses) and social institutions (e.g., marriage), but researchers in cross-cultural psychology focus mainly on the symbolic meaning associated with the artefacts and social institutions, and how this is translated into messages between people, which result in certain types of behaviour (Smith & Bond, 1998). Similarly, in the field of journalism, after the Second World War, it was deemed appropriate to expand value-based notions of journalism beyond the West European and North American region: “Independent media was understood as integral for the development of democracy (...) it was expected to produce better journalists, organisations, and media systems which were supposed to contribute to the development of democracy” (Higgins, 2014, p.2). However, this was not a view supported across the field of journalism, and it may be considered in terms of a distinction between so-called *emic* and *etic* approaches. Whereas an *emic* approach refers to research conducted from within a social group (from the perspective of the participant/participants), an *etic* approach refers to research conducted from outside that group (from the perspective of the observer).

In this context, based on the replication of (mainly) North American studies in other countries, Berry (1969) coined the term *imposed etic* with regard to methodologies and/or analyses where one assumes similarity in meaning of the measures (items) across nations. Over time, the so-called *imposed etic* of a Western type of journalism has been disputed. “You can’t drive at a speed of 100 miles an hour on a rocky road. Likewise, you can’t take the media in the West and place them in Ethiopia and expect them to function properly. You need to adjust” (Skjerdal, 2011, p.44). Now, within journalism that may be viewed as an ideological debate – are Western journalism norms better than others? Within psychology, it is seen as a methodological faux-pas of general, ethical and professional conduct.

Thus, imposed *etic* analyses may be a starting point for comparative research, but in order to avoid making assumptions it is important to develop measures in an *emic* fashion to capture the local interpretations of knowledge. Instead, according to Berry (1969), “ideally each behaviour system should be understood in its own terms; each aspect of behaviour must be viewed in relation to its behaviour setting (ecological, cultural and social background). Failing to do so would be ‘comparing incomparables’” (p.122).

Hence, due to the complex nature of measure development in each culture separately, the *derived etic* method was proposed, which involved the extensive use of *emic* approaches in

a number of cultures so that psychological universals may emerge (Berry, 1989, 1999). Because the measures are constructed separately, no metric equivalence is enforced. Any convergence found is an indication of equivalent processes to be used for derived etic generalisations. By moving from emic to derived etic methods it becomes clear that “indigenous psychologies, while valuable in their own right, serve an equally important function as useful steps on the way to achieving a universal psychology” (Berry, 1999, p.10). The derived etic method is important especially because it defines a core difference between general and (cross-) cultural psychology. Furthermore, it unveiled the need for a framework to measure culture, using items that have been universally validated, refraining from relying on nationality as a distinguishing label when looking at psychological constructs comparing cultures.

Whereas ideology was defined above as a “systems of socially shared ideas, beliefs, and values *used to understand, justify, or challenge a particular political, economic, or social order*” (Homer-Dixon et al., 2013, p.337, emphasis added in italics), culture may be seen as a system of shared meanings without any purpose per se, although Schwartz (1994) argues that cultural values are guiding principles. People have a culture, just like they have a language, but are part of a group, be it racial, national, or other (cf. Rohner, 1984). The reason some researchers steer clear from cross-cultural research is because the terms culture and society are often used interchangeably, incorporating everything from “arts” to “language” to “habits”. This may confuse developing theories and conducting research: “Most contemporary theorists of culture... agree that one must distinguish the cultural realm ... from the social realm ... if we are to unwrap and refine the concept of culture ... sufficiently to make [it] useful for research” (Rohner, 1984, p.114). Cross-cultural psychology aims to understand shared systems of belief but it steers clear from justifying or challenging a specific phenomenon.

When we make an argument or premise, we must be aware of our own perspective. The lenses with which we observe the world and create our hypotheses are not free from biased perceptions. Second, we need to ensure that our methods are cross-culturally valid and not an assumed neutral design (Berry, 1969). Third, we need to ensure that we cross-check our findings to be sure the results are valid across cultures. Finally, when we draw our conclusions, we need to be willing to consider alternative hypotheses.

The focus in cross-cultural psychology is on values, because regardless of differences in individual behaviour within national boundaries, there appears to be a deeper level of functions and generalizations that remain constant across cultures (Kagitçibasi & Berry, 1989; Smith, 1997). In order to achieve step 1 above, one must assess one’s own lenses:

Values are universalistic statements about what we think is desirable or attractive. Values do not ordinarily contain statements about how they are to be realised. Behaviours are specific actions, which occur in a particular setting at a particular time and the difference between the two can be compared to the etic-emic distinction (Smith & Bond, 1998, p. 65).

The review above may seem archaic, yet only in recent years have critical voices within the social sciences crept up about imposed theories and methodologies. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter, within journalism, multi-country studies exploring the role of journalists, for example, still use nationality as an explanatory factor for differences observed, not actually measuring the antecedents of variance. The following section explores cross-cultural psychological considerations in designing one's research.

### **Cross-cultural psychology as a methodology**

Culture acts as a basis for forming groups and constructing intergroup relations. With this in mind, it is necessary to define the concept of culture and assess a means of its application to research. Unlike society, culture is not an entity to which one becomes a member, but a relatively organised system of shared meanings which involves “the internal constraints of genetic and cultural transmission and the external constraints of ecological, socioeconomical, historical, and situational contexts, with a range of distal to proximal effects within each type of constraint” (Bond & Smith, 1996a, p. 209).

These internal cultural constraints termed *boundary conditions for behaviour* (Poortinga, 1992, p.13) “limit and shape the behavioural expression of the universal process” (Bond & Smith, 1996, p.209). Thus, unlike general psychology, (cross) cultural psychology concerns the belief that behaviours vary across cultures due to generations of people living in proximity to each other, sharing and communicating symbolic meanings. Nations are particular groups with shared symbols, which can be represented by values that act as guiding principles in life, which subsequently affect behaviour.

Media organisations also have a responsibility in how they deal with culture and identity in terms of their reporting. Depending on the status of a cultural group, certain values (such as security and uncertainty avoidance) will be more important to a group when it is under threat or when the nation is in political turmoil. If this difference in status pertains to different cultural groups within a nation, conflict arises and requires management. Furthermore, when group cultures within a nation differ on one particular aspect in terms of their values, and this, rather than the similarity, is constantly highlighted, the divide may continue to grow. For

example, this can result in amplified dissonance of faith and feelings about homosexuality or gender about which the media either warns the community (e.g., Carlo, 2019) or that the media causes to flare up (e.g., Brachhi, 2019). In the UK, for example, underneath the blanket of the over-arching national identity (e.g., British) there are other, non-passported groups that are continuously confronted with their differing to the perceived national norm (e.g., Muslim). Chapter 7 explores these processes in more detail.

For the purpose of the current chapter, it suffices to consider that people, media and government have a power and responsibility to maintain the psychological peace of a nation collectively. Still, defining people in the media or in government speeches just by their social identity or ideology simplifies a complex issue. Furthermore, when politicians and their supportive media claim socially desirable values as their own, or even when tax money is spent on researching relationships between culture, values, and behaviour as part of policy makers' agendas, it may be time for cross-cultural researchers to step in.

Group think is also important when considering Social Identity Theory (e.g., Tajfel, 1981) and how our behaviour is determined by the social identities we have, which vary in salience depending on the context. SIT includes three key elements: a) the psychological analysis of the cognitive-motivational processes producing a need for positive social identity, b) the elaboration of this analysis in its application to real world inter-group relationships and c) the hypothesis of an interpersonal-intergroup continuum (Tajfel, 1981, 1982; Hogg, 2001 – see also Chapter 7 in this book). The media has a powerful hand in creating “teams” that each have their say from their own corner. The phenomenon of the “minimal group paradigm” (MGP: us vs. them) in social psychology explains how easy it is to create divisive feelings among people by simply assigning them to meaningless so-called “minimal” groups, e.g., people who prefer a painting by Klee vs Kandinsky (Tajfel, 1970). In essence, in order for there to be favouritism towards your own group and prejudice against another group, simply belonging to a group may suffice.

If this theory is accepted, then fitting in for someone may be far more basic than we think. Asking about value congruence – “are you with us or against us?” - may activate this sense of belonging or, in fact, wanting to rebel. It highlights the importance of misfit, in the sense of whose side are you on. The media can also use a celebrity or figurehead as an example of socially undesirable behaviour as a way to fuel underlying racial or immigrant tensions. In



Britain, the continuous disparagement of Meghan Markle in comparison to Kate Middleton<sup>3</sup> has been a prime example (as analysed by Duncan & Bindman, 2020). The consequences for journalism that is steeped in ethnocentrism, racism or stereotyping may be then that reporters are seen as entertainers, or gossip columnists and no longer as the professional, detached purveyors of truth. Humphreys of the Irish Times, 2020, in a discussion with Rolf Dobelli (the Swiss author of “The Art of Thinking Clearly”), both called for turning off the news but acknowledges that the “entertainment” culture is systemic and individual journalists are frustrated.

A refinement of SIT led to the development of Self Categorisation Theory (SCT), through which the conceptualisation of personal and social identity as a bipolar continuum was replaced by the notion that these identities represent different levels (of inclusiveness) of self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1987). This theoretical development thus shifted the predominant focus on the person-group dichotomy towards a more refined investigation of both the person and the group. According to SCT, categorizations of the self are formed by the cognitive processes, behaviours, and emotions of the self (Turner et al., 1987). Group identity enables the emergent group processes and products of social life, while the personal identity functions as the conduit by which these group processes, relations, and products mediate human cognition (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994). From the perspective of SCT, culture was not perceived as an expression of behaviour (e.g., the arts) but as a group identity to which one can belong.

Much of the SCT work in relation to the self and the collective with regard to culture was based on Markus and Kitayama’s (1992) independent vs. interdependent self, which has been linked back to Hofstede’s concepts of individualism and collectivism (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). Research has shown that the concept of the self contributes to that which we know as culture (e.g., Adamopoulos & Kashima, 1999). It is reasonable to assume that the way structures are construed in one cultural setting would differ from the way they are construed in another. Hence, through the processes of social-categorization theory, that which is considered beneficial to one particular in-group, may not be perceived as such in another, due to cultural differences. It may be that for a group of journalists in a certain national context, for example Pakistan, their faith and nationality are important drivers in their professional role

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<sup>3</sup> Spouses of Prince Harry and Prince William respectively, who are the sons of Prince Charles, the next in line for the British Monarchy. Meghan Markle is a dual heritage Afro-American, who as such was the target of a campaign of sustained disparagement from the British press.

(e.g., Pintak & Nazir, 2013). The national as well as the faith culture may be defined by group belonging, i.e., collectivist, as opposed to working independently, i.e., driven by individualist norms (e.g., Islam, 2004). The challenge for a journalism scholar, however, is to link the two – what norms have predictive validity when it comes to specific behaviours?

This can be complex. In a 13-nation study that explored the impact of national-level uncertainty on organisations and individual employees, Fischer, Ferreira and van Meurs et al. (2019) found that in countries where people perceived the national situation to be uncertain, employees would engage in more collaborative behaviour (helping others and voicing ideas), if the organisation had plans and procedures in place (formalisation). According to conventional organisational psychology theory, in our complex, global environment, organisations would do better to be organic and flexible, and to avoid bureaucracy; however, that theory was developed at a time when the United States was relatively stable.

Similarly, then, depending on the national context of where journalism is practised, news media organisations may have to decide what organisational approach to embrace in order for individual journalists to engage in behaviour that is conducive to the aims of the profession, be it reporting facts, campaigning or making money, depending on the state of the nation. This links back to Deuze's (2005) work – what level of culture is of influence in which way if we review journalism as a vocation, driven by certain norms? In other words, there is a global culture of journalism that is bound by national norms related to freedom of speech, for example, and by journalists' individual cultural values.

For example, some generally accepted psychological findings need a more nuanced perspective. For instance, Asch's (1956) world-famous experiment on “conformity” found that 67% of the respondents went along with the opinion of a group that deliberately gives the wrong answer. Replications show that people outside of Europe and America are “guilty” of this more often (so, theoretically, do not think for themselves), and that this may be due to the importance of collectivistic values that prompt normative behaviour (such as avoiding loss of face) as being more important than being right (Bond & Smith, 1996). This does not invalidate Asch's findings about group conformity, but it does affect the interpretation of whether conformity is desirable or not (in that specific context).

## **Finding out the why**

More research in journalism uses multi-country designs to ensure an incorporation of various “cultures” when exploring the role of journalists and how they practise. Ginosar (2015) juxtaposes patriotic journalism, biased towards the nation (e.g., during the Vietnam war or the 9/11 bombing in the USA) with a type that is not so much “liberal” or “western” as that it is focused on “global patriotism”, where “journalists take a normative position in favour of universal values; they prefer expressing solidarity with the whole human society rather than with their own national or ethnic community” (p.295). Ginosar concluded that a journalist needs to consider his or her stance to balance their personal and professional values (see also Chapter 6 in this book).

As mentioned above, Hanitzsch et al. (2010) found universals, in that surveyed journalists around the globe agreed that “reliability and factualness of information as well as the strict adherence to impartiality and neutrality belong to the highly esteemed professional standards of journalism” (pp. 286-7). This means that the belief quoted earlier was found to be present across countries and across different types of media, media ownership, in people working for national versus local media, and independently from editorial ranks. They thus found similarities across cultures in terms of role perception, but they also observed distinct cultural differences in terms of normative orientations with regard to the acceptance of harmful consequences. In order to explain cultural differences in relation to journalism’s institutional roles, Hanitzsch et al. focussed not on interventionism and market orientation as explanations but on what they termed *Power Distance*. Although this is the same term as that used by Hofstede (2001, Hofstede et al., 2010), it is not the same; Hanitzsch et al. provide their own definition of Power Distance as follows (p.3):

... the journalist’s position towards loci of power in society. The adversary pole of the continuum captures a kind of journalism that, in its capacity as the “Fourth Estate”, openly challenges those in power. “Loyal” or opportunist journalists, on the other hand, tend to see themselves more in a collaborative role, as “partners” of the ruling elites in political processes.

This role in society is linked to the values and norms that drive the news source (e.g., newspapers, television). The same 18-nation study by Hanitzsch et al. also identified cultural variation when it came to interventionist aspects of journalism, which they connect to subjectivity and objectivism.

Although Hanitzsch et al. (2010) do not mention it, there seems to be a fault line between journalists from different cultures when it comes to rule-based versus consequence-

based decision-making, in terms of whether harm is (n)ever justifiable<sup>4</sup>. This they link to a key divide: journalists who favour a subjective reasoning about ethical dilemmas and those who prefer a situational approach (p. 15). The authors argue that although developing nations are playing catch-up, and in some countries journalists are in genuine danger if they would report against the sitting government, the old bastions of objectivity are also changing; they give as an example the national context of the United States, now no longer seen as a prime example of objective journalism. Still, they acknowledge that cultural differences are not clear-cut and only occur to a degree, and that any proposal that journalism culture can be divided as “The West and the rest” is denying within-group variation.

There are examples of studies that explore the underlying, ideological reasons for cultural differences. In their seven-nation survey of journalism students, Mellado et al. (2013, p.15) argued that:

...in line with assumptions about the increasing consumer-orientation in Western developed societies, students from Australia, Switzerland, and the United States favour addressing audiences as consumers, while still living up to their respective countries’ traditions of watchdog journalism despite the finding that US journalism students do not display that much support for it. Chilean and Brazilian students show strong support for the watchdog role as well as for addressing audiences as citizens, both traditional ideals associated with Western journalism. The reason for this strong support arguably lies in the recent history of democratization in both countries and corresponding notions of journalism’s role in supporting this process. Mexico and Spain similarly support a citizen-orientation, but both display much less support for watchdog journalism, again, it was argued, due to specific national contexts.

In another example, Zhong (2008) presented several ethical scenarios to American and Chinese journalism students, and found similarities in defining journalistic values and norms. Chinese students, contrary to expectations, also did not prioritise the views of the editor over and above colleagues’ views. Moreover, the American students thought more about the needs of the organisation, which, the author argues, is unexpected for an individualistic culture.

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<sup>4</sup> If the aim of journalism is to work towards a democratic framework of universally desirable practices, an obvious difficulty with rule-based normative approaches is achieving wide consensus on which rules (whose values) this will be based. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development publicised policies and principles that member governments agree to take to their national legislative governing bodies for approval and implementation. The OECD website also features articles for journalists on protection and their role to combat corruption, among others (<http://www.oecd.org/>)

However, Chinese students did consult others more when deciding on ethical dilemmas, which Zhong links to collectivism. The author concluded that “the differences detected in this study should be introduced to students for a greater understanding of the ethical decisions by their colleagues from different cultures. This may help them appreciate the concept of the “‘global journalist’ and the media globalization as a whole” (p.120).

Although Zhong (2008), and other researchers cited above, support a cross-cultural psychology approach, a critical point is paramount here. Mellado et al. (2013), Zhong (2008) and Hanitzsch et al. (2010) did not measure *why* they found cultural differences and thus did not use a cross-cultural *methodology*. Journalism research may need to incorporate value measures to acquire data that explains variations in comparative studies.

### **How to measure culture**

Initially, the introduction of values as a currency to measure cultural profiles was welcomed as an alternative to the mere categorisation by group (e.g., nationality, ethnic group, or socio-economic status). Researchers who compare national groups have been criticised for using nations in the same way as sex (male/female) is used as a variable, i.e., without measuring the level of “Britishness” or “Chineseness”, although it is now noted that sex and gender are equally non-binary and, if relevant for the hypothesis, should be measured on a Likert scale. Furthermore, criticism levelled at country-level cross-cultural research focused on its treatment of culture like another macro-economic index, such as GDP, because the within-nation differences may be larger than the between-nation differences, depending on what dependent variable is explored (e.g., Graham et al. (2016) on morality). Still, Hofstede (1980) argues that, although within-nation variety exists, ultimately citizens are subject to the political, legal, economic and social system of a country. There are values and norms particular to being a citizen of a certain country.

As mentioned, in order to make valid cross-cultural comparisons it is necessary to have a measure of culture that can be used universally and will not result in researchers (and others) making tautological inferences. “One cannot describe the cultural profile of a sample of respondents until an agreed set of concepts and measures is available for the purpose” (Smith & Bond, 1998, p.40). A key issue here is, however, that the meaning of the value must be agreed upon, before establishing levels of endorsement. The meaning of values is a precarious issue: researchers explored the existence of a cross-cultural equivalence in meaning, because the use of any value becomes ambiguous and meaningless without this (e.g., Schwartz & Sagie, 2000).

It may appear that research on culture is supportive of the ideological idea that value consensus is the way forward to a peaceful society, however, the main premise of cross-cultural psychologists is that no one value is preferable over another. It is just a value, thus culture can be perceived as positive or negative, depending on one's ideological beliefs. For example, "tolerance" is a much used, socially desirable value. A noble cry for a need for tolerance may obtain the agreement from many of us who hear it initially. Yet, tolerance as a value can be interpreted in at least two different ways, possibly therefore why its political usage is so attractive. Tolerance can indicate a power relationship, with those who tolerate as the more powerful. For instance, to say that "I will tolerate you" at a personal level reflects this power difference clearly. Yet, it seems an acceptable rhetoric at the national level, even if the meaning is the same and is not, as also commonly thought, an issue of liberalism. Wemyss (2006) argues that tolerance is not a positive national aspiration as it is in fact "the conditional withholding of force by those at the top of a 'hierarchy of belonging'" (p.215).

Of course, tolerance also indicates acceptance and benevolence for the greater good, which, over the years, has become synonymised with a social and liberal political view. Thus, using the word "tolerance" can be indicative of an implied power relationship as much as it is supportive of the idea of a multicultural society. The meaning of any espoused value is a complex issue, which is a function of history, language and the current socio-economic status of the community, among others. Cross-cultural researchers have done extensive research in finding value dimensions with universal meaning (e.g., Schwartz, 1994; House et al., 2002) and their findings show that most people across the globe value security, happiness, and benevolence, which is neither an ideological mould or a western gospel.

In order to apply culture as a variable in research, it was necessary to define a framework that is universal and organised in such a way that it is applicable to most countries but simple enough for interpretation and ease of use. Hofstede's dimensions as mentioned above (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010) are a useful tool but only work at national or macro-level.

As the most quoted researcher in economics, Hofstede put a forcible mark on the map of cultural research (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). However, since Hofstede's work, it has been acknowledged that non-western values needed to be included to yield a more universal measure. Furthermore, differentiation between culture level and individual level was required since societal phenomena cannot explain individual-level behaviour and vice versa.

A more robust and reliable method to measure culture for individuals, somewhat like a personality profile has been devised by Schwartz (the Value Survey, Schwartz 1992, 1994). He

presented a tightly argued theoretical basis for a universal structure of individual values, supported by data from more than 60 nations, proposing that values are organized according to a circumplex model. For example, the values of Self Enhancement (i.e., the extent to which one values individual goals and one's status within society, including the value categories of power and achievement) are opposed to Self Transcendence (i.e., the extent to which one values things that benefit the collective above the single individual's interest, including the value categories of benevolence and universalism). The values of Values and Conservation (i.e., the extent to which one values the preservation of the status quo, including the value categories of security, conformity, tradition) are opposed to Openness to Change (i.e., the extent to which one values the challenge of the status quo, including the value categories of self-direction, stimulation, hedonism). Measures of these values can be used to determine the dominant guiding principles of an individual's behaviour.

Schwartz (1996) linked these values to, for instance, interpersonal cooperation and preference for out-group contact by correlating values with the type of choice one would make during a version of the Prisoner's Dilemma<sup>5</sup> negotiation game (see Luce & Raiffa, 1957) and with the type of contact in which people in intergroup conflict would be willing to engage. Results showed that respondents endorsing Conservation values would engage in non-cooperative behaviour and were less ready for social contact with an out-group, while those endorsing Openness to Change values would opt for cooperative behaviour and were more ready for out-group contact. It is Schwartz's values profile that may be used to explore a person's cultural profile.

At a macro-level, the Hofstede framework (or later variations and augmentations thereof) suffices (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). Consider again the example of journalism in Pakistan mentioned above, one of the most studied dichotomies in cultural studies is the one between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (see, e.g., Triandis, 1988). The main difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures seems to be the emphasis that is given in the definition of an individual on his/her personal goals, choices and achievements, rather than on the set of groups and collective organizations he/she belongs to (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). One of the major factors that differentiate individualism and collectivism is the relative importance of the in-group. Individualists have many specific in-

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<sup>5</sup> The prisoner's dilemma is a game utilised in game theory that concerns two players, both suspects in a crime. The dilemma faced by the prisoners is that each is better off confessing rather than remaining silent, but if both confess, then the outcome is worse than the outcome they would have obtained if both remained silent.

groups that may influence behaviour in any particular social situation. Since there are many, they exert little influence on behaviour.

For journalism scholars, the relationship of values with communication is particularly important. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), the communication process in individualistic cultures focuses on inter-individual levels, whereas collective cultures focus on the group base (whether you are in-group, one of us; or out-group, one of them). This results in, Ting-Toomey (1999) argues, individualistic people tending to be verbally direct: they value communication straightforwardness and like to be direct, whereas in collectivistic group-oriented cultures, indirect communication is preferred because group harmony is essential. For example, it is rare in Asian cultures to have open conflict within their in-group, because it appears to disrupt group harmony. However, collectivists are more stringent in treating the in-group differently from the out-group (Triandis, 1988). The fundamental difference in interaction behaviour between collectivists and individualists is thus a concern for harmony, whereby collectivists are more concerned to maintain harmony, *but* particularly with in-group members, than are individualists (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

This may explain why it is a surprise to some western governments, media and people that foreign intervention is not welcomed, even if the leadership is corrupt or oppressive. The outraged Iraqi reaction to the Americans' capture of their former leader (the dictator Saddam Hussein) during the Iraq War of 2003 is an interesting example of this. If through military action, a foreign government engages in "freeing a nation", this may rid a people of perceived oppression, but it may cause unrest or outrage at the interference. Moreover, one must be "seen" to protest, to be faithful to the in-group. If even it is welcomed, it still strips a population from one particular social identity, allowing others to rise to the surface, the complexity of post-colonialism a case in point. Cultural groups (be it national, team, or religious) are socially constructed and have value systems that are created through communication, artefacts, and a general way of life. Because value systems usually change slowly and often from within the group, a quick fix value change is unlikely to succeed; any intervention in another state's affairs being a strong case in point.

Note, however, that such correlations are complicated. Simplistic bipolar or even orthogonal dimensions give us some insight, but more often than not, the research needs deeper analysis. For example, in a study comparing seven nations on the link between individualism/collectivism and orientations towards authority, the results showed that "vertical" (hierarchical) individualism and collectivism (I/C) was linked to authoritarianism



but “horizontal” I/C was not, unless it concerned former Soviet-states (Kemmelmeier, Burnstein, Kurmov, et al., 2003).

As another example, in an essay on the return of ideology to China’s journalism education, Xu (2018), a scholar resident in Australia (and therefore, presumably, with freedom of press), points out that China’s leader Xi had launched an ideological campaign to curb the perceived pernicious influence of Western values and to seek ideological consistency. This thinking, the author argues, also reflects “collectivism” – to put the interest of the group before oneself, and to align with the group norm. Yet, Xu acknowledges, “the adherence to party ideology by educators and students appears to be more on the surface than in substance” (p.8). Such debates require more data to know and understand the nuances of cultural differences. Theoretically, differences may be explained by I/C, but this needs to be measured, preferably using a framework that taps into the cultural specifications of the sample, whilst being aware of one’s own current situation, employment context and adherence to (vocational) ideology.

### **Implications for journalistic communication**

The number of interactions between people from different cultures has greatly increased due to the increase in world population and advances in technology. The fact that technological developments and the world population have grown at an exponential rate implies that related aspects, such as the number of personal interactions, have also increased in frequency, even despite COVID19 crisis rendering such interactions online. This, of course, is paramount to journalism. Carey (2008) argues that “the ritual view of communication” is not so much about the transmission but about the representation of shared beliefs, whereby reality is produced, maintained and transformed. Zelizer (2004) adds that journalists are then the spokespeople for events in the public domain and they maintain their cultural authority through by this ritual way of communication.

More generally, communication between people varies on a number of contextual dimensions: the length, the nature of the relationships between people, the topic, and the way people speak, amongst others:

Difficulties of social interaction and communication arise in several main areas: (1) language use, including forms of polite usage; (2) nonverbal communication: uses of facial expressions, gesture proximity, touch, etc.; (3) rules of social situations, e.g., for bribing, gifts and eating; (4) social relationships, within the family, at work, between members of different groups; (5) motivation, e.g., achievement motivation and for face-

saving; (6) concepts and ideology, e.g., ideas derived from religion and politics (Argyle, 1982, p. 76).

Added to this, of course, are the exponential advances within IT, AI and (social) media, but also the changes within advertising revenue (and also how it has transferred to Facebook and Google), which have changed the journalism landscape in terms of their business models and how journalists fulfil their role. Therefore, developing competence in everyday use of effective verbal and nonverbal codes can be a major challenge to intercultural communicators, including the professional media (see also Chapter 2).

The culture of a person influences communication style, however, to an equal degree, “communication behaviour is the primary vehicle for the active creation and maintenance of cultures” (Davenport Sypher et al., 1985, p.17):

The relationship between culture and communication ... is reciprocal. ... Understanding communication on any culture ... requires culture general information (i.e., where the culture falls on the various dimensions of cultural variability) and culture specific information (i.e., the specific cultural constructs associated with the dimension of cultural variability) (Gudykunst, 1998, pp.44-45).

For example, two cultures can both be qualified as “collectivist”, but one may emphasize the family, whereas the other may focus on groups that are not family related (e.g., professional, hobbies, political groups) (Gudykunst, 1998). Again, as we have seen above, one is related to hierarchy and status, whereas in another form it is related to equality (Singelis et al., 1995). Communication between people can be regarded as the user interface or front-end of culture, which, according to Hofstede (1991), is “the software of the mind” (p.4). Cultures can be viewed as dynamic meaning systems, and people help construct their culture through the communication and negotiation of meanings of their experiences (van Meurs & Spencer-Oatey, 2010). Through increased interaction between people from different cultures, cultural universals and differences as a focus of psychological research developed quickly. “In the West, the crisis of confidence in Western media has created confusion in media assistance. The traditional business model in newspapers and broadcasting in the West no longer seems to be working” (Higgins, 2014, p.9).

People use sociological, psychological, and cultural information to make predictions of their communication behaviours, i.e., they “choose among various communicative strategies on the basis of the predictions about how the person receiving the message will respond” (Miller & Steinberg, 1975, p.7). Sociological information helps predict behaviour in an intracultural context, as it involves group membership such as gender or social class, and roles

such as student or journalist. Similarly, intercultural information provides the person with some clues to their likely responses based on common knowledge about the person's culture or knowledge acquired during the interaction:

Knowledge about another person's culture – its language, beliefs, and prevailing ideology – often permits predictions of the person's probable response to messages ... Upon first encountering ... [another person], cultural information provides the only grounds for communicative predictions (Miller & Sunnafrank, 1982, p.226).

Psychological information involves personal knowledge of the person with whom one is communicating. However, it is impossible to get to know each person we communicate with well; therefore people rely mostly on cultural and sociological information during interactions (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). This can be complex, as Van Meurs and Spencer-Oatey (2010) argue: communication, culture and conflict is like the Bermuda Triangle<sup>6</sup>. As much as globalisation is a fact, and we may all seem to be citizens-of-the-world, recent research shows that, for example, language barriers affect international teams, in that language diversity is perceived to imply deep-level cultural differences (Tenzer et al., 2014).

In an extensive review of intercultural communication research, Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2017) conclude that:

more and more individuals in the global world have mosaic oppositional or compatible cultural identities ... the more ... researchers attune to the dynamic interplay of multiple sociocultural identity and personal identity issues within hybrid individuals (and in conjunction with situational dynamic issues), the more likely we can catch up to the cultural frame-switching cognition and emotion that drive such individuals to form and shape their close relationships (p.168).

If the art of communication is your business, then it pays to know what drives people to buy into your media delivery. Moreover, if the buying public does not want to be the product, then they too have the responsibility to support a different kind of culture-aware, investigative journalism (e.g., Humphreys, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

In many respects social groups are the outcome of history and specific circumstances. However, they are sustained by human volition and the media has a powerful hand in this. We

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<sup>6</sup> The Bermuda Triangle is a geographical location between Bermuda, Florida and Puerto Rico in the North Atlantic Ocean that is well-known because ships supposedly disappear under mysterious circumstances.

need to become aware of the perspective that we ourselves are not normal or the norm, and the other is not the problem for being different, as they see themselves as normal. This does not legitimise relativism; the review above shows that a simple “When in Rome do as Rome does” approach does not suffice, and a culturally intelligent approach is to ensure journalists focus on investigating facts, whilst being aware that there is no “absolute truth”. For example, there are scientific facts about climate change and “alternative facts” in this scenario can be equated to opinions with dangerous consequences. This also highlights the responsibility of media organisations and why new media platforms have been gaining momentum. In sum, a “western” (or any ideological) approach to journalism is not a neutral norm to which others need to adhere. Journalists can keep themselves and each other in check by questioning the approach taken to a story and identifying the lens they employ. Secondly, diverse recruitment within media organisations is key, not just in terms of ethnic, gender or national backgrounds but also in terms of value profiles. There is no one Nation which holds the gold standard for journalism and can be used as a reference point for all others. In other words, there is no such thing as Greenwich Mean Time<sup>7</sup> journalism.

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<sup>7</sup> Greenwich Mean Time is the clock time at the Royal Observatory Greenwich, which has been widely used as an international standard time.

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