BRIDGING CULTURES:

Unpacking the learning process of intercultural competence

Pauline Vromans

Institute for Management Research

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Bridging cultures

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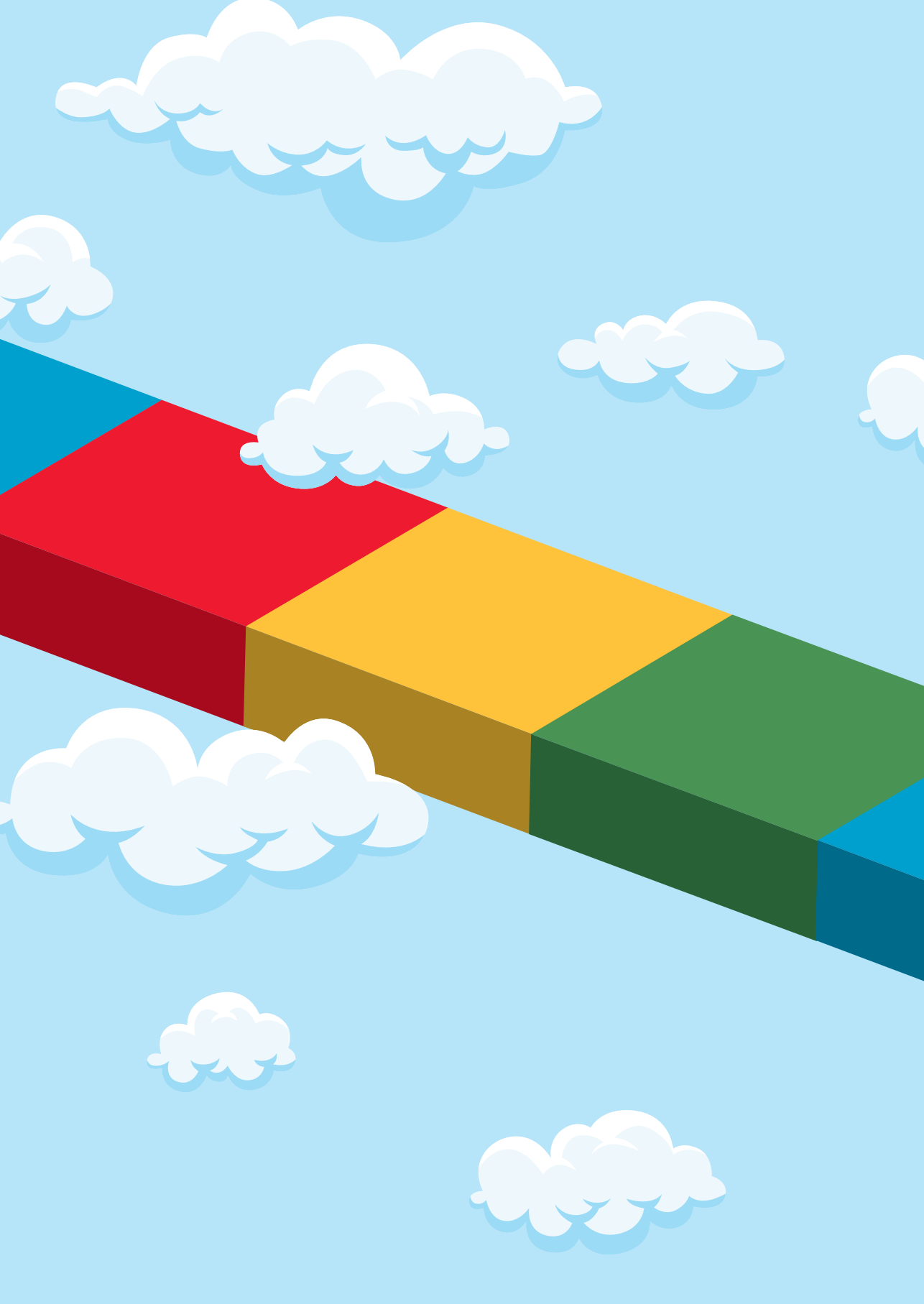

Chapter 1

Introduction

Worldwide societal changes in the last decades, such as globalization, and increased migration and mobility, have created more multicultural societies (Neuner, 2012). Leaders of multinationals do business across cultures and employees are sent on expatriate assignments. Besides the globe-trotting leaders of multinationals, working with other cultural groups has become commonplace for many employees, for example, working with diverse client bases or in a multicultural team. This creates "interactions between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world" (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 7). Appropriately and effectively managing these intercultural interactions constitutes intercultural competence (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The employability and transferability of these skills make them ever more valuable in the labor market (Jones, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2016).

The benefits of employees with enhanced intercultural competence lie in both improved interactions with those from other cultures and individual psychological outcomes (Leung et al., 2014). For example, intercultural competence or cultural intelligence positively influences job performance (Ang et al., 2007; Ott & Michailova, 2018; Rose et al., 2010), multicultural teamwork (Matveev & Milter, 2004; Shan et al., 2021), intercultural decision quality (Ang et al., 2007; Graf & Harland, 2005), innovative work behaviors (Korzilius et al., 2017), expatriate job performance (Liao et al., 2021; Mol et al., 2005), and cultural adjustment (Ang et al., 2007; Liao et al., 2021; Ott & Michailova, 2018). Employers, as well as educational institutions, which are instrumental in preparing the future labor force, are increasingly recognizing the importance of developing intercultural competence (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017; Jones, 2013; Stier, 2006). However, we still have a long way to go as the current supply of interculturally competent professionals is far from sufficient for the organizational demand (Caligiuri, 2021) and educational institutions are finding it challenging to embed intercultural competence development into their curricula (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017).

If employers and educational institutions want to develop the intercultural competence of (future) employees, they need to be able to make evidence-based decisions on which intercultural experiences, education, and training to provide. This dissertation supports this by researching the effectiveness of different ways of developing intercultural competence. It also examines the learning processes underlying the development of intercultural competence to better understand why some methods and experiences are effective and others are not, in order for educators and trainers to design more effective intercultural education and training, and facilitate more meaningful intercultural experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Intercultural competence has been studied by multiple disciplines such as communication, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. This has led to conceptual diversity and a lack of integration of concepts (Bücker & Poutsma, 2010). Some other terms used are intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural competence, cultural intelligence, global competencies, and cultural agility. To gain more clarity, Deardorff (2004) used the Delphi Method with a group of intercultural experts to come to an agreed upon definition of intercultural competence, namely "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 171), whereby effectiveness stands for the achievement of valued objectives and appropriateness refers to avoiding the violation of valued rules. The various disciplines studying intercultural competence have brought forth many different models that conceptualize intercultural competence and some commonalities can be observed, namely motivation/attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

These models give insight into *what* attitudes, knowledge, and skills an individual needs to develop to be interculturally competent, but not *how* intercultural competence can be developed. Most previous research has focused on predicting intercultural competence by identifying characteristics of those adapting to other cultures (Taylor, 1994), but more clarity is still needed on how intercultural competence is developed (Mitchell & Paras, 2018; Perry & Southwell, 2011), taking into account different circumstances (Deardorff, 2015). The main research question of the dissertation is: *How do different learning experiences develop the intercultural competence of (future) employees in different learning contexts?*

Intercultural learning is defined as "the acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the ability of learners to both understand culture and interact with people from cultures different than their own" (Lane, 2012, p. 97). Reviewing the academic literature, intercultural learning can be broadly categorized into two main learning experiences. The first is through formal training and education, for example, intercultural training, workshops, professional developmental programs, and courses at higher education institutions. The second is through intercultural exposure and contact, for example, as an immigrant or refugee; on a work assignment abroad (assignees, expatriates); studying or volunteering abroad; working in a multicultural team; growing up in different countries (adult third culture kids); or being raised by parents from two different cultures (bicultural individuals).

Research on the effectiveness of formal intercultural training and education on developing intercultural competence shows contradictory results (Mendenhall et al., 2004; Zhang & Zhou, 2019), and in some cases, learners have even been shown to regress (Fischer, 2011; Paras & Mitchell, 2017). A meta-analysis (Zhang & Zhou, 2019) showed that students' intercultural competence increased through pedagogical interventions, but the impact varied per type of intervention. It has also been argued that different developmental stages of learners require different pedagogies (Bennett & Bennett, 2004), the amount of challenge and support given in terms of content and training methods should be adjusted to the developmental stage of the learner (J. M. Bennett, 1993), and careful sequencing of learning activities is recommended (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). In addition, the duration of the intervention has a positive relationship with intercultural competence (Kohli Bagwe & Haskollar, 2020).

Next to formal education and training, intercultural exposure and contact are often assumed to increase intercultural competence (Vande Berg et al., 2012). Indeed, intercultural contact has the potential to develop an individual's intercultural competence (Schwarzenthal et al., 2017). According to culture learning theory (Argyle & Kendon, 1967), intercultural interactions allow for sociocultural learning through observation and practice (Ward & Searle, 1991; Wilson et al., 2013). Pettigrew's (1998) intercultural contact theory states that contact creates opportunities to learn from others, change behavior, and develop positive emotions toward them through affective ties and in-group reappraisal. However, research shows mixed results of the influence of previous experience abroad (Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014; Kohli Bagwe & Haskollar, 2020), international school experiences (Allan, 2003), and study abroad (Mu et al., 2022; Paras et al., 2019; Vande Berg et al., 2012) on intercultural competence development. Some individuals even experience regressions in intercultural competence, and may, for example, come back from a study abroad or an international assignment with (more) negative ideas about the host culture. This could be due to intercultural interactions causing too much stress (Kim, 2000), anxiety or uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1998), or feeling threatened (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). So, intercultural exposure and contact are prerequisites for developing intercultural competence, but they do not guarantee development (J. M. Bennett, 2011). For an intercultural experience to enhance an individual's intercultural competence, experiential learning must take place (Ng et al., 2009), with reflection playing an essential role (McAllister et al., 2006). Interventions such as intercultural training, courses, or mentoring, can support learning from an intercultural experience (Kohli Bagwe & Haskollar, 2020).

The issue is that there are many different types of educational activities and intercultural experiences, as well as numerous situations and contexts under which intercultural competence is developed. More research is needed that assesses which types of learning experiences and activities are effective (Deardorff, 2015; Eisenberg & Zhao, 2023; Perry & Southwell, 2011). Besides the need to study the effectiveness of different learning methods and experiences under different circumstances, it has been argued that a better understanding of the learning process underlying the development of intercultural competence is needed (Deardorff, 2015; Hang & Zhang, 2023; Mitchell & Paras, 2018; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Taylor, 1994). Similarly, the process of how international experiences can lead to intercultural competence is still underresearched (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Hang & Zhang, 2023; Reichard et al., 2014). In addition, insight into how this learning process may vary across circumstances and environments is still lacking (Deardorff, 2015). Further researching the learning process will help to create more effective training and education (Deardorff, 2015; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Taylor, 1994).

This dissertation aims to address the identified research gaps in three ways. First, it examines some of the less researched learning experiences, activities, and circumstances, with a particular focus on critical incidents. Second, it delves into the intercultural learning process. Third, it adopts a mixed methods approach using various quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods.

The researched learning experiences, activities, and circumstances are summarized in Table 1.1. Chapter 2 and 3 present the research on the integration of a blended learning tool, Cultural Detective, into an existing theory-focused cross-cultural management course at a university. Both research on the effectiveness of this tool (Korshuk, 2008) and of cross-cultural management courses with an intercultural skill development component are scarce (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Besides, the learning took place in a classroom setting, a form of internationalization at home, rather than the more commonly researched study abroad experiences. Chapter 4 examines the intercultural learning of Ph.D. students and their supervisors (living and) working internationally, and within a multicultural research consortium. This type of intercultural experience is far less researched than that of business expatriates on overseas assignments. Chapter 5 compares adult third culture kids (ATCKs) to non-ATCKs on multicultural personality traits and cultural sensemaking, providing insight into the extent to which the intercultural experience of growing up abroad influences intercultural competence.

In addition, critical incidents play a role in all the studies, demonstrating the various ways in which they can be used for both intercultural learning and for research on intercultural learning. Critical incidents are defined as "distinct occurrences or events which require some attention, action or explanation; they are situations for which there is a need to attach meaning" (Fitzgerald, 2000, p. 190). Critical incidents are an instrument for reflection and analysis in a structured manner (McAllister et al., 2006). The pedagogical intervention in Chapter 2 and 3 uses critical incidents and their analysis to enhance intercultural competence. Chapter 4 investigates how participants learned from real-life incidents and engaged in sensemaking. Chapter 5 studies the influence of multicultural personality traits on cultural sensemaking of two critical incidents in the form of video animations. Moreover, critical incidents are part of the research methodology in Chapters 4 and 5, as they enable the discovery of effective practices as well as identification of both hindering and facilitating factors (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954).

Table 1.1 Overview of Studied Learning Experiences/activities, Contexts, and Groups

Chapter	Context	Type of persons	Learning experience	Critical incident
2 & 3	Classroom - university	Domestic and international students	Blended learning tool in cross-cultural management course	Incident analysis as learning activity
4	Practice - Academic environment	Ph.D. students and supervisors	Living and working interculturally	Real-life incidents as learning experience
5	Practice - Growing up internationally	Adult third culture kids (ATCKs) and non-ATCKs	Raised in multiple cultures	Animation video of incident

Furthermore, this dissertation has a strong focus on the intercultural learning process. Chapter 3 uses interviews with university students to uncover the facilitators and challenges of intercultural learning, and the learning process underlying the development of intercultural competence in the classroom. The study in Chapter 4 investigates intercultural interactions and relationships of the research participants in order to better understand the learning process from an intercultural trigger event to intercultural competence development. Chapter 4 and 5 research the process of cultural sensemaking and sensemaking strategies in intercultural situations.

Methods

The topic of intercultural competence is studied through different research designs in this dissertation. A concern in the intercultural competence literature is the assessment of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2004). It has been argued that the best way to assess intercultural competence is through mixed methods (Deardorff, 2004, 2015; Paras et al., 2019). Therefore, the study in Chapter 2 used a mixed methods convergent parallel design. A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was used to measure students' cultural intelligence quantitatively. Qualitative research was used to explore and get more insight into the learning processes underlying intercultural competence development. In Chapter 3, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis led to the identification of facilitators of learning, learning dilemmas, as well as a process model of intercultural learning. The grounded theory approach and semi-structured interviews with the critical incident technique were used in Chapter 4 to form a theory about intercultural sensemaking and sensemaking strategies. Subsequently, Chapter 5 quantitatively tested the generalizability of this new theory with a sample of 178 ATCKs and non-ATCKs.

Overview of Dissertation and Research Questions

Chapter 2 focuses on *the extent to which* intercultural competence can be developed through training in a classroom setting. It answers the research questions: 1) *What is the impact of a cross-cultural management course combined with the Cultural Detective training tool on students' intercultural competence?* and 2) *Which aspects of intercultural competence do students develop as a result of the course?* The literature review discusses intercultural competence models and theories, and how different types of training can develop intercultural competence. In addition, the limited literature on integration of intercultural training into university courses is reviewed. Based on the literature, an analysis is made of what students can be expected to learn from the Cultural Detective learning tool, which employs a values-based and critical incident approach. Using mixed methods, the effect of integrating the Cultural Detective tool into a cross-cultural management course was assessed. Pre- and post-test quantitative surveys measuring cultural intelligence were conducted with the cross-cultural management students and a control group of international business course students. In addition, qualitative semi-structured interviews with some of the cross-cultural management students were held to research their experiences of their learning outcomes. The study raises questions around measuring the effectiveness of intercultural training tools and whether the transformational

nature of intercultural learning and the different learning experiences of students can be captured with quantitative pre- and posttest questionnaires. This study implies that universities can build intercultural competence development tools into their otherwise theoretical cross-cultural management courses in order to develop this competence in classroom-based settings.

Chapter 3 investigates *how* intercultural competence is developed through training in a classroom setting and studies the research question: *What facilitates intercultural learning for students in a classroom setting?* The literature review discusses intercultural competence development, learning processes, and learning theories. To understand how integrating the Cultural Detective training method into the cross-cultural management course did or did not help students learn, and their learning experiences and processes, qualitative semi-structured interviews with a sample of the students were conducted and analyzed thematically. This study identifies the factors that should be taken into account in course design when universities incorporate the development of students' intercultural competence into their curricula.

Chapter 4 researches *how* intercultural competence is developed through intercultural experiences that involve living and working with people from other cultures over several years. It answers the research questions: *What type of trigger events do the participants experience during living and/or working internationally?* and *How do trigger events lead to the development of intercultural competence?* This study focuses on how people learn from their intercultural experiences in the form of trigger events/critical incidents to better understand the process from intercultural experience to intercultural competence development. The literature review investigates learning processes through intercultural experiences, how trigger events can lead to learning and transformation, and the role of intercultural contact and relationships in developing intercultural competence. The qualitative grounded theory study researches a multicultural group of Ph.D. students and postdocs who are working on their research abroad, and their supervisors. It uses the critical incident research technique in semi-structured interviews to study the trigger events experienced. This is the first study to empirically assess Osland et al.'s (2023) model of trigger events and intercultural sensemaking in a work environment and contributes to research on the learning process of intercultural competence development. It identifies cultural sensemaking strategies and brings forth a new model of how trigger events can lead to intercultural learning.

Chapter 5 quantitatively researches the main theory that came forth from the study of Chapter 4 to examine its generalizability. It focuses on the research question: *What strategies do interculturally competent individuals use to make sense of intercultural interactions?* The relationship between intercultural competence and cultural sensemaking is tested, as well as whether the sensemaking strategies identified in Chapter 4's study are used by the participants, a sample of ATCKs and non-ATCKs. Adult third culture kids were compared to non-ATCKs because they grew up in multiple cultures, and their intercultural learning experiences tend to be more intense both in duration and depth. They can therefore be expected to demonsteate higher levels of intercultural competence (De Waal et al., 2020; De Waal & Born, 2020; Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009), resulting in more cultural sensemaking. Through a survey, the participants were presented with two animation videos of intercultural incidents to measure cultural sensemaking and sensemaking strategies. The qualitative responses were coded quantitatively. Participants' intercultural competence was measured through a questionnaire, and international experience and demographic data were also collected. Regression analyses were used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The study identifies multicultural personality traits needed to effectively engage in cultural sensemaking, as well as useful strategies for cultural sensemaking. In addition, it contributes to research on the intercultural competence of adult third culture kids which has been inconclusive.

Chapter 6 answers the overarching research question of the dissertation. The chapter discusses the insights derived from each study, the connections between them, and the contributions to the literature of the dissertation as a whole. This leads to recommendations for trainers and educators, as well as suggestions for the future direction of research on intercultural competence development.

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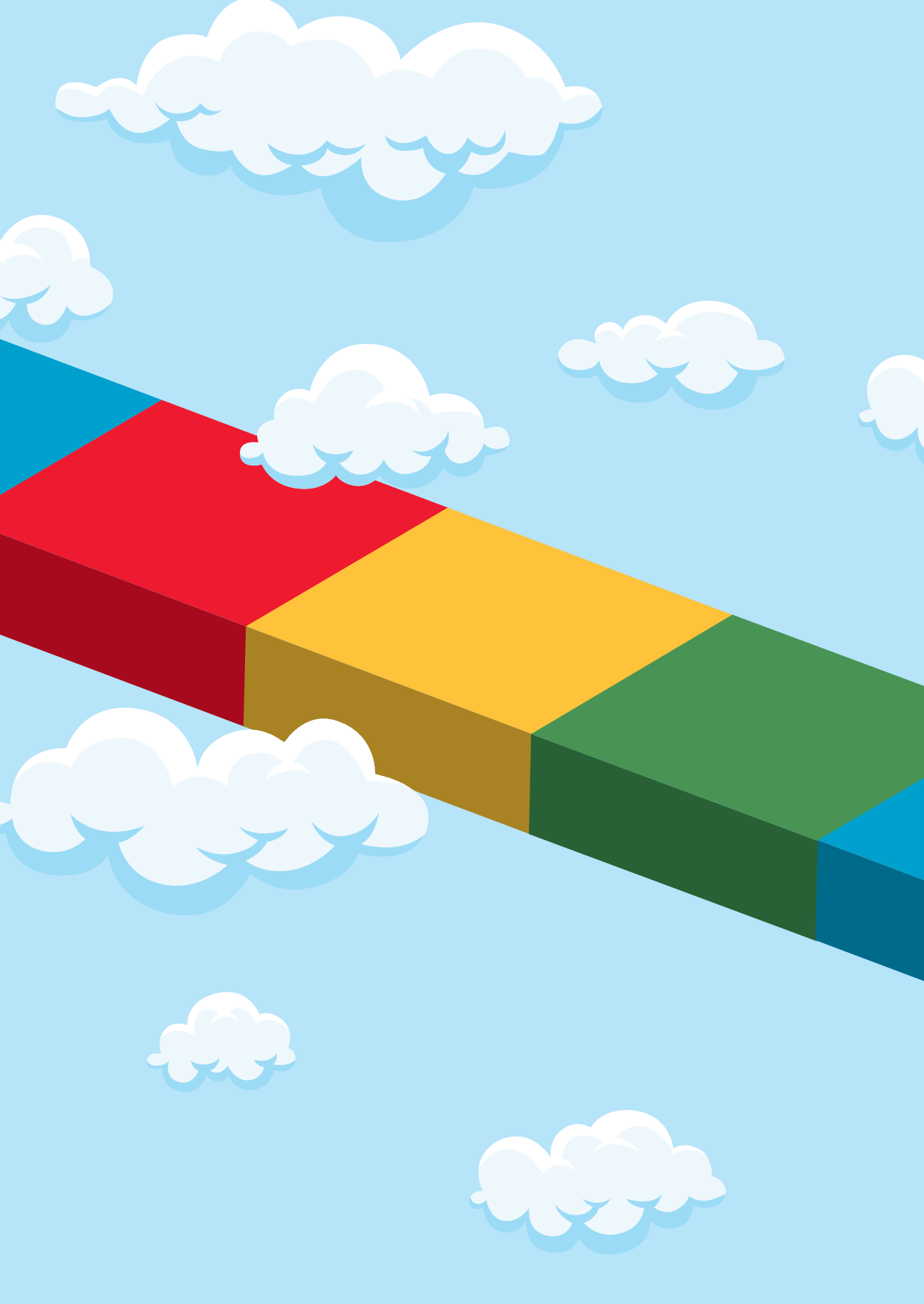

Chapter 2

The Effect of a Cross-Cultural Management Course with Cultural Detective on Intercultural Competence Development

Due to globalization, intercultural competence, defined as the ability to "communicate and behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 171), has become increasingly essential for a growing number of employees. The European Union recognizes a "need for educating a future labour force that 'possesses' adequate intercultural competences" (Stier, 2006). Consequently, higher education institutions play a crucial role in developing these competences to better prepare their students for the demands of the modern job market. This is particularly relevant in the field of business, where students can benefit from an increased intercultural competence when they start working in diverse or global workplaces (Ott & Michailova, 2018).

Internationalization of higher education was embedded in policies of the Dutch government, European institutions, and most Dutch universities in 2018 (Messelink et al., 2018). One increasingly popular way of internationalizing education is by sending students to study abroad (European Commission, 2014, 2023). However, the EU's Bologna process target for 2020 for study or training abroad was set at 20% of students in European higher education (EU, 2015), implying that the majority of students graduate without the international experience of study abroad. If not all students can go on study abroad, developing intercultural competence in the classroom, often referred to *as internationalization at home*, may well be an alternative approach to ensuring more students have the intercultural competencies to be successful in their future workplace. Internationalization at home arguably democratizes internationalization beyond those with the financial means to participate in mobility programs (De Wit & Altbach, 2021).

Moreover, developing intercultural competence in the classroom is important, because study abroad programs can enhance intercultural competence for some students, but others show little to no change, and in some cases, even experience regression (Lantz-Deaton, 2017; Mu et al., 2022; Vande Berg et al., 2012). It is typical for international students to "group in their national communities or in a kind of international reservations" (Otten, 2003, p. 14), while local students stick with their local group of friends (O'Brien et al., 2019). This is in line with the similarity-attraction theory (Festinger, 1954), which states that people like others who they share commonalities with. When intercultural contact does occur, this does not necessarily lead to positive encounters and enhanced intercultural competence, but may lead to negative stereotyping, according to Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis and the Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Intercultural competence development requires training and facilitation (Kohli Bagwe & Haskollar, 2020; O'Brien et al., 2019; Triandis, 2006). Therefore, many

European universities have started adding mandatory intercultural courses to their international programs, but these do not include the domestic students. In addition, teachers are often not supported and prepared by educational institutions to integrate intercultural learning into the standard curriculum and to utilize the diversity present in the classroom for intercultural learning (Messelink et al., 2018; Otten, 2003).

As integrating intercultural learning into the curriculum is not common practice, there is limited research available on courses that have incorporated intercultural competence development components into a course and the effectiveness of doing so. Most research on training intercultural competence concerns intercultural training for expatriates or study abroad students, or diversity and inclusion programs. A meta-analysis (Deshpande & Viswesvaran, 1992) and a review (Black et al., 1990) of cross-cultural training studies in the expatriate literature show that training has a positive impact on cross-cultural skill development of expatriates. However, the studies included have been criticized on research quality (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996). A more recent review (Kohli Bagwe & Haskollar, 2020) of studies measuring the intercultural sensitivity of participants who followed intercultural competence training programs concluded that training enhanced intercultural sensitivity. Another review (Mendenhall et al., 2004) showed that cross-cultural training improves knowledge, but attitudes and behavior are much more difficult to change and many studies do not use both a pre-test and a control group to measure change.

Besides, there are many different types of intercultural training and activities, from area studies to role plays and simulations, taking a didactic or experiential approach and focusing on culture-specific or culture-generic skills or both (Fowler & Yamaguchi, 2020). These different types of training have differing effects. A recent meta-analysis (Chenyang, 2022) showed that cross-cultural training enhances cultural intelligence (CQ), but experiential training methods are more effective than didactic methods in developing motivational and behavioral CQ. A systematic review of training in tertiary education found that behavioral training was the most effective, followed by cognitive-behavioral and cognitive-based programs, while didactic-alone programs were not effective (Sit et al., 2017). In addition, some types of training may be more or less suitable depending on the group (e.g., expatriates, undergraduates) receiving the training. So, more research is needed that assesses which activities are effective and for whom (Deardorff, 2015; Eisenberg & Zhao, 2023; Perry & Southwell, 2011).

This chapter focuses on a cross-cultural management course at a Master program in Business Administration at a Dutch academic research institution, in which a blended learning tool, Cultural Detective Online, was incorporated in the previous mainly theory-focused course with the aim of enhancing students' intercultural competence. Blended learning combines face-to-face classroom learning methods with online materials and activities. Research on the effectiveness of cross-cultural management courses that include a cross-cultural skill development component is scarce (Eisenberg et al., 2013). In addition, to our knowledge there is only one publication in scientific journals that reports researching the effectiveness of Cultural Detective in enhancing intercultural competence (Korshuk, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which incorporating the Cultural Detective blended learning tool into a cross-cultural management course develops the intercultural competence of the students. The research questions are:

1) *What is the impact of a cross-cultural management course combined with the Cultural Detective training tool on students' intercultural competence?*

2) *Which aspects of intercultural competence do students develop as a result of the course?*

Through quantitatively measuring the cultural intelligence of students before and after the course compared to a comparison group, the impact on intercultural competence was assessed. In addition, the qualitative data of this study show the elements of intercultural competence that students developed during this course, for instance cultural awareness, attitudes such as non-judgmentalism and open-mindedness, and skill sets such as analyzing, listening and observing. Studying the effectiveness of this teaching approach contributes to theoretical and practical knowledge of which methods are successful in developing both domestic and international students' intercultural competence in the classroom, as part of curriculum courses, rather than study abroad programs.

This chapter begins with a literature review on the most relevant theories of intercultural competence. Thereafter, the teaching approach of the study, including the Cultural Detective method, and the expected effectiveness of this approach based on theory are discussed. This is followed by an explanation of the mixed methods design used in this study. Next, the results on the effectiveness of the teaching approach in developing intercultural competence are presented. The chapter ends with a discussion and conclusion, including limitations and suggestions for future research.

Literature review

Intercultural Competence and Cultural Intelligence

Intercultural competence has been studied by multiple disciplines such as communication, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, leading to a multitude of terms and definitions, which show some similarities (Bücker & Poutsma, 2010). Some other terms used are intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural competence, cultural intelligence, and cultural agility. To gain more clarity, Deardorff (2004) used the Delphi Method with a group of intercultural experts to come to an agreed upon definition of intercultural competence, namely "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 171). Appropriateness refers to avoiding the violation of valued rules, whereby effectiveness is the achievement of valued objectives. Besides multiple definitions, researchers have also posited different theories and models of intercultural competence, resulting in over 300 characteristics of intercultural competent people (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009) with many showing overlap. This article reviews the most common elements found in the intercultural competence literature and further on, relates these to the studied teaching method.

First, traits or attitudes that characterize an individual's approach to cultures and people from other cultures are considered important characteristics of intercultural competence. Openness or open-mindedness (Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Hunter et al., 2006; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2000), inquisitiveness (Bird et al., 2010), and curiosity about other cultures (Bird et al., 2010; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006), as well as respect for other cultures (Deardorff, 2006), or valuing diversity (Caligiuri, 2012), ensure that an individual approaches a new culture or person in a positive manner. Novel intercultural situations and learning a new culture create uncertainty and ambiguity and thus tolerance for ambiguity (Bird et al., 2010; Caligiuri, 2012), non-stress tendency (Bird et al., 2010), and emotional stability (Van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2000), or resilience (Bird et al., 2010), are also considered important. In addition, one needs to feel a certain confidence to manage the challenges that come with intercultural situations, so self-efficacy is also seen as a desirable trait (Bird et al., 2010; Caligiuri, 2012), as well as optimism (Bird et al., 2010). The concept of cultural intelligence includes motivational cultural intelligence, the drive to put energy towards learning and understanding those from other cultural backgrounds (Earley & Ang, 2003). Although Leung et al. (2014) categorize this as a capability, it is mostly based on attitudes and being motivated to problem-solve and cope with ambiguity and complexity (Earley & Peterson, 2004).

According to M. J. Bennett (2004), people may have positive attitudes about other cultures, but a person's worldview is at the basis of the development of intercultural competence. His Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) views intercultural sensitivity as a developmental process, whereby people are assumed to be naturally ethnocentric but can develop an ethnorelative worldview or experience of cultural differences. Liking another culture is not equivalent to ethnorelativism (M. J. Bennett, 2004) and rather than measuring personal characteristics, the model focuses more on how people progress and change in interaction with cultural others (Hammer, 2015).

The DMIS consists of six stages of increasingly sophisticated experiences of cultural differences. The first three stages are *ethnocentric* which means "that one's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way" (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 152). In the first stage, Denial, only a person's own culture is experienced as real and other cultures are avoided psychologically or physically. In the second stage, Defense, one's own culture is seen as the best way and other cultures are perceived as less valid (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). During the third phase, Minimization, people trivialize cultural differences, believing that their own worldview is experienced by everyone universally and below the surface all cultures are the same (M. J. Bennett, 1986). The next three stages are *ethnorelative*, which means that "one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures…[and one is] seeking cultural differences" (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 153), rather than avoiding them in some way. The first ethnorelative stage is Acceptance whereby other cultures are experienced as different constructions of reality (Bennett & Bennett, 2004), and differences are acknowledged and accepted (M. J. Bennett, 1986). In the second ethnorelative stage, Adaptation, one becomes able to shift one's perspective and frame of reference to those of another culture (M. J. Bennett, 1986). Integration, the last stage, involves construing the self in multiple cultural ways and being able to evaluate from multiple cultural worldviews relative to the cultural context (M. J. Bennett, 1986). Every stage is characterized by certain beliefs and issues that can be 'resolved' to move on to the next stage (M. J. Bennett, 2004).

Cultural self-awareness is an essential part of intercultural competence (M. J. Bennett, 1998; Bird et al., 2010; Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014; Fischer, 2011; Iles & Kaur Hayers, 1997; Martin & Nakayama, 2010). It is also included in Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence as needed knowledge and comprehension. Cultural self-awareness does not mean analyzing at the personal level what one has learned about oneself nor analyzing at the institutional level about institutional oppression or privilege, but involves self-awareness at group level, recognizing that

one's own worldview reflects to some extent the worldview of the groups of which one is part (M. J. Bennett, 2009). For transformative learning to take place, a person needs to become aware of their own beliefs, assumptions and frames of reference and critically reflect on these (Mezirow, 1991). This is especially important for learners at the Minimization stage of the DMIS (M. J. Bennett, 2004). This starts with learning about personal values, but a person must then recognize that one's values reflect to some extent those of the groups they belong to for this to constitute cultural self-awareness (M. J. Bennett, 2009).

Next to cultural self-awareness, cultural awareness is the recognition and understanding of cultural differences and how others' behavior is influenced by their values and beliefs and is essential in the Acceptance stage of DMIS (M. J. Bennett, 2004). Deardorff's model of intercultural competence (2006) also recognizes the deep knowledge and understanding of culture as part of intercultural competence and adds sociolinguistic awareness. Other researchers have similarly emphasized understanding cultural differences (Brinkman & van Weerdenburg, 2014; Chen & Starosta, 2000; Fischer, 2011; Iles, 1995). Both cultural self-awareness and cultural awareness are considered culture-general competencies as they contribute to intercultural effectiveness in any cultural context (M. J. Bennett, 1998).

However, culture-specific knowledge is also part of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). Culture-specific knowledge can include information about values, norms and beliefs, or behaviors and habits. Cognitive cultural intelligence constitutes the knowledge on cultures and cultural differences (Earley & Ang, 2003). Culture-specific knowledge of values is needed to learn what is otherwise implicit in the other culture and to get a more accurate picture or interpretation of the situation from the other culture's perspective (Ting-Toomey, 2004).

In addition to awareness and knowledge, intercultural competence has also been described in terms of skills and capabilities, which refer to what a person does in an intercultural interaction (Leung et al., 2014). The skill of analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting is part of the skill set of intercultural competence as described by Deardorff (2004) and of metacognitive cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003). Metacognitive CQ involves being able to identify cues and patterns in intercultural situations (Earley & Peterson, 2004). For this, listening and observing are important skills (Deardorff, 2006), particularly active listening, seeking information, and paying attention to verbal and nonverbal signals (Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014), as well as mindful listening (Ting-Toomey, 2004). In analyzing an intercultural situation, a metacognitive culturally intelligent individual makes sense of patterns,

uses inductive reasoning, forms hypotheses, and reads cues (Earley & Peterson, 2004). In interpreting the situation, an intercultural competent individual makes isomorphic attributions, which are interpretations of the behavior from the other culture's perspective rather than the own culture's perspective (Triandis, 1975). For this non-judgmentalness (Bird et al., 2010) and withholding judgement are needed (Deardorff, 2004; Ting-Toomey, 2004), and the cultural awareness previously mentioned (Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014).

The internal outcome of analyzing situations is then the shifting of one's frame of reference (Deardorff, 2006). Frames of reference are "assumptions, perspectives, mental maps, and mindsets that are shaped by the social groups and culture in which individuals have been raised and are used to construct meaning of their experiences" (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014, p. 664). In shifting one's frame of reference, one forms new mindsets and behaviors (Mezirow, 1991) and creates new cultural schemas (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Being able to shift perspective and frame of reference to those of another culture is part of the ethnorelative Adaptation stage of the DMIS. It is cultural empathy and can be merely cognitive or manifest itself in appropriate behavior (Bennett, 1986). Shifting frame of reference allows flexibility and adaptability to adjust behaviors (Deardorff, 2006).

External outcomes of intercultural competence are behavioural intercultural skills and include adapting behaviors and communication styles (Deardorff, 2006). Behavioral cultural intelligence refers to the capability to adapt behavior to the cultural context (Earley & Ang, 2003). Other theories also emphasize adapting behaviors such as communication (Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014), flexibility to adjust behaviors (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000), and social flexibility to adapt behavior to make a positive impression (Bird et al., 2010). Molinsky (2007) calls adaptation in an intercultural interaction, cross-cultural code switching; the purposeful changing of behavior so that it is in line with the norms of the other culture.

However, adaptation is not the only behavioral response that can be effective in intercultural situations (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Caligiuri, 2012). Cultural minimization is an alternative response that involves effectively eliminating cultural differences to create consistency (Caligiuri, 2012). Tactically avoiding the situation is a similar way to circumvent the cultural differences (Adler & Aycan, 2018). Cultural integration is another possible response. It constitutes the creation of new norms and behaviors through collaboration whereby solutions are acceptable for all cultures involved (Caligiuri, 2012). Likewise, Adler and Aycan (2018) identify a creative compromise or

synergistic resolution as alternatives that combine two or more cultural approaches. These responses need to be leveraged at the appropriate time to constitute cultural agility (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Caligiuri, 2012).

Building relationships is another behavioural intercultural skill. Building relationships is useful in intercultural situations, because relationships provide information and social support (Bird et al., 2010), as well as helping overcome tensions and conflicts (Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014). An intercultural competent person is interested in relationship-building (Bird et al., 2010) and is willing to initiate social contact, also referred to as social initiative (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000) or interpersonal engagement (Bird et al., 2010). In order to build commitment, one should invest in relationships and social networks and understand the needs of different stakeholders (Brinkman & Van Weerdenburg, 2014).

Learning capabilities are also mentioned by some researchers in intercultural competence. Earley and Peterson (2004) state that metacognitive cultural intelligence includes generating strategies to learn in intercultural interactions, being able to reflect on one's own behavior and learning from these interactions (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Van Der Zee and Van Oudenhoven's (2000) flexibility component of multicultural effectiveness includes learning from mistakes.

Cross-Cultural Management Courses and Intercultural Competence

The effect of cross-cultural management courses on cultural intelligence or intercultural competence has been researched very little (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Most cross-cultural management courses can be viewed as didactic, whereby information is transferred from instructor to student, usually through lectures (Gudykunst et al., 1996). Education or training can also be experiential. In the case of cross-cultural training this means methods are used that confront learners with intercultural situations to which they react and then discuss their intellectual, emotional, and behavioral reactions, as well as how their own cultural beliefs and values have influenced these. They then relate their experiential learning back to the theories and concepts they know (Gudykunst et al., 1996).

There is some evidence that cross-cultural management courses need an experiential or training component focused on cross-cultural skills to have an effect on the development of cultural intelligence or intercultural competence. Just as Brislin and Yoshida (1994) state that learning about theories of intercultural communication does not mean that a student knows how to communicate in an intercultural effective way, learning theories about cross-cultural management

probably does not automatically make students more intercultural competent. An exploratory study by Blasco (2009) of a Danish international business program with a strong emphasis on culture showed that students left the program knowing that culture was complex and important, but did not know how to culturally analyze business problems in practice. In the study by Sizoo et al. (2007) a group of international undergraduates and a group of US American domestic undergraduates taking a 'traditional' or 'typical' international business course on cultural differences were compared with a group of US American domestic undergraduate students who followed a course with multiple cross-cultural training exercises. They found that only the group with multiple cross-cultural training exercises significantly increased their intercultural sensitivity.

Other studies on cross-cultural management courses that incorporated experiential elements in the courses showed mostly positive results for cultural intelligence. In Eisenberg et al.'s (2013) study, the cross-cultural management courses had 60% academic content and 40% experiential content and increased students' meta-cognitive and cognitive CQ. MacNab's (2012) study of his international management and cross-cultural management courses in Australian and US American universities showed students increased their CQ, especially metacognitive and behavioral CQ. A similar result was found by Ramsey and Lorenz (2016) for MBA students taking a cross-cultural management course. However, Fischer (2011) taught a university course with lectures, a simulation game and a behavioral modification session and his students decreased in metacognitive and cognitive CQ. Students reported that the course made them realize how little they actually know about other cultures and their abilities to analyze them, which may explain the decreases in self-reported CQ (Fischer, 2011). More recently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, studies have focused more on the impact of virtual international collaboration and teamwork in cross-cultural or business management courses.

Teaching Approach in this Study

In this study a cross-cultural management course of six weeks is evaluated. The course had didactic elements with readings and lectures about theories and concepts in cross-cultural management. In addition, the course had a training component using the Cultural Detective method. In this study, Cultural Detective Online was used as a blended learning tool in that the participants worked online with the tool as well as having facilitated sessions using the tool during face-to-face classes. The tool uses cultural value lenses, interactional analysis of critical incidents, and self-discovery exercises to increase understanding of oneself as a cultural being, understand others' intentions, behavior and values, as well as the

ability to leverage similarities and differences for interpersonal and organizational effectiveness (Nipporica Associates, 2023). In doing so, the tool aims to enhance participants' intercultural competence.

Cultural Detective Online consists of culture packages on national cultures, as well as other types of culture such as religions, gender, generations, sexual orientation, and deafness. First, the packages include information on the culture, value lenses and how these values may be positively or negatively perceived as well as examples of how these values can be observed in daily life. The value lenses contain around six cultural values that are most important to a specific culture and are to be used as clues or tools to understand a culture. They are norms or tendencies of people from these cultures, but may not apply to all individuals of that culture (Nipporica Associates, 2023). The values come from the culture themselves, how people from that culture describe their values and are stated in the language of that country. This is in line with Adler and Aycan (2018), who have argued that more indigenous concepts should be included in cross-cultural management. In addition, this emic approach lets the learner understand the culture from the perspective of those from that culture. In contrast, most teaching and training on culture uses 'universal' values dimensions on a continuum (Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013), for example Hofstede 's (1980) model. This etic approach provides a framework that can be applied to all cultures and whereby cultures can be easily compared. However, the problem with this approach is that it can create polarized views and ignore the nuances and complexity of each culture (Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013).

Second, the packages include incidents that involve intercultural encounters that can be analyzed with the Cultural Detective worksheet. This method asks users to identify words and actions of the characters in the critical incidents, without immediately making judgments about these words and actions. The behaviors can then be linked to values, using the value lenses or other culture-specific resources. The method, therefore, encourages the users to interpret the incident from the cultural perspectives of the characters involved. Users are then prompted to come up with bridges or solutions for the individuals in the critical incident to resolve the incident. These can be suggestions at the interpersonal level or at the system- or organizational level to support the individuals in the incident.

Critical incidents are used quite often in intercultural training, with one of the most researched methods being the cultural assimilator or intercultural sensitizer, which puts an emphasis on different perceptions and interpretations of behavior (Fowler & Yamaguchi, 2020). The critical incidents portray a situation between

people from two different cultures where a misunderstanding or problem occurs, which is similar to what Cultural Detective does. Participants can then choose from a range of responses of which one is the most preferred for the particular culture in question (Fowler & Yamaguchi, 2020). This is different from the Culture Detective whereby participants are not given responses but rather analyze the responses in the incident and then come up with solutions or bridges. While this may be harder than being given responses, this is closer to real-world situations where one does not get responses to choose from.

In addition to the culture packages, Cultural Detective Online includes a few packages focused on areas of intercultural competence, such as Self-discovery and Global Teamwork. Self-discovery includes exercises for users to become more aware of their own cultural values, where these come from and how they compare to values of different layers of culture. Furthermore, it has exercises for users to reflect on how their values influence their ways of behaving, communicating, and working with others. Global Teamwork focuses on challenges that multicultural teams may face and how to resolve these.

Intercultural training methods can take several approaches, namely cognitive, attributional, self-awareness, experiential, and behavioral (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). Cognitive training emphasizes the transfer of knowledge about a culture, such as lectures and readings (Earley & Peterson, 2004; Fowler & Yamaguchi, 2020). The course in this study included readings and lectures about other cultures and management in intercultural environments, which gave information and thus can be considered cognitive. Besides, the Cultural Detective packages contain information about different cultures and their values. Attributional training involves interpreting intercultural critical incidents (Earley & Peterson, 2004), as employed by the Cultural Detective method. Self-awareness training focuses on helping participants become more aware of their own cultural values, attitudes, and behavior, as well as how people from other cultures may react to them (Earley & Peterson, 2004). The Self-Discovery module of Cultural Detective was used to stimulate students to think about their own values, attitudes, and behaviors and how those may be perceived by others and so address cultural self-awareness. Experiential approaches involve learning through experiencing and include role plays and simulations, while behavioral approaches involve practicing culturally-appropriate behaviors (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Experiential and behavioral activities were not included, although students were asked to work in pairs or groups with a diversity of cultures and the class was a multicultural group of domestic and international students. This may be seen as experiential and behavioral as they were interacting with people from other cultures.

Expected Effectiveness of the Teaching Approach

The theories explained in the course and the value lenses and cultural packages of the Cultural Detective were expected to increase the cultural knowledge of students, a part of Deardorff's (2004) model. Earley and Peterson (2004) state that training based on knowledge should increase cognitive CQ, which suggests that the cross-cultural management course in combination with the Cultural Detective in this study should increase cognitive CQ. The cultural packages can also be used for learners at the Denial stage to learn some basic surface-level differences, while Defense stage learners can use the value lenses to find commonalities and Minimization learners to find differences (Hofner Saphiere, 2010). Exploring value lenses is beneficial to Acceptance learners to develop a deeper understanding of a framework of cultural differences (Hofner Saphiere, 2010). It is possible that learning about theories of cross-cultural management and other cultures can increase students' motivation to learn more, so increase their motivational CQ, although it will not necessarily increase perseverance and drive which are also part of motivational CQ (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Cultural differences can also be confrontational and challenging for students. Being pulled out of their comfort zone may lead to a decrease in motivational CQ as well. On the other hand, learning about cultural values can increase their respect for cultural diversity and their curiosity for other cultures, important attitudes according to Deardorff's model (2004).

The positive and negative perceptions shown in the Cultural Detective value lenses can be used for an increased ability to shift frame of reference, which is emphasized in Deardorff's (2004) model as well as the DMIS. Understanding how a value may be positively and negatively perceived can support viewing the value from different perspectives. The negative perceptions can also be supportive in the Defense stage by acknowledging that values can be viewed negatively (Hofner Saphiere, 2010). The positive intentions can help Minimization learners understand that people have different motivations and not everyone perceives the world similarly (Hofner Saphiere, 2010).

The incidents included in the Cultural Detective packages are expected to increase metacognitive cultural intelligence. Fowler and Yamaguchi (2020) argue that cultural incidents may be the best way for people to understand how others perceive situations and help participants understand cultural differences in a realistic way. The cultural assimilator, which also uses critical incidents, is one of the most researched methods in intercultural training and has been found effective in varying types of studies, types of training, and types of participants and cultures,

mostly at a cognitive level but sometimes also at a behavioral or affective level (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000). However, Earley and Peterson (2004) argue that cultural assimilators may not be effective in increasing metacognitive capabilities, because it is unclear whether the knowledge learned in the training will be transferred to similar situations with different context-specific details. Cultural assimilators sometimes teach participants a normative script rather than the more important competences that can be applied to varying cultural contexts (Van Oudenhoven, 2004, as cited in Herfst et al., 2008). However, Cultural Detective teaches a method of analyzing and interpreting a situation rather than learning what to do in that specific situation. Participants learn a way of analyzing a situation in a non-judgmental manner (Korshuk, 2008), which can be applied to different intercultural encounters. This makes the method less culture-specific and more culture-general, teaching towards a skill.

In the Cultural Detective worksheets the first step of identifying words and actions can be used to teach students to view situations without judgment, another important attitude according to Deardorff (2004), by separating the observed behavior in the situation from the cultural interpretations of the behavior. In Korshuk's (2008) study of Cultural Detective, the Swedish and Belarusian university students found it challenging to refrain from judgment when stating the words and actions. In addition, practicing this part of the worksheet can increase the intercultural skills of listening and observing (Deardorff, 2004). Neutrally describing words and actions can be reassuring for Denial learners, while giving Defense learners a structured way of analyzing incidents and helping them start to see the details of an intercultural interaction (Hofner Saphiere, 2010).

The second step of the incident worksheet asks participants to interpret the situation from the perspective of each character, by linking possible values and beliefs to the words and actions of each character. Being able to analyze and interpret intercultural situations is an important skill of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2004) and metacognitive CQ (Earley & Peterson, 2004). This step in the method can help develop frame of reference shifting, as participants view the situation from multiple perspectives. Minimization learners can be challenged here to understand how each character's behavior in the incident is influenced by their culture. Acceptance learners are given the opportunity to compare and contrast how values play out in interactions, while Adaptation learners can be challenged by engaging in deeper and more complex analyses of values and behaviors (Hofner Saphiere, 2010).

The third step of the worksheet focuses on solutions and bridges to bring together the characters in the critical incident and leverage the cultural differences. In Korshuk's (2008) study, students tended to come up with solutions that were very general or came from their own cultural perspective, so this can be a challenging part of the method. However, this step stimulates students to think about appropriate behaviors in cross-cultural encounters, the desired external outcome of intercultural competence development (Deardorff, 2004), and possibly increasing their behavioral CQ. Using the Cultural Detective method of analyzing incidents can give students the feeling that they can cope with intercultural encounters and that this can be enjoyable. The students in Korshuk's (2008) study very much enjoyed using the Cultural Detective and wanted to keep using it which could be an indication of enhanced motivational CQ. Finding practical solutions for the incidents can also feel reassuring for Defense learners, especially if they look for commonalities in values. Acceptance learners can use this part to find opportunities for learning and collaboration between people with different viewpoints (Hofner Saphiere, 2010). For Adaptation learners the bridges and solutions are considered the part where they can practice their skills the most, in finding sophisticated solutions that leverage the similarities and differences between the characters, as well as thought-through systemic or structural solutions for the organization (Hofner Saphiere, 2010).

The Self-Discovery package of Cultural Detective is important as it is aimed at creating cultural self-awareness, a culture-general competence in that it is useful in any culture (M. J. Bennett, 1998; Deardorff, 2004). The Self-Discovery package is essential for Minimization learners to recognize that behavior and beliefs are partially influenced by one's cultural values and create a more nuanced understanding of their own cultural values (Hofner Saphiere, 2010). For Integration learners it could support enhanced understanding of their cultural identity and how their cultural values were formed.

In conclusion, incorporating the Cultural Detective into the cross-cultural management course was expected to further develop students' intercultural competence. In particular, it was hypothesized that students would increase their cognitive and metacognitive cultural intelligence and possibly their motivational and behavioral cultural intelligence. The hypotheses are as follows:

> *Hypothesis 1: Participants in the cross-cultural management course will show a greater improvement in cultural intelligence than participants in the comparison group.*

Hypotheses 1a-d: Participants in the cross-cultural management course will show a greater improvement in motivational (1a), cognitive (1b), metacognitive (1c), and behavioral (1d) cultural intelligence than participants in the comparison group.

Confounding Factors: Self-efficacy and Intercultural Experience

Another factor that is taken into account in this study is intercultural experience, as this can possibly influence intercultural competence or cultural intelligence. There are many ways people have intercultural experiences, for instance, working abroad (assignees, expatriates), studying abroad, being an immigrant or refugee, growing up in different countries (adult third culture kids), or being raised by parents from two different countries (bicultural individuals). It has previously been assumed that intercultural experiences increase intercultural competence (Vande Berg et al., 2012), but results have been mixed. It has been noted that intercultural experience allows for the development of intercultural competence, but it does not guarantee that intercultural competence is developed (J. M. Bennett, 2011). Brinkman and Van Weerdenburg's (2014) research showed that exposure to other cultures through regional diversity, domestic diversity, globalization, or previous experience abroad does not necessarily lead to more intercultural competence. The meta-analysis by Mol et al. (2005) did not find previous international experience to be a predictor for expatriate performance, while Takeuchi et al.'s (2019) longitudinal study did find a positive effect of high level international experience on expatriate job performance. A study by Rodríguez-Izquierdo (2022) showed that intercultural friendships and international mobility experiences positively influenced the development of intercultural sensitivity of university students. Allan's (2003) case study at an international school with children from multiple cultures indicated that some children exhibited intercultural learning, while others exhibited ethnocentrism. A review by Ott and Michailova (2018) found mixed results for the relationship between international experience and cultural intelligence. For example, Sizoo et al. (2007) found that intercultural expertise is not increased solely by living in another country, while Eisenberg et al.'s (2013) results showed that international experience was positively related to metacognitive, cognitive, and motivational CQ. Because of the mixed results of international and intercultural experience, this variable was measured in this study as it may or may not influence cultural intelligence.

CQ development is influenced by general self-efficacy (MacNab & Worthley, 2012; Wilson et al., 2013). Self-efficacy is defined as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Self-efficacy is important

for intercultural training as participants must have the confidence to interact in intercultural situations (Earley & Peterson, 2004). Therefore, self-efficacy is also controlled for in this study.

Methods

To answer the research questions and test the hypotheses, quantitative and qualitative methods were used. It has been argued that the best way to assess intercultural competence is through mixed methods, as most intercultural experts agree that assessing intercultural competence is complex and difficult (Deardorff, 2004). The research design can best be described as a mixed methods convergent parallel design. This approach collects and analyzes quantitative and qualitative data concurrently but independently, eventually merging the data for overall interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were held, as well as quantitative surveys. Combining the qualitative and quantitative assessments of intercultural competence provides the opportunity to generate more comprehensive evidence with which to determine whether the cross-cultural management course with Cultural Detective enhanced the intercultural competence of students and which components of intercultural competence in particular. It also gives the opportunity for methodological triangulation of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Research Sites and Participants

The study took place at an academic research university in the Netherlands with Master students in Business Administration. Data were collected during two separate instances of the cross-cultural management course, resulting in two cohorts. The first time the cross-cultural management course incorporated the Cultural Detective tool was in November 2015 (Cohort 1). The course was repeated in April 2017 (Cohort 2) with similar content and design. The students were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews after the course ended. The students following the cross-cultural management course were compared on quantitative pre- and post-course scores to a comparison group of students following an international business course during the same time. The international business course is obligatory in this Master program and most cross-cultural management students already followed this course earlier in their studies. So, the treatment group was further in their Master program than the comparison group. The cross-cultural management course is an elective.

Survey Sample

In Cohort 1, the treatment group consisted of 20 students and the comparison group consisted of 62 students with a response rate for the pre-test of 90% (n = 18) and 77.4%, (n = 48), respectively. In Cohort 2, the treatment group consisted of 23 students and 5 invited refugees, and the comparison group of 40 students, with a response rate of 89.3% (n = 25) and 60% (n = 24), respectively. Some students were absent during the survey administration or did not wish to fill in the survey. One student handed in an incomplete survey and the scores were removed from the dataset. The response rate for the post-test of cohort 1 was 72.2% (n = 13) for the treatment group and 29% (n = 13) for the comparison group, while in cohort 2, the response rate was 64.2 % (n = 18) for the treatment group and 37.5% (n = 15) for the comparison group. In cohort 2, the post-test was also done in class to increase the response rate. Because of the large difference in response rate between the pre- and post-test for the comparison group, the group who did fill in the post-test was compared with the group who did not fill in the post-test for the whole sample. To test for nonresponse bias, independent sample t-tests were conducted. The results showed that the groups did not significantly differ on age ($t(112) = 0.21$, $p = .84$), years spent abroad during childhood ($t(109) = -0.44$, $p = .66$), years spent studying abroad ($t(109) = -1.41$, $p = .16$), years spent working abroad ($t(109) = 0.96$, $p = .34$), number of languages spoken ($t(110) = -0.24$, $p = .81$), and intercultural contact frequency ($t(109) = 0.81$, $p = .42$). A chi-squared test showed that the groups did not differ significantly on gender ($\chi^2(1, n = 112) = 3.43$, $p = 0.06$). To conclude, the analyses indicate that there was no serious nonresponse bias.

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show the descriptive statistics for the demographics and background of the treatment and comparison group at pre- and post-test. Both groups had a larger percentage of females than males and in the post-test there were more international students than Dutch students. Not all students identified culturally with their nationality with some students identifying with multiple cultures, referred to in this study as 'blended' and a few identified with a different culture than their passport country. Less than half of the students identified culturally as Dutch. A small percentage of students was bicultural, meaning they have parents from two different countries or are from a different country than their parents. The majority of students did not practice a religion. Most people had not spent any time living abroad during childhood but those that had usually spent a significant part of their childhood abroad. Many students spent some time studying abroad, but few had experience working abroad. All students spoke at least 2 languages at intermediate level or higher.

The post-test treatment group and comparison group were compared on demographic data and international experience. The two groups did not differ significantly in gender distribution ($\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 2.22, p = .14$), nor on biculturalism ($\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 0.04, p = .83$), or the distribution of international versus domestic students ($\chi^2(1, n = 58) = 0.15, p = .70$). Independent sample t-tests showed that the post-test treatment and comparison group did not differ significantly in age ($t(56) = -1.89, p = .07$), years spent abroad during childhood ($t(56) = -0.78\ p = .44$), years spent studying abroad ($t(56) = 0.03, p = .98$), years spent working abroad ($t(55) = 1.39, p = .17$), number of languages spoken ($t(55) = -1.13, p = .26$), and intercultural contact frequency ($t(56) = -0.40, p = .69$). In sum, the analyses show that there were no significant differences between the treatment and comparison group on demographic factors and international experience.

Table 2.1 Means and (Standard Deviations in Parentheses) of Continuous Demographic and Background Variables for Pre-test and Post-test Treatment and Comparison Group Samples

	Pre-test		Post-test	
Characteristic	**Treatment**	**Comparison**	**Treatment**	**Comparison**
Age	25.28 (3.65)	23.87 (2.60)	24.97 (3.36)	23.63 (1.62)
Years childhood abroad	1.84 (4.81)	1.20 (3.56)	2.19 (5.38)	1.20 (4.07)
Years study abroad	1.51 (1.65)	1.47 (2.24)	1.74 (1.68)	1.76 (2.77)
Years work abroad	0.56 (1.37)	0.54 (1.18)	0.27 (0.54)	0.63 (1.31)
Languages	3.02 (0.86)	2.86 (0.86)	3.06 (0.89)	2.81 (0.80)
IC contact frequency	2.76 (1.18)	2.72 (1.30)	2.70 (1.18)	2.57 (1.42)

Table 2.2 Frequencies of Categorical Demographic and Background variables (Percentages in Parentheses) for Pre-test and Post-test Treatment and Comparison Group Samples

	Pre-test		Post-test	
Characteristic	**Treatment**	**Comparison**	**Treatment**	**Comparison**
Gender				
Male	14 (32.6)	31 (43.1)	7 (22.6)	11 (39.3)
Female	29 (67.4)	38 (52.8)	24 (77.4)	16 (57.1)
Transgender	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Gender fluid	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Unknown	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Nationality				
Blended	3 (7.0)	2 (2.8)	2 (6.5)	2 (7.1)
American	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Austrian	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Belgian	0	3 (4.2)	0	1 (3.6)
Bulgarian	1 (2.3)	2 (2.8)	1 (3.2)	0
Chinese	4 (9.3)	5 (6.9)	3 (9.7)	3 (10.7)
Dutch	19 (44.2)	37 (51.4)	13 (41.9)	10 (35.7)
Eritrean	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
German	3 (7.0)	8 (11.1)	3 (9.7)	3 (10.7)
Greek	2 (4.7)	2 (2.8)	2 (6.5)	2 (7.1)
Indonesian	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Italian	1 (2.3)	2 (4.2)	0	2 (7.1)
Lithuanian	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Luxembourgish	2 (4.7)	0	2 (6.5)	0
Norwegian	1 (2.3)	1 (1.4)	1 (3.2)	1 (3.6)
Palestinian	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
Peruvian	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Polish	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Portuguese	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
Romanian	1 (2.3)	0	0	0
Swedish	1 (2.3)	1 (1.4)	0	0
Syrian	2 (4.7)	0	0	0
Vietnamese	0	1 (2.1)	0	1 (3.6)
Unknown	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Cultural Background				
Blended	9 (20.9)	10 (13.9)	7 (22.6)	3 (10.7)
American	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Antillian	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
Arabic	1 (2.3)	0	0	0

Table 2.2 Continued

	Pre-test		Post-test	
Characteristic	**Treatment**	**Comparison**	**Treatment**	**Comparison**
Austrian	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Belgian	0	3 (4.2)	0	1 (3.6)
Bulgarian	1 (2.3)	2 (2.8)	1 (3.2)	0
Chinese	4 (9.3)	6 (8.3)	3 (9.7)	3 (10.7)
Dutch	13 (30.2)	28 (38.9)	8 (25.8)	8 (28.6)
Eritrean	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
German	2 (4.7)	7 (9.7)	2 (6.5)	3 (10.7)
Greek	1 (2.3)	2 (2.8)	1 (3.2)	2 (7.1)
Italian	1 (2.3)	3 (4.2)	0	2 (7.1)
Latin American	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
Lithuanian	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Luxembourgish	2 (4.7)	0	2 (6.5)	0
Norwegian	1 (2.3)	1 (1.4)	1 (3.2)	1 (3.6)
Palestinian	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
Peruvian	0	2 (2.8)	0	1 (3.6)
Polish	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Portuguese	1 (2.3)	0	1 (3.2)	0
Romanian	1 (2.3)	0	0	0
Surinam	0	1 (1.4)	0	0
Swedish	1 (2.3)	1 (1.4)	1 (3.2)	0
Syrian	1 (2.3)	0	0	0
Vietnamese	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Unknown	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Bicultural				
Not bicultural	37 (86.0)	62 (86.1)	27 (87.1)	24 (85.7)
Bicultural	6 (14.0)	9 (12.5)	4 (12.9)	3 (10.7)
Unknown	0	1 (1.4)	0	1 (3.6)
Religion				
No religion	30 (69.8)	52 (72.2)	22 (71.0)	21 (75.0)
Protestant	1 (2.3)	6 (8.3)	1 (3.2)	3 (10.7)
Catholic	4 (9.3)	3 (6.3)	3 (9.7)	3 (10.7)
Christian	3 (7.0)	2 (2.8)	2 (6.5)	0
Orthodox Christian	1 (2.3)	1 (1.4)	1 (3.2)	0
Muslim	4 (9.3)	1 (1.4)	2 (6.5)	0
Buddhist	1 (2.3)	1 (1.4)	0	0

Interview Sample

Seven students who followed the cross-cultural management course were interviewed after the first course and two more after the second course. All students that volunteered were interviewed. However, one student was explicitly asked to be interviewed as it appeared from class discussions that this person had a different opinion and experience than the majority of the students. An attempt was made to have students from different nationalities and cultures, as well as more than one Dutch student to ensure representativeness of the class. Of the nine students, three students were Dutch, two were Chinese, one was German, one was Romanian and two were from blended cultural backgrounds. Two students were male and seven were female. While there were less males than females following the course, males are underrepresented in the interview sample.

Participant Consent and Confidentiality

Participation in the study was voluntary and consent was given by the interviewees. On the survey, participants were asked to fill in their initials, name, or student number to be able to link the pre- and post-test results. The data collection was not anonymous in the sense that the researcher was able to identify which results belong to which person. However, participants were guaranteed that individual results would be treated confidentially and would not be shared with their professors or anyone else. In addition, results are only reported at the aggregated group level and qualitative results are reported with pseudonyms and without any information that may identify the participants.

Intervention

The cross-cultural management course was given in the second period (of 6) of the Master program and a year later in the fifth period. The course lasted six weeks, with a lecture followed by a Cultural Detective session each week. Next to the theoretical exam, students made two group assignments. In cohort 1, one of these assignments asked the students to come up with their own critical incident (e.g., from media, own experience) and use the Cultural Detective tool to analyze the incident, develop responses and recommendations to resolve or prevent it, and present their work to the class. They worked in pairs of one domestic and one international student. In cohort 2, the assignment was similar, but students were asked to use the incidents from the Cultural Detective because the previous year students had found their own incidents and some of them contained very superficial cultural differences. They were also asked to work in groups of four students to increase the diversity in the team and so expose them to working in a multicultural team.

Data Collection

Timeline

Quantitative data were collected at the beginning and end of the course in the form of surveys with a questionnaire. Qualitative data were collected in the treatment group soon after the course ended.

Quantitative Data Collection

The questionnaire contained measures for cultural intelligence, general self-efficacy, international experience, and demographic data.

Instruments and Measures. The following instruments were used to collect the pre-test quantitative data for both the control and treatment group. The same questions were asked in the post-test.

Cultural Intelligence (20 items, α = .90 pre-test; .91 post-test) was measured using Ang et al.'s (2007) Cultural Intelligence Scale. This instrument measures an "individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings" (Ang et al., 2007, p. 337). The CQ consists of four dimensions: motivational CQ (5 items, α = .71 pre-test; .70 post-test), cognitive CQ (6 items, α = .70 pre-test; .78 post-test), metacognitive CQ (4 items, α = .74 pre-test; .85 post-test), and behavioral CQ (5 items, α = .80 pre-test; .88 post-test). An example item for motivational CQ is "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures" and for cognitive CQ, "I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures." For metacognitive CQ an example item is "I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures." An example item for behavioral CQ is "I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it." Answers to these self-report items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree", 7 = "Strongly agree").

General Self-efficacy (8 items, α = .81 pre-test; .79 post-test) was measured using the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE) (Chen et al., 2001). General Self-Efficacy "captures the differences among individuals in their tendency to view themselves as capable of meeting task demands in a broad array of contexts (Chen et al., 2001, p. 63). An example item is "when facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them." A 5-point Likert scale was used to answer these questions (1 = "Strongly disagree", 5 = "Strongly agree").

In addition, more information was gathered in the pre-test survey about cultural background and international experience, as well as demographics. Cultural background was assessed with a question about nationality and a question about cultural background, as nationality does not always reflect the culture with which someone identifies. One question asked respondents about their religion. Another question asked students to list the languages they speak and at what level. In addition, one question asked the respondents if their parents are from two different countries or if they are from a different country than their parents. These questions give information about cultural background and experience, for instance biculturalism and immigration. Furthermore, four questions were asked about international experience, inquiring about how much time was spent outside one's home country and in which countries. These questions include time spent abroad during childhood, and study or work outside the home country. In addition, participants were asked to rate their frequency of contact with locals during these international experiences on a 4-point scale (1= "seldom", 4="always").

Qualitative Data Collection

Interviews are rated by intercultural experts as more valuable in assessing intercultural competence than pre- and post-test scores (Deardorff, 2004). The interviews in this study asked questions about what was learned and its value, important learning moments, changes in awareness or outlook, application of the learning to real-life situations, and broader insights gained. The interviews were semi-structured so that each student was asked about the same aspects in order to compare how the course influenced their intercultural competence development, while allowing for flexibility to obtain deeper information with probing questions. An attempt was made to get students to give specific examples of their learning, so that there was more concrete evidence for what they learned. The interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis, using open coding. Coding was initially done inductively, and later compared to concepts from theory.

Additional Data

The university collected course evaluation data from the students on a voluntary basis. The course evaluation report issued by the university included several questions with quantitative measurements, as well as qualitative comments from students, which were relevant for this study. These data were used to complement the primary data collected in this study.

Results

Quantitative Results

First, independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare the treatment and comparison group on pre-test scores of the dependent variables to ascertain that there were no pre-test differences between the groups before starting the course. The results are shown in Table 2.3. The treatment and comparison group did not significantly differ in pre-test scores of cultural intelligence and its dimensions, nor of self-efficacy.

Table 2.3 Independent Sample T-tests Comparing Comparison and Treatment Group on Pre-test Scores

	Treatment		Comparison					95% CI	
Variable	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***df***	***p***	***LL***	***UL***
CQ	5.01	0.77	4.86	0.74	-0.78	57	0.44	-0.55	0.24
Motivational CQ	5.70	0.74	5.76	0.76	0.31	57	0.76	-0.33	0.45
Cognitive CQ	4.68	0.81	4.47	0.75	-1.01	57	0.76	-0.62	0.20
Metacognitive CQ	4.95	1.07	4.99	0.97	0.15	57	0.88	-0.49	-0.57
Behavioral CQ	4.77	1.12	4.31	1.11	-1.58	57	0.12	-1.04	0.12
Self-efficacy	3.97	0.34	4.11	0.40	0.55	57	0.59	-0.15	0.27

To test for an effect of the cross-cultural management course on cultural intelligence, mixed between-within ANOVAs were conducted. The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.4. The analyses showed that there were no significant effects for time ($F(1,54) = 2.99$, $p = .09$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$) and group ($F(1,54) = 0.40$, $p = .53$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$) or the interaction between time and group ($F(1,54) = 1.75$, $p = .19$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$) on cultural intelligence, so hypothesis 1 was not supported. The analyses for each dimension of cultural intelligence showed that there were no significant effects for time ($F(1,55) = 0.72$, $p = .40$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$) and group ($F(1,55) = 0.09$, $p = .76$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$) or the interaction between time and group ($F(1,55) = 0.18$, $p = .67$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$) on motivational CQ. In addition, there were no significant effects for time ($F(1,55) = 0.71$, $p = .40$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$) and group ($F(1,55) = 0.40$, $p = .53$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$) or the interaction between time and group ($F(1,55) = 0.89$, $p = .35$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$) on behavioral CQ. In sum, hypotheses 1a and 1d were not supported. Further, the analyses showed that time had a significant positive effect on cognitive CQ ($F(1,54) = 5.67$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.095$), while group ($F(1,54) = 0.12$, $p = .73$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$) or the interaction between time and group ($F(1,54) = 3.65$, $p = .06$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$) did not. This means cognitive CQ increased for both the treatment and comparison group. In addition, time had a significant effect on metacognitive

CQ ($F(1,55) = 5.43$, $p = .23$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$), but not on group ($F(1,55) = 0.08$, $p = .77$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$) or the interaction between time and group ($F(1,55) = 0.86$, $p = .36$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.015$). For both groups, metacognitive CQ was higher after the course. So, hypotheses 1b and 1c were partially supported.

Table 2.4 Means and Standard Deviations for Pre-test and Post-test Scores for Treatment and Comparison Group

	Treatment group				Comparison group			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
Variable	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
CQ	5.01	0.77	5.04	0.63	4.80	0.75	5.02	0.82
Motivational CQ	5.70	0.74	5.66	0.56	5.68	0.74	5.57	0.77
Cognitive CQ	4.68	0.81	4.72	0.73	4.43	0.79	4.83	0.91
Metacognitive CQ	4.95	1.07	5.10	0.92	4.92	0.96	5.26	0.90
Behavioral CQ	4.77	1.07	4.76	1.07	4.25	1.13	4.48	1.15

Qualitative Results

While it is not possible to isolate the learning effects that were a result of the Cultural Detective learning tool from the rest of the course, the learning outcomes that were most probably a result of the Cultural Detective or a combination of the course and the Cultural Detective are presented here. The focus is on outcomes related to intercultural competence development. So, for example, what students learned from the literature and course about international HRM strategies, is not considered.

One learning outcome identified was culture-specific knowledge. One of the highest scores (4.5 out of 5) on the learning outcomes on the course evaluation report was acquiring factual knowledge. Most interviewed students said they had gained new knowledge from the course and the Cultural Detective, more specifically this included knowledge about different cultures and their values, for instance, Student 6 said, "I am not familiar with the Indian culture at all, but it does make, reading this stuff makes sense and I do get them more now." Students' curiosity for cultures was heightened, which is considered a requisite attitude in the process of developing intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2004) and motivational cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003). Student 2 commented, "for example, that I learned something about cultures, maybe I wasn't interested before or didn't know something" and Student 1 said about the Cultural Detective value lenses, "I was like seeing cultures just to see the lenses, oh let me see this, oh let me see this one. So that was very interesting."

Developing cultural self-awareness of learners, a goal of the Cultural Detective tool, was confirmed by the data. In the course evaluation report, learning to recognize and appreciate personal values received a relatively high score of 4 out of 5 from the students. In the interviews, a few students explained how the Self-discovery part of the Cultural Detective helped them learn about their personal values, for example:

> In the way of looking at the reasons behind the way you are, you can really see that influences of really things from way back that still influence you right now and kind of made you who you are right now. (Student 7)

As M. J. Bennett (2009) points out, cultural self-awareness also means recognizing that one's values reflect to some extent those of the groups one belongs to. The interviews showed that most students started thinking about their own culture's values, recognizing them and seeing if they applied to themselves and as such developing cultural self-awareness. Examples of comments are, "I never thought about my [own country's] values, but then I was like yes, we are like that" (Student 5) and "I remember there was this article about negotiations in [own country] and it is true, people in [own country], they don't really focus too much on the future" (Student 6). Two students commented on how it not only gave them insight into their own values, but also led them to think more about others' values:

> So, it is very interesting to read about your own culture because I never think about these things, but they are so true sometimes. Or sometimes some of them are not true for me, but I see them as true for my parents. (Student 3)

> I think it was valuable to think about your own values and reflect that for me on the [own culture's] values and the [own gender] value lenses and being more aware of your own, because I think if you are more aware of your own values you can better understand someone else's values. (Student 8)

Student 1 also commented that they were using this insight to constantly analyze their own behavior in how it is influenced by their culture, saying "to look at your own cultural things and that's something that I am actually really using, like I am: ah, actually I am doing this because this is my culture or analyzing yourself." However, Student 7 said he learned a lot about his own personal values, but

later on said he felt that personality was more important than cultural values in explaining behaviors.

> Someone's personal personality is way more important than their cultural value lens. So, expanding the cultural value lens to explain someone's behavior is far too much attention on the cultural value lens, instead of maybe someone who they are themselves. (Student 7)

The interviews showed that most students had developed cultural awareness, which consists of recognizing and understanding cultural differences, the second goal of Cultural Detective. Student 9 commented that she became more aware of the differences between European countries which she had previously assumed to be very similar. One student commented on how he had previously attributed behavior to someone's personality but now realized that it was influenced by that person's cultural background. And, what he had previously seen as the way to behave in a professional environment, "leaving culture behind," he now realized that which behavior is considered as 'professional' is impacted by one's culture. Another student stated:

> The main lesson you learn from this; that we are all acting out of something and something that is maybe rude for me, for the other person is just how they are from something, how they learned to be and it's not rude, it is acting out of their values. (Student 1).

This showed that the student understood the cultural relativity of behavior. It also shows that the student realized there may be a positive or negative perception to values depending on whose perspective one uses to look at the situation. So, the student is looking at the situation from the other's perspective, the starting point for making isomorphic attributions.

Acceptance of other cultures, a sign of ethnorelativism, was another element that came forward in some of the interviews. One student explains how he appreciates differences more:

> I am more appreciative and understanding of them. At first it's always like oh they are always late, that's like the typical of them. But I don't think of it in this way anymore. I just try to be more understanding of it. I mean of course there's no bad intentions behind it but usually I'm trying to be more understanding and try to get behind this more. It

> made me more reflective about issues like that. That's what helped me. (Student 6)

This example shows that he has become more accepting of cultural differences in no longer seeing the different behavior as 'bad', but accepting it as another equally valid way. Another student commented that learning about her own culture helped her with this:

> It was very interesting to read about my cultures so then in the future when I interact with people from other cultures and I find something in their behavior and maybe I find it weird, maybe I can explain this using my culture so it's weird from my point of view but obviously for them it is something normal. (Student 3)

On the other hand, Student 7 felt that learning about cultural values was not useful and stated that it was more about making a connection with the individual person:

> I don't know if it is really possible to make it that simple for something that's deeper because if you are going to go to another country then well it shows that in general you can have a little bit ideas about the people over there but well every person is different either way so to make a good connection to someone it may help a little bit but in general you still have to find a connection with someone themselves. (Student 7)

The student also stated:

> So, in the end you can really see that a lot of basic things are the same among everyone and everyone in the world has a lot of the same ideas and principles. (Student 7)

This can be considered a minimization worldview. During the phase of minimization, people trivialize cultural differences, believing that their own worldview is experienced by everyone universally and below the surface all cultures are the same (M. J. Bennett, 1986). This is not to say that this student has not developed in their intercultural sensitivity, finding commonalities can be very important in intercultural competence, but the student has not yet moved to the acceptance of cultural differences.

In addition, developing cultural awareness seemed to enhance attitudes that are necessary in the process of intercultural competence development, such as open-mindedness, understanding, and withholding judgment (Deardorff, 2004). One example of a student's reported insight from the course was:

> Be open-minded about other cultures. Something that makes you upset with someone from another culture, could easily be one of the values lenses of that particular culture. Find out what that is, maybe talk about it, acknowledge that there is a difference and focus on common grounds. (Student's response on course evaluation).

Other students commented on how they now felt more understanding of cultural differences:

> I wasn't like a really judgmental person in the first place but I was quicker to just make a decision and evaluation and now I can get more behind it and think more about it, because I was enlightened with all the knowledge and just the mere fact that cultures do differ in some aspects is really helpful to be more understanding of other cultures. (Student 6)

> It's kind of thing for you to understand the world, like some people are really behaving differently than you. And you try to understand why they are behaving differently than you. And that's interesting and for you to open your mind. (Student 5)

Withholding judgment was often mentioned in combination with analyzing situations, which is part of the Cultural Detective method of analyzing incidents and an important skill set of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2004). One student explains how the first step of the Cultural Detective method, identifying words and actions, helped him suspend judgment:

> I think the most valuable thing was to learn how to deal with the differences and because this step or the strategy that they do is collecting the actions without evaluating them and then trying to attribute it to culture and I think this way of thinking helped a lot because it helps to sort of neutralize it and think of actions separately before judging them. I think that was quite helpful for me and it gives a new perspective on how to analyze people culturally. (Student 6)

Other students commented on how the Cultural Detective method of analyzing incidents gave them a new skill set of analyzing and interpreting a situation from multiple perspectives.

> I think the most valuable is that you can use it in every situation. That you can stop and think about how the other person may think, feel or act because of something. That is something we don't really do normally. Or maybe I don't, I don't really stop and say ok, maybe they did this because of, because it is normal in their culture or because… that's I think very valuable, learning how to actually analyze a situation from out of you. (Student 1)

> When we have certain situations, I try to analyze them why something works out or not and I want to try to get to know them and understand them. Because I know there are cultural differences and maybe I don't understand the behavior in the first moment. (Student 2)

A few students also said they could see the different cultures play out in class discussions, like incidents. So, while discussing topics in class, these students were also analyzing the way people interacted with each other. One student also saw it as a tool she could not only use herself but also use to help others understand each other better.

> When I am trying to bridge, like what I am doing in my internship right now, to bridge the Chinese company with the Dutch company, I can maybe use tools like this to explain to them that this is their way of working and this is our way of working and what they need to do. It will be easier for me to guide them to understand each other. (Student 9)

Another skill set some students gained was listening and observing. Student 5 explained how she observes first and waits to see what will happen before acting in an intercultural situation. Student 4 explained that the course made her think more about how to communicate with her assignment partner and how to interpret her partner's communication. In working on the assignments, she tried to listen more and give the other more space. She realized that she needed to check if her partner really agreed with her on a decision they had to make, because she was not sure her partner's communication really meant agreement as it would in her own culture.

So, she did more observing, listening, and rechecking than she would usually do with someone from her own culture.

The enhanced skills and attitudes of intercultural competence translated into taking a different approach to intercultural situations, for some students. Student 6 explains:

> With this new knowledge in mind, with this sort of adapted mindset that's a different way of working, I'm approaching cross-cultural encounters differently now, because it's more analytical now, it's more trying to understand what is going on. I'm not trying to be too quick to make a decision or judgment just because a person is the way they are based on their culture. But just try to understand and try to get the best out of it really. And I think this will help in business also, to figure out what the person, what the cultural background of the person can be used for best in this professional environment.

Another student reflected on how behavior common for her cultural group might be perceived negatively by others, "[own culture's] people, they are, I don't know, they think they are really open but when it comes to it they just bulldozer over everyone" and then reflected on her own behavior in intercultural situations and how she wants to approach these situations:

> I think it is most about my own behavior, like realizing or trying to realize how you come across to other people and how you influence people maybe, also like how you can influence other people with your behavior. Because they will act on that. (Student 4)

And student 8 commented that she started focusing more on how she communicated to those from other cultures, "you are more aware of which words you choose … like 'for me…' or 'I feel comfortable if...' those kind of sentences are helpful." Both these examples demonstrate learning capabilities (Earley & Peterson, 2004), the ability to reflect on one's own behavior and learn from interactions.

Related to taking a different approach to intercultural encounters is also adaptation. A few students identified as bicultural or 'blended culture' and gave very concrete examples of behavioral adaptation. But they had been displaying this behavior before following this course. However, the course did seem to increase most students' awareness of adaptation and many intended to focus more on adapting their behavior in future intercultural situations, in order to be more effective.

> I feel like adapting to people's culture is also a sign of respect or courtesy maybe and by showing up by their rules and following their rules sort of, I can show that. And they appreciate me more, it works better. (Student 6)

> Maybe in the future I can if I meet those people from those specific parts of the world, I can know how to behave accordingly, to adjust to their values, how to interpret their values maybe. (Student 5)

> I live with three Dutch people and I am not direct. Because I avoid conflict so when for example the garden is a mess, I don't say it, I just expect ok they will realize and they will clean it. But my roommates are really like, 'Yo the garden is a mess, clean it up.' And I am not like that at all. So I have to deal with directness and learn how to also speak direct, because I know they expect it. They are not going to think something bothers me if I don't tell them directly. (Student 1)

Student 7 did not find adaptation to be a useful approach for intercultural encounters, as it could jeopardize authenticity.

> Someone from another country understands that you are to them from another country as well so everyone understands that there can be difficulties and if you actively try to overcome those then it will be appreciated by everyone I think and that is why I don't really know whether I liked the ways of really trying to adapt to a certain culture because I believe in practice it would really feel like theatre and not real. (Student 7)

Another interesting finding in this study was that students used some of what they learned in the course to make sense of the intercultural experiences that they had had so far. The course seemed to help students process some of their intercultural experiences, increasing the learning. Students on study abroad talked about experiences interacting with host country nationals. For example, one student talked about how, when working in groups, Dutch people were more task-oriented, while in her own culture people were more relationship-oriented. She said the Cultural Detective value lenses helped her make sense of the differences she had observed in behavior. A couple of the students were bicultural or blended culture and the interviews indicated that they could now better explain differences in behavior that they had experienced, as well as their behavior of code-switching

from one culture to another. One student explained how she had been analyzing her cultural background:

> I grew up in [another country] where there are more than fifty cultures and so you have friends from all over, that's the normal, you have friends from everywhere, because it is very, very multicultural. So, I sometimes, I don't know, I have so many things that are not actually [country where she is from], even if I grew up in a very [country she is from] family, I have a lot of stuff from other cultures. And I analyze that and I am like this is so not [country she is from] but I actually got it from all my environment. (Student 1)

Students also became aware that not everyone views and experiences cultural differences in the same way as they do. Most of the students commented on this in the interviews. One student said:

> I saw others you know they got the concept of the values lenses and consequentially they got the consequences of cultural differences of it more so I think it's just that people deal with the knowledge differently. And yeah, some people seem to have more of an understanding effect and some people didn't I guess, because but I also see that because I try to understand the culture more and that's why I am on this sort of understanding extreme instead of standing behind my culture extreme and yeah that's what I noticed in this course. (Student 6)

So, this student found that some other students were not so accepting of cultural differences. In essence, these students recognized different developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity (M. J. Bennett, 2004) without being aware of the theory. Another student found that other students' approach to cultural differences and values was stereotyping or generalizing too much.

> In some cases, people really generalized or people really had an idea to draw conclusions from some really general ideas about certain groups to really draw conclusions about them how to act upon them in practice to I don't know make decisions on who to hire, or make decisions on how to act towards someone or make I think fast conclusions about how to treat someone. (Student 7)

In this case the student preferred to focus on the individual and was uncomfortable with the class discussions about cultural differences. In conclusion, the students thought about how to navigate the topic of culture and realized people can have a different understanding and perspective on cultural differences.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to qualitatively assess which elements of students' intercultural competence, particularly attitudes, awareness, knowledge, skills, and behaviors, were enhanced by incorporating the Cultural Detective into a cross-cultural management course. In addition, it quantitatively investigated the extent to which incorporating the tool into the course developed students' motivational, cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral cultural intelligence. The study also intended to compare the qualitative and quantitative results. The qualitative results showed growth in students' attitudes, including increased open-mindedness, curiosity, and respect toward other cultures, alongside improvements in their culture-specific knowledge, cultural (self-)awareness, and ethnorelativism. They developed their skills in analysing and interpreting, listening and observing, withholding judgment, shifting frame of reference, and learning capabilities. In addition, some students showed behavioral adaptation. However, not every student developed all these elements of intercultural competence, different students developed different aspects of intercultural competence. The quantitative results showed that students from the treatment and comparison group developed their cognitive and metacognitive CQ, but not their motivational and behavioral CQ. Table 2.5 gives an overview of the results compared to the expectations based on the literature.

The quantitative results did not show an improvement in motivational cultural intelligence, while the qualitative results showed that students enhanced intercultural competence attitudes, namely open-mindedness, non-judgmentalness, and curiosity or interest in other cultures. It is possible that the qualitative and quantitative results measured different components of intercultural competence. Motivational CQ items focus more on enjoyment and confidence, while the qualitative interviews showed increased open-mindedness and curiosity. Also, students already rated their motivational CQ very high before the course, at 5.7 out of 7, pointing to a ceiling effect. This is possibly due to the fact that they are International Business students and chose to do an elective in cross-cultural management and so already have a high motivation and interest in other cultures.

In addition, the qualitative results showed that students learned culture-specific knowledge about values and behaviors of other cultures. The quantitative results support this, showing an increase in cognitive cultural intelligence. This is similar to previous studies (Eisenberg et al., 2013; MacNab, 2012) on cross-cultural management courses. However, the comparison group also increased their cognitive CQ. It is possible that this is because the course the comparison group followed, International Business, provided theoretical knowledge about cultures. Further, the qualitative results indicate students increased their cultural awareness, both cultural self-awareness and awareness of other cultures. These are both explicit aims of the Cultural Detective and it seems that this succeeded. Students progressed in the development of ethnorelativism as expected.

According to the qualitative results, students enhanced intercultural skills that are useful in intercultural situations. Students became better at listening and observing, as well as analyzing situations. In analyzing situations, they were less quick to make a judgment or interpretation informed by their own cultural frame of reference. This is the aim of the Cultural Detective worksheets where participants are meant to identify the words and actions in the incidents and separate these from the interpretations of these behaviors. In addition, the students made more isomorphic attributions and became more understanding of different perspectives and ways of doing. Again, the Cultural Detective worksheet is a tool to train students to understand the behaviors from the cultural perspective of each participant in the incidents. The quantitative results supported these findings, showing that metacognitive cultural intelligence of the students increased. This is in line with most previous studies on cross-cultural management courses with an experiential approach (Eisenberg et al., 2013; MacNab, 2012). However, the students from the comparison group also increased their metacognitive CQ. This may be due to the use of case studies as a teaching method in the International Business course, which might encourage being conscious of, checking, and adjusting cultural knowledge in intercultural situations.

The qualitative interviews illustrated how students approached intercultural situations differently, using new skills, and sometimes also adapting their own behavior. Students were able to apply what they learned to real-life situations and the course helped them make sense of some of their intercultural experiences in- or outside the classroom. However, an increase was not seen in the quantitative measurement of behavioral CQ. An explanation could be that the items focus mostly on adjusting verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors, such as rate of speaking. This is quite different to the behavioral changes that the qualitative data identified.

Table 2.5 Intercultural Competence Elements Enhanced by Cultural Detective

Literature	Expected development	Results
Attitudes		**Qualitative**
Open-mindedness	Yes	Yes
Curiosity cultures	Yes	Yes
Respecting cultures	Yes	Yes
Tolerance for ambiguity	No	No
Emotional stability	No	No
Self-efficacy	No	No
Cognition		**Qualitative**
Ethnorelativism	Yes	Yes
Cultural self-awareness	Yes	Yes
Cultural awareness	Yes	Yes
Culture-specific knowledge	Yes	Yes
Skills		**Qualitative**
Analyzing & interpreting	Yes	Yes
Listening & observing	Yes	Yes
Withholding judgment	Yes	Yes
Shifting frame of reference	Yes	Yes
Learning capabilities	No	Yes
Behavior		**Qualitative**
Adaptation	Possibly	Yes
Relationship-building	No	No
Cultural Intelligence		**Quantitative**
Motivational	Possibly	No
Cognitive	Yes	Yes
Metacognitive	Yes	Yes
Behavior	Possibly	No

In conclusion, it can be stated that the incorporation of Cultural Detective in the cross-cultural management course enhanced the intercultural competence of the students, mostly in terms of attitudes, awareness, knowledge, and skills and somewhat in behavior. However, not all students learned and developed all the mentioned components of intercultural competence. The qualitative results suggest that students learned and developed different components of intercultural competence, depending on their developmental stage, background, and prior intercultural experiences. It may also be the case that some students engaged more with the Cultural Detective tool than others. The interviewed students did

all show progress in their development towards ethnorelativism, whether it was moving to a minimization stage or showing more acceptance or even adaptation. This means that the Cultural Detective method is a flexible tool that can be used with a variety of people and levels. This study contributes to the literature by showing that incorporating the Cultural Detective in an academic cross-cultural management course enhances students' intercultural competence, which has not been evidenced previously. However, how people learn from this method and what facilitates the learning, needs to be researched further.

There are several possible reasons for the differences in the quantitative and qualitative results. First of all, as shown earlier in the discussion the two methods do not always seem to have measured the same elements of intercultural competence. Second, developing intercultural competence involves "deep, complex transformational" learning that cannot be captured fully by survey responses (Wisniewski Dietrich & Olson, 2010, p. 149). Moreover, because students developed different components of intercultural competence, measuring learning quantitatively at the group level may not fully capture these individual differences. Another issue with self-report pre- and post-test scores of intercultural competence is unconscious incompetence. Bhawuk (2009) explains that novel intercultural learners often 'do not know what they don't know.' For example, one of the interviewed students said he expected his post-test scores to be lower than his pre-test scores, because he now realized how much he did not know before. This has been found in other studies, for example Caligiuri and Di Santo's (2001) sample of MBA students rated their abilities higher before their international assignment than after.

Another interesting finding is that the treatment and comparison group both developed their cognitive and metacognitive CQ. As mentioned earlier, this may be due to the content of both courses. Simply teaching theoretical knowledge about culture may be enough to enhance cognitive CQ, although this contradicts earlier research (Sizoo et al., 2007). Analysing business cases, as was done in the International Business course, might be another way to develop metacognitive CQ, similar to analysing intercultural incidents. But, it is also possible that the self-report nature of the quantitative assessment influenced the results. Following a course or Master degree with an international focus can give students the idea that they must be improving on their intercultural knowledge and metacognition. In sum, this study contributes to the literature by showing that multiple methods of measuring intercultural competence development better capture the effects of a training method than using a single method and that a single method can give inconclusive results.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further research

There are several limitations to this study. Even though data were collected during two periods that the cross-cultural management course with Cultural Detective was given, the sample size remains small. This is a consequence of studying a training tool in a real-life setting with small classes which have the advantage of increasing intercultural contact (Dunne, 2009) and a higher quality of learning than larger classes (Maringe & Sing, 2014). As per research ethics standards, the students participated in the study on a voluntary basis. This may have led to a self-selection bias. The students who volunteered to fill out both surveys, as well as the students that volunteered to be interviewed may have been more motivated or successful in the course than other students. The response rate for the treatment group was higher than for the comparison group. One of the reasons for a lower response rate in cohort 1 could have been that the post-test was administered online rather than in class. Another reason may be that the treatment group had a relationship with the researcher after spending 6 weeks in a course together. As the cross-cultural management course was an elective, a selection bias may have occurred with students more interested in cross-cultural issues choosing this course. However, the comparison group and treatment group showed no significant differences in pre-test scores of CQ, self-efficacy, international experience, or demographic variables.

Another limitation is that in both the surveys and the interviews a self-report bias may have occurred. However, in the interviews the students were probed to give concrete examples of their learning for this reason. This way more evidence was gathered for the learning, rather than merely having students state that they increased a particular aspect of intercultural competence. In addition, the interview questions left it open for students to come with their own accounts of their learning, rather than prompting for certain aspects as is the case in quantitative survey questions. It is likely that self-report methods are better at assessing internal outcomes of intercultural competence such as awareness, but for the external outcomes such as behavior other methods are more suitable. Another possible bias is that the researcher was also the teacher of the Cultural Detective method so students may have answered favorably. This bias was avoided as much as possible by asking for concrete examples of learning and by the researcher not being the teacher that issued grades for this course. This still may have left a bias in analysis and interpretation of the data, although the researcher was aware of this possible bias and attempted to minimize it.

As mentioned earlier, the students in this study may have had a higher motivation and interest in other cultures as they chose to study International Business

Administration for their Master's degree and chose the cross-cultural management course as an elective. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to students that have less interest in this topic. In addition, all students were Master's level students at an academic university and results may differ for students of other levels and types of educational institutions. Besides, the sample contained domestic and international students and the sample size was too small to determine if there was a difference in their learning and experiences.

Future research could assess intercultural competence development through different methods, for example, using assignments, incident analyses, situational judgment tests, or peer assessment. Another suggestion for future studies is to employ a longitudinal design with multiple waves of measurements whereby the impact of a course is also measured after the Master's degree is completed and students enter the workforce. In addition, it would be interesting to see how students apply what was learned in the workplace as this would further validate the relevance of these courses. As the results of this study show that individuals developed different aspects of intercultural competence and some seemed more susceptible to learning than others, it would be valuable to investigate what the influence of individual differences is on the development of intercultural competence. This study and previous literature seem to point to learners in different developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity having different learning needs. Differences in personality or the quality rather than quantity of previous international experiences may be of influence as well. Besides, internationalization at home may affect domestic students differently than international students, a study comparing these two groups could give more insights into ways to make the experience equally beneficial. Moreover, researching how training and education can be better tailored to individual levels of intercultural competence development can improve the effectiveness of these interventions, especially when a teacher or trainer has to cater to a group of students at different levels.

Practical Implications

The results of this study suggest that universities and possibly other higher education institutions can use cross-cultural management courses as a way to develop the intercultural competence of their students. It is important to include an intercultural training component to the course that focuses on fostering positive intercultural attitudes such as curiosity, developing cultural self-awareness and cultural awareness, as well as skills to be more effective in intercultural interactions. Using critical incidents as a pedagogical tool can be an effective method to enhance skills such as observing, withholding judgment, analyzing and interpreting a situation

from multiple perspectives, and shifting frame of reference. While regular university courses usually assume a certain level of competence in the area of study at the start, this may not be the case when it comes to intercultural competence development. It is more likely that students will be at different stages of intercultural competence development and educational interventions need to be designed to accommodate these differences. When examining whether courses or other educational interventions are developing students' intercultural competence the evaluation should include both qualitative and quantitative assessments when possible.

To conclude, universities have the potential to facilitate students in their intercultural competence development by incorporating educational interventions that support intercultural learning into their courses, contributing to internationalisation at home. However, institutions will need to make space and time in their curricula to focus on these skills, and educate their teachers to confidently and effectively deliver these educational interventions. In this way, they will contribute to the transferable skills and competencies that university graduates will need in an increasingly globalized and complex workplace.

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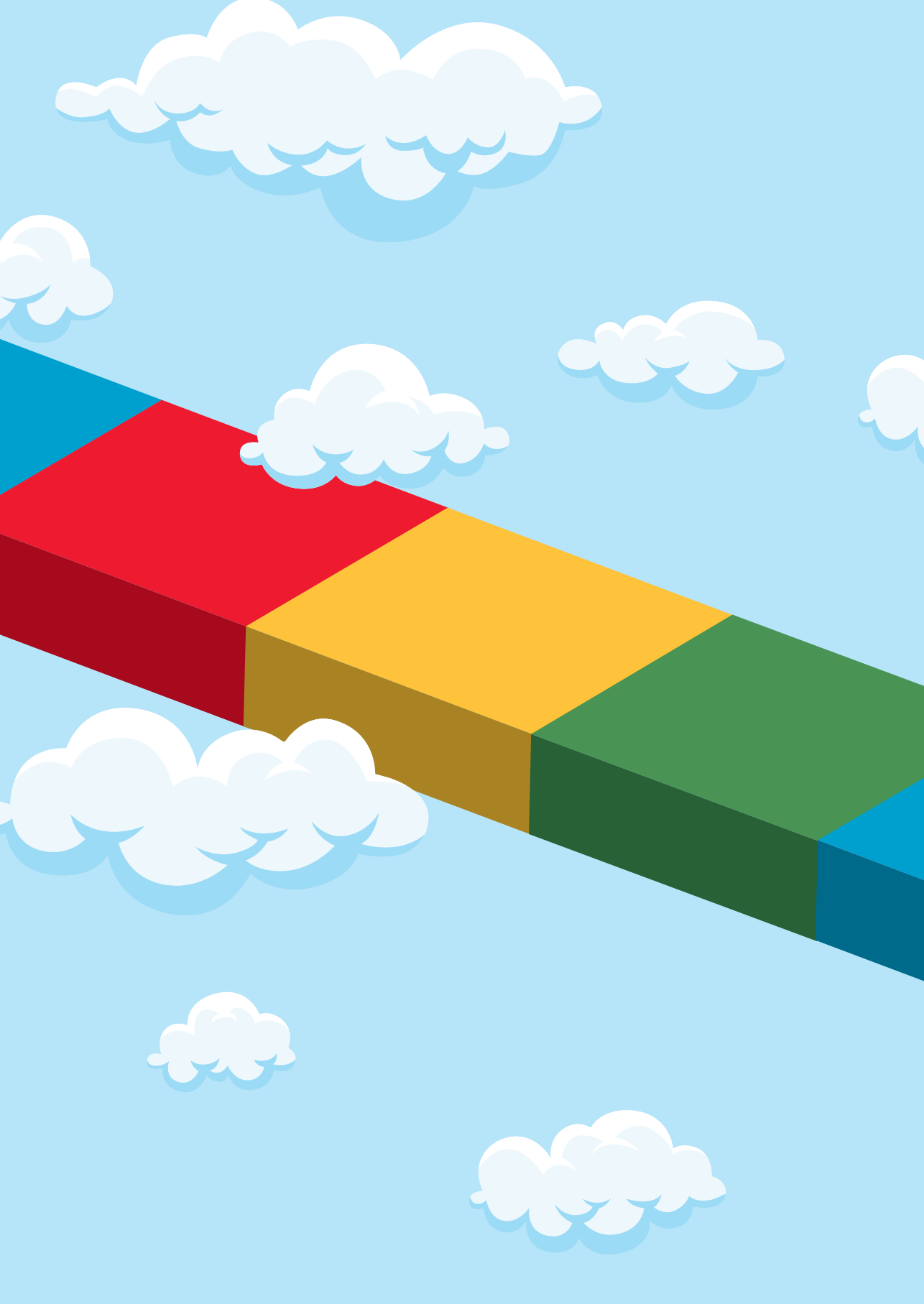

Chapter 3

Intercultural Learning in the Classroom: Facilitators and Challenges of the Learning Process

(This study has been published as Vromans, P., Korzilius, H., Bücker, J., & de Jong, E. (2023). Intercultural learning in the classroom: Facilitators and challenges of the learning process. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *97*(1):101907)

Due to globalization, increasingly more employees need to be effective in intercultural contexts. Nevertheless, the current pool of professionals with intercultural competence falls significantly short of the demand within organizations (Caligiuri, 2012). In order to develop intercultural competence, companies send employees on international assignments (Caligiuri, 2012), and educational institutions encourage students to participate in study abroad programs (Vande Berg et al., 2012). However, these opportunities are limited to those privileged enough to enjoy such opportunities (Jones, 2013). Besides, the impact of study abroad programs on students' intercultural competence shows inconsistent results (Mu et al., 2022; Paras et al., 2019; Vande Berg et al., 2012). To address this gap, integrating intercultural training into university courses, a form of internationalization at home, could offer a viable approach to enhancing the intercultural competence of a larger number of students. But, teachers are rarely equipped to provide intercultural learning within standard curricula (Beelen & Jones, 2018; Otten, 2003) and internationalization is frequently overlooked in curriculum design (Beelen & Jones, 2018).

The body of literature concerning intercultural competence has predominantly centered around two main areas: formulating the conceptual framework of intercultural competence and assessing the efficacy of specific training or instructional approaches. To cultivate more effective training and education in this domain, it becomes imperative to gain a deeper insight into *how* intercultural competence develops (Perry & Southwell, 2011) with a specific focus on understanding the process of intercultural learning itself (Deardorff, 2015; Mitchell & Paras, 2018; Taylor, 1994). Intercultural learning is "the acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the ability of learners to both understand culture and interact with people from cultures different than their own" (Lane, 2012, p. 97). However, the current body of literature about how and why intercultural learning takes place remains predominantly theoretical or anecdotal in nature, lacking a solid foundation in empirical research.

The purpose of this study was to conduct empirical research into what facilitates intercultural learning for students in a classroom setting. An intercultural training tool, Cultural Detective, was incorporated into a Cross-Cultural Management course at a Dutch research university. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews, the study explored students' perspectives on their learning experience and process, and the factors that contributed to their learning. This research contributes to the existing body of literature by formulating a comprehensive model of the intercultural learning process. Moreover, it identified factors that facilitate learning as well as those that hinder it. This newfound understanding has the potential to further inform the design of educational and training approaches aimed at fostering intercultural competence.

Literature Review

Intercultural competence is defined as "behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 254). Several models of intercultural competence provide some insight into how intercultural competence is developed, although they have their limitations. Certain theories posit that the development of intercultural competence occurs in stages. For instance, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1986) encompasses six stages of increasingly sophisticated experiences of cultural differences. These stages progress from ethnocentric stages of denial, defense, and minimization, and advance to the ethnorelative stages of acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Similarly, the intercultural learning spiral (Allan, 2003) outlines four stages: awareness, understanding, acceptance and respect, and appreciation and valuing. While these models offer valuable insights, they fall short in explaining the actual learning process that drives the transitions between these stages (Taylor, 1994). In contrast, Deardorff's (2006) model presents intercultural competence development as an ongoing process of improvement, commencing with internal changes within the individual constituting attitudes, knowledge, comprehension, and skills. This leads to a shift in frame of reference, ultimately resulting in more effective and culturally appropriate communication and behavior. Although this model provides a deeper understanding of how intercultural competence evolves, it does not explicitly elucidate the factors that facilitate the process of intercultural learning.

Several studies have shown that incorporating pedagogies aimed at intercultural learning into cross-cultural management courses can increase the intercultural competence of students (Eisenberg et al., 2013; MacNab, 2012; Sizoo et al., 2007), but regressions in intercultural competence have also been found (Fischer, 2011). Similarly, classroom studies from other disciplines have shown mixed results (Krebs, 2020; Van Melle & Ferreira, 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2019). Pedagogical interventions include cultural self-awareness exercises (Eisenberg et al., 2013), group work (Daly et al., 2015; Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2007; Ippolito, 2007; McGrath-Champ et al., 2012; Popov et al., 2012), in-class discussions (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2007), cultural experiences (MacNab, 2012) or a series of experiential learning activities (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Mak et al., 2008). In some cases, the interventions also included instruction on culture theory concepts and/or reflection exercises. These classroom studies give insight into the effectiveness of different interventions, but an understanding of why interventions work or do not work (Van Melle & Ferreira, 2023) and what the intercultural learning process entails is needed (Deardorff, 2015).

Learning through intercultural experiences, referred to as experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), plays a significant role in facilitating intercultural learning (MacNab, 2012). Experiential learning is more effective than merely cognitive or information-based approaches (Kolb, 1984). However, within a classroom setting, intercultural experiences may be less available, so educators sometimes include experiential learning activities, such as simulations, incidents, and role plays (MacNab, 2012). Additionally, they may facilitate real-life intercultural experiences in the form of intercultural contact and interaction through group work and class discussions, providing students with opportunities to observe others' behavior and obtain more information (Osland & Bird, 2000; Wilson et al., 2013).

For effective learning to occur, most adult learning theories suggest that a certain level of dissonance should exist between previous and new experiences or knowledge (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013). Dissonance arises "when the learner's existing knowledge is challenged and found to be incomplete" (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013, p.1566). This is what happens during an intercultural experience, where a person's perceptions, assumptions, and worldview are challenged, creating disconfirmed expectations (Bhawuk, 2009). According to transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), a person needs to experience dissonance or what is referred to as a 'disorienting dilemma' in order to construct a new meaning structure and expand their perspective and worldview (Rosenblatt et al., 2013; Taylor, 1994). When dissonance is experienced in an intercultural interaction, it can evoke stress or anxiety which in turn motivates a person to engage in learning (Gudykunst, 1998; Kim, 2000) and increase their participation in social interactions (Rosenblatt et al., 2013). This dissonance also creates uncertainty, prompting individuals to question the accuracy of assumptions regarding the other's behavior (Gudykunst, 1998). Consequently, as individuals grapple with dissonance, they are inclined to delve into deeper cognitive analysis, seek additional information, and reconfigure their cognitive structures. This process can even lead to adjustments in behavior (Rosenblatt et al., 2013). Mitchell and Paras (2018) argue that the psychological process of resolving cognitive dissonance can lead to a change in values, attitudes, and behaviors. All these changes constitute intercultural learning.

This notion finds support in Allan's (2003) study, wherein students sharing a national culture similar to the prevailing school culture failed to progress significantly in their development of intercultural competence due to insufficient experience of cultural dissonance. Conversely, those who encountered substantial cultural dissonance displayed notable advancement in their intercultural learning. Dissonance has also been found to drive transformative learning in international service learning (Kiely, 2005), study abroad (Mitchell & Paras, 2018), and expatriate assignments (Maertz et

al., 2009). Therefore, it appears that intercultural educators should ensure they provide students with enough dissonance to stimulate learning.

However, this dissonance can also impede the process of intercultural learning. In the study conducted by Allan (2003), students who experienced too much cultural dissonance stagnated in their learning. They formed attribution errors and misinterpretations. Excessive uncertainty and anxiety arising from dissonance can hinder people from accurately interpreting messages and predicting behavior (Gudykunst, 1998). Furthermore, dissonance has the potential to trigger resistance towards learning, primarily due to the discomfort and tensions it can evoke. People often prefer the certainty and order of their existing frames of reference, and a paradox can 'paralyze learning' (Lewis & Dehler, 2000). The stress from experiencing dissonance can cause a person to withdraw from the learning process (Kim, 2000).

Therefore, to facilitate intercultural learning, intercultural education should provide enough dissonance as well as support to the student. Dissonance can be in the form of new knowledge and experiences, while the learner is supported by the scaffolding of the language (Bernstein, 2000) and structure, to make sense of the novel knowledge and experiences (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013). In addition, intercultural learning can be supported by intentional reflection (Vande Berg et al., 2012). According to the experiential (Kolb, 1984) and the transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), critical reflection results in the formation of abstract conceptualizations. Furthermore, providing students with culture theory concepts, such as individualism-collectivism, help learners make sense of experiences and understand why a particular behavior is reinforced differently in another culture (Bhawuk, 1998). Finally, the learner should engage in practical application to experiment with the newfound knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Intercultural contact provides opportunities to practice intercultural skills and facilitates sociocultural learning (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017; Ward & Searle, 1991) and intercultural competence development (Schwarzenthal et al., 2017). However, it is essential that the contact is experienced positively (Meleady et al., 2021). To summarize, the educator should provide opportunities for intercultural experiences, reflection, abstract conceptualizations, and experimentation to facilitate students' intercultural learning.

Moreover, to facilitate students' intercultural learning it is beneficial to tailor the level of challenge and support offered by the training in accordance with the learner's current stage of intercultural sensitivity development (Bennett, 2008). At each stage of intercultural sensitivity, the learner has a different dilemma that needs to be resolved. These dilemmas can be related to dissonance, as

new knowledge or experience contradicts the existing worldview, creating a dilemma. If the dilemma can be resolved, the learner will move to the next stage of intercultural sensitivity and this can be facilitated through appropriate support and challenge (Bennett, 2008). For instance, denial stage learners are not aware of cultural differences or having a culture, and feel that culture is not relevant. The learning activities for these learners should stimulate them to be curious of other cultures, recognize cultural differences and the importance of culture (Bennett, 2008). Defense stage learners are becoming aware of cultural differences, but are uncomfortable with them. Therefore, the intercultural training activities for these learners should emphasize similarities. In contrast, minimization stage learners trivialize differences and may resist the idea that differences are a positive phenomenon. They benefit from cultural self-awareness exercises and learning from cultural informants (Bennett, 2008). In turn, acceptance stage learners are at ease with cultural differences, but the dilemma for them is how to accept others' values without dishonoring their own values. For this group of learners, Bennett (2008) recommends role-plays, simulations and cases that allow complex analysis. The dilemma for adaptation learners is feeling like they have to renounce who they are to adopt the new behaviors. For them, activities should focus on practicing new behaviors and showing that new behaviors are an addition and not a replacement of their own behaviors (Bennett, 2008).

Based on anecdotal evidence of students' reactions to teaching culture, Nahavandi (2016) identifies several shortcomings in how culture is commonly taught: superficial knowledge and skills, comparisons between cultures that encourage status differences, students having difficulties applying knowledge, or culture being seen as 'something of others.' She suggests introducing the threshold concept of culture as meta-context, which is the understanding that culture is "ever-present" and "just 'is' " before focusing on cultural self-awareness and subsequently, cultural knowledge, skills and competencies.

While previous literature has applied learning theories to intercultural contexts, it remains mostly theoretical. Bennett (2008) and Nahavandi (2016) work is very insightful, but is mostly based on their theoretical, experiential and expert knowledge. There exists a significant need for more empirical research that delves into the intercultural learning process and the factors facilitating intercultural learning, especially from the perspectives of the participants involved.

Teaching Approach

Students followed a six-week Cross-Cultural Management course consisting of weekly 2.5-hour classes. Students received 1.5–2 h of lecturing on theories and concepts in cross-cultural management by an Assistant Professor, supported by readings of academic articles. The aim of this component was to enhance theoretical knowledge and understanding. This was followed by 30–60 min of intercultural training by the first author, using the Cultural Detective tool and method. This component was added to develop the intercultural skills of the students. Cultural Detective Online was employed as a blended learning tool allowing participants to engage both independently through the online platform and in class during facilitated face-to-face sessions. The tool uses interactional analysis of critical incidents, cultural value lenses, and self-discovery exercises to increase understanding of oneself as a cultural being, understand others' intentions, behavior and values, as well as the ability to leverage similarities and differences for interpersonal and organizational effectiveness (Nipporica Associates, 2023). In doing so, the tool aims to enhance participants' intercultural competence.

Cultural Detective includes packages with culture-specific information about different national cultures, gender, generations, religions, and deaf culture. The value lenses describe the cultural values of each cultural group from an emic perspective. For example, the Dutch value lens includes consensus, directness, pragmatism, egalitarianism, and individualism (Nipporica Associates, 2023). Moreover, each package contains several real-life incidents of intercultural interactions, which can be analyzed through structured worksheets referred to as the Cultural Detective method. This method asks users to identify words and actions of the characters in the critical incidents, without immediately interpreting these words and actions. The behaviors of each character are then analyzed from the character's perspective using the value lenses that may be relevant to this person. Therefore, the method encourages users to suspend judgment, and interpret the incident from multiple cultural perspectives. Users are then prompted to devise bridges or solutions for the characters to resolve the incident. Cultural incidents may be the best way for people to understand how others perceive situations and help participants understand cultural differences in a realistic way (Fowler & Blohm, 2004).

The trainer facilitated incident analyses, activities, and discussions in class, in small groups or as a whole group. Individually, students did incident analyses and exercises at home. In diverse teams they prepared a presentation of an incident analysis. One class session was specifically focused on cultural self-awareness,

supported by exercises from the self-discovery package of the Cultural Detective to explore and reflect on one's own values, their origin and influence on behaviors. Another session focused on challenges and strategies of working in multicultural groups using the Global Teamwork package. Different aspects of cultural identity (e.g., gender, religion, sexual orientation) were discussed in another session. In the second offering of the course, cultural informants were invited to speak about religion, gender and sexual orientation.

The course provided students with opportunities for intercultural 'experiences' through the incidents, intercultural knowledge through the value lenses, and intercultural contact through teamwork and the classroom activities. Due to the wealth of cultures and incidents in the tool, it was expected that there would be new knowledge and experiences, in other words dissonance, for the students. The worksheets in the tool as well as the self-discovery and group work exercises were expected to provide opportunities for reflection. Debriefing in class also encouraged reflection. The worksheets were expected to support the learner by giving them a framework to analyze the incidents, while the value lenses could help students with forming abstract conceptualizations. The incidents and worksheets could serve as a safe and structured way to experiment, which can then be applied to real-life situations.

Method

Due to the exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative and inductive approach was used. In addition, qualitative research allows studying participants' perspectives (Patton, 2002).

Research Setting and Sample

The study took place at a Dutch research university in a Cross-Cultural Management course for Master students of Business Administration held in November-December 2015 and again in April-May 2017. Nine of the 43 students volunteered and consented to participate (Students 1–7 from the first course, Students 8 & 9 from the second course). Attention was paid to having a variety of nationalities in the sample to capture multiple perspectives and one participant was explicitly invited to participate due to his/her divergent opinions. The participants were between 24 and 26 years old; two participants were male and seven were female. Three students were Dutch, two were Chinese, one was Bulgarian, one was German and two self-identified as bicultural due to growing up in another national culture than their parents' national culture or having parents from two different cultures.

Cultural Detective Tool and Trainer

The Cultural Detective tool (Nipporica Associates, 2023) was designed in 2004 by Dianne Hofner Saphiere based on her experience working across cultures. An online version was created in 2013. The content of the tool was authored by 130 intercultural experts. Access to the tool was purchased ($35) by the students instead of a textbook. Access included all the culture packages, value lenses, and incidents. Students could make incident analyses online with the worksheet and complete the self-discovery exercises to create their own value lens.

The university instructor that facilitated the intercultural training component of the course has an educational background in Human Resource Management and Culture and Management. She is also an intercultural trainer, who has followed facilitation courses at the Intercultural Communication Institute, and workshops of the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research. The training instructor and the Assistant Professor of the course both have ample international experience and were able to share personal experiences and examples from living and working across cultures with the students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were held, as this allowed for comparisons across answers but flexibility to explore topics and probe further (Patton, 2002). A few interview questions (see appendix) inquired about the learning experience by asking for opinions about the Cultural Detective tool, the group work and which activities the students enjoyed. Other questions tried to capture the learning process by asking about valuable learning moments, challenges, insights, changes in awareness or outlook, and application of what was learned. These questions also gave insight into the factors that contributed to learning. Questions were also asked about which learning activities contributed to learning or created challenges. Students were probed to explain their answers and to give specific examples of their learning to prevent socially desirable answers. The questions were phrased in an open-ended format to avoid 'leading' questions. To encourage students to share their true opinions and experiences, it was explained to students that their answers were confidential and the questions were meant to evaluate the teaching tool and help the researchers understand students' perspectives, thoughts, and learning experiences. The 30- to 60-minute interviews were held in English at the university in the two weeks after the course and recorded with the consent of the participant. Notes were kept by the first author during the course to be able to contextualize the answers of students.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the data with NVivo (Version 12). After reading through the transcripts, initial coding was done inductively. Through close reading of the text, asking questions, and making comparisons between data (Boeije, 2014), mostly 'in vivo' codes, derived from the participants' words, and researcher denoted codes, determined by the researchers to best describe the data, were assigned to the data (Baralt, 2012). Next, the codes were categorized into themes and sub-themes. Another review of the data was done to check if the themes fit the data and if any codes/themes were missing. In defining and refining the themes, 'in vivo' and researcher denoted codes were sometimes replaced by theoretical codes, concepts from theory. Memos were written throughout the analysis to identify patterns, make connections, and record insights. The analysis resulted in six key themes that describe the learning experience and the factors that facilitate learning or create challenges to learning (dilemmas). Quotes from the data are given to support the findings. Quotes are mostly verbatim, but some minor edits have been made to the grammar to improve readability.

Findings

The six themes identified were 1) teaching methods, 2) the facilitation of intercultural contact, 3) experiences outside the classroom, 4) motivational factors, 5) adaptation dilemma and 6) stereotyping dilemma. The theme 'teaching methods' refers to the components of the pedagogical intervention and how these were learning experiences for students and facilitated their intercultural learning. The theme 'facilitation of intercultural contact' describes different ways that intercultural contact was facilitated and how this stimulated intercultural learning. The theme 'experiences outside the classroom' illustrates the interplay between what was learned in the course and intercultural experiences students had outside the classroom and the impact on learning. Motivational factors are forms of motivation that positively influenced students' learning. The adaptation and stereotyping dilemmas were challenges for learners that students responded to in different ways. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the findings of the thematic analysis.

Facilitating Factors

Teaching Methods

The teaching methods provided learning experiences for the students. The Cultural Detective (CD) learning tool, and the class assignments and activities facilitated intercultural learning in several ways. Students found the value lenses to be a

Table 3.1 Overview of Facilitating Factors and Learning Dilemmas Resulting from Thematic Analysis

Facilitating factors		**How intercultural learning is facilitated**
Themes	**Sub-themes**	
Teaching methods	Cultural Detective learning tool	value lenses visualize and concretize abstract values
		new information & knowledge about cultures
		self-discovery exercise to understand & reflect on own values
		providing a method/framework to analyse incidents
	Assignment incident	application of learning, experimentation
	In-class discussions & small group activities	exposure to diversity of opinions and perspectives
		sharing of cultures & experiences
		exposure to different ideas & solutions for learning activities
Facilitating intercultural contact	Teamwork	learning about cultures
		recognizing cultural behaviors/values
		experimenting with interculturally appropriate behavior
		positive experiences and commonalities
	Multicultural classroom	exposure to cultural diversity of opinions, perspectives
		observation of cultural behavior in classroom
		affirmation of cultural knowledge by students
	Cultural informants	new knowledge, more explanation
		affirmation of cultural knowledge
Experiences outside the classroom	Previous experiences	recognizing abstract conceptualizations in own experiences
		reflection on intercultural experiences
	Current experiences	application of learning, experimentation
Motivational factors	Intrinsic motivation	motivated by interest in other cultures
	Extrinsic motivation	motivated by grades
	Meaningfulness	relevance for future career and daily life
	Safety and connection	feeling comfortable
Learning dilemmas		**How intercultural learning is challenged**
Themes	**Sub-themes**	
Adaptation	Affective/cognitive	dilemma about inauthenticity of adaptation
	Behavior	difficulty of adapting behavior
	Bridges in incidents	difficulty of finding interculturally appropriate solutions
Stereotypes & generalizations		fear of stereotyping or uncomfortable with generalizations
		dilemma about when generalizations can be applied to individuals

way to visualize values and make the abstract concept of culture more tangible. The majority of the students appreciated that the focus was not only on national cultures, but also on other social groups such as religious groups and gender, increasing their awareness of the influence of multiple parts of their cultural identity on their value systems.

This appears from the following quote:

> It also made you aware of the fact that you do not have only one [value] lens, but that you can have a combination of your religion and your gender. (Student 8)

According to the students, the CD provided information and intercultural knowledge, "the information from all the lenses was really thorough" (Student 8). Some students found the CD method of analyzing incidents provided a framework.

> This step or the strategy … helped a lot, because it helps to neutralize it, and think of actions separately, before judging them. I think that was quite helpful for me and it gives a new perspective on how to analyze people culturally. (Student 6)

Students, in general, found the incident analysis presentations contributed to learning and were a way to apply their acquired knowledge, "you also have to do it [the incident analysis]. We used the value lenses … I think that it was much better to do these presentations when we actually have the Cultural Detective" (Student 3). It allowed experimentation with and recognition of the theoretical concepts, "seeking out the values in the video. Oh, that's actually individualism … normally I wouldn't really stop and think: 'oh, that sentence may represent individualism'" (Student 1).

However, Student 7 found that the presentations focused too much on cultural habits, which he did not find interesting. Students were allowed to find their own incidents, but these were sometimes superficial. During the second offering of the course, students were asked to use the more layered incidents from the Cultural Detective tool, to allow for deeper analysis.

The cultural self-awareness exercises were highlighted by some students as increasing their awareness and encouraging reflection. They contributed to the students' learning process by facilitating a clearer understanding of their own values. Student 3 explained, "it is very abstract to see what someone's values are …

if you do this exercise just like this, without the Cultural Detective, it wouldn't result in such a varied outcome."

The class discussions, and small group activities contributed to learning by exposing students to more diversity of ideas, solutions, and perspectives during incident analyses. Student 1 explained:

> Everyone is like, 'that shows this, and that shows that.' That is actually when you think about it and you learn … I saw people saw things that I didn't see, and I saw things that maybe other people didn't see.

In addition, the discussions allowed students to share their cultural backgrounds and experiences. Student 8 said, "everybody was free to add something to the discussion like 'in my country…', 'in my opinion…', '[in my culture] we have this and this', I think this was really interesting." Students found that the way others reacted to topics and discussions also taught them about other perspectives and experiences. Student 7 said, "maybe even more interesting than the assignments themselves, were the reactions of the people in the class and the way the class handled them."

From this we conclude that the teaching methods can be used to provide both dissonance and support to students.

Facilitating Intercultural Contact

Intercultural contact provided dissonance and learning experiences. Intercultural contact was facilitated through teamwork, the diversity in the classroom, and cultural informants.

Teamwork. In order for students to have more intercultural contact, they collaborated with a partner or team on their presentations. Some students gained insights about the other's culture, or about their own culture from the other's perspective. In addition, some students put into practice their classroom learning, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of their collaborative teamwork, "reading about the culture, learning about the other culture, that was often the solution in the Cultural Detective, that's what we did, we discussed the Dutch culture and the [other student's] culture" and this was instrumental in "how we build relationships" (Student 3). Furthermore, it was an opportunity to experiment with interculturally appropriate behavior, as illustrated by this quote:

> I tried not to walk all over her and tried to be more cautious and give her more space. I really tried that, because in class it was emphasized that the Dutch are, I don't know, they think they are really open but when it comes to it, they kind of waltz over everyone. (Student 4)

Other students did not feel that they consciously applied what they were learning in the course in their group work, but some did recognize cultural differences within the team. So, they were applying the abstract concepts from the course to real-life situations. For example, Student 9 noticed the communication differences between her and her team members:

> When they talk, when they discuss questions, they like to talk about their ideas directly. But for me, I like to do my own thinking, like keep silence for a long time, and after my thoughts are ready, ready to make a perfect argument, then I will start to talk.

The majority of students felt their group work went smoothly and it was easy to work together, even though some had negative experiences with teams in the past. Positive experiences in this course were often attributed to the discovery of commonalities, for example, "because we are [both] blended cultures," referring to both having a bicultural identity (Student 1).

Multicultural Classroom. A multicultural classroom was another form of intercultural contact from which students learned in several ways. Firstly, some students recognized the enhanced diversity of opinions and perspectives in discussions due to the diversity of the group. To illustrate, Student 5 shared that in the context of a small group discussion on LGBTQ+ issues, a team member expressed surprise at learning that gay marriage was not legal in Student 5's culture.

Secondly, a few students even mentioned that they could observe the various cultural behaviors they had learned about in theory manifesting in real-life situations within the classroom, "because we had discussions and different opinions and we didn't come to the same point. You saw the different cultures, like a situation or a critical incident" (Student 2).

Thirdly, the multicultural classroom provided students with the opportunity to gain insights from their peers about their respective cultures. This experience often validated what they had learned in theory, as real individuals affirmed the theoretical concepts and culture-specific knowledge, "she was really explaining it

in her own words" (Student 1). Another instance occurred when one of the lecturers shared his experience with Chinese *guanxi* and the practice of paying bills among friends. This was further affirmed by one of the Chinese students in class, leaving a lasting impression on Student 3, "I never knew [that] and then the girl from the class, from China, she said: 'yeah, yeah, that is totally normal that they want to pay.' "

Cultural Informants. A third way that students learned from intercultural contact was through cultural informants. During the second offering of the course, we had a cultural informant on Islam and another on transgender identity. As religion and LGBTQ+ topics can be sensitive, cultural informants were more suitable than relying on the diversity represented in the classroom. The cultural informants were both older than the average student, had a background in education and were comfortable and knowledgeable speaking about the topic. Their talks were received well by students, offering new knowledge, enhancing their understanding, and bringing to life the concepts from the course.

> It was the first time for me to hear and to talk about such a serious topic, their [transgender] experiences … it was very new to me. And also, it attracted more of my attention to transgender people, their living conditions, their unique advantages. (Student 9)

> I really liked it that the woman from Palestine explained about the Islamic value lens and how to interpret that value lens. Because I think that one was the hardest one for me to understand. (Student 8)

It served as affirmation of what was being taught, as Student 8 stated: "you can read [about] it, but it is without an explanation of how people really feel about it. It's on paper and you can interpret it in the wrong way."

Experiences Outside the Classroom

Another facilitator of learning was the linking of intercultural experiences outside the classroom to what was learned during the course. If students could recognize what they learned, it helped the learning process, for example, by relating the abstract conceptualizations to a previous intercultural experience. Student 2 said, "the hierarchy in Asian countries. For example, when I worked in Thailand, I saw the same things there and that they won't normally say something against their boss, as we learned actually in the class." One international student could relate the concepts in the value lenses to her experiences with Dutch students:

> If we have a conversation with someone in [own country], there will be more warm-up things. So, you always try to maintain a relationship first, and talk about the issues you are going to talk about. But here, when I work with Dutch students, they go direct to the point. That's also how I learned what I learned from the value lens. (Student 5)

The value lenses also provided a framework for students to reflect and make sense of previous intercultural experiences. Student 8 recounted an incident while traveling in the Philippines, where the locals were "so surprised, almost like angry" that her boyfriend had let her travel on her own. The Filipino value lens helped her better understand this incident.

> Now I understand better that they were very protective over women, and at first I already recognized it, but now I really understand that it is part of their value lens … I thought, 'yeah, now I got it!' (Student 8)

Another student reflected on his experiences working with Chinese co-workers and realized that what he had assumed to be a personality trait was actually driven by Chinese cultural values.

> It was really more this relationship aspect and this notion of hierarchy was different and I wasn't used to this from a [own country] point of view, that the boss plays such an important role … when I worked with Chinese, I realized that, and I thought maybe it's just their character and they are submissive or something. But actually, it's a cultural thing. (Student 6)

Students could also experiment with what they were learning by applying it to intercultural experiences that they had during the course. Some students were analyzing incidents in their own life.

> My Dutch boss sometimes gives me some tasks and I actually don't want to do them … I will say: 'ok, I will see if I can do it.' But then next week he will come back to me again and ask: 'do you want to do it?' That is one of the cases that I am trying to say 'no' via an indirect way, but he really wants to know exactly the result. (Student 9)

Another student watched a movie on deaf culture, and then applied the Cultural Detective information.

> I watched this video recently about a football team from the US who are all deaf people … and then I read the Cultural Detective package about [deaf] culture, so it was very interesting to see how it relates, it's true actually, not something just written on the internet, but they [the deaf community] really have these strong community relationships. (Student 3)

Again, affirmation is important here. The students' own intercultural experiences affirm what they are learning in class about cultural values and differences.

Motivational Factors

Several motivational factors encouraged intercultural learning. Motivation had to be intrinsic according to some students, "it is really difficult to answer the question insofar as the Cultural Detective got me to learn something, because it depends on me" (Student 2). Many of the students felt that the motivation should come from an interest in other cultures. Some students found that being exposed to people from other cultures provided motivation to learn more about other cultures, while one student was motivated by a lack of exposure to other cultures. Student 5 felt that the individual assignment of analyzing incidents should be graded to provide extrinsic motivation.

Meaningfulness was a motivational factor. Most students could see the meaningfulness of the course and tool for their future careers, describing the learning tool as "so practical" and "the most useful for the professional world" and the course as relevant, "everyone needs to do this course, because if you want to work in international business, I think you have to be really aware of all the different cultures and how to work together" and could see themselves "try to use what I learned from the Cultural Detective" in a work setting. It was also important that the incidents from the learning tool represented real-life situations, "they were good examples and I think you have these situations in daily life when you work in another culture" (Student 6). On the other hand, Student 7 felt the incidents were fictional and useless in real-life situations and so the meaningfulness was lacking for him.

Connection and safety were also motivational factors. A couple of students explained that a small class size and the right atmosphere of sharing were important. Student 4 said, "because we had a very small class, it felt like a high school class. You know the people a little bit or at least some of them. That made me feel very comfortable, also to say things."

A couple of students also found some learning methods did not fit their individual or cultural preferences for learning, for example, getting bored with class discussions or not feeling comfortable with sharing feedback directly. A couple of students also felt that they needed more time for certain learning activities in the classroom.

Challenges

Students experienced several challenges that created learning dilemmas.

Adaptation

One dilemma for students was around adaptation. There were several discussions in class about the extent to which one should adapt to another culture. During the interviews some students talked about this dilemma. Some students found it felt inauthentic or 'not being yourself.' Student 7 explained: "in practice it would really feel like theatre and not real … it's constructed, and I would really expect them [people from other cultures] to see through that straight away." While Student 7 resisted the idea of adapting, Student 1 experienced it more as a dilemma, as she also recounted examples where she adapted herself.

> If I am going to act differently because you are Dutch, then I am not totally being myself … Not change all our behaviors and our gestures and our tone of voice because then it's weird, then you are a different person, right or not?

Some other students seemed to have a different perspective, seeing adaptation as a way of respecting the other culture and working more effectively. Student 6 explains:

> Now I do it [adapting] even more because I feel that adapting to people's culture is also a sign of respect or courtesy and by showing up by their rules and following their rules, I can show that. And they appreciate me more, it works better.

Some students wanted to adapt when working in their assignment teams, but found it challenging to effectively adapt. One student explained she became aware of her partner's indirectness and tried to adjust her behavior, but found this difficult. Another student recounted a similar experience of being aware of the indirectness of the other, but not knowing how to interpret the other's communication.

In addition, the bridges part of the incident worksheets was challenging for some students. This part constitutes adapting behavior in intercultural interactions

and leveraging diversity. Often students would suggest that characters simply change their behavior, for instance, 'character A should be more direct' without being specific on how they should do this and realizing how difficult this may be. In addition, students would suggest similar bridges, as Student 4 noted in the interview, " if you do a couple [of incidents] you often come up with the same solutions, because it is often: study the culture first before you interact." This means that students' learning stagnates and more support to develop intercultural strategies is needed.

Stereotyping and Generalizing

A second dilemma was about stereotyping and generalizing. Towards the end of the first course, the students and teachers had a strong discussion in class with varying perspectives. One student felt that the course and the learning tool encouraged stereotyping and generalizing and that other students were constantly engaging in this behavior. During the interview, Student 7 stated:

> The course brought people maybe more stereotypes and more generalizations than the other way around … it made [other students] accept the stereotypes that they maybe already had beforehand. and now they saw, 'ah, even science says that it is true, so of course I can say it.'

Some other students thought that the Cultural Detective tool or learning about values felt like stereotyping.

> It also felt like generalizing, because you learn, for example, somebody from Spain is this. And, not everyone from Spain has the values which are in the Spanish value lens. So, somehow it felt the opposite of what we had to learn. (Student 8)

> How should I apply those values? As you are an individual and maybe how you act is because of what you went through or so many things. So, it is very difficult to know how to use it with a small group of people, because then it very quickly feels like you are stereotyping. (Student 1)

Other students seemed to see this dilemma differently or had resolved it. Another student explained in the interview:

> At first, it's always like: oh, they [people from other culture] are always late, that's the typical for them. But I don't think of it in this way anymore. I just try to be more understanding of it [the behavior] … and try to understand what is behind this [behavior] more. It made me more reflective about issues like that. (Student 6)

This standpoint was shared by some others in the class discussion, for example, one student commented that people can be different and equal at the same time. When this topic was discussed, the trainer explained the difference between stereotyping and generalizing. It was emphasized that a cultural group's values are based on group averages and not every individual adheres to these. During the second course, this was explained at the start of the course, as recommended by Bennett (2008). The Cultural Detective tool gives a similar explanation stating that "values represent the 'central tendencies' of what a group of people is taught as being important and virtuous" and that "not everyone from the same culture will hold the same values, nor will they interpret and act in the same way based on the same values" (Nipporica Associates, 2020). However, students still felt that this had not been stated clearly (enough).

> It will be better that it says … that this just gives you an idea about others' opinion of their country or their own mirror for themselves. But please be aware that it is not the same for everyone, it should not be the expectation for anyone you meet. (Student 9)

Since explaining the difference between stereotyping and generalizing, and how to use the value lenses appropriately did not seem to be effective with all students, it is interesting to explore these students' perspectives further. Some of these students perceived cultural differences as negative or uncomfortable and focused more on similarities, indicative of being in the defense or minimization stage of the development of intercultural competence (Bennett, 1986). For them, the dissonance of the new knowledge and experiences may have been too large.

> I don't really feel those differences that consciously either. In the end you can really see that a lot of basic things are the same among everyone and everyone in the world has a lot of the same ideas and principles. (Student 7)

> What we learned as well is that in a lot of value lenses we had on the basis the same values, but implemented in another way … Also,

> emphasize the similarities … Sometimes it felt like it was presented as, 'oh, you are so different, it's really hard to work together.' (Student 8)

These students also felt that personality was more important than cultural influences. It may be related to valuing equality, whereby acknowledging differences is considered as a practice of inequality or unfairness. Student 7 explained that he found the stereotyping he perceived in class "scary" and felt that it led to differential treatment of people based on their values or background which he felt was unfair. During the class discussion, some students agreed with his perspective. For example, one student stated that having a separate value lens for LGBTQ+ -persons was the opposite of being inclusive. Again, there seems to be discomfort with the dissonance presented.

Model of Intercultural Learning

To synthesize the findings and illustrate the learning process, we created a model of intercultural learning (Fig. 1). Dissonance is needed for learning and is created by providing new information about cultures and values with the CD. Dissonance is also created through the assignments, activities, and the multicultural classroom by exposing students to different opinions and perspectives, as well as learning about each other's cultures. This dissonance can then push the individual to learn or it may lead to learning dilemmas about adaptation, or stereotyping and generalizing. This may depend on the intensity of the dissonance and the developmental stage of intercultural sensitivity of the learner. When intercultural learning occurs, it happens through intercultural experiences before and during the course, abstract conceptualizations provided by culture concepts and the CD method for analyzing incidents, reflection on values and intercultural experiences, and experimentation with the assignments, multicultural classroom, and experiences outside the classroom. Affirmation and motivation are factors that can support the learning, so that dissonance is a stimulus for learning rather than creating resistance. These ameliorating factors are affirmation by cultural informants, students from other cultures, or one's own experiences, and motivational factors such as interest in cultures, meaningfulness, connection, and safety. However, if a learning dilemma occurs, the learner can work through this, resolving the dilemma, resulting in intercultural learning. But, if the learner is not able or willing to resolve the dilemma, their learning will be blocked.

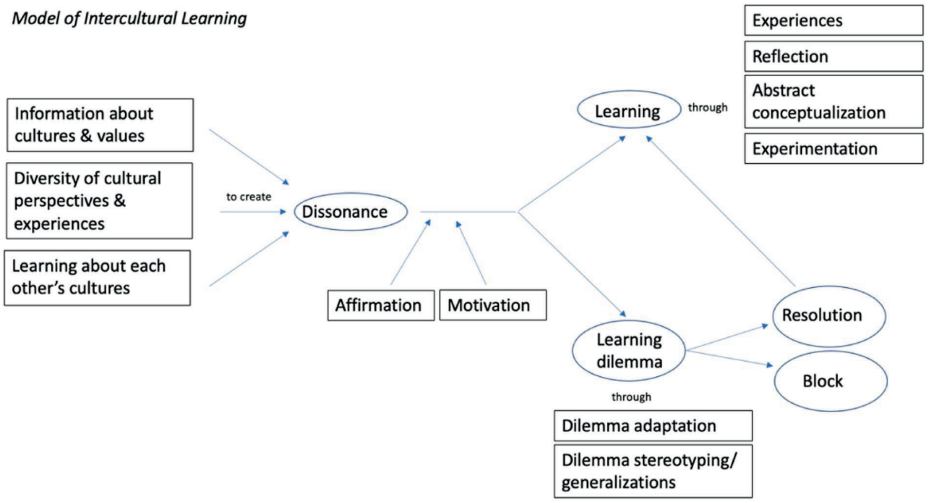

Figure 3.1 Model of Intercultural Learning

Discussion and Conclusion

This study contributes to theory by confirming and expanding on theoretical knowledge of intercultural learning through empirically researching students' experiences and perspectives. First of all, this study confirms the theory that dissonance is needed to learn (Lewis & Dehler, 2000; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor & Hamdy, 2013) and develop intercultural competence (Allan, 2003; Nahavandi, 2016; Taylor, 1994). Dissonance can be created by providing new information and knowledge about different cultures and cultural values (Bhawuk, 1998; Taylor, 1994). In this study the Cultural Detective learning tool provided this new information and knowledge through the packages with information, value lenses, and incidents. Other tools, books, or teaching methods could be used for the same purpose.

Dissonance can also be created by exposing students to other opinions, perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and experiences. This is in line with the literature that states that intercultural experiences can create dissonance (Bhawuk, 2009; Gudykunst, 1998; Kim, 2000). Our findings show this can be facilitated with cultural informants, activities, and in-class discussions. Moreover, the students' diversity is instrumental when activities and discussions create the space for students to share their cultural background and experiences. Class discussion is one of the most common methods of cross-cultural training (Mendenhall et al., 2004). This study shows that students learned a lot from each other in the class discussions and small group activities

and were exposed to a diversity of experiences, perspectives, and cultures through these discussions.

Secondly, the findings of this study fit with and expand on Kolb (1984) theory of experiential learning by showing concrete ways that this learning takes place in the intercultural learning context. Experiences consisted of the intercultural contact that was facilitated through teamwork, a multicultural classroom, and cultural informants, but also students' intercultural experiences outside the classroom before or during the course. This is in line with the literature that states that intercultural contact can develop intercultural competence (Schwarzenthal et al., 2017) and observing people from other cultures and cultural informants can contribute to attributional knowledge (Osland & Bird, 2000). Students learned through reflection on previous intercultural experiences and explored their own cultural values by using the learning tool's exercises on cultural self-awareness, which is important for intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Nahavandi, 2016). Abstract conceptualizations were facilitated through the theory presented in the course as well as the learning tool, providing the language (Bernstein, 2000) and structures (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013) to understand intercultural experiences. The CD method for analyzing incidents gave students a framework to apply to intercultural interactions. The tool's value lenses helped to conceptualize culture theory concepts and values (Bhawuk, 1998), which is important for the application of cultural differences in intercultural interactions (Gudykunst et al., 1991). The students were able to learn a more heterogeneous concept of culture that is not limited to national culture (Nahavandi, 2016). There were opportunities for experimentation when students were able to recognize or apply the concepts from the course in their teamwork and during situations in the classroom, but also to intercultural experiences outside the classroom. This confirms the role of intercultural contact as a means to practice intercultural skills (Ward & Searle, 1991). The incident analyses allowed application of the concepts to a situation in a safe manner.

However, dissonance also created several dilemmas. Students sometimes found creating bridges in the incidents or adaptation in practice challenging, which may be due to adaptation being an advanced stage of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2008). Adaptation can feel inauthentic to the adaptation stage learner as they resolve the dilemma of adapting without renouncing the self. The defense stage learner may resist adaptation as they feel their own way is the best way (Bennett, 2008). Also, cross-cultural code-switching might be psychologically taxing due to performance difficulty, face threat or identity conflict (Molinsky, 2007).

The dilemma around stereotyping and generalizing that some students experienced is positive as students were aware of the danger of stereotyping. However, it is problematic that they viewed culture theory and the learning tool as stereotyping, because it can create resistance to learning. It may be an indicator of students being in an ethnocentric stage of intercultural sensitivity, in which cultural differences are experienced as non-existent, negative, or trivial (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). So the dissonance of the information may be too large, causing resistance (Lewis & Dehler, 2000), attribution errors and misinterpretations (Allan, 2003), and too much anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1998). Learners may resist the idea of subjective culture due to fear of stereotyping or their cultural values, such as Western individualism (Bennett & Bennett, 2004) or Dutch egalitarianism. Also, in the Dutch language 'generalizing' often has a negative connotation and is sometimes used to mean stereotyping.

To avoid or move through learning dilemmas, it may be necessary to provide more support to learners (Bennett, 2008; Nahavandi, 2016). Our findings show that one way to support students is through affirmation of what is being learned by contact with culturally diverse students and cultural informants. Cultural informants can support minimization learners in acknowledging and accepting cultural differences (Bennett, 2008). Another factor that seems to reduce resistance is motivation. Most students could see the practical application of the Cultural Detective and the relevance of the course for their future. Thus, it had meaningfulness which is a motivating factor for learning (Horn, 2017). Being intrinsically motivated by an interest in other cultures is also important (Deardorff, 2006). The need for connection and feeling comfortable in the classroom fits with the theory that belongingness is a motivational factor of learning (Horn, 2017). It is also necessary to consider different students' preferences for learning methods, which may be culturally informed, so all students feel supported and motivated (Otten, 2003; Wlodkowski, 2003).

Practical Implications

This study provides educators with research-based teaching strategies to develop intercultural competence. In designing a course, attention should be paid to providing a suitable balance between dissonance and support. Dissonance can be created by using a learning tool such as the Cultural Detective, but also by providing materials on culture theory and different cultures. Teachers should leverage the diversity in the classroom as a resource and include activities and assignments that encourage discussion and sharing of perspectives and cultural backgrounds. Examples of such activities are group projects in diverse teams, discussing own

cultural values, and asking for examples from students' own culture. Educators should assess the extent to which students have had intercultural experiences and create more opportunities for intercultural experiences accordingly. Reflection can be incorporated through assignments and the inclusion of reflective questions to debrief activities and assignments. Abstract conceptualizations can come from literature on culture theory and cultural values, but also the Cultural Detective value lenses and the analysis of intercultural incidents. Besides, the use of intercultural incidents encourages experimentation.

To provide effective support to learners, activities should be tailored to the developmental stage of the students. To be perceived as meaningful, the incidents, examples, and activities incorporated in the course should mirror real-life situations and be applicable to students' daily lives or future professional environments. If students commence the course without a pre-existing interest in intercultural topics, teachers may need to work on students' motivation and engagement. To explore cultures not represented in the classroom or sensitive topics, cultural informants can be invited. To ensure a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives, it is advisable to select cultural informants who possess backgrounds distinct from those of the teacher. These cultural informants should be willing to share their personal experiences, while also adeptly linking them to course concepts or theoretical frameworks. To effectively bridge cultures, students require additional support which could consist of feedback, or ideas and examples of intercultural strategies from academic articles or practice. It is essential to explain the difference between stereotypes and generalizations, and educators should be competent in facilitating discussions on stereotyping.

This article shows that intercultural learning is more complex than it may seem and universities that want to contribute to developing the 21st century transferable skills of intercultural competence are advised to create well-designed intercultural competence courses given by skilled educators. Ideally, intercultural competence development is incorporated into courses of the standard curriculum, but this does require an investment in the training and development of university teachers.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was limited to a Dutch context and students at a research university. Internationalization at home has been on the agenda of higher education in the Netherlands since 2000, while other countries might be in earlier stages of developing internationalization at home making the results less generalizable to these contexts. The data having been collected in 2015 may also limit generalizability, although the findings are still relevant particularly given that teachers continue to lack adequate preparation for intercultural teaching (Beelen & Jones, 2018). A further limitation is that the course was an elective, which may have biased the type of students that participated: those who already had an interest in cultures. The interviewer being the trainer may have influenced what students shared in the interviews although the trainer was not the one who graded their assignments and interviewees were asked to give examples to back up their statements. Relying on the voluntary participation of students to be interviewed resulted in a small sample size.

It would be valuable for future research to study the factors contributing to learning for different types of learners and in different contexts. In addition, further research is needed on the reasons behind and management of learner resistance to intercultural learning. As stated before, the results showed that learners may have been at different stages of intercultural sensitivity, which may also be related to their varying backgrounds, different prior education, and exposure and interaction with people from different cultures. Measuring students' intercultural development with the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer et al., 2003) prior to an intervention would allow a link to be made between learners' developmental stage and their developmental process. Future research could also focus on how to provide enough challenge and support when the group consists of participants at different stages of intercultural sensitivity or the group is culturally homogenous with less opportunities for intercultural contact.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What did you like most about the Cultural Detective method?

2. What did you like least about the Cultural Detective method?

3. What were the most valuable things you learned from using Cultural Detective and our sessions?

4. How do you feel/think about cultural differences?

5. Has your outlook/ideas/awareness changed during this course and if so, how?

6. What moments/parts/activities did you enjoy the most?

7. What moments/parts/activities were challenging or out of your comfort zone? And why?

8. What was the moment/part that you learned the most from?

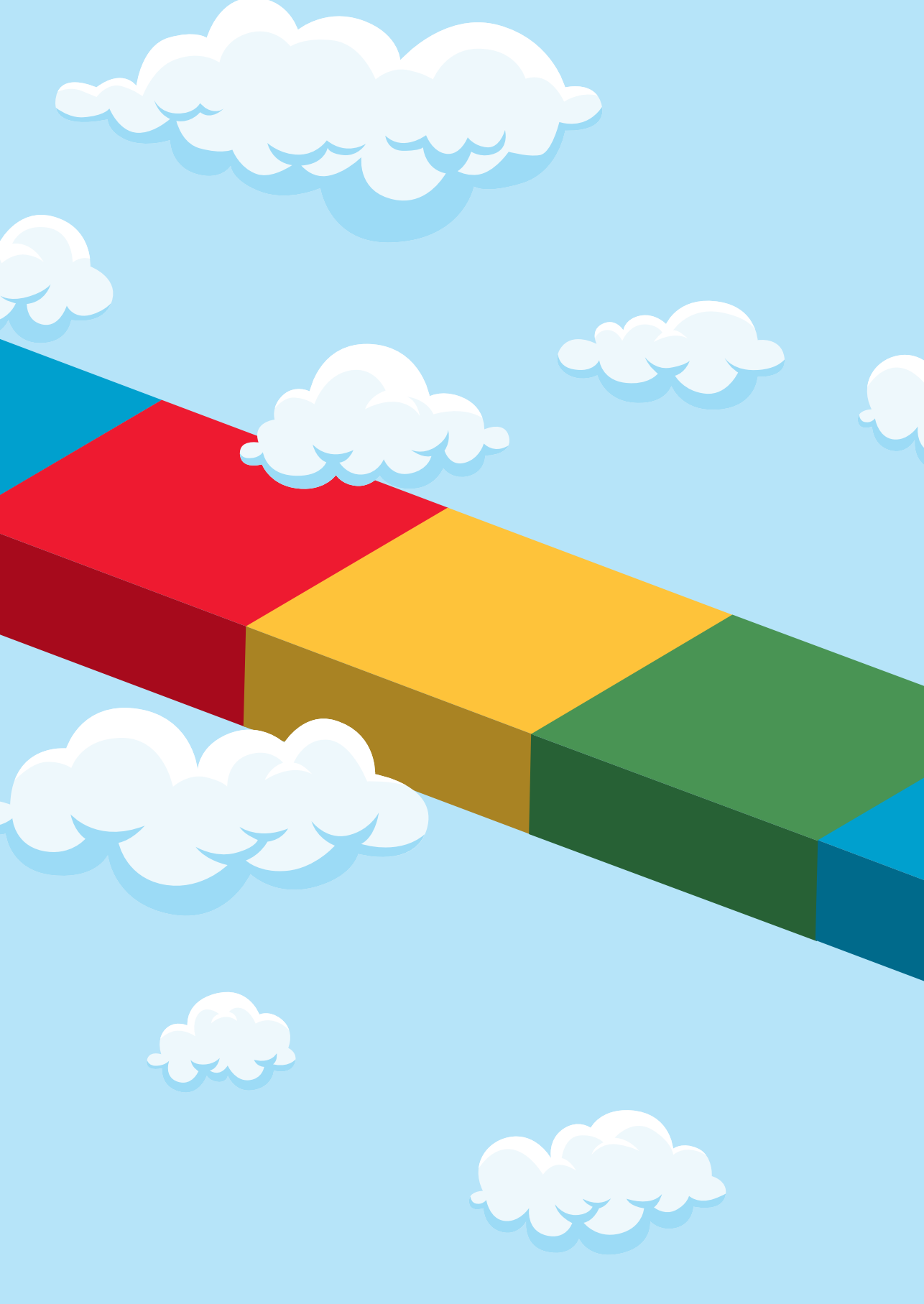
9. How did your group work go? What worked well? What worked less well?

10. Did you apply anything you learned from the Cultural Detective method to your group work?

11. What did you learn in the course that you were able to apply to real-life situations?

12. What are the broader insights and lessons that can be applied to other cross-cultural situations/real-life situations in the future?

13. What next steps will you take to develop your cross-cultural skills?



Chapter 4

Trigger Events and Intercultural Competence in a Multicultural Group of Academic Expatriates

Due to globalization, working with colleagues from other cultural backgrounds has become a reality for many employees in both business and academia. Cultural intelligence or intercultural competence, defined as the ability to "communicate and behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 171) has been recognized as an essential competence for current and future employers to develop in their employees (Caligiuri et al., 2019). It has previously been assumed that intercultural experiences increase intercultural competence (Vande Berg et al., 2012). Intercultural experiences that could develop intercultural competence are, among others, international assignments or working in multicultural groups. It has been noted that although intercultural experience allows for the development of intercultural competence, it does not guarantee that intercultural competence is developed (J. M. Bennett, 2011; Caligiuri et al., 2019).

Most research on international assignments has predominantly focused on performance and adjustment, rather than on the developmental aspects of such experiences (Ng et al., 2009). The process of how international experiences can lead to intercultural competence is still underresearched (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Reichard et al., 2014). More research is needed on the quality of international experiences and how this affects the development of cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007) or intercultural competence (Ang et al., 2007; Caligiuri et al., 2019). While intercultural experiences have the potential to enhance a person's intercultural competence, the specifics of how and when this occurs warrant further research. One way that international experiences could lead to the development of intercultural competence is through trigger events (Osland et al., 2007, 2023). Osland et al. (2007) have suggested a theoretical model of how trigger events can lead to intercultural sensemaking, and learning and transformation. Researching trigger events that occur during intercultural experiences could shed light on how and when these experiences lead to intercultural learning. Trigger events in intercultural competence development have been researched in a few studies (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Reichard et al., 2014), giving some insight into the types of trigger events (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014) and the role of an individual's engagement and resources in the process of developing intercultural competence (Reichard et al., 2014). However, it is likely that the types of trigger events identified are not exhaustive and the process has not been fully explored. In addition, these studies used undergraduate students on study abroad as a sample, which may not generalize to employees working internationally.

The purpose of this study was to research if, what, and how people learn from trigger events or critical incidents during intercultural experiences, through studying the

intercultural experiences of academics in an international research consortium. A majority of the members were living and working in another country than their home country during the duration of the 4-year project. In addition, the team of Ph.D. students (considered employees by the project), research associates, and their supervisors formed a multicultural group with members from various countries. This allowed for many opportunities for intercultural contact. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. *What type of trigger events does working abroad and in a multicultural group bring about for the research consortium members?*
2. *What is the influence of trigger events on the research consortium members' development of intercultural competence?*
3. *How do trigger events lead to intercultural sensemaking for the research consortium members?*

The study used the grounded theory approach in combination with the critical incident research technique to explore the trigger events experienced by the research participants. Previous studies of trigger events have used interviews or open-ended surveys (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Reichard et al., 2014). Through the retelling of critical incidents of intercultural interactions, this study gained insights into the type of situations that serve as trigger events, the conditions for triggering, the thoughts, reflections, and emotions involved, and the reactions and outcomes of the trigger event. Finally, a model was built that sheds light on the process from a trigger event to intercultural sensemaking. The results contribute to our understanding of how individuals learn from intercultural experiences and which strategies are used to come to cultural sensemaking. This knowledge can inform the design of intercultural training and coaching for employees working abroad or in multicultural environments. It also provides valuable insights on how to structure international research consortia or Ph.D. programs to optimize intercultural learning.

This paper begins with a literature review exploring the relationship between international experiences and intercultural competence, trigger events, and cultural sensemaking. The subsequent methods section outlines the study's design, detailing the sample, the use of the critical incident interviewing technique, and the application of grounded theory for data analysis. The qualitative findings are then presented, followed by a discussion of their implications and the study's conclusions.

Literature Review

Intercultural Experience and Intercultural Competence

Culture learning theory (Argyle & Kendon, 1967) states that being effective in intercultural interactions requires certain knowledge and skills that can be learned. Intercultural contact offers opportunities to learn and practice these skills. Increased and positive contact further facilitates sociocultural learning (Ward & Searle, 1991). Intercultural contact also provides the opportunity to learn from observation and obtain more information (Wilson et al., 2013). This suggests that through intercultural contact it is possible to learn the appropriate social skills involved in being interculturally competent.

Intercultural contact and experiences can develop intercultural competence but are not guaranteed to do so (Ng et al., 2009). Previous research has found mixed results. On the one hand, Brinkman and Van Weerdenburg's (2014) research showed that exposure to other cultures through previous experience abroad does not necessarily lead to more intercultural competence. Previous international experience was not a significant predictor for expatriate performance in a meta-analysis by Mol et al. (2005). Shannon and Begley (2008) only found a relationship between international work experience and motivational cultural intelligence, and not for other dimensions of cultural intelligence. On the other hand, Crowne's (2008) study concluded that cultural exposure through employment increased cultural intelligence and Li et al.'s (2013) research indicated that the length of global leaders' overseas experience positively impacted cultural intelligence. Valk's (2021) interviews with expatriates and repatriates show that they developed their intercultural competence by learning from experiences during their assignments. A critical analysis of the literature (Michailova & Ott, 2018) concluded that it is inconclusive and inconsistent on the relationship between international experience and cultural intelligence, and a theoretical foundation for the relationship is often lacking.

The quality of the international experience seems to be an important factor in developing intercultural competence. The breadth (number of cultures) of cultural exposure increases knowledge and awareness of cultural differences, while the depth of exposure enhances the ability to behave appropriately with people from other cultural backgrounds (Dias et al., 2020). A significant amount of contact with host culture locals facilitates the development of intercultural competence (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012). Van Bakel et al.'s (2014) research showed that expatriates living in the Netherlands experienced a decrease in attitudinal and behavioral intercultural competence over time, but this was buffered for those who were matched with a

local host. The contextual novelty of the international experience also influences the development of intercultural competence (Caligiuri et al., 2019).

Besides international assignments, multicultural team experiences have the potential to enhance team members' cultural intelligence. For example, Erez et al. (2013) conducted a 4-week online multicultural team project and showed it increased the cultural intelligence of the participants and in Pless et al.'s (2011) study, participants in international service-learning assignments in multicultural teams had increased cultural intelligence after the experience. A qualitative study by García and Pérez Cañado (2011) concluded that working in multicultural teams allowed employees to learn from the experience and develop their intercultural competence under the right climate and conditions of the workplace. Nevertheless, multicultural teams have also been found to suffer from stereotyping, and to underperform compared to homogenous teams (DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000). Employing student multicultural teams to develop intercultural development can be effective (Hackett et al., 2023), but comes with many challenges (Popov et al., 2012), such as freeriding, a lack of sufficient language skills, and communication difficulties.

Trigger Events and Intercultural Sensemaking Model

One model that could help better understand the process of how experiences develop intercultural competence is the Trigger Events and Intercultural Sensemaking Model (Osland et al., 2007, 2023). Based on literature on trigger events, sensemaking, and intercultural competence, Osland et al. (2023, 2007) created the model in order to understand the way in which trigger events could lead to cultural sensemaking behaviors and cognitions, and possibly learning and transformation.

The concept of trigger events is not new, but has not received much attention in the intercultural competence literature. A trigger event is defined as "an interruption in a previously stable state or coherent flow that initiates a response, leading to a new state" (Osland et al., 2007, p. 7). Previously, Taylor (1994) identified 'disorienting dilemmas,' which involve change and are often stressful, and have been compared to 'culture shock' (Taylor, 1994). These can be compared to trigger events, except that Taylor (1994) seems to view the entire intercultural experience as a disorienting dilemma, while trigger events zoom in on specific critical incidents during the intercultural experience.

Trigger events are situations that increase arousal and attention in a person causing them to react. In intercultural settings, these trigger events could be interactions

or situations that involve novelty, discrepancy, or deliberative initiative (Osland et al., 2007, 2023). So, an individual may encounter a situation that is surprising and unexpected or contradicts expected behavior. Bhawuk (2009) states that 'disconfirmed expectancies' are situations where one experiences a different behavior than expected, which can provide opportunities for intercultural learning. An individual may also deliberately decide to engage, because he or she is aware of the lack of competence and knowledge of what to expect (Osland et al., 2007, 2023).

Trigger events can evoke a cognitive, emotional, or physiological response in a person. Subsequently, a person can react to the trigger event by fight, flight, acceptance, or cultural sensemaking (Osland et al., 2007, 2023). Fight is a defensive reaction whereby the person will not consider the other perspective and hangs onto their own. The flight reaction involves withdrawal by avoiding contact with the cultural other. Bhawuk (2009) states that following a concrete experience which one does not understand, one can attribute the behavior to bad intentions or the other culture being 'less' or 'wrong', a natural but ethnocentric reaction. The acceptance reaction is one where the trigger event is accepted but not understood (Osland et al., 2007, 2023). However, cultural sensemaking is the most positive reaction because it involves trying to understand the other culture and why certain behavior is appropriate in certain situations (Osland et al., 2007, 2023).

The process of intercultural sensemaking starts with 'Indexing the Context,' which involves identifying the situation and noticing cues (Osland & Bird, 2000). The individual then makes attributions about cues, evaluating and drawing inferences, followed by choosing the schema or cultural script that specifies how they should interact. Schemas are influenced by cultural values and cultural history (Osland & Bird, 2000). To illustrate with an example from Costa Rica:

> When bank tellers interact with clients (indexing context) many of them (e.g., members of various in-groups, civil servants making attributions) do not greet customers and make eye contact, but concentrate solely on their paperwork (selecting schema). The values that underlie this schema are in-group-out-group behavior and power (cultural values) […] State-owned banks did not have a history of training employees in friendly customer service (cultural history). (Osland & Bird, 2000, p. 71-72)

Experiencing trigger events or disconfirmed expectations can increase an individual's cultural intelligence or intercultural competence (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014;

Reichard et al., 2014; Rosenblatt et al., 2013). The transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1991) gives more insight into the developmental process of trigger events and cultural sensemaking. The theory posits that adults have meaning schemes and perspectives that constitute meaning structures, which determine how they make meaning out of experiences. While meaning schemes are habits and expectations, meaning perspectives are higher-order schemes that are formed through (cultural) socialization (Mezirow, 1991). These perspectives define a person's perceptions of reality, assumptions, and worldview. When one is confronted with an experience that is very different or incongruent with one's meaning perspective, such as an intercultural experience, one either rejects it or transforms one's meaning perspective forming a new meaning structure (Taylor, 1994). Forming these new meaning structures means a broadening of perspective and worldview and thus developing intercultural competence (Taylor, 1994). This is similar to cultural sensemaking and helps better understand this process.

It seems that a person must be able to engage in critical reflection about their intercultural experiences to develop intercultural competence. Reflection is defined as "the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective" (Boyd & Fales, p. 100 as cited in Savicki & Price, 2021). Through critical reflection individuals become aware of and question their own meaning schemes, those which they have always taken for granted, and are able to change their frame of reference (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1994). Applying Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory to intercultural competence development, Bhawuk (2009) argues that to learn an individual must engage in reflective observation after a concrete experience, often learning culture-specific knowledge. This can then be followed by abstract conceptualization where experiences are organized and culture-general knowledge and understanding is developed. Next, active experimentation involves applying the new knowledge and understanding by trying out new behavior in intercultural settings. So, this may follow the cultural sensemaking process. One of the only studies on trigger events (Reichard et al., 2014) found that these do not lead to learning for everyone, but to learn one must engage and go through Kolb's (1984) learning cycle stages. They found that the intensity of the engagement with the trigger event, through observing, interacting, or integrating and changing, positively influenced the learning.

Types of Trigger Events

Some events are trigger events and others are not. For an event to be a trigger event, it must be sufficiently intense, persistent, salient, or accumulative (Osland et

al., 2007, 2023). The type of trigger event may influence how transformational it is in developing intercultural competence. Clapp-Smith and Wernsing's (2014) study found that shifts in individuals' frame of reference occurred in four categories of trigger events: immersing with local customs and people, experiencing that what is normal for one is not normal for the other, communicating and finding that shared meaning is not easily translated in another language, and taking time to self-reflect.

It is not clear whether trigger events should be positive or negative to lead to learning. Taylor (1994) calls disorienting dilemmas stressful events. Similarly, Kim's (2000) stress-adaptation-growth theory of adaptation to other cultures argues that intercultural contact creates stress or an internal conflict which may lead one to withdraw, but eventually pushes one to adapt to the environment and grow and learn. The anxiety/uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 1998) states that a certain level of uncertainty is needed to motivate one to question the accuracy of predictions about the other's behavior, and a certain level of anxiety is needed to encourage a person to communicate and interact with people from the other cultural group. It has also been argued that conflicts and misunderstandings are instrumental to come to an understanding of the other (Blasco et al., 2012). This suggests that trigger events should be negative to be transformational.

However, when uncertainty is too high, people tend to make inaccurate interpretations of messages and inaccurate predictions of behavior (Gudykunst, 1998). Moreover, when anxiety is too high, people communicate and interpret others' behavior from their own cultural frame of reference and revert to simpler processing of information (Gudykunst, 1998). In addition, intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) suggests that positive experiences are important. Positive emotions are vital, as intercultural contact can produce anxiety (Pettigrew, 1998). Positive emotions are created through affective ties, for example, feeling empathy and building friendships. Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis specifies four conditions for optimal group contact, namely equal status of those involved, common goals, meaningful personalized contact, and contact that is supported by authorities. Perception of optimal contact has been found to positively impact the experience of disconfirmed expectations, which in turn increases the development of cultural intelligence (Rosenblatt et al., 2013). According to Meleady et al.'s (2021) study, positive intergroup contact longitudinally increases individuals' intercultural competence, while negative contact decreases it. In sum, the literature is inconclusive on whether negative or positive trigger events lead to transformational intercultural learning.

Individual Factors and Trigger Events

Certain individual factors affect the perception of trigger events and cultural sensemaking (Osland et al., 2007). Individuals who have more intercultural competence, an ethnorelative stance and are curious will notice trigger events sooner. Emotional resilience, or the ability to cope with stress, also helps an individual find the space to focus on sensemaking rather than be too cognitively consumed by stress (Osland et al., 2023). In addition, Reichard et al.'s (2014) study found that cognitive resources, such as language ability and cognitive cultural intelligence, social resources, such as social networks, friends, and social support, as well as psychological resources such as resilience and efficacy, were important in determining to what extent individuals tried to make sense of the event or merely became frustrated by it.

Methods

To answer the research questions, a qualitative approach was chosen, consisting of a grounded theory approach with semi-structured interviews. This provided the opportunity to generate more comprehensive evidence with which to answer the research questions. The qualitative interviews provided in-depth data to enhance understanding of the process of developing intercultural competence. In addition, the qualitative dimensions of the study allowed for a more open and detailed inquiry, avoiding the constraints associated with the use of predetermined categories of analysis (Patton, 2002).

Research Sites and Participants

The research participants consisted of 23 of the 25 members of the European Union research consortium, working at six different institutions: five universities and one non-profit small medium entreprise (SME), located across Europe, namely in the Netherlands, Ireland, Hungary, Germany, and Spain. Table 4.1 shows the demographic data of the participants. Seventeen members of the research consortium were living and working in another country than their home country, during (part of) the 4-year project. The remaining six, mostly supervisors, stayed in their home country. The research consortium started in 2014 with the common purpose of interdisciplinary research. The project also provided a training program that members followed together. The last Summer School was attended by the researcher to learn more about the group and its members, and to build rapport and trust with the participants preceding the interviews. It allowed the researcher to understand the context of the participants and get to know them, which helped in the interpretation of the interview data.

Participant Consent and Confidentiality

All project members were sent an email requesting their participation in the study. Informed consent was obtained. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were guaranteed that individual results would be confidential and would not be shared with their supervisors or anyone else. In addition, any data from the interviews are reported without any information that may identify the participants.

Data Collection

Interviews

The research participants were interviewed individually, in person or through Skype, and the interviews were audio- or video-recorded. The interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes.

Critical Incident Technique. For the interviews, the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) was chosen as it specifically researches events or situations that are meaningful to participants. Critical incident studies use concrete learning experiences as a way to understand how people learn (Soini, 2012). Rather than asking participants directly to express their thoughts about learning, their stories give insight into their experiences of learning which can be much more revealing (Soini, 2012). To understand learning processes, social context and personal experiences need to be taken into account as important elements of this process (Soini, 2012). The critical incident technique (CIT) takes into account the context from the participant's perspective, rather than from the researcher's perspective (Chell, 2004). This is especially important in this study because the participants were from different cultures and may experience the context differently than the researcher. In addition, the CIT allows the researcher to connect context, strategy, and outcomes and find a relationship between these, in order to learn more about the ways people deal with significant situations (Chell, 2004).

The participants were asked to describe two critical incidents around intercultural interactions and what contributed or preceded the incident to give information about the type and conditions of the trigger events. They were asked what their thoughts and feelings were around the incident and what they did, giving insight into the reactions to the trigger events. They were then asked what the outcome was and what they learned. So, a relationship could be found between the event, what the participants thought and did, how they reacted in terms of cultural sensemaking, and what outcome these reactions had in terms of learning and

Table 4.1 Demographic Data of Participants (Frequencies with Percentages in Parentheses)

Position		Gender		Age		Nationality		Discipline	
Research	2 (8.7)	Male	12 (52.2)	25-30	10 (43.5)	Dutch	3 (13.0)	Economics	9 (39.1)
assistant		Female	11 (47.8)	31-35	5 (21.7)	Spanish	3 (13.0)	Psychology	3 (13.0)
Ph.D.	11 (47.8)			35-40	6 (26.1)	Slovakian	2 (8.7)	Computer Science	3 (13.0)
Postdoc	3 (13.0)			40+	2 (8.7)	Hungarian	2 (8.7)	Information Science	2 (8.7)
Supervisor	7 (30.5)					Serbian	2 (8.7)	Data Mining	1 (4.3)
						Italian	1 (4.3)	HRM	1 (4.3)
						Indian	1 (4.3)	Sociology	1 (4.3)
						Greek	1 (4.3)	Management & Organization	1 (4.3)
						French	1 (4.3)	Public Policy	1 (4.3)
						Romanian	1 (4.3)	Knowledge Management	1 (4.3)
						Australian	1 (4.3)		
						Ethiopian	1 (4.3)		
						Iranian	1 (4.3)		
						Filippino	1 (4.3)		
						German	1 (4.3)		

transformation. Demographic data, such as gender, age, and nationality, were also collected.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed following the grounded theory principles of analysis. Grounded theory aims to generate theory from data in a systematic manner (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach was chosen for this study due to the exploratory nature of the research problem and the need to generate a theory about trigger events and intercultural sensemaking that is grounded in empirical data.

The data was coded inductively. The codes, patterns, and relationships were derived from the data. The model by Osland et al. (2007, 2023) did inform the analysis to some extent and provided sensitizing concepts, such as cultural sensemaking, as well as ideas about the trigger event process and relationships between concepts. Sensitizing concepts function as 'background ideas' that "offer ways of seeing, organizing and understanding experience" and can be used as "starting points for building analysis" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 259).

The analysis followed the coding steps of the grounded theory approach, starting with open coding, followed by axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding of the transcripts involved coding line by line, using in vivo, researcher-denoted, and theoretical codes. The constant comparison method was used when coding to identify similarities and differences in the data and assign the same codes or new ones, accordingly (Boeije, 2014). Axial coding consisted of renaming, merging, and reorganizing open codes, as well as grouping open codes into categories (Boeije, 2014). For example, the types of trigger events were categorized into themes (e.g., 'misunderstandings and disagreements') and sub-themes (stemming from 'language differences', 'interdisciplinary differences', 'communication differences' or 'value differences'). After about two-thirds of the data was coded, a first attempt at selective coding was made. During selective coding, patterns and relationships between categories and concepts were identified (Boeije, 2014), resulting in a theory of strategies of cultural sensemaking, describing the process from trigger events to sensemaking. Subsequent coding of the remaining data, confirmed or added to the model. Sometimes, the data disconfirmed a pattern and this led to helpful new insights. For example, dialogue seemed to be an effective strategy for cultural sensemaking, but there were a few incidents that showed it to be ineffective. These incidents were compared to those where dialogue was effective, and the difference found was the relationship status

(equal or hierarchical) between the interactors. In this way, the relationship status could be added to the model as a condition for dialogue as a strategy.

During the coding process, memo writing was used to keep track of thoughts, insights, and ideas related to the analysis of the data (Boeije, 2014), particularly the sorting of codes and the patterns and relationships between concepts and categories. Memos, therefore, facilitated the process of generating a theory from the data.

Findings

Nature of the Incidents

The interview data resulted in 48 incidents. There was a wide variety of incidents, both positive and negative. The incidents centered around four main themes; misunderstandings or disagreements, friendships, collaboration, and different ways of behaving. The incidents and their categorization into themes and sub-themes are shown in Table 4.2. Several incidents were about misunderstandings or disagreements due to language problems, or differences in cultural value orientations, communication, or disciplinary backgrounds. Misunderstandings due to language were either because the parties in the incident did not share a common language or because the other party chose not to use the shared language in the interaction. One participant explains his unexpected struggle with the new language of his host country while trying to direct the taxi driver to an address:

> I didn't know what my limitations were. It was an unknown, I didn't know my unknown and in that case I didn't know the difference, for instance, between the pronunciation of 'berg' and 'burg', there are these tiny little accentuations in language […] Because it is 'erg' instead of 'urg' and that little bit is the difference between driving, you know, literally 2 km in the wrong direction to then driving to two other addresses which aren't even close to the pronunciation. (male postdoctoral researcher, living abroad)

One incident also involved disagreement about whether it was appropriate to use other languages than the language shared by the whole group. Differences in communication involved the use of direct versus indirect communication, use of compliments, and different meanings of non-verbal behavior. There were also misunderstandings whereby both parties came from different disciplinary

backgrounds, which can also be considered cultural in the sense that academic disciplines socialize people and create mental maps, so called epistemic cultures. In these incidents, the parties misunderstood each other because specific words had different meanings in their respective disciplines. Cultural value orientation differences involved different concepts of time, hierarchy, and individualism versus collectivism.

Several incidents revolved around friendships, particularly the formation of new friendships. One incident was specifically about finding commonalities, but many of the other friendship incidents also mentioned this theme. These commonalities consisted of common interests, experiences, or problems. A considerable amount of incidents were about exploring cultural differences of the people involved through talking or observing. Friendships seemed to give the participants an opportunity and a safe space to explore differences:

> I really felt excited to be able to step for a moment into a hint of her little universe. This small moment of insight that somehow expands – I somehow felt that that little moment really expanded my world view - maybe this is a bit of an exaggeration – but more, I saw India on TV, I read some books, etcetera, but this was really somehow a strong personal story that made this life closer to me. (female Ph.D. student, living abroad)

A few incidents were about collaboration and whether the collaboration was successful or unsuccessful, which was mostly defined in terms of the result achieved, for example, the completion of a research project or writing of a paper. These incidents were characterized by stories about what made the collaboration successful or unsuccessful. Factors that were found to be important in a successful collaboration were an inclusive environment, trust, and having common goals and similar priorities.

The incidents about different ways of behaving were stories about cultural differences that participants had observed in daily life or at work. Some participants talked about different ways of holding meetings, for example, eating lunch during a meeting or the productivity of meetings. A couple of participants had stories about the way feedback is delivered by people from different cultures. There were also incidents about participants experiencing differences in customer service, cleaning standards, and the role of relationships in their interactions. One incident was about playful behavior that surprised the interviewee and another one was about the inappropriateness of wearing a Native American costume in the USA.

Table 4.2 Description and Categorization of the Incidents

Categories - nature of incidents			**Incidents**
Misunderstandings/ disagreements	Language differences	No common language	Not being able to communicate to taxi driver, not finding the correct location on time to sign lease on a rental apartment
			Team meeting where parts were in local language that interviewee did not understand
			Thinking bus driver wants to scold interviewee when she wants to give advice to help coughing children
		Not using common language	Discussion about speaking in own language which is more comfortable but might be excluding others
	Interdisciplinary differences	Meaning of terms/words	Misunderstanding due to different words and language related to each discipline
			Misunderstanding between two people from different disciplines during data analysis, due to a different understanding of the term 'clustering' (retold by 2 different interviewees)
	Cultural value orientation differences	Time	Conflict between Ph.D. student and supervisor about coming late for meetings
			Ph.D. colleagues not submitting work on time
		Individualism-Collectivism	Friends not reciprocating hospitality in same way
			Did not expect host family to share food, invite for dinner, give her a ride or help in other ways
		Leadership	Conflict between Ph.D. students and supervisors about transparency around financial matters, and involvement of the Ph.D. students in decision-making, explained by differences in expectations of hierarchy versus egalitarianism
			Conflict during a meeting with a senior person led this person to tell interviewee's supervisor to fire him due to impolite, destructive behavior
			Conflict between Ph.D. student and supervisor about expectations of work, resulting in termination of contract
			Disagreement between summer camp leaders about rules for children

Table 4.2 Continued

Categories - nature of incidents			Incidents
	Communication styles	Indirect-direct	Misinterpreting supervisor's requests - not taking them seriously enough
			Getting defensive in reaction to direct feedback and saying 'yes' to requests when they were unclear or not possible to execute
			HR department of university saying 'no' to request for help - direct response
		Non-verbal behavior	Trainer told interviewee that avoiding eye contact meant not giving attention, while interviewee's own culture sees making eye contact as impolite
		Compliments	Locals taking compliments as embarrassing
Friendship	Forming new friendships		Meets a new friend from another culture while apartment-searching
			Making new friends from other cultures at a meetup.com event
			Making a new friend from another culture and bonding very quickly
	Finding commonalities		Participating in communication workshop with other Ph.D. students during summer school
	Exploring cultural differences		Living in student housing, making many international friends
			One night during summer/winter school another consortium member shared her personal story of applying to the project, showcasing cultural differences
			Witnessing culture shock of another Ph.D. student
			Sharing an apartment after a course led to a deeper conversation between three Ph.D. students during which interviewee discovered cultural differences
			Discussion with friend when friend was complaining about locals not helping and other cultural differences
			"I saw so many Bollywood movies. Eating with hands which at the beginning is not easy because the food is very hot. Eating very spicy food and then learning other ways of thinking with your boyfriend or with your friends. She is completely different."

Table 4.2 Continued

Categories - nature of incidents		Incidents
Collaboration	Inclusive environment	Through the summer school program, an environment was created where consortium members were open, bonded, and everyone was included - important for successful collaboration
		Being inclusive, helping Ph.D. adjust to new culture, managing paperwork, cost a lot of time and energy
		Welcoming Ph.D. student and supporting her adaptation led to more productive and enjoyable time abroad
	Trust	Successful collaboration (writing a paper) by trusting each other's expertise
		Meeting new person at conference that becomes collaboration partner, trust built by being honest about (lack of expertise) and open-minded. Trust from the institution to support the partnership
	Goals and priorities	Supervisory board members having different ideas about the objectives of the project, different priorities
		Research project not moving forward due to lack of clear goals, different priorities
		Clarity about expectations, roles, goals leads to efficient collaboration on research projects

Table 4.2 Continued

Categories - nature of incidents		Incidents
Ways of behaving - cultural differences	Meetings	Lunch seminars - mixing lunch and work in meetings
		Spending more time in meetings that are not always productive
	Feedback	Wife being critiqued on how she received feedback - too defensive
		Meeting where interviewee received feedback on work and noticed two different approaches to giving feedback
	Cleaning	Friend not rinsing soap off dishes
	Playful behavior	Consortium members being playful despite age/hierarchical position, e.g., supervisor planking, Ph.D. student creating character out of stuffed animal
	Relationships	Collecting survey data in Greece taking a lot of time and personal involvement with participants
		Different interaction and contact with kindergarten teachers of children - involving the parents more
		Different approach/relationship as supervisor with two Ph.D. students
	Costumes	Discovering that dressing up child in American Indian costume is inappropriate in USA
	Customer service	Waiters ignoring interviewee

Certain situational conditions were conducive to trigger events such as working together on a project, having to make new friendships due to moving to another country, living or temporarily staying in the same housing with people from another culture, taking courses/workshops together or the supervisor-Ph.D. student relationship. These situations were inherent to the set-up of the research consortium. Most Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers moved to a new country for their Ph.D., postdoc, or to do a secondment. In addition, collaboration between the different researchers was encouraged by some supervisors, and the consortium members attended summer and winter schools, courses, and workshops together in different locations. Besides, Ph.D. students had supervisors from a different country than their home country.

Many times, participants had emotional responses to the incidents, although less so for the collaboration incidents. Emotional responses ranged from stress, anxiety, frustration, anger, feeling hurt, disappointment, and shock, to amazement, happiness, and feeling connected. One participant explains how a taxi ride gone wrong, triggered negative emotions for him:

> Oh, I was panicking, so, so much panicking because there is the first part of it which was frustration with myself for not clarifying where I needed to be for, you know, my apartment renting process, of where you would sign the contract and stuff like that. And then there was just the frustration of not being able to clearly communicate to the taxi driver when I got the taxi as to where we actually needed to go. You know, and it was like, yeah, a lot of frustration and anxiety at that point in time. (male postdoctoral researcher, living abroad)

Learning and Cultural Sensemaking

The data showed that in most incidents some form of learning had taken place, although this was not necessarily in the form of cultural sensemaking. The categories of learning were *minimization*, *differences-similarities dialectical perspective*, *awareness of cultural differences*, and *cultural sensemaking* (Figure 4.1).

Minimization has been described as the trivialization of cultural differences and the belief that below the surface all cultures are the same (M. J. Bennett, 1986). While this cannot be considered cultural sensemaking, it can be considered learning when the person initially had a negative view of cultural differences. This is illustrated by one of the incidents in this study, whereby one of the Ph.D. students came to Europe feeling worried about the cultural differences she would

find, "I was so scared what kind of planet I'm going," as others in her country had told her Europeans were very independent and individualistic. During the incidents she recounted that she actually found people to be very caring, which led her to conclude that "all these things, like these stereotypes, they are really stereotypes. Now I don't believe in those things. I see that people, as human beings, we are so similar, very similar."

Some participants shifted to the *differences-similarities dialectical perspective*, discovering that "difference and similarity can coexist in intercultural communication interactions" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 67). Participants talked about how there were differences between themselves and their interaction partner due to their cultural or disciplinary background, but at the same time discovered similarities on an individual level. One participant (female, research assistant, living abroad) commented about a new friendship, "although she is from a very different background, she is quite similar to me in many ways. She's outgoing, she's fun and not necessarily what you'd expect from someone from Saudi Arabia either." The tension of this dialectical relationship was a surprising and significant discovery for participants recounting these incidents, as explained by one participant:

> I would count them among my oldest friends, and I was never expecting that. And especially because we are all so different. We are from different fields, different cultures, we have different life experiences, so I am in general somehow surprised that it is somehow possible. (male Ph.D. student, living abroad)

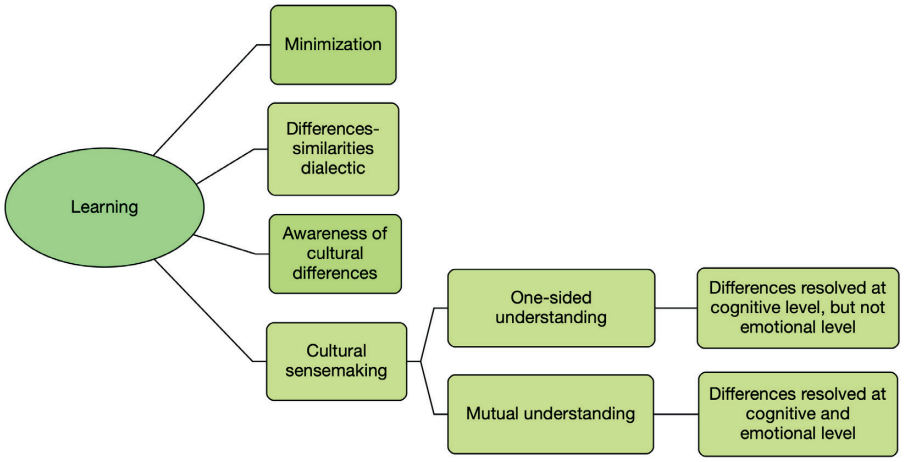


Figure 4.1 Concept Tree: Types of Learning from Trigger Events

The participants found commonalities in personalities, interests, work experiences, or the experience of doing a Ph.D. and this seemed to help them bond, "we all have problems with science supervisor's situation at the university, so the talk felt pretty much at home" (male, Ph.D. student, living abroad) and moving to a new country, "we all were playing out of our own country so we were playing in a different field (…) we were in the same situation, so it really took nothing to become friends" (female Ph.D. student, living abroad).

The next category was the *awareness of cultural differences*. In these cases, people were able to attribute certain behaviors to culture, although they did not attribute the behavior to specific values and did not understand the other's perspective at a cognitive and/or emotional level. One participant considers that "maybe it is just the culture of the workplace and I am not used to it and maybe that's why" (female Ph.D. student, living abroad). However, understanding that culture played a role in the incident was often an important realization for them and therefore can be considered learning.

The last category was *cultural sensemaking*. In these cases, the participants were able to make sense of the behavior of the other and of themselves by understanding the cultural values behind these behaviors. However, the data showed that this understanding could be perceived as one-sided or mutual. One-sided understanding meant that they understood the perspective of the other, but did not feel that the other understood their perspective, whereas mutual understanding meant that the participant felt that the other also understood them. When the understanding was perceived to be one-sided, the participants would be able to make sense of the incident at a cognitive level, but sometimes not at an emotional level, meaning negative emotions were not resolved. For example, one interviewee was left feeling powerless and annoyed, "there is very little I can do other than reiterate my annoyance and so ultimately it's difficult to become very angry because I don't think it will help."

On the other hand, when they perceived that the interaction partner(s) also understood their perspective, the sensemaking of the trigger event was more emotionally satisfying. For example, this participant recounts how her emotions changed when mutual understanding was reached, after arguing for one hour:

> So, after an hour we were like, ohhh. And then it was completely gone. We were like almost screaming at each other and then it was like, oh, solved. And no hard feelings whatsoever anymore, it was

> completely ok, so now we can continue. (female Ph.D. student, living in home country)

Outcomes of Learning

The learning from the trigger event led to changes in perspective or changes in behavior or approach for the interviewees. Participants talked about how the incident and the processing of it changed how they saw the particular behavior involved. Initially, they saw the behavior as negative, viewing it from their own frame of reference, and later came to see the behavior in a positive way, shifting their frame of reference. As one male postdoctoral researcher living abroad explains: "then you start to realize the positive aspects. Maybe in the beginning you only think, 'Hey, so cold these people here.' But then you realize, 'Hey, so honest these people here.'" Some participants also changed how they thought about their own culture, as one male Ph.D. student, living abroad explains, "other cultures could be very good reflectors on ourselves as well."

As a result of the learning, many consortium members changed their behavior or approach. This involved adapting their own behavior, compromising, or finding a strategy to manage the cultural differences. Adaptation was a common approach to cultural differences, as one female Ph.D. student living abroad commented, "sometimes when you live in another place you have to adapt your behavior to the values of where you are. Otherwise, you are always going to be in conflict because the country is not going to change for you." Another participant explains how he adapted his more indirect communication style to a more direct one:

> Before I was on the receiving end, I just do what they instruct me to do, what they want me to do or what they expect me to do. (…) But now I realize this is a bit of a waste of time because if I really don't believe this is going to work then I must say, "this is not going to work, we are going to a direction that is not, that's a dead end." So now I am more assertive, I say "I think that is not going to work." (male Ph.D. student, living abroad)

Sometimes the change in behavior involved a compromise. One Spanish participant explains how he compromised on eating lunch in the Netherlands, "so my sandwiches, okay, I surrender my bread with you, but I do my own version of the sandwich. So, I've got my version of Dutch lunch. I make it more Spanish – more complete, bigger sandwiches." Occasionally, participants would avoid the cultural behavior they had learned about in the incident, for example, one interviewee

decided to avoid having locals do her dishes as she found their way of doing them was not something she could get used to.

As a result of the incidents, consortium members also found different strategies to manage cultural differences. One strategy was to avoid making assumptions and ask more questions. Clarifying what one means was another strategy, as explained by this interviewee:

> Maybe my concept of time is different, or my ideas of when a deadline is and I should be clear in communicating what I mean with 'then is the deadline' and put it even earlier to make sure I have less stress. And not only see a deadline as I would see it. (female Ph.D. student, living in home country)

Other ways to manage cultural differences were to be better prepared and know what to expect, "I would definitely say I would be far more prepared next time round, just from that lesson, that experience." In addition, managing and making explicit expectations was a change in approach to collaboration or supervision of Ph.D. students, "what I would do differently at the very beginning of doing supervision, especially with foreign students coming from different cultures, is to have a long and detailed conversation about what your expectations are concerning a Ph.D. work or doing research work" (female Ph.D. supervisor, living in home country). Engaging in dialogue about differences or addressing issues were also strategies that participants started employing as a result of the incidents:

> Nowadays I am more mature, that experience would be an example for me to, maybe trying to raise the problem first or to see if there is a solution earlier. As I told you I never actually said, "this is an issue for me." I was just going on and on and receiving no's to my face. (…) That is what I have learned. (male postdoctoral researcher, living abroad)

Intercultural Sensemaking Process and Strategies

The process of intercultural sensemaking, based on the data, is illustrated in Figure 4.2. To be successful at cultural sensemaking, participants needed to have or acquire culture-specific knowledge relevant to the trigger event. One cannot make sense of the behavior of others and attribute these behaviors correctly, without having knowledge about the other's culture or engaging in a strategy to acquire this knowledge. An example of applying culture-specific knowledge about cultural values to make sense of an incident is:

In Serbia it would be completely normal that I invite a friend and I'm like, "Hey, I'm moving – can you help me for two days?" meaning 24 hours and they will be fine with that whereas in the Netherlands they still will help you, but it is not okay for you to ask for someone to be 24 hours a day at your place. They will still help you, it's just the threshold is different. So, they will do it for 2 hours maybe. So that is the difference – that is how I understand it. So, I would not say they are less hospitable or less helpful, it's just the threshold is different of how much you are willing to do for someone else. And I understand it definitely coming from more individualistic versus collectivist culture. (female research assistant, living abroad)

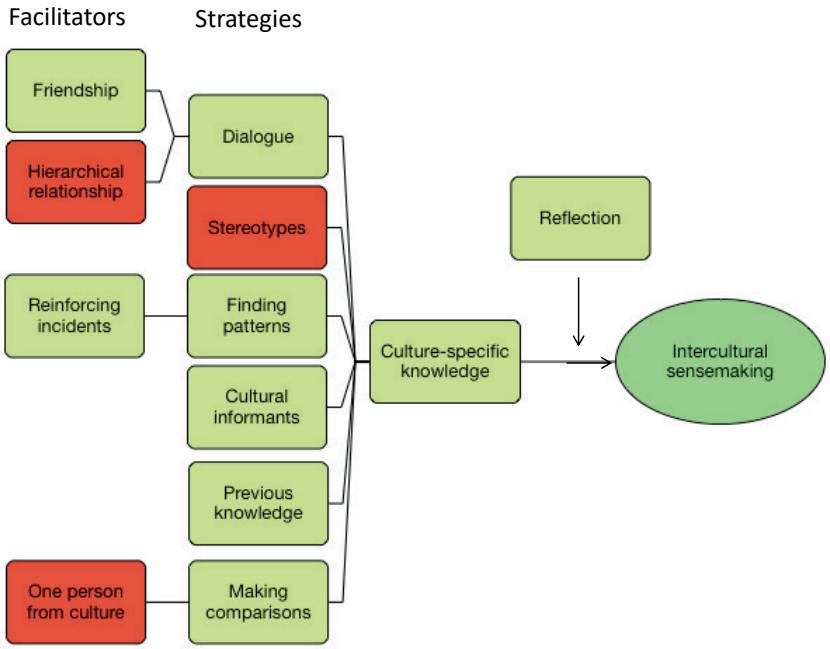


Figure 4.2 Intercultural Sensemaking Strategies and Process

At times, participants applied knowledge about cultural history to come to cultural sensemaking:

The church is very important in Ireland; they have religious classes in school still every morning (…) So, religion is supposed to teach you to be very humble and it's not nice to really stand out. When I make a compliment I make them stand out of the rest of the crowd

> and it's not so nice. So, basically when I'm trying to be nice I'm just embarrassing them. (female Ph.D. student, living abroad)

In addition, culture-specific knowledge of one's own culture is important to understand one's own reaction or perspective in the situation. An example is:

> I think it is a characteristic of Dutch culture that people are very mindful of time. So being on time is considered very important and being late (…) so when I'm late for a meeting, I feel terrible and I'm very apologetic when I arrive late for a meeting. (male supervisor, living in home country)

Culture-specific knowledge could already be present before the trigger event, be gained through the trigger event or after the event. Some participants already had knowledge from previous experience with the culture, "I remember my friends when I still was living with my parents, we also had Italian friends and there's always this Mediterranean culture" (male, Ph.D. student, living abroad). Or they read about cultural differences, with which they were able to make sense of the trigger event. One participant (male Ph.D. student, living abroad) explains his previous knowledge of directness in German culture: "I also read about it actually and if you ask me what impact it had on me, is that I should be prepared for everything, prepared to hear anything."

Other participants engaged in different strategies to obtain the culture-specific knowledge to make sense of the intercultural interaction or understand the culture of the other person better. These strategies consisted of dialogue, cultural informants, making comparisons, and finding patterns.

Dialogue with the interaction partner(s) to make sense of their behavior took place during the trigger events or afterwards. One participant recounts:

> I think I mainly learned from it, because I asked them what was going on, we talked about it, and then I realized like ok, it's not they are doing this on purpose to frustrate me or give me more stress, it's just that they have a completely different understanding of what I meant with this deadline. (female Ph.D. student, living in home country)

In some cases, this led to mutual understanding. In other cases, however, dialogue was unsuccessful in reaching mutual understanding and only led to one-sided

sense-making. All trigger events related to language and interdisciplinary differences whereby dialogue was used as a sensemaking strategy were successful in reaching mutual understanding, but this was not the case for all culture-related incidents. This may be because language and interdisciplinary differences are more prominent, whereas cultural differences are more hidden. In addition, it may be that people are less comfortable discussing cultural differences than discussing language or interdisciplinary differences. This idea is strengthened by the finding that mutual understanding through dialogue was facilitated by the presence of a friendship between the interactors. For example, this participant explains:

> That's the main thing with my friend, every time there is something and we can see that there is going to be a bit of a difference, he goes like, "differences are fine." We understood each other – there's going to be a difference there. But it's okay. (female Ph.D. student, living abroad)

On the other hand, reaching mutual understanding through dialogue was less successful when the interactors did not have equal status due to hierarchy or seniority, such as between this supervisor and Ph.D. student:

> She expected me as her supervisor to tell her exactly what to do and how to do things while I told her, "look this is not what a Ph.D. is about, it's about that we have questions, we should also think of how to answer the questions, what are the possible solutions for that question." And actually we couldn't really resolve this situation. So, she thought that we are not having those capabilities or that knowledge that we should have to be able to supervise her, while at the other hand we thought she was not able to make a change because she always said, "what is not written down in the literature that cannot be researched or investigated because that's not written down." So, in the end this became such a harsh conflict between us that she decided to terminate the contract. (Ph.D. supervisor, living in home country)

The use of cultural informants also occurred during or after the events. Cultural informants were either present during the event or the event was discussed with people outside of the event afterwards. Cultural informants were, for example, colleagues or friends. As this participant explains:

> I would go and have lunch with a colleague, be it that day or the next day, and I would have a chance to debrief and ask questions

> about things and perhaps get a better understanding as to what was going on and how I felt after the meeting. (male, Ph.D. student, living abroad).

These cultural informants helped the participants make sense of the interaction, because they had some culture-specific knowledge that the participant gained from them. An example:

> In my culture basically you do not keep eye contact, because that is a sign of being impolite, so often it's we try our best with eye contact, so we look somewhere else as we speak and so on. And she told me that it is like that, in her culture if you don't keep eye contact you are either lying or you are not attentive to the conversation. (male Ph.D. student, living abroad).

Cultural informants helped the participant through discussing the event with them or in one case through mediation. In that case, the cultural informant "acted as a bridge or acted as someone who mediates" resolving a misunderstanding, "she had an understanding of what we mean by clustering on my side and clustering on that side" (male Ph.D. student, living abroad).

Making comparisons and finding patterns were strategies that were sometimes interrelated but also occurred as independent processes. Some people made comparisons between the way people from different cultures did similar things differently, as this participant explains:

> It is different approaches for the same process for the same action, activity. I mean they are giving me feedback on my thesis and I can easily compare whether how they are doing it and how they differ in their way of doing it. (female Ph.D. student, living abroad).

Another way to use this strategy was to compare the interactor's behavior to the behavior of other people from that culture:

> He said, 'Yes, we could.' He didn't look at me in the eyes so much at that moment, so somehow even I knew what it meant. But they're always like this. They never say no because they feel uncomfortable if they say no to something, so they are trying to come up with all these ways of saying almost yes, but not yes, but not no. And it's like this

> with each and every single thing. So, you have to know that. You have to be aware of that. (female Ph.D. student, living abroad).

When there were many people to compare the behavior to, for example, when the interactor was from the host country, this facilitated making comparisons as one can compare the individual to the group. However, when the interactor was from a culture with which the participant had not had a lot of contact, it was difficult to make comparisons. The participants then were not sure whether the behavior could be attributed to personality or culture and were careful not to generalize too quickly, as this quote illustrates:

> I think perhaps in his culture things are a bit more laid back and maybe it's not more important, although I cannot really judge because I don't really know his culture very well. So, that's perhaps also why I'm not sure how to attribute this behavior. Perhaps it's just something personal. (male supervisor, living in home country)

Finding patterns involved noticing a recurring behavior when similar situations happened multiple times. These could be similar situations that others experienced, for example, "talking with other people who experienced more or less similar situations, then I saw that there was a pattern" or identifying similar behavior with similar situations:

> I have to say that I had this feeling over and over with Dutch people and I realize the difference we have between you and maybe myself … more than the once: the very beginning with the 'burger' number things … the health insurance, in the case of the tax declaration. (male postdoctoral researcher, living abroad).

When a person experiences reoccurring incidents, this facilitates the use of this strategy to acquire culture-specific knowledge.

Hindering the application or acquirement of culture-specific knowledge to come to cultural sensemaking was stereotyping, as one participant recounts, "there were some type of stereotyping, but I would wish that I couldn't confirm any of those negative stereotyping stories but one of them has been confirmed." Sometimes there was overgeneralization, for example, "I read some books about the German being very direct, so and I supposed he lived here over 30 years and it was my

expectation that he is also in that group of telling things direct." Other times stereotyping created an oversimplified perception, as this interviewee explains:

> I had lots of stereotypes about Europe and then also I thought that Irish people are a bit similar to British people and British are (…) I heard a lot of things about them, like they are very cold, like they are not affected with anything, they are not that emotional, stuff like that. So, like people are very individualistic, like I as an individual is more important than anything else, things like that. (female Ph.D. student, living abroad)

With culture-specific knowledge, participants could reflect on the incident and make sense of what happened. So, reflection is also an essential part of the intercultural sensemaking process, as illustrated by this participant:

> I think I reflected by myself and with others, maybe not even work-related people, on what happened. So that made me realize, ok so now I understand, and I mean you learn from it. So, in the end it was not that bad, it was informative. (female Ph.D. student, living in home country)

In sum, the intercultural sensemaking process entails reflecting on the incident and using culture-specific knowledge to make sense of what happened. The culture-specific knowledge comes from previously acquired knowledge that is applied to the incident or is acquired during or after the event through dialogue, cultural informants, finding patterns, or making comparisons.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore which trigger events the members of the research consortium experienced working and living in another country and working in a multicultural context. The study found four main types of trigger events: misunderstandings or disagreements, friendships, collaboration, and different ways of behaving. It seems that certain situations facilitated these trigger events, such as needing to make new friends and sharing housing, collaborating on a project or following workshops/courses together, as well as the relationship between the Ph.D. supervisor and student. In addition, the research questions of this study were focused on understanding what individuals learn from trigger

events and how trigger events can lead to intercultural competence. The results show that learning from a trigger event constitutes multiple forms, namely minimization, differences-similarities dialectical perspective, awareness of cultural differences, and cultural sensemaking. For cultural sensemaking to take place, the individual needs to be able to acquire or have acquired relevant culture-specific knowledge to make sense of the trigger event. Individuals who engaged in cultural sensemaking already had prior knowledge or acquired culture-specific knowledge through dialogue, cultural informants, making comparisons, and finding patterns. The process of intercultural sensemaking requires reflection on the trigger event.

The types of events identified in this study show some similarities with trigger events previously identified in the literature. The incidents with friendships are somewhat similar to those that Clapp-Smith and Wernsing (2014) described as immersing with local customs and people, while the incidents about different ways of behaving show similarities with those that Clapp-Smith and Wernsing named experiencing the novelty of "normality". Similarly, this study confirms that communicating in another language is a trigger event, but expands on the types of trigger events with other misunderstandings and disagreements, including differences in value orientations, communication, and disciplinary backgrounds. Another addition to the literature is collaboration as a trigger event, which is more likely to occur when the context requires one to work with people from other cultural backgrounds.

This study also shows that trigger events can be both positive and negative. Particularly the trigger events involving friendships were positive, as well as some of the incidents on collaboration and ways of behaving. In line with Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011), positive emotions were brought forth by friendships, whereby the members were of equal status and the contact was meaningful and personal. When the Ph.D. students were sharing housing, following workshops together, or collaborating with one another, this contact was also supported by their supervisors and the common goal of the research consortium. Similarly, successful collaboration often involved having a common goal. Negative trigger events were more likely to involve a hierarchical relationship, often between Ph.D. student and supervisor, supporting Allport's (1952) theory. A hierarchical relationship was also less likely to lead to dialogue as a strategy for cultural sensemaking, compared to a relationship between friends or team members of equal status.

The qualitative results indicate that the reactions of fight or flight, as theorized by Osland et al. (2007, 2023), were not very common. It is possible that research

participants did not choose incidents where they showed this reaction, as they were less meaningful to them than the ones where more learning took place. Another explanation could be social desirability in their answers. The reaction of acceptance from Osland et al.'s theory is most similar to the reaction of awareness of cultural differences in that both reactions involve recognizing that cultural differences are at play, while not understanding the differences. However, acceptance was not the best description of the reaction found in the interviewees' answers as they did not always seem to be fully accepting of the difference. It may also be necessary to understand a difference before one can accept it. In addition, this study added minimization and the differences-similarities dialectical perspective as two possible reactions to trigger events that constitute learning. So, trigger events can contribute to intercultural competence development in different ways.

The findings show that learning from trigger events can indeed be transformational and enhance individuals' intercultural competence (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Reichard et al., 2014; Rosenblatt et al., 2013). The outcomes of learning were mainly a change of perspective and a change in behavior or approach to cultural differences. This confirms Taylor's (1994) theory that a trigger event can transform one's meaning perspective. Besides, the data help define the changes in behavior that trigger events can elicit. Consortium members adapted to, compromised, or avoided the cultural aspect they learned about from the incident. This is in line with Adler and Aycan's (2018) model on approaches to intercultural interactions. Strategies to manage cultural differences more effectively were clarifying, avoiding assumptions, asking questions, preparing oneself, discussing expectations, and engaging in dialogue to address cultural differences. While the data do not directly show this, these strategies may be useful to achieve creative compromises or synergistic resolutions that involve mutual understanding and adjustment (Adler & Aycan, 2018).

The study contributes to the literature by creating a model of how sensemaking strategies can be used to come to cultural sensemaking, giving insight into the process from trigger event to intercultural sensemaking. It confirms previous literature (Bhawuk, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1991; Reichard et al., 2014; Taylor, 1994) about the critical role of reflection in learning from own's intercultural experiences, as this study has shown reflection to be part of the sensemaking process. In addition, culture-specific knowledge needs to be applied to make sense of an intercultural incident. This finding is in line with Osland et al.'s (2000) theory on cultural sensemaking whereby attributional knowledge of cultural values and history contribute to sensemaking. It confirms that cultural sensemaking involves

culture-specific knowledge as well as culture-general metacognitive skills to attain the culture-specific knowledge (Rasmussen et al., 2011). Moreover, this study adds to the limited literature on sensemaking strategies (Nardon & Aten, 2016; Sieck et al., 2013) by identifying strategies that are used to acquire the culture-specific knowledge needed for cultural sensemaking, namely previous knowledge, dialogue, cultural informants, finding patterns, and making comparisons. The results also give insights into which situational conditions facilitate certain strategies. Friendships or equal status relationships allow for effective dialogue more than hierarchical relationships. Reinforcing events facilitate finding patterns, while knowing only one or few people from a culture inhibits making comparisons. Stereotyping, as Osland et al. (2000) also noted, is an obstacle to cultural sensemaking because it misleads us into making the wrong assumptions or hinders us in finding more meaningful explanations of what is happening.

Practical Implications

The findings have several practical implications. First of all, if academic institutions or project leaders want to develop the intercultural competence of their employees, particularly Ph.D. students, and therewith their employability, they are advised to provide opportunities for international secondments or other living abroad experiences, and collaboration between individuals from different cultures and disciplines. It is recommended to do this in a structured and facilitated manner, for example, built into a Ph.D. trajectory with support and guidance. In this way, employees will have more probability of experiencing trigger events that can lead to cultural sensemaking and subsequent learning. Paying attention to facilitating friendship formation is also beneficial, considering the positive effect this had on learning in this study. This could be done through social events or intensive time spent together in a summer school format. The findings also support the initiatives of corporates and other organizations in sending employees on international assignments for developmental purposes.

To support and guide employees in learning from trigger events, organizations can provide intercultural training to employees that teaches them to identify trigger events and reflect on them, as well as training in the strategies for intercultural sensemaking. Organizations and managers/supervisors can encourage dialogue about cultural differences and exploration of each other's cultural values, behaviors, norms, and traditions, through team building activities and workshops. Managers/supervisors could also role model these dialogues. The organizational culture, as well as the organizational leadership, can emphasize that conflicts and misunderstandings are opportunities for learning. Employees can be encouraged

to seek cultural informants or organizations can deliberately assign cultural mentors to employees living and working abroad. Resources with culture-specific knowledge can be made available to employees, for example, online tools based on research about cultural dimensions or intercultural training materials. Employees can also be given the time and space to reflect regularly on their intercultural experiences, for example, with a coach or through journaling.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further research

There are several methodological limitations to this study. The findings were based on interviews with members of a research consortium in Europe. The findings may not generalize to other contexts such as non-academic contexts. The project leaders of the consortium also took deliberate actions to create an international consortium with members and institutions from different countries and disciplines, and secondments abroad, as well as relationships between members and opportunities to collaborate, including the winter and summer schools. Without these actions, the nature or experience of the trigger events may have been different. Researchers may also use different strategies in intercultural sensemaking than individuals from other backgrounds. For example, finding patterns and commonalities are ways of thinking that are common in conducting research.

Another limitation of this study may be the personal relationship that the researcher had with the participants. Joining them on their summer school created trust and established rapport with the participants facilitating the interviews and sharing of experiences, benefitting the data collection. However, it may have influenced their answers about incidents in the research consortium when they knew that the researcher also knew the individuals they were talking about. They may have assumed shared contextual knowledge or been reluctant to discuss negative experiences involving other consortium members.

While the critical incident technique used in the interviewing of participants was an effective way to study the learning process, it has several limitations. The retelling of the critical incidents may be prone to recall bias. It may also be the case that certain types of critical incidents are retold before others, for example, those that made the participant be perceived in a positive way. Some of the incidents retold by the participants did not take place during the 4-year project so they give less insight into how participants learned from the particular situation of working in a multicultural research consortium. There were also participants that did not seem to have trigger events or did not learn significantly from the trigger events they shared. These tended to be participants who stayed in their home country

and had a higher age. The question then remains whether these factors; working multiculturally in one's home country, age, or experience, diminish the likelihood to experience trigger events or learn from them. There may be individual and situational differences that influence the likelihood of experiencing trigger events, as well as the likelihood that one learns from the trigger events.

It is important to acknowledge the lens through which the data were analyzed. As a researcher with extensive international experience as well as an intercultural trainer and educator, my own understanding of intercultural competence may have influenced the interpretation of participants' stories. In addition, my identity as Dutch and an adult third culture kid and familiarity with certain cultures, namely Spanish and US American, may have made some incidents easier to understand than others. But ultimately, the focus was on the understanding the participants had of the incident, not my own, and efforts were made to remain aware of these potential biases through the use of memo writing. During the interviews, relating to people with a culture I am familiar with may have been easier, allowing for them to open up more, in comparison to those with a culture I am less familiar with. Being an intercultural trainer, I was also careful to refrain from asking coaching questions or giving cultural insights during the interviews as not to influence the answers of the participants.

Future research could investigate the relationship between individual factors and the occurrence of trigger events as well as the learning from trigger events. Similarly, different intercultural experiences (e.g., study abroad, work assignments, multicultural teams) could be compared to find out whether and how the amount, frequency, and intensity of trigger events is influenced by the type of international experience or different contextual factors of those experiences. Different types of people and their work contexts, such as expatriates and global leaders, could be researched to investigate the generalizability of the findings. In addition, a quantitative study on the sensemaking strategies identified in this study would further validate the findings.

More insight is also needed into the impact of intercultural sensemaking from trigger events on intercultural competence development and the process in which this happens. Subsequently, it would be interesting to research the transferability of intercultural competence development from trigger events. In other words, if an individual has learned and made sense of a particular trigger event, to what extent will this learning be useful in other interactions with people from that culture or with people from other cultures in general.

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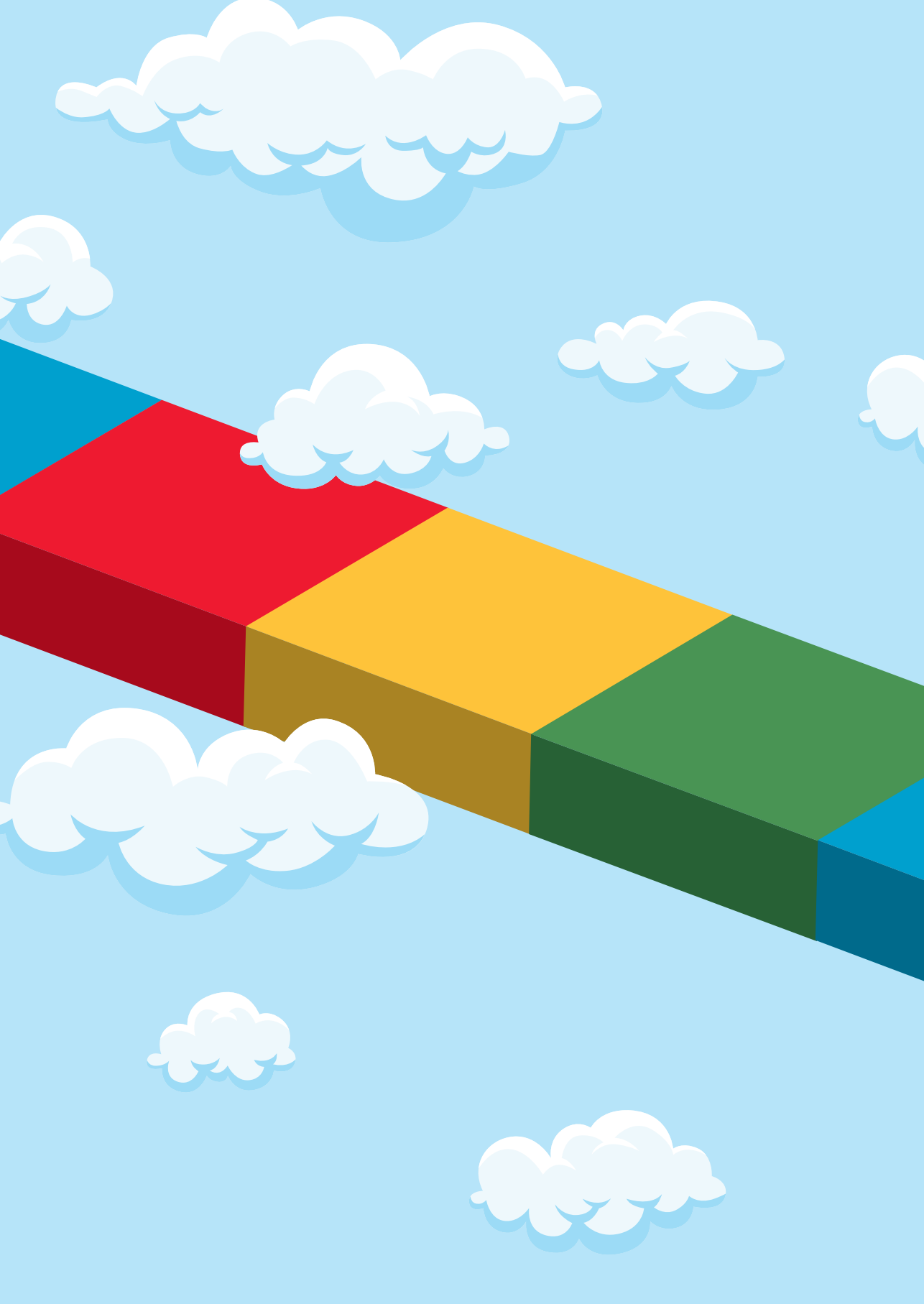

Chapter 5

Predictors of Cultural Sensemaking: A Vignette Study into Adult Third Culture Kids, Multicultural Personality Traits, and Sensemaking Strategies

Due to globalization, working in multicultural teams, expatriation, global leadership, and cross-cultural business negotiations are increasingly common, leading to more intercultural interactions (Adler & Aycan, 2018). The way employees respond to and manage the cultural differences in these interactions determines their effectiveness and that of their organizations. Being effective in intercultural interactions is related to intercultural competence (Leung et al., 2014). A growing group of individuals, named adult third culture kids (ATCKs), grew up internationally (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), constantly engaging in intercultural interactions. Due to their childhood experiences, they are believed to have enhanced intercultural competence.

While interculturally competent individuals have been found to be more effective in intercultural interactions (Leung et al., 2014), *how* more interculturally competent individuals behave and perform in intercultural interactions is under-researched (Hofhuis et al., 2020), as well as *how* intercultural interactions can be successfully managed (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Molinsky, 2007). A part of effectively managing intercultural interactions is cultural sensemaking, whereby one understands the cultural behavior of the other (Sieck et al., 2011). Several strategies for cultural sensemaking have been identified (Nardon & Aten, 2016; Sieck et al., 2013; previous chapter of this dissertation). However, cultural sensemaking and the strategies that can be used to achieve this have received little attention in the literature.

Therefore, the research question of this study is: '*What strategies do interculturally competent individuals use to make sense of intercultural interactions?*' The purpose of the study is to quantitatively test the relationship between the sensemaking strategies identified in the study from Chapter 4 and cultural sensemaking, and the relationship with intercultural competence. This vignette study collected responses to two intercultural incidents from a group of students and a group of ATCKs through a survey. In addition, their multicultural personality was measured. The study contributes to the literature by showing which traits of intercultural competence individuals need to effectively engage in cultural sensemaking and which strategies are more or less useful for cultural sensemaking. The results provide insights to organizations and training professionals on how to train cultural sensemaking and which sensemaking strategies to develop in employees for effective intercultural interactions. Besides, this study adds to the growing but inconclusive literature on (A)TCKs and intercultural competence.

This introduction is followed by a literature review on cultural sensemaking and strategies, multicultural personality traits, and ATCKs. Next, the method section describes the design of the study, the sample, and the measures used for the

different variables. The results are presented in the next section, followed by the discussion and conclusion.

Literature Review

Cultural Sensemaking & Strategies

Cultural sensemaking consists of the "processes by which people come to understand and explain the behavior of others with distinct cultural backgrounds" (Sieck et al., 2011, p. 104). When people from different cultural backgrounds interact, they may misunderstand each other due to their different cultural assumptions, expectations, values, and norms. In intercultural interactions, people tend to interpret the situation using their own cultural lens and cognitive schema (Osland & Bird, 2000). However, to be more effective in intercultural interactions one needs to understand the behavior of the other person(s) from their cultural perspective, making isomorphic attributions or in other words, making the same attributions about their behavior as they make themselves (Triandis, 1975). This is part of intercultural competence (Sieck et al., 2013). Intercultural competence consists of understanding the other's worldview and the ability to shift one's frame of reference appropriately (Deardorff, 2006). It has been argued that those with higher metacognitive cultural intelligence are better able to make sense of intercultural situations through reflection, observation, and consideration of multiple perspectives (Ng et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, there is limited empirical evidence on what strategies are used for cultural sensemaking in intercultural interactions (Sieck et al., 2013). Rasmussen, Sieck, and Osland (2010) posit that cultural sensemaking involves culture-specific knowledge, as well as culture-general metacognitive skills to attain the culture-specific knowledge. This was confirmed by my grounded theory study of 48 real-life incidents (Chapter 4 of this dissertation).

Five metacognitive strategies for effective cultural sensemaking were suggested by Sieck et al. (2013). First, to engage in cultural sensemaking a sojourner would need to identify an anomaly. The second strategy is to instantiate cultural schema whereby the focus is on considering cultural explanations for the anomalous behavior. A third strategy is to inquire into the cause of unexpected observations. A fourth strategy constitutes considering alternative explanations rather than focusing on one hypothesis. A last strategy is to suspend judgement and keep an open mind. Sieck et al.'s (2013) vignette study showed that cross-cultural experts

use the strategies of instantiating a general cultural schema, inquiring into causes, and considering alternative explanations more than non-experts. Limited empirical evidence was found in their study for suspending judgment, and there was no support for the strategy of identifying an anomaly.

A study on cultural sensemaking in blogging identified four mechanisms used by immigrants and expatriates to make sense of their new foreign environment (Nardon & Aten, 2016). Self-debating involved considering possible explanations or alternative explanations (Nardon & Aten, 2016), similar to the fourth strategy theorized by Sieck et al. (2013). Making comparisons to the home country was another mechanism used by bloggers, and sequencing of facts and events is a mechanism whereby one links facts and events to outcomes. The last mechanism identified was reflecting on information-gathering whereby experience and observations were connected to information gathered (Nardon & Aten, 2016).

In contrast to Sieck et al. (2013), the study in Chapter 4 used real-life incidents from a multicultural team of Ph.D. students, postdoctoral researchers, and research assistants, and their supervisors. The majority of the participants was living and working in another country than their home country. Using a grounded theory approach, five effective strategies for cultural sensemaking were found that were different to those theorized by Sieck et al. (2013). Participants gained culture-specific knowledge through the strategies of applying previous knowledge, finding patterns, making comparisons, dialogue, and cultural informants. Stereotyping was found to be a strategy that inhibited cultural sensemaking.

The first three strategies, applying previous knowledge, finding patterns, and making comparisons, can be considered metacognitive strategies. Applying previous knowledge means one uses information from books or other sources to make sense of the situation. It has similarities with Nardon and Aten's (2016) mechanism of reflecting on information-gathering. Finding patterns involves noticing a reoccuring behavior when similar situations happen multiple times. Making comparisons is a strategy where a comparison is made between the way people from different cultures do similar things differently. Nardon and Aten (2016) also identified this as a cultural sensemaking mechanism, except in my study making comparisons could also involve comparing the interactor’s behavior to the behavior of other people from the same culture.

The last two effective strategies identified in my grounded theory study can be considered interactional strategies. These strategies were not found in Nardon and

Aten's study (2016), possibly because in their study they focused on introspection, not interaction. Dialogue is a strategy where one discusses the incident with those involved to come to cultural sensemaking. Using cultural informants involves discussing the incident with someone outside the incident who has attributional knowledge about the culture. It has also been recommended by Osland and Bird (2000) as a strategy for effective cultural sensemaking. Table 5.1 gives an overview of the strategies from the three different studies and where there are similarities (displayed in the same row).

The current study tests whether the strategies of cultural sensemaking identified in Chapter 4 can also be found in a larger sample, examining the generalizability of the theory. The study explores whether and to what extent the sensemaking strategies of previous knowledge, finding patterns, making comparisons, engaging in dialogue, and using cultural informants are used by individuals when asked to make sense of an intercultural situation. In addition, it is expected that the use of these strategies will lead to cultural sensemaking as the results in Chapter 4 showed. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Using sensemaking strategies positively affects cultural sensemaking

Table 5.1 Overview of Sensemaking Strategies Identified in Previous Studies

Sieck et al. (2013)	**Nardon & Aten (2016)**	**Chapter 4**
Identify an anomaly		
Instantiate cultural schema		
Inquire as to causes		
Suspend judgment		
Consider alternative explanations	Self-debating	
	Sequencing of facts and events	
	Making comparisons to home country	Making comparisons
	Reflecting on information-gathering	Using previous knowledge
		Finding patterns
		Dialogue
		Cultural informants

Note. Strategies in the same row are similar

Multicultural Personality

Intercultural competent individuals are expected to be more effective at cultural sensemaking. Many models of intercultural competence exist (Leung et al., 2014). A well-tested assessment (Bücker & Poutsma, 2010) of intercultural effectiveness is the multicultural personality model which includes five intercultural traits (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). Cultural empathy is the sensitivity to feelings and behaviors of others from different cultural groups. Open-mindedness involves being open and without prejudice towards other cultural groups (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). Emotional stability is the ability to handle psychological stress without strong feelings and reactions. Flexibility means that one learns from new experiences and adjusts behavior. Those with the trait social initiative are active in interacting and establishing relationships (Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000).

The multicultural personality questionnaire (MPQ) has been used to predict sociocultural adjustment of students (Lee & Ciftci, 2014; Leong, 2007) and expatriates (Halim et al., 2014; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2003), and student performance in diverse teams (Van Der Zee et al., 2004). While the results of these studies suggest that individuals who score higher on the MPQ are more effective in intercultural interactions, this has not been directly measured in these studies. In contrast, Herfst et al. (2008) did measure intercultural effectiveness in intercultural incidents and found a positive effect of open-mindedness and cultural empathy (Herfst et al., 2008). More recently, Hofhuis et al. (2020) researched whether individuals with a more multicultural personality were more effective in an intercultural interaction simulation game, Barnga. While open-mindedness, cultural empathy, and flexibility were not significantly related to effectiveness in the simulation, emotional stability was positively related to effectiveness by reducing stress and social initiative through enhanced proactive communication.

Theoretically, it seems plausible that a multicultural personality is positively related to cultural sensemaking and the use of sensemaking strategies. The trait cultural empathy involves the ability to understand the other's behavior (Van Der Zee et al., 2013), which is central to cultural sensemaking. Understanding the other's worldview and the ability to shift one's frame of reference appropriately require open-mindedness (Deardorff, 2006). It is also likely that a certain cognitive open-mindedness is needed to engage in strategies such as finding patterns and making comparisons, but also in using dialogue to come to cultural sensemaking. People with more flexibility are motivated to interpret a new situation and effectively adapt to it (Van Der Zee et al., 2013), suggesting they are able to culturally make sense of the situation. Individuals who have flexibility have been able to learn from

previous intercultural experiences and have a positive outlook on intercultural interactions (Van Der Zee et al., 2013), which should encourage the use of sensemaking strategies. The proactiveness of people with high social initiative (Van Der Zee et al., 2013) may provide the drive to engage in cultural sensemaking. In addition, social initiative involves an active approach in intercultural situations, which may support the use of interactional sensemaking strategies such as dialogue. Emotional stability may contribute to staying calm in intercultural situations that create uncertainty and anxiety. This is important for sensemaking because too much uncertainty and anxiety can prevent individuals from making accurate attributions and interpretations (Gudykunst, 1998). Besides, being stressed during an interaction could hinder the cognitive ability to engage in sensemaking strategies. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses 2: The MPQ dimensions: cultural empathy (2a), open-mindedness (2b), flexibility (2c), social initiative (2d), and emotional stability (2e) are positively related to cultural sensemaking.

Hypotheses 3: The sensemaking strategies mediate the relationship between cultural empathy (3a), open-mindedness (3b), flexibility (3c), social initiative (3d), and emotional stability (3e), and cultural sensemaking.

(Adult) Third Culture Kids

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is defined as a "person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any" (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 13). The term 'adult third culture kids' (ATCKs) refers to adults that grew up as TCKs, differentiating between those in adulthood and those in childhood. ATCKs, having grown up in multiple countries and having been exposed to culturally diverse environments, tend to have a higher intercultural competence (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Selmer & Lam, 2004).

A study (Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009) on the MPQ and adolescent TCKs found that the TCKs had more open-mindedness and cultural empathy than the non-TCKs. A study by Selmer and Lam (2004) showed TCKs were more open-minded, while McCammon's study (2020) indicated that TCKs had a higher cultural empathy, although a different measurement instrument than the MPQ was used. The original work on TCKs by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) also characterized most TCKs as being less prejudiced due to their exposure to different cultures. In addition, TCKs have an expanded worldview which means they understand there are different

ways to view life and many ways to do the same thing (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). However, a recent study (De Waal & Born, 2020) found no significant differences between ATCKs and non-ATCKs in open-mindedness and cultural empathy.

TCKs have been described as chameleons due to their high adaptability to new cultural situations (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This would suggest they have a high flexibility, as confirmed by Selmer and Lam (2004). Though, Dewaele and Van Oudenhoven (2009) did not find a significant difference in flexibility between TCKs and non-TCKs.

Furthermore, ATCKs are expected to score higher on social initiative than non-ATCKs. While Dewaele and Van Oudenhoven (2009) did not find a significant difference in social initiative, Pollock and Van Reken (2009) found TCKs to have advanced social skills as they have had to enter new social environments and build new friendships multiple times during their childhood years.

ATCKs are expected to have less emotional stability than non-ATCKs. Due to their high mobility during childhood, TCKs have repeatedly been confronted with loss of their relationships and homes. This may result in unresolved grief and other emotional issues (Gilbert, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). TCKs have indeed been found to score lower on emotional stability (Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009) than non-TCKs, while De Waal and Born (2020) found no significant differences in emotional stability between ATCKs and non-ATCKs. Based on this, the following hypotheses were formulated:

> *Hypotheses 4: ATCKs have more cultural empathy (4a), open-mindedness (4b), flexibility (4c), social initiative (4d), and less emotional stability (4e) than non-ATCKs.*

Methods

This study takes a combined qualitative-quantitative approach, particularly a generalization model (Srnka & Koeszegi, 2007). This approach was taken as it allows more insights into cultural sensemaking and sensemaking strategies, as well as generalizable results (Srnka & Koeszegi, 2007). The study used an online questionnaire with vignettes in the form of animation videos and open-ended questions (qualitative) followed by a questionnaire (quantitative).

Participants

To be able to compare individuals with high intercultural competence to individuals with low intercultural competence, university students and adult third culture kids (ATCKs) were sampled. While some university students may have high intercultural competence, most will have grown up in their home country and be fairly young. Thus, this sample was expected to include more partcipants with a low intercultural competence.

University students were recruited through an email to the first-year Bachelor Business Administration students of two Dutch research universities who had followed courses that were taught by the author and one of the Ph.D. co-supervisors. It concerned a course in Organizational Behavior (approx. 500 students) and a course in Cross-Cultural Management (approx. 200 students). Due to the time investment (30 minutes) and cognitive effort required to fill out the survey, the students were offered a virtual gift card of 5 euros. The response rate was approximately 10%. The ATCKs were recruited through the TCK research organization which has over 2000 subscribers (response rate ≅ 5%) who received an email requesting participation. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and participants were asked for their consent.

Two-hundred and forty-six participants provided data about sensemaking and sensemaking strategies for one or both of the animations. Of these 246, 178 participants also completed the questionnaire of which 76 were non-ATCKs (42.7%), 100 were ATCKs (56.2%), and 2 (1.1%) participants did not specify whether they were an ATCK or not. Independent sample t-tests (Table 5.2) showed that the ATCKs had more international experience, having lived in more countries outside their home country, and having spent more years abroad as an adult than the non-ATCKs. Ages ranged from 18 to 83 years old, and the non-ATCKs were significantly younger than the ATCKs, as they were mostly students. Further sample description is shown in Table 5.3. Notable is that more females than males participated in the study, and that ATCKs tended to identify as multicultural (more than 1 national culture) more than the non-ATCKs.

Table 5.2 Independent Sample T-tests Comparing ATCKs and Non-ATCKs on Age and International Experience

	ATCKs		Non-ATCKs		*t*	*df*	*p*
Variable	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
Years abroad child	10.50	5.39	0	0			
Age	38.62	17.38	24.33	11.26	6.58	169	< .001
Years abroad adult	5.93	8.68	1.92	4.69	3.86	152	< .001
Number of countries lived	3.55	2.03	0.92	1.39	10.1	170	< .001

Table 5.3 Sample Description – Frequencies and Percentages

Variables	**ATCKs**	**Non-ATCKs**	**Total**
Gender			
Male	24 (24.0)	32 (42.1)	57 (32.0)[a]
Female	75 (75.0)	43 (56.6)	118 (66.3)
Gender fluid	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Unknown	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Education			
Secondary school	2 (2.0)	6 (7.9)	8 (4.5)
Vocational	6 (6.0)	1 (1.3)	7 (3.9)
Bachelor	49 (49.0)	61 (80.3)	111 (62.4)[a]
Master	34 (34.0)	3 (3.9)	37 (20.8)
Ph.D.	9 (9.0)	5 (6.6)	14 (7.87)
Unknown	-	-	1 (0.6)
Cultural background			
Australia	2 (2.0)	-	2 (1.1)
Brazil	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Bulgaria	1 (1.0)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.1)
Ecuador	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Egypt	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Ethiopia	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Germany	4 (4.0)	4 (5.3)	8 (4.5)
Ghana	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Greece	1 (1.0)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.1)
Hungary	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
India	1 (1.0)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.1)
Italy	-	3 (3.9)	3 (1.7)
Latvia	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Lithuania	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)

Table 5.3 Continued

Variables	ATCKs	Non-ATCKs	Total
Madagascar	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Mexico	1 (1.0)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.1)
Morocco	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Netherlands	3 (3.0)	42 (55.3)	46 (25.8)[a]
New Zealand	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Poland	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Portugal	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Romania	1 (1.0)	1 (1.3)	2 (1.1)
Russia	-	3 (3.9)	3 (1.7)
Serbia	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Slovakia	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Switzerland	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
Tajikistan	-	1 (1.3)	1 (0.6)
Thailand	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
United Kingdom	3 (3.0)	-	3 (1.7)
United States of America	18 (18.0)	1 (1.3)	19 (10.7)
Vietnam	1 (1.0)	-	1 (0.6)
2 cultures	23 (23.0)	7 (9.2)	30 (16.9)
3 cultures	14 (14.0)	1 (1.3)	15 (8.4)
4 cultures	7 (7.0)	-	7 (3.9)
5 cultures	5 (5.0)	-	5 (2.8)
6 cultures or more	4 (4.0)	1 (1.3)	5 (2.8)
Unknown	2 (2.0)	-	2 (1.1)

Note. Cells contain frequencies with percentages in brackets.
[a] One participant did not identify as ATCK or non-ATCK.

Design and Procedures

To assess cultural sensemaking and sensemaking strategies, the participants were presented with two animations of intercultural incidents and asked a series of questions. The first animation video shows a female employee, Marilene, who is new at her workplace. She is working at her desk and after a few hours she wonders why no one has introduced themselves. A woman comes to remind her about a meeting that afternoon. At the meeting, before Marilene arrives, someone asks if anyone has met her and the others respond that they were busy or think she must have been tied up with HR. When Marilene comes in she says her name and everyone at the meeting also gives their name. Then they start talking about the weekend and last

night's game. One woman then says she would like to finish quickly as she has a deadline. The meeting proceeds and Marilene's thought bubble shows she feels a bit invisible.

The second animation shows three members of a Global Executive Educational Program who are discussing a project. One character, David, suggests dividing the work. Another character, Yumi, says she is not sure, while the third character, Francois, suggests first discussing how the pieces come together. They then each give a reflection. David states that the project will take too much time, Yumi is too quiet, and Francois is creating too much work. Yumi shares that she is not fast enough in English, does not see the big picture this way, and that David is not involving everyone. Francois sees the project as a disaster with David taking over and Yumi not speaking up, and he just wants everyone to work collaboratively.

In the first incident the cultural background of the participants is ambiguous and in the second incident the cultural backgrounds of the participants are more apparent due to accents, appearances, and names. An ambiguous incident is included for several reasons. First, in real life, one does not always know the cultural background of the person(s) one is interacting with. Secondly, the participants may not be able to engage in the sensemaking strategies of previous cultural knowledge or use stereotyping, so will need to rely on other sensemaking strategies. Thirdly, the ambiguous character of the incident will increase the uncertainty for the participants, which may give a different response than when uncertainty is lower. Brislin (1986) states that participants feel more uncomfortable and find an incident more difficult to analyze when the cultures involved are not specified. Fourthly, the participants will be less aware that the study is looking for cultural explanations thus reducing the chance of reactivity.

In the second animation, the cultural backgrounds of the participants were more apparent. In real life, one sometimes is aware of the cultural backgrounds of those one is interacting with. It also allows participants to use the sensemaking strategy of using previous cultural knowledge. The incident may be easier to analyze because there is less uncertainty and the participants may be more likely to look for a cultural explanation.

Manipulation checks were done to check whether the participants believed the characters had different cultural backgrounds. For the first animation, 3 (1.7%) participants believed the characters did not have different cultural backgrounds, 71 (40.0 %) answered "possibly" and 104 (58.4%) believed the characters did have

different cultural backgrounds. For the second animation, almost all participants (168, 94.4%) believed that the characters had different cultural backgrounds with 10 (5.6%) answering "possibly." The manipulation checks confirm that the characters were perceived as (possibly) culturally different. A chi-square test of independence showed there was a significant difference between the animations, X^2 (2, N = 178) = 7.13, p = .03, confirming that the first animation was more ambiguous than the second one.

Description of Measures

Cultural sensemaking was assessed by open-ended questions asking participants for their interpretation of the situation in each animation as well as questions about why they think the situation happened and why the characters behaved the way they did (4 questions for Animation 1, 5 questions for Animation 2). These qualitative answers were coded quantitatively and a category scheme was created inductively through discussion between the author and one of the Ph.D. co-supervisors for each animation. All answers were then coded by the author. Two other raters (Rater A and B) coded a random selection of answers (10%). Rater A coded the first animation, resulting in 76% agreement with a moderate interrater reliability (Cicchetti, 1993), Cohen's kappa = .59, p < .001, (95% CI, 0.331 to 0.841). Rater B coded the second animation, and there was 84% agreement, showing a substantial interrater reliability (Cicchetti, 1993), Cohen's kappa = .61, p < .001, (95% CI, 0.35 to 0.89).

Sensemaking strategies were assessed by open-ended questions asking participants how they came to their answers. In addition, three questions were asked about possible sensemaking strategies: knowledge used, comparisons made, and patterns noticed. To determine whether participants would use dialogue or seek cultural informants in that situation, they were asked what the characters could do to gain more information to better understand the situation. The qualitative answers were coded quantitatively and categorized abductively; coding for the strategies identified in Chapter 4, as well as for new strategies present in the data. All answers were coded by the author. Strategies commonly used were converted into dummy variables for quantitative analysis. Three raters coded a random selection of answers (10%) to check the reliability of the coding. Table 5.4 shows the interrater agreement for each sensemaking strategy. For Animation 1, the interrater agreement with Rater C was fair to moderate for most strategies. Because the interrater agreement with Rater C was on the low side for many of the strategies, this was investigated further. Discussion with Rater C showed that some answers were interpreted differently. To add an extra check, Rater A also coded a random selection of answers. The interrater agreement with Rater A was moderate to substantial. For Animation 2, the interrater agreement with Rater B was moderate to substantial.

Table 5.4 Interrater Agreement for Coding of Participants' Answers into Sensemaking Strategies

	Animation 1								Animation 2			
	Rater A				Rater C				Rater B			
Strategies	**%**	**K**	**95% CI**	***p***	**%**	**K**	**95% CI**	***p***	**%**	**K**	**95% CI**	***p***
Cultural knowledge	92	.47	[.13, 1.07]	.006	76	.51	[.09, .92]	.009	84	.50	[.29, .93]	.012
Experiential knowledge	88	.76	[.51, 1.03]	< .001	92	.83	[.62, 1.05]	.001	84	.68	[.39, .96]	.001
Knowledge human behavior	92	.78	[.50, 1.07]	< .001	68	.41	[.14, .68]	.011	72	.41	[.04, .77]	.041
Observation	80	.56	[.17, .90]	.005	68	.42	[.19, .88]	.010	72	.43	[.10, .76]	.019
Dialogue	80	.58	[.25, .91]	.004	80	.53	[.19, .88]	.006	76	.50	[.15, .85]	.012
Finding patterns	68	.36	[.01, .73]	.073	64	.22	[-.10, .53]	.173	72	.48	[.20, .76]	.005
Making comparisons	68	.34	[.03, .71]	.073	68	.35	[.09, .61]	.022	76	.52	[.19, .85]	.008

Multicultural Personality (38 items, α = .88) was measured using Van Der Zee et al.'s (2013) 40- item short form Multicultural Personality Questionnaire. Two items ("is a trendsetter in societal developments" and "is nervous") were deleted due to a low item-total correlation and inconsistent labelling. The MPQ measures the five dimensions: cultural empathy (8 items, α = .75), flexibility (8 items, α = .83), social initiative (8 items, α = .84), emotional stability (7 items, α = .83), and openness (7 items, α = .73). An example item for cultural empathy is "pays attention to the emotions of others" and for flexibility, "works according to strict rules." For social initiative an example is "takes the lead" and for emotional stability, "worries." An example item for openness is "tries out various approaches." Participants were asked "to what extent do the following statements apply to you?" Answers to these self-report items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "totally not applicable", 5 = "completely applicable").

Demographic data (gender, age, educational level) were collected. Being an ATCK was measured by asking if the participant had lived abroad as a child. International experience was measured by the years abroad as a child and as an adult, and the number of countries in which one lived.

Results

Descriptive Results

Participants made sense of the incident in Animation 1 in different ways. Table 5.5 shows an overview of the categories of explanations the participants gave. Of the 242 participants, 24 engaged in cultural sensemaking. They explained the situation by cultural differences in initiative-taking (14), task-relationship orientation (6), greeting rituals (4), individualism-collectivism (2), time perception (2), and hierarchy (1). Cultural differences were mentioned 41 times to explain the incident, but without sensemaking. So, the role of culture was recognized but not the specific difference that explained the incident happening. These differences were not limited to national cultural differences, but could include other cultural differences. Furthermore, the incident was often attributed to the personalities of the characters, organizational culture in the workplace, or the team operating under time pressure. To conduct correlation and regression analyses a variable with three categories was created: cultural sensemaking was coded as '2', cultural differences as '1', and all other sensemaking as '0'.

Table 5.6 shows the frequencies of participants' sensemaking of Animation 2 with multiple explanations per participant possible. Thirty-two participants came to

cultural sensemaking, explaining the situation by differences in individualism-collectivism (24), directness-indirectness (8), confrontational-conflict avoidant (7), hierarchy (4), process-result driven (4), discussion style (3), saving face (1), and task-relationship orientation (1). Another 32 participants recognized that cultural differences or cultural backgrounds of the characters may have played a role, but they did not engage in full cultural sensemaking. Some participants considered a lack of cultural awareness an explanation, which also recognizes the role of culture. Several other explanations were given that did not consider culture. Incidents were commonly attributed to differences in English language proficiency, work methods, leadership styles, and personalities. Again, a variable with three categories was created for the correlation and regression analyses: cultural sensemaking was coded as '2', cultural differences and lack of cultural awareness as '1', and all other sensemaking as '0'.

Table 5.5 Category Coding Scheme and Frequencies of Sensemaking – Animation 1

Categories	Participants	Description	Example quote
Bias, racism, ageism, sexism	6 (2.50)	Situation is attributed to bias, racism, sexism, or ageism.	There's some bias and possible racism.
Cultural sensemaking	24 (9.92)	Situation is attributed to cultural differences/ backgrounds with explanation of what the influence of the cultures is.	It's clearly a multicultural team, with different approaches to issues such as the power differential and time management.
Cultural differences	41 (16.94)	Situation is attributed to cultural differences/ backgrounds but no explanation is given of what the influence of the cultures is.	It could be the cultural differences that exist between them.
Group culture	5 (2.07)	Situation is attributed to culture of the team/group.	They were already part of a team and used to their own cultural paradigm.
Group formation	25 (10.33)	Situation is attributed to the group already being established, Marilene is an outsider.	It could be because they are used to being together, known each other for a long period of time. Her colleagues could have developed an in-group favouritism in which they view themselves as superior to the out-group (the new employee).

Table 5.5 Continued

Categories	Participants	Description	Example quote
History of character's position	13 (5.37)	Situation is attributed to Marilene's position being rotational, high turnover or other history (such as previous employee leaving).	Personnel rotation at the company is high and they do not see the value of investing in getting to know the new people.
Lack of empathy	21 (8.68)	Situation attributed to characters not being able to understand the others' perspective.	Lack of awareness by co-workers on what it feels like being new to a workplace.
Lack of experience	3 (1.24)	Situation is attributed to lack of experience with newcomers.	Not used to welcoming new colleagues.
Normal newcomer behavior/situation	22 (9.09)	The situation or behavior is attributed to the awkwardness of being new.	She was in a new situation and her behaviour reflects someone who doesn't want to disturb the status quo as well as someone whose value has not yet been recognised.
Others' responsibility	18 (7.44)	Situation is attributed to confusion around who is responsible for making Marilene feel welcome.	They assumed that someone else would reach out to Marilene.
Organization's responsibility	31 (12.81)	Situation is attributed to organization/HR not having done a good job at onboarding.	Lack of organization to receive the new employee! HR didn't welcome her nor introduced her to the team and the team members are not aware of anything.
Organizational culture	52 (21.49)	Situation attributed to the organisational culture.	This seemed to be the general "culture" of the workplace.
Personality	113 (46.69)	Situation attributed to personality differences, often followed by phrases that describe the personalities of the characters (e.g., shy).	Folks were not friendly.
Poor management/ leadership	19 (7.85)	Situation is attributed to manager/leader not taking the appropriate action.	The supervisor did not have good human relations skills and handled Marilene's first day badly.
Time pressure	51 (21.07)	Situation attributed to team working under time pressure/busy.	Because they have other things to do.

Note. Percentages in brackets. $n = 242$. Multiple responses per respondent possible.

Table 5.6 Category Coding Scheme and Frequencies of Sensemaking – Animation 2

Category	Participants	Description	Example quote
Cultural sensemaking	32 (17.39)	Situation is attributed to cultural differences/ backgrounds with explanation of what the influence of the cultures is.	It is also in her culture to be given the big picture in order to understand the steps and the method that need to be taken in order to achieve a result.
Cultural differences	32 (17.39)	Situation is attributed to cultural differences/ backgrounds but no explanation is given of what the influence of the cultures is.	The three different cultures are clashing in the scenario.
Age or experience	13 (7.07)	Situation attributed to age or experience differences.	Age and experience give him the insight for the need to work together as a team.
Fear or distrust	5 (2.72)	Situation attributed to fear or distrust.	The 'why?' goes deep into his past and the formation of his fears.
Lack of communication skills	31 (16.85)	Situation attributed to poor communication skills of one or more team members.	Because this group is not communicating well.
Lack of cultural awareness	10 (5.43)	Situation attributed to characters not understanding others' cultural values/behaviors. Also referred to as ethnocentrism.	Each character is ethnocentric and only thinks the way they think and they do not see where the other person is coming from. Lack of understanding of how others think.
Lack of empathy	35 (19.02)	Situation attributed to characters not being able to understand the others' perspective.	Each member also struggles to emphasise with the others in the team.
Lack of teamwork skills	24 (13.04)	Situation attributed to a lack of teamwork skills of one or more characters.	He [David] is not skilled to frame a collaborative team.
Language inequality	17 (9.24)	Language difference creates inequality/power disbalance. Other words used: unfair, disadvantage, privilege.	English isn't her [Yumi] first language and she doesn't feel like she is getting the space to equally contribute.
Language proficiency	80 (43.48)	Different levels of proficiency of characters. Other words used: language barrier, language difficulties/differences.	Yumi wants to express herself but is still learning English fluency.
Leadership styles	80 (43.48)	Situation attributed to difference in leadership style, expectations of good leadership, lack of leadership skills.	This video shows how team members often have different working and leadership styles, often conflicting.

Table 5.6 Continued

Category	Participants	Description	Example quote
Organizational culture	1 (0.54)	Situation attributed to organisational culture	Different work cultures meeting without a clear manager and lack of established team working methods
Personality	44 (23.91)	Situation attributed to personality differences, often followed by phrases that describe the personalities of the characters (e.g., introverted, assertive).	He [David] also probably has a forceful personality.
Power dynamics	25 (13.59)	Situation attributed to power inequality, also includes racism, sexism, white privilege.	Internal racism, misogny, and ageism on the part of the white man.
Team goals	12 (6.52)	Situation attributed to characters having different goals.	They have different goals in the situation.
Time pressure	8 (4.35)	Situation attributed to team working under time pressure.	He's [David] feeling pressure about the deadline.
Work methods	72 (39.13)	Situation attributed to characters having different work methods/ styles/ approaches/ ways (NOT attributed to cultural background).	It's more that the three of them have very different approaches when it comes to collaboration.

Note. Percentages in brackets. $n = 242$. Multiple responses per respondent possible.

Table 5.7 shows which sensemaking strategies were most commonly used. In both animations, observation was used as a sensemaking strategy. Empathy was a strategy that was used quite frequently in Animation 1, but not so often in Animation 2. Participants commonly used different types of previous knowledge such as cultural knowledge, knowledge of human behavior, and experiential knowledge. Making comparisons between characters' behaviors and finding patterns in characters' behaviors were also frequently used, although finding patterns was more common in Animation 1 and comparisons more common in Animation 2. Dialogue was a behavioral strategy that participants recommended the characters use to make sense of the incident. A few other strategies were used, but only by a small percentage of participants and so were left out of further analysis.

Table 5.7 Category Scheme and Frequencies of Sensemaking Strategies

Strategies	Animation 1	Animation 2	Description	Example quote
Alternative explanations	2 (1.00)	1 (0.60)	Considered different scenarios/explanations.	I thought about possible scenarios.
Belief system	2 (1.00)	1 (0.60)	Own belief system.	My answers came from my belief system.
Common sense/general knowledge	12 (6.00)	7 (4.00)	Used common sense or general knowledge.	Common sense.
Comparison	69 (34.50)	112 (64.70)	Compared behaviors of different characters.	Compared behaviours of Marilene (showed little initiative) and other characters (who showed little initiative towards her, but positive interactions towards each other).
Cultural awareness or knowledge	39 (19.50)	44 (25.40)	Respondent has cultural awareness or knowledge of different cultures.	I am very aware of differences in different cultures so I always keep that multicultural lens in mind.
Cultural informant or mediator	9 (4.50)	3 (1.73)	Characters could understand each other better by using a cultural informant or mediator (sometimes Francois).	Francois seemed to know why both people acted that way. He could explain to David why Yumi prefers to work as a group.
Description	5 (2.50)	0	Used description.	I just described what I saw.
Dialogue	75(30.50)	69 (39.90)	Characters could engage in dialogue to better understand each other.	They should explain how they feel and why and then they should include their differences and needs.
Emotional intelligence	3 (1.50)	1 (0.60)	Used emotional intelligence.	My emotional intelligence.
Empathy	40 (20.00)	10 (5.78)	Imagining being in the same situation/placing oneself in the character's shoes/imagining other's perspective.	I imagined myself as Marilene and as her colleagues to try to empathize with why they might act the way they did.
Expectations of situation	2 (1.00)	0	How the respondent expected the situation to go versus how it went.	I was comparing the behaviour of the characters with ideal behaviour.

Table 5.7 Continued

Strategies	Animation 1	Animation 2	Description	Example quote
Experiential knowledge	124 (62.00)	104 (60.10)	Based on previous situations one has been in or previous experiences one has had/personal experience.	I used experiential knowledge from being "the new kid" in different schools so I was able to guess how Marline may be acting and how I've seen others treat new students/ employees before.
Intuition	8 (4.00)	2 (1.16)	Used intuition.	Just intuition.
Knowledge from speaking with others	7 (3.50)	1 (0.60)	Respondent has gained knowledge from others (informants).	Also experiences friends and people I've met abroad have told me about.
Knowledge of human behavior	37 (18.50)	29 (16.80)	Knowledge of psychology, human behavior, communication, org. behavior.	I have some professional knowledge about psychology
Media	3 (1.50)	0	Seen/read on TV, news, etc.	Also, different people's experiences I watch on TV or read about.
Observation	83 (30.30)	64 (37.00)	Looking at/listening to behavior, nonverbal communication, etc.	I observed all the people in the video... How they responded to each other, to their boss, and to Marilene.
Own interpretation or judgment	8 (4.00)	0	Used their own judgment or interpretation.	Watching the video and interpreting the situation.
Pattern	103 (51.50)	54 (31.20)	A pattern (recurring way of acting) is identified in the behavior of the character(s).	A pattern in the behaviour of Marilene was that she didn't seem to be very confident (because of why I suspect her to be shy), as she did not seem to step up to introduce herself or try to take the lead in the conversations.
Stereotyping	1 (0.50)	4 (2.31)	Characters' behaviours are stereotypes for their cultures.	The characters all portrayed very stereotypical behaviors of office scenes that lack management/leadership.

Note. Percentages in brackets. Animation 1, n = 200. Animation 2, n = 173. Multiple responses per respondent possible.

Table 5.8 Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations for Animation 1

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender[a]	0.69	0.51		.05	.14	.16*	.16*	-.07	.09	.11	.14
2. Education	2.23	0.83			.39**	.25**	.19*	.21**	.38**	.44**	.07
3. Age	32.4	16.6				.42**	.39**	.24**	.47**	.45**	.32**
4. ATCK[b]	0.57	0.50					.80**	.22**	.27**	.59**	.31**
5. Years abroad child	5.72	6.58						.14	.24**	.55**	.28**
6. Lived abroad as adult[b]	0.59	0.49							.49**	.49**	-.02
7. Years abroad adult	4.19	7.47								.51**	.08
8. Number of countries lived	2.42	2.20									.18*
9. Cultural Empathy	4.19	0.46									
10. Flexibility	2.87	0.66									
11. Social initiative	3.61	0.68									
12. Open-mindedness	4.05	0.54									
13. Emotional stability	3.31	0.79									
14. Pattern[b]	0.56	0.50									
15. Observation[b]	0.42	0.51									
16. Cultural knowledge[b]	0.20	0.40									
17. Comparison[b]	0.36	0.49									
18. Experiential knowledge[b]	0.62	0.49									
19. Dialogue[b]	0.19	0.39									
20. Knowledge human behavior[b]	0.38	0.49									
21. Empathy[b]	0.20	0.40									
22. Cultural sensemaking[c]	0.37	0.66									

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. [a] 0 = male, 1 = female. [b] 0 = no, 1 = yes. [c] 0 = no, 1 = cultural differences, 2 = cultural sensemaking.

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
-.05	.03	.03	-.27**	.03	.00	.05	-.15*	.01	.12	-.02	-.004	.12
.13	.13	.23**	.12	.22**	.10	.14	-.13	.17*	-.09	.01	.16*	.18*
.20**	.09	.37**	.12	.20**	-.05	.02	-.28**	.22**	.02	-.09	-.12	.13
.23**	.10	.48**	-.07	.20*	-.09	-.03	-.08	.32**	-.10	.05	-.13	.15*
.20*	.001	.47**	-.10	.14	-.06	-.05	-.12	.32**	-.05	.04	-.01	.02
.26**	-.04	.22**	.04	.02	-.05	.13	-.08	.06	-.06	.04	-.10	.17*
.12	.01	.27**	.03	.05	.08	.15	-.18*	.19*	.05	-.04	-.12	.16*
.28**	.14	.41**	.01	.09	-.07	.07	-.22*	.27**	-.05	-.05	-.16*	.14
.19*	.12	.50**	.04	.14	.01	-.08	-.05	.27**	-.03	.06	-.10	.10
	.30**	.31**	.36**	.05	.04	-.01	-.15*	.07	.08	.09	-.01	.07
		.27**	.48**	.05	.02	.11	.001	-.03	.02	.06	-.14	.21**
			.23**	.19*	-.05	.00	-.15*	.36**	-.24**	-.10	-.10	.21**
				.07	.05	.10	-.04	-.08	-.06	-.01	-.10	.10
					.13	.05	-.05	.02	.11	-.001	.06	-.002
						-.04	.004	-.15*	.09	.09	-.14*	-.02
							.06	-.06	.06	-.07	-.15*	.51*
								-.11	-.08	.05	-.10	.01
									-.12	-.16*	.01	.10
										-.02	.00	.02
											.05	-.09
												.21**

Table 5.9 Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations for Animation 2

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender[a]	0.69	0.51		.05	.14	.16*	.16*	-.07	.09	.11
2. Education	2.23	0.83			.39**	.25**	.19*	.21**	.38**	.44**
3. Age	32.35	16.56				.42**	.39**	.24**	.47**	.45**
4. ATCK[b]	0.57	0.50					.80**	.22**	.27**	.59**
5. Years abroad child	5.72	6.58						.14	.24**	.55**
6. Lived abroad as adult[b]	0.59	0.49							.49**	.49**
7. Years abroad adult	4.19	7.47								.51**
8. Number of countries lived	2.42	2.20								
9. Cultural Empathy	4.19	0.46								
10. Flexibility	2.87	0.66								
11. Social initiative	3.61	0.68								
12. Open-mindedness	4.05	0.54								
13. Emotional stability	3.31	0.79								
14. Pattern[b]	0.32	0.49								
15. Observation[b]	0.37	0.48								
16. Cultural knowledge[b]	0.25	0.44								
17. Comparison[b]	0.64	0.48								
18. Experiential knowledge[b]	0.60	0.49								
19. Knowledge human behavior[b]	0.17	0.37								
20. Dialogue[b]	0.40	0.49								
21. Cultural sensemaking[c]	0.54	0.77								

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. [a] 0 = male, 1 = female. [b] 0 = no, 1 = yes. [c] 0 = no, 1 = cultural differences, 2 = cultural sensemaking.

9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
.14	-.05	.03	.03	-.27**	.16*	-.02	.06	-.04	-.07	.05	-.09	.11
.07	.13	.13	.23**	.12	-.04	.02	.14	-.17*	.16*	.01	.06	.22**
.32**	.20**	.09	.37**	.12	-.16*	-.11	.16*	-.18*	.27**	-.06	.01	.19*
.31**	.23**	.10	.48**	-.07	.04	-.15*	.09	.01	.25**	-.01	.11	.28**
.28**	.20*	.01	.47**	-.10	.04	-.09	.07	.03	.28**	-.02	.11	.28**
-.02	.26**	-.04	.22**	.04	-.06	-.06	.04	-.02	0.14	-.06	.11	.17*
.08	.12	.01	.27**	.03	-.02	.03	.17*	-.10	.26**	.01	.15	.26**
.18*	.28**	.14	.41**	.01	-.06	.03	.09	-.08	.20**	.01	.16*	.35**
	.19*	.12	.50**	.04	.17*	.12	.16*	.01	.19*	-.03	.01	.15*
		.30**	.31**	.36**	-.13	-.11	.13	-.04	.10	-.03	-.09	.09
			.27**	.48**	.03	.02	.10	-.03	-.04	.01	.02	.15
				.23**	.07	-.21**	.08	-.12	.34**	-.12	-.10	.29**
					-.01	-.14	.16*	-.03	.03	.01	-.11	.02
						-.01	-.03	.07	-.11	.24**	-.03	-.06
							-.06	0.02	.02	-.05	.16*	-.03
								0.07	-.01	-.15*	.10	.58**
									-.12	.01	.11	-.03
										-.17*	-.03	.17*
											-.05	-.14
												.14

Table 5.8 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the demographic variables, international experience variables, MPQ dimensions, the sensemaking strategies, and cultural sensemaking for Animation 1. There is a significant positive correlation between ATCKs and open-mindedness, cultural empathy, and flexibility, but not social initiative or emotional stability. Age and several international experience indicators were also correlated with these three MPQ dimensions, but age and international experience indicators also correlated strongly with ATCKs. The results show that men were reported to be more emotionally stable than women. The pattern strategy was used more by younger, higher educated individuals and ATCKs. The comparison strategy was used more by men, younger people, and those who have not lived abroad as an adult. It was also negatively related to the MPQ dimensions of flexibility, open-mindedness, and emotional stability. In contrast, the strategy of experiential knowledge was used more by women, older people, ATCKs, and those with international experience. Open-minded individuals used finding patterns, and experiential knowledge more, and less dialogue and comparisons. The strategy empathy was positively related to education and negatively related to the number of countries lived. Higher educated individuals, ATCKs, and those with international experience as an adult were more likely to engage in cultural sensemaking for Animation 1. These variables were controlled for in further analyses. Open-mindedness, social initiative, and the strategy of cultural knowledge were significantly and positively correlated with cultural sensemaking.

Correlations for Animation 2 are displayed in Table 5.9. Of the strategies, only cultural knowledge and experiential knowledge were significantly correlated with cultural sensemaking. ATCKs used observation less and experiential knowledge more than non-ATCKs. Cultural empathy was positively related to the strategies of finding patterns, and cultural and experiential knowledge. Open-minded participants used observation less, but experiential knowledge more. A higher emotional stability was related to more experiential knowledge. Age, education, and years abroad as an adult were significantly related to sensemaking and were therefore controlled for in further analyses. ATCKs did more cultural sensemaking than non-ATCKs. Cultural empathy and open-mindedness were significantly positively correlated with cultural sensemaking.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 states that the sensemaking strategies will be positively related to cultural sensemaking. For Animation 1, the regression analysis (Table 5.10) showed that sensemaking strategies explained an additional 28.3% of variance in cultural sensemaking after controlling for education and years abroad as an adult. However,

the coefficients of the strategies showed that only cultural knowledge significantly predicted cultural sensemaking.

For Animation 2, sensemaking strategies explained an additional 31.5% of variance in cultural sensemaking after controlling for education, years abroad as an adult, and age. Again, only cultural knowledge significantly predicted cultural sensemaking.

Table 5.10 Multiple Regression Analysis of Sensemaking Strategies on Cultural Sensemaking for Both Animations

	Cultural Sensemaking Animation 1			**Cultural Sensemaking Animation 2**		
		Model 2			**Model 2**	
Variable	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	-0.001	-0.06	[-0.37, 0.25]	0.07	0.33	[-0.37, 0.43]
Education	0.18*	0.11	[-0.03, 0.20]	0.12	0.08	[-0.05, 0.21]
Years abroad adult	0.01	0.03	[-0.01, 0.02]	0.15	0.73	[-0.01, 0.02]
Age				0.09	-0.01	[-0.01, 0.01]
Pattern		-0.004	[-0.18, 0.17]		-0.04	[-0.26, 0.14]
Observation		0.01	[-0.15, 0.19]		-0.01	[-0.22, 0.19]
Cultural knowledge		0.52**	[0.65, 1.09]		0.56**	[0.76, 1.22]
Comparison		0.05	[-0.11, 0.23]		-0.06	[-0.30, 0.11]
Experiential knowledge		0.09	[-0.06, 0.30]		0.13	[-0.01, 0.42]
Knowledge						
human behavior		-0.03	[-0.26, 0.16]		-0.06	[-0.32, 0.22]
Dialogue		-0.01	[-0.18, 0.16]		0.13	[-0.16, 0.24]
Empathy		-0.07	[-0.33, 0.10]			
R2	0.06	0.34		0.08	0.39	
F	4.89**	8.08**		4.63**	10.13**	
ΔR2		0.28			0.32	
ΔF		8.47**			11.58**	

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Hypotheses 2a-e focus on the relationship between the MPQ dimensions and cultural sensemaking. As presented in Table 5.11, regression analyses showed that social initiative was a predictor of cultural sensemaking for Animation 1, and open-mindedness was a predictor of cultural sensemaking in Animation 2. The other MPQ dimensions were not predictors of cultural sensemaking. In sum, Hypothesis 2b and 2d were supported, and Hypotheses 2a, 2c and 2e were not.

Table 5.11 Multiple Regression Analyses of MPQ Dimensions on Cultural Sensemaking for Both Animations

	Cultural Sensemaking Animation 1			**Cultural Sensemaking Animation 2**		
		Model 2			**Model 2**	
Variable	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	-0.01	-0.90	[-1.92, 0.13]	0.07	-1.33	[-2.57, -0.09]
Education	0.19*	0.15	[-0.01, 0.25]	0.13	0.10	[-0.06, 0.25]
Years abroad adult	0.10	0.10	[-0.01, 0.02]	0.15	0.13	[-0.004, 0.03]
Age				0.09	0.02	[-.001, 0.01]
Cultural empathy		0.004	[-0.24, 0.25]		0.02	[-0.25, 0.33]
Open-mindedness		0.07	[-0.14, 0.31]		0.22*	[0.05, 0.59]
Flexibility		-0.02	[-0.18, 0.14]		-0.01	[-0.21, 0.18]
Emotional Stability		-0.01	[-0.15, 0.13]		-0.12	[-0.28, 0.05]
Social initiative		0.20*	[0.02, 0.35]		0.12	[-.005, 0.34]
R2	0.06	0.11		0.08	0.15	
F	5.12**	2.64*		4.775**	3.34**	
Δ*R2*		0.05			0.06	
Δ*F*		1.61			2.35*	

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * p < .05. ** p < .01

Hypotheses 3a-e predicted that the sensemaking strategies would mediate the relationship between the MPQ dimensions and cultural sensemaking. First, the relationship between the MPQ dimensions and each strategy was tested with regression analyses. For Animation 1 (Table 5.12a-b), open-mindedness negatively predicted using dialogue and positively predicted using experiential knowledge. For Animation 2 (Table 5.13a-b), cultural empathy positively and flexibility negatively predicted finding patterns. Emotional stability negatively and social initiative positively predicted observation as a strategy. Open-mindedness positively predicted using experiential knowledge. Since there was no significant direct relationship between the strategies observation, dialogue, experiential knowledge, and finding patterns, and cultural sensemaking, the mediating relationships were not further

analyzed. Cultural empathy positively influenced the strategy of cultural knowledge. Previous testing of hypothesis 1 showed that cultural knowledge predicted cultural sensemaking, so it was possible there might be a mediation effect. However, testing of hypothesis 2 indicated that there was no direct effect of cultural empathy on cultural sensemaking. Therefore, following the Baron and Kenny (1986) method for mediation it was concluded that the first condition of mediation was not met. Although not hypothesized, it was explored whether being an ATCK influenced the use of different strategies. The regression analyses showed that ATCKs used dialogue less than non-ATCKs, but no other significant relationships were found.

Hypotheses 4a-e on the relationship between being an ATCK and the MPQ dimensions was tested with regression analysis, while controlling for age, education, and years lived abroad as an adult, as shown in Table 5.14. The analysis showed that ATCKs had a significantly higher cultural empathy than non-ATCKs and there was a significant positive relationship between age and cultural empathy. ATCKs were significantly more open-minded than non-ATCKs. They also differed significantly in flexibility, as ATCKs were more flexible than non-ATCKs. ATCKs and non-ATCKs did not significantly differ in social initiative and emotional stability. In sum, hypotheses 4a, 4b, and 4c were supported while hypotheses 4d and 4e were not supported.

As a post-hoc analysis, it was tested whether open-mindedness mediates the relationship between ATCK and cultural sensemaking for Animation 2. It was already shown that being an ATCK and open-mindedness were positively related and that open-mindedness predicted cultural sensemaking for Animation 2. Table 5.15 shows that ATCKs scored higher on cultural sensemaking. ATCK is no longer a significant predictor of cultural sensemaking after including the MPQ dimensions, indicating that open-mindedness fully mediated the relationship between ATCK and cultural sensemaking. Using PROCESS in SPSS, this mediation model was further tested and confirmed (95% CI 0.01, 0.27). In conclusion, ATCKs engaged in more cultural sensemaking because they are more open-minded.

Table 5.12a Multiple Regression Analysis of MPQ Dimensions on Sensemaking Strategies for Animation 1

	Pattern			Observation		
		Model 2			Model 2	
Variable	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	0.16	-0.19	[-1.05, 0.66]	0.41	0.13	[-0.76, 1.01]
Education	0.16	0.16	[-0.09, 0.20]	0.13	0.13	[-0.02, 0.19]
Years abroad adult	-0.10	-0.10	[-0.02, 0.01]	0.13	0.15	[-0.002, 0.02]
Age	0.13	0.10	[-0.003, 0.01]	-0.16	-0.19	[-0.01, 0.00]
ATCK	0.13	0.11	[-0.09, 0.30]	-0.08	-0.06	[-0.27, 0.14]
Cultural empathy		0.04	[-0.15, 0.24]		0.11	[-0.08, 0.32]
Flexibility		-0.06	[-0.17, 0.09]		0.05	[-0.10, 0.17]
Social initiative		-0.04	[-0.16, 0.10]		0.002	[-0.13, 0.14]
Openmindedness		0.10	[-0.10, 0.28]		-0.10	[0.29, 0.11]
Emotional stability		0.04	[-0.09, 0.14]		0.03	[-0.10, 0.14]
R2	0.08	0.09		0.04	0.06	
F	3.51**	1.75		1.79	1.00	
ΔR2		0.01			0.01	
ΔF		0.39			0.40	

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * p < .05. ** p < .01

Table 5.12b Multiple Regression Analysis of MPQ Dimensions on Sensemaking Strategies for Animation 1

	Experiential Knowledge			Knowledge Human Behavior		
		Model 2			Model 2	
Variable	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	0.29	-0.46	[-1.24, 0.33]	0.22	0.10	[-0.61, 0.79]
Education	0.08	0.10	[-0.04, 0.15]	0.05	0.06	[-0.06, 0.11]
Years abroad adult	0.06	0.04	[-0.01, 0.01]	-0.02	0.02	[-0.01, 0.01]
Age	0.12	0.08	[-0.003, 0.01]	-0.14	-0.16	[-0.01, 0.001]
ATCK	0.20	0.07	[-0.12, 0.24]	0.11	0.15	[-0.04, 0.28]
Cultural empathy		0.09	[-0.09, 0.27]		0.15	[-0.03, 0.29]
Flexibility		-0.001	[-0.12, 0.12]		0.12	[-0.03, 0.18]
Social initiative		-0.08	[-0.17, 0.06]		0.07	[-0.06, 0.15]
Openmindedness		0.25**	[-0.05, 0.40]		-0.26*	[-0.35, -0.04]
Emotional stability		-0.13	[-0.19, 0.03]		-0.02	[-0.10, 0.09]
R2	0.12	0.19		0.02	0.07	
F	5.27**	3.95**		0.69	1.30	
ΔR2		0.07			0.05	
ΔF		2.68*			1.76	

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * p < .05. ** p < .01

Cultural knowledge			Comparison		
	Model 2			Model 2	
Model 1 *B*	*B*	95% CI	Model 1 *B*	*B*	95% CI
0.08	-0.02	[-0.68, 0.65]	0.64	0.71	[-0.14, 1.55]
0.14	0.12	[-0.03, 0.14]	-0.02	-0.01	[-0.11, 0.10]
0.15	0.15	[-0.001, 0.02]	-0.06	-0.04	[-0.02, 0.01]
-0.03	-0.02	[-0.01, 0.004]	-0.26**	-0.26	[-0.01, -0.002]
-0.13	-0.12	[-0.25, 0.06]	0.05	0.09	[-0.10, 0.29]
	-005	[-0.19, 0.11]		0.09	[-0.10, 0.29]
	-0.06	[-0.14, 0.07]		-0.12	[-0.22, 0.04]
	0.11	[-0.04, 0.16]		0.06	[-0.08, 0.17]
	0.02	[-0.13, 0.16]		-0.12	[-0.30, 0.08]
	0.06	[-0.06, 0.12]		0.02	[-0.11, 0.13]
0.05	0.07		0.08	0.10	
2.14	1.32		3.39**	1.93*	
	0.02			0.02	
	0.68			0.79	

Dialogue			Empathy		
	Model 2			Model 2	
Model 1 *B*	*B*	95% CI	Model 1 *B*	*B*	95% CI
0.50	0.86	[0.04, 1.68]	0.45	0.60	[-0.10, 1.29]
-0.11	-0/09	[-0.16, 0.04]	-0.16	-0.15	[-0.16, 0.01]
0.08	0.12	[-0.004, 0.02]	-0.03	-0.05	[-0.01, 0.01]
0.10	0.11	[-0.002, 0.01]	-0.04	-0.03	[-0.01, 0.004]
-0.13	-0.07	[-0.25, 0.12]	-0.06	-0.11	[-0.25, 0.07]
	0.10	[-0.09, 0.29]		-0.05	[-0.20, 0.12]
	0.16	[-0.004, 0.24]		0.09	[-0.05, 0.16]
	0.13	[-0.03, -0.21]		-0.12	[-0.18, 0.04]
	-0.36**	[-0.51, -0.14]		0.09	[-0.09, 0.23]
	-0.12	[-0.18, 0.04]		-0.09	[-0.14, 0.05]
0.03	0.13		0.05	0.08	
1.16	2.27**		2.15	1.46	
	0.01			0.03	
	3.46**			0.91	

Table 5.13a Multiple Regression Analysis of MPQ Dimensions on Sensemaking Strategies for Animation 2

	Pattern			Observation		
		Model 2			Model 2	
Variable	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	0.49	-0.38	[-1.21, 0.46]	0.50	0.93	[0.11, 1.76]
Education	-0.01	0	[-0.10, 0.10]	0.03	0.03	[-0.08, 0.12]
Years abroad adult	0.07	0.09	[-0.01, 0.02]	0.13	0.15	[-0.002, 0.02]
Age	-0.25**	-0.30**	[-0.02, -0.003]	-0.13	-0.08	[-0.01, 0.004]
ATCK	0.13	0.08	[-0.11, 0.27]	-0.16	-0.14	[-0.33, 0.05]
Cultural empathy		0.24**	[0.10, 0.19]		0.01	[-0.18, 0.20]
Flexibility		-0.16*	[-0.24, -0.01]		-0.05	[-0.16, 0.09]
Social initiative		0.08	[-0.07, 0.19]		0.18*	[0.001, 0.26]
Openmindedness		0.03	[-0.16, 0.22]		-0.14	[-0.32, 0.06]
Emotional stability		-0.09	[-0.17, 0.06]		-0.20*	[-0.23, -0.01]
R2	0.04	0.35		0.05	0.11	
F	1.71	2.61**		2.09	2.003*	
ΔR2		0.08			0.06	
ΔF		2.76*			1.87	

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * p < .05. ** p < .01

Table 5.13b Multiple Regression Analysis of MPQ Dimensions on Sensemaking Strategies for Animation 2

	Experiential Knowledge			Knowledge Human Behavior		
		Model 2			Model 2	
Variable	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**	**Model 1 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	0.28	-0.34	[-1.13, 0.46]	0.20	0.47	[-0.21, 1.15]
Education	0.05	0.06	[-0.06, 0.13]	0.03	0.03	[-0.07, 0.10]
Years abroad adult	0.14	0.10	[-0.01, 0.02]	0.05	0.08	[-0.01, 0.14]
Age	0.21	0.17	[-0.001, 0.01]	-0.09	-0.09	[-0.01, 0.003]
ATCK	0.08	-0.02	[-0.20, 0.16]	0.01	0.10	[-0.08, 0.23]
Cultural empathy		0.01	[-0.17, 0.19]		0.05	[-0.11, 0.20]
Flexibility		0.02	[-0.11, 0.13]		-0.03	[-0.12, 0.09]
Social initiative		-0.14	[-0.23, 0.02]		0.04	[-0.08, 0.13]
Openmindedness		0.27**	[0.07, 0.42]		-0.22*	[-0.31, -0.02]
Emotional stability		0.01	[-0.10, 0.11]		0.05	[-0.07, 0.12]
R2	0.14	0.19		0.01	0.03	
F	6.18**	3.95**		0.26	0.59	
ΔR2		0.05			0.03	
ΔF		2.004			0.86	

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * p < .05. ** p < .01

Cultural knowledge			Comparison		
	Model 2			Model 2	
Model 1 *B*	*B*	95% CI	Model 1 *B*	*B*	95% CI
0.08	-0.64	[-1.40, 0.11]	0.94	0.89	[0.06, 1.72]
0.06	0.06	[-0.06, 0.12]	-0.15	-0.14	[-0.18, 0.02]
0.11	0.15	[-0.002, 0.02]	0.001	0.03	[-0.01, 0.01]
0.09	0.02	[-0.01, 0.10]	-0.15	-0.17	[-0.01, 0.001]
-0.002	0.02	[-0.16, 0.92]	0.09	0.13	[-0.06, 0.32]
	0.20*	[0.02, 0.37]		0.12	[-0.07, 0.31]
	0.05	[-0.08, 0.15]		-0.02	[-0.14, 0.11]
	0.04	[-0.09, 0.14]		0.00	[-0.13, 0.13]
	-0.13	[-0.28, 0.06]		-0.14	[-0.31, 0.06]
	0.12	[-0.04, 0.17]		0.03	[-0.10, 0.13]
0.04	0.10		0.05	0.06	
1.82	1.79		2.02	1.17	
	0.05			0.02	
	1.74			0.05	

Dialogue		
	Model 2	
Model 1 *B*	*B*	95% CI
0.51	0.53	[-0.33, 1.38]
-0.12	-0.11	[-0.17, 0.04]
0.03	0.05	[-0.01, 0.02]
0.17	0.17	[-0.001, 0.01]
-0.23**	-0.21*	[-0.41, -0.01]
	0.08	[-0.11, 0.28]
	0.05	[-0.09, 0.17]
	0.04	[-0.10, 0.16]
	-0.14	[-0.32, 0.07]
	-0.05	[-0.15, 0.08]
0.06	0.07	
2.41*	1.33	
	0.02	
	0.51	

Table 5.14 *Regression analyses of ATCK on MPQ dimensions*

	Cultural Empathy		Open-mindedness		Flexibility	
Variable	***B***	**95% CI**	***B***	**95% CI**	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	3.91	[3.70, 4.11]	3.56	[3.33, 3.78]	2.53	[2.22, 2.85]
Education	-0.05	[-0.11, 0.06]	0.07	[-0.05, 0.14]	0.04	[-0.10, 0.17]
Years abroad adult	-0.10	[-0.02, 0.004]	0.08	[-0.01, 0.02]	0.01	[-0.02, 0.02]
Age	0.30**	[0.003, 0.01]	0.14	[-.001, 0.01]	0.1	[-0.004, 0.01]
ATCK	0.20*	[0.03, 0.34]	0.39**	[0.26, 0.59]	0.18*	[0.004, 0.46]
R2	0.39		0.53		0.26	0.16
F	7.06**		15.66**		3.03*	1.12

Note. CI = Confidence Interval. * p < .05. ** p < .01

Table 5.15 Multiple Regression Analyses of ATCK and MPQ on Cultural Sensemaking

	Cultural Sensemaking Animation 2			
			Model 3	
Variable	**Model 1 *B***	**Model 2 *B***	***B***	**95% CI**
Constant	0.07	0.06	-1.18	[-2.46, 0.10]
Education	0.13	0.11	0.08	[-0.07, 0.25]
Years abroad adult	0.15	0.15	0.13	[-0.004, 0.03]
Age	0.09	0.01	-0.01	[-0.01, 0.01]
ATCK		0.19*	0.09	[-0.15, 0.43]
Cultural empathy			0.02	[-0.25, 0.33]
Open-mindedness			0.19	[-0.01, 0.56]
Flexibility			-0.02	[-0.22, 0.17]
Emotional Stability			-0.09	[-0.27, 0.08]
Social initiative			0.12	[-0.06, 0.33]
R2	0.08	0.11	0.15	
F	4.78**	4.89**	3.06**	
Δ*R2*		0.03	0.04	
Δ*F*		4.89*	1.54	

Note. * *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01

	Social Initiative		Emotional Stability	
	B	**95% CI**	***B***	**95% CI**
	3.31	[2.98, 3.64]	2.97	[2.59, 3.35]
	0.12	[-0.04, 0.24]	0.12	[-0.05, 0.28]
	-0.08	[-0.02, 0.01]	-0.05	[-0.03, 0.01]
	0.04	[-0.01, 0.10]	0.17	[-0.001, 0.02]
	0.08	[-0.13, 0.35]	-0.15	[-0.52, 0.04]
	0.20			
	1.72			

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to quantitatively test the existence of different sensemaking strategies which were previously identified in my grounded theory study (Chapter 4), and their relationship with cultural sensemaking. In addition, the study aimed to examine the influence of intercultural competence on the use of the strategies and sensemaking. The study also gives insight into ATCKs' intercultural competence and sensemaking, compared to non-ATCKs. The results show that most of the previously identified strategies were also found in this study. However, their use does not significantly predict cultural sensemaking, except for cultural knowledge. The two multicultural personality traits of open-mindedness and social initiative predict cultural sensemaking. ATCKs are more likely to culturally make sense of a situation, due to being more open-minded than non-ATCKs.

The exploration of sensemaking strategies shows that previous knowledge, particularly cultural knowledge, experiential knowledge, and knowledge of human behavior, are used for cultural sensemaking. The strategies of making comparisons, finding patterns, and dialogue are also used for cultural sensemaking. This confirms the findings from Chapter 4 on sensemaking strategies and expands on it with different types of previous knowledge. The strategy of using a cultural informant was not found in this study. This may mean this strategy is less commonly used. However, it could also be explained by the design of the study, as respondents watched an animation rather than participating in the incident itself. As this is a behavioral strategy, it may still be used when one is actually a participant in the incident. This could be further researched in a study with a simulation or an experiment with enacted critical incidents.

Statistical analysis showed that only the strategy of previous cultural knowledge is related to cultural sensemaking, indicating that this strategy is specific to cultural sensemaking. The other strategies are used in cultural sensemaking, but also in other forms of sensemaking. This means that more general sensemaking strategies can be used for cultural sensemaking, although they would need to be applied in such a way that would allow for cultural sensemaking. For example, people may find patterns in behavior but attribute this to personality when they could also attribute these to cultural backgrounds. However, this may not occur to them if they do not have cultural knowledge or awareness. Similarly, experiential knowledge can be useful for cultural sensemaking if the experiences are with those of other cultures, but not if a connection is made cognitively to another type of experience.

Of the MPQ dimensions, social initiative of an individual predicted cultural sensemaking in the first animation, while an individual's open-mindedness predicted cultural sensemaking in the second animation. This may imply that different intercultural traits are useful for cultural sensemaking in different types of incidents or situations. The first animation was a situation involving the first creation of social connections in the workplace, for which a strong sense of social initiative may be very helpful in deciphering what is happening in a cultural sense. In Animation 2, the characters seem to have different approaches to teamwork, different communication styles, and levels of English language proficiency, and the results seem to indicate that one needs open-mindedness to realize that these differences could be explained by cultural backgrounds, rather than other factors related to a lack of skills, the situation, or the persons involved. Future research could examine other types of incidents to see if this proposition holds and if other multicultural personality traits are useful for cultural sensemaking in other types of incidents. In addition, future research could investigate whether these animation videos can be used to develop or assess social initiative and open-mindedness in participants.

The ATCKs in this study had more open-mindedness, cultural empathy, and flexibility, which confirms most of the previous research (Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Selmer & Lam, 2004). There was no difference in social initiative which agrees with Dewaele and Van Oudenhoven's (2009) research, but not with that of Pollock and Van Reken (2009). This may be due to the sample of comparison which were mostly Business Administration students, and Business majors have been found to score high on social traits (Ackerman & Beier, 2007). There was no difference in emotional stability which is in line with De Waal and Born's (2020) study, but not with other previous research and theory (Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Gilbert, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). In the last decades, more attention has been paid to the experiences of TCKs, and Pollock and Van Reken's work, first published in 1999, raised more awareness of the effects of high mobility in childhood on the psychological well-being of (A)TCKs. This may have contributed to improved emotional stability. It could also be specific to this sample. The ATCK participants were part of a group of ATCKs volunteering to participate in TCK research. This means they are aware of their ATCK identity and they may have worked through some of their TCK issues.

Practical Implications

The results can be used by trainers and teachers in how they train employees and students to be more effective in intercultural interactions. They can teach them how to apply the sensemaking strategies that people already use, such as observation,

finding patterns, making comparisons, and dialogue, in intercultural contexts and for cultural sensemaking. This study highlights the importance of acquiring cultural knowledge and awareness for effective cultural sensemaking. Therefore, training and teaching intercultural competence should incorporate these aspects while also providing strategies for individuals to acquire more knowledge from their experiences. Trainers and teachers can use animations in their training to practice the sensemaking strategies and cultural sensemaking. It is recommended to use different scenarios as different situations seem to require different intercultural traits for cultural sensemaking. At least open-mindedness and social initiative have been shown to predict cultural sensemaking, so training and development could focus on developing these particular traits.

In addition, organizations that would like to recruit and select employees for jobs that require a lot of intercultural interactions or multicultural teamwork, such as those in leadership, business development, human resource management, and customer service, could assess multicultural personality traits during the selection process. More purposefully recruiting ATCKs may lead to a pool of applicants that are more likely to have the multicultural personality traits that are useful in positions where intercultural effectiveness is key.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several limitations to this study. While the use of vignettes has benefits, participants may respond differently if they experienced the incident themselves. For example, more emotions may be involved, there may be more at stake, and they would be able to determine their own actions. Future research could quantitatively research strategies and sensemaking by using simulations in which respondents actively participate. The measurement of some of the strategies, such as finding patterns and making comparisons, could have had a higher reliability. These strategies may need to be more precisely defined. For example, determining whether an answer fit into the category of finding patterns or making comparisons was sometimes ambiguous. While the aim of this study was to be more exploratory, using open-ended questions and coding, a future study could develop a more structured, quantitative measurement instrument to measure strategies. The samples used in this study were quite specific, ATCKs and students, in order to ensure a variance in intercultural competence. However, this also means these samples have specific characteristics such as the unique experiences of ATCKs, and the education, age, and developmental stage of students, which are less generalizable. In addition, in the student sample, about half of the participants were Dutch which may have influenced their perspective on the incidents. Other samples should be studied in subsequent research.

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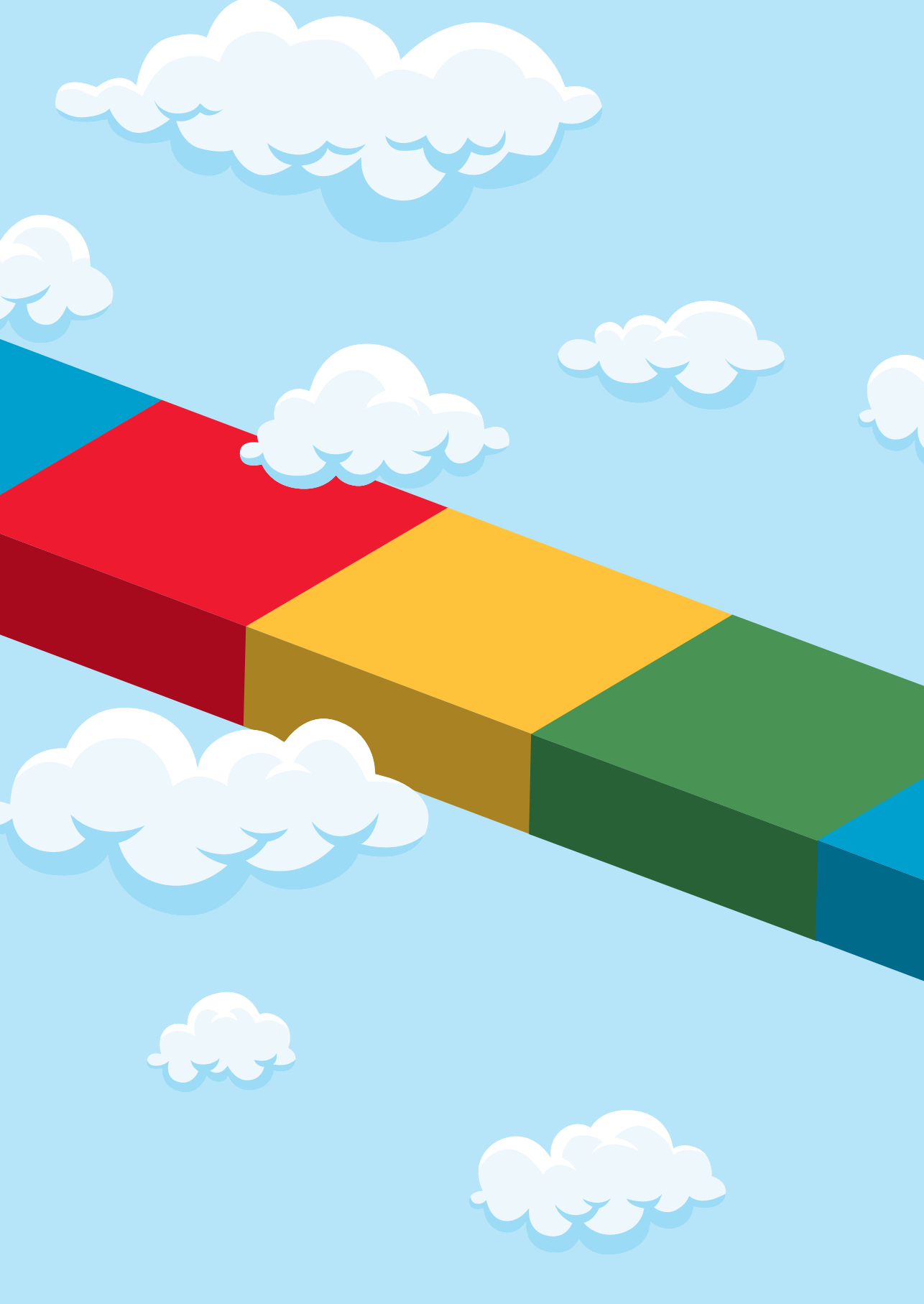

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to enrich and advance the knowledge on the development of intercultural competence of (future) employees. More specifically, the objective was to study the effectiveness of different learning experiences in developing intercultural competence. Furthermore, the learning processes underlying the development of intercultural competence were studied. Previous research has identified what constitutes intercultural competence and therefore, which attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors should be developed. However, there are many potential ways to develop intercultural competence and previous research has primarily focused on study abroad, cross-cultural or intercultural training, and expatriate assignments. Therefore, this dissertation studied some of the less researched learning experiences to contribute to our understanding of which learning experiences are effective in developing intercultural competence. Chapter 2 and 3 researched the integration of intercultural experiential training into a theoretical cross-cultural management course at a research university and its influence on intercultural competence development. Chapter 4 studied an international research consortium of Ph.D. students and their supervisors, and how this experience can lead to experiencing trigger events that can contribute to intercultural learning. Chapter 5 compared adult third culture kids (ATCKs) and non-ATCKs, evidentiating the influence of growing up internationally on multicultural personality traits and cultural sensemaking. The research on the learning processes involved in intercultural competence development is limited (Deardorff, 2015; Mitchell & Paras, 2018). In order to better understand why some learning experiences are effective or ineffective, this dissertation studies the intercultural learning process of students attending a course with an intercultural training component (Chapter 3), as well as the intercultural sensemaking process following a trigger event when living and/or working internationally (Chapter 4).

This concluding chapter discusses the main findings of the dissertation as a whole, synthesizing and connecting the findings from the different chapters. Subsequently, the dissertation's theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature on intercultural competence development are reviewed. Finally, the practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are explicated.

Main Findings per Chapter

Chapter 2

The study in Chapter 2 investigates a six-week cross-cultural management course at a Master program in Business Administration at a Dutch academic institution,

whereby a blended learning tool, Cultural Detective, was incorporated in the course with the aim of enhancing students' intercultural competence. The study aims to answer the research questions, 1) *What is the impact of a cross-cultural management course combined with the Cultural Detective training tool on students' intercultural competence?* and 2) *Which aspects of intercultural competence do students develop as a result of the course?* The course was given twice and students' cultural intelligence was quantitatively measured before and after the course (n = 26) and compared with students from another international business course (n = 28). Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 9 students investigated their learning experiences.

The quantitative results showed improvements in cognitive and metacognitive cultural intelligence, although the comparison group also developed these. On the other hand, the qualitative findings demonstrate that students developed open-mindedness, curiosity, and respect towards other cultures, culture-specific knowledge, cultural (self-)awareness, ethnorelativism, analysing and interpreting skills, listening and observation skills, withholding judgment, shifting frame of reference, learning capabilities, and adaptation. However, different students developed different elements of intercultural competence, depending on their background, developmental stage, and intercultural experiences.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 built forth on the study from Chapter 2 to answer the research question, *What facilitates intercultural learning for students in a classroom setting?* Thematic analysis of the data from the qualitative semi-structured interviews resulted in an inductive explanatory model. Learning follows the cycle of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) with experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and experimentation. Facilitating factors for learning are teaching tools, intercultural contact (teamwork, multicultural classroom, and cultural informants), motivational factors, and intercultural experiences. Dissonance plays an important role in intercultural learning. There should be enough dissonance to stimulate learning. However, dissonance can also create learning dilemmas that learners need to work through. These learning dilemmas revolved around stereotyping and adaptation.

Chapter 4

The aim of Chapter 4 was to gain more insight in how people develop intercultural competence by learning from trigger events or critical incidents during intercultural experiences. The study focused on the intercultural experiences of sixteen Ph.D./postdoctoral fellows and seven supervisors from fifteen different nationalities involved in a 4-year EU-funded research consortium whereby the majority of the

participants lived and worked outside their home country. The research questions were 1) *What type of trigger events do the participants experience during living/ working internationally?* and 2) *How do trigger events lead to the development of intercultural competence?* The critical incident technique was used in qualitative interviews with the members of the consortium to elicit a total of 48 trigger events from the participants. These were analyzed through the grounded theory method. The types of trigger events were both positive and negative, and centred around misunderstandings or disagreements, friendships, collaboration, and different ways of behaving. The results expanded on Osland et al.'s (2007, 2023) model of trigger events and intercultural sensemaking by identifying different types of learning besides cultural sensemaking, namely minimization, awareness of cultural differences, and a differences-similarities dialectical perspective.

A model of intercultural sensemaking grounded in the data illustrates the process of how people learn from trigger events. Through reflection and application of relevant culture-specific knowledge participants made sense of incidents. Several sensemaking strategies were used to develop this culture-specific knowledge during or after the incident, including dialogue, using cultural informants, finding patterns, making comparisons, and using previous knowledge. Using stereotypes was found to be counterproductive. Several factors facilitated certain sensemaking strategies, for example, dialogue is facilitated by friendships while hierarchical relationships inhibit dialogue.

Chapter 5

The purpose of Chapter 5 was to further research cultural sensemaking strategies identified in Chapter 4's study, and to quantitatively test their relationship with cultural sensemaking and intercultural competence. The research question was, *What strategies do interculturally competent individuals use to make sense of intercultural interactions?* Through a survey administered to a sample (N = 246) of university students and ATCKs, participants' qualitative responses to two animation videos featuring intercultural incidents were collected and quantitatively coded to assess their (cultural) sensemaking and sensemaking strategies. Of these participants, 178 answered the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (Van Der Zee et al., 2013) to indicate their intercultural competence.

The results show that the strategies of making comparisons, finding patterns, and dialogue were used for (cultural) sensemaking, while cultural informants were not used. Previous knowledge, particularly cultural knowledge, experiential knowledge, and knowledge of human behavior, were also used for (cultural) sensemaking.

However, regression analyses showed that only the strategy of previous cultural knowledge predicted cultural sensemaking. The other strategies are used in cultural sensemaking, but also in other forms of sensemaking. Of the MPQ dimensions, an individual's social initiative predicted cultural sensemaking of the first animation, while an individual's open-mindedness predicted cultural sensemaking of the second animation. The ATCKs had more open-mindedness, cultural empathy, and flexibility than the non-ATCKs. The ATCKs engaged in cultural sensemaking more than the non-ATCKs. This relationship was fully mediated by open-mindedness; ATCKs were more open-minded which led to more cultural sensemaking.

Main Findings Overall

The dissertation as a whole aimed to answer the research question, *How do different learning experiences develop the intercultural competence of (future) employees in different learning contexts*? In terms of different learning experiences and how these develop intercultural competence (the learning process), several findings can be concluded by comparing and synthesizing the findings from the different chapters.

Different Intercultural Learning Experiences

The findings of Chapter 2, 3, 4, and 5 combined, show that different learning experiences have the potential to develop (future) employees' intercultural competence. The findings of Chapter 2 and 3 demonstrate that intercultural competence can be developed in the classroom, while Chapters 4 and 5 indicate that international experiences of living and working abroad, working in multicultural groups, and growing up as a TCK, respectively, can enhance intercultural competence.

However, the studies also illustrate that these experiences do not necessarily and automatically lead to intercultural competence development. Chapter 3 shows that some learners face learning dilemmas, and that support and facilitation enhances their learning. Chapter 4 demonstrates that not everyone engages in the process of intercultural sensemaking when confronted with trigger events.

In addition, the learning experiences lead to different outcomes for different individuals. In Chapter 2 and 3, individual students drew different learnings from the same pedagogical intervention and worked through learning dilemmas differently. Similarly, in Chapter 4, the type of learnings derived from the critical incidents varied, as well as the complexity. This may be related to individuals' different stages of intercultural sensitivity development (M. J. Bennett, 2004). Depending on whether

a person is in the denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, or adaptation stage of intercultural sensitivity, they may respond differently to pedagogical interventions or real-life intercultural experiences and have different dilemmas to work through (J. M. Bennett, 2008). Chapter 5 of this dissertation also demonstrates that certain multicultural personality traits are linked to intercultural sensemaking. Individuals with more open-mindedness and social initiative are more likely to engage in cultural sensemaking when confronted with an intercultural incident. Individuals with cultural empathy are more likely to use cultural knowledge as a strategy for cultural sensemaking. This aligns with other studies that found that multicultural personality traits influence an individual's susceptibility to intercultural training (Figueroa & Hofhuis, 2024), and that social dominant individuals benefit less from experiential cross-cultural training (Alexandra, 2018). Chapter 3 shows that an individual's motivation to learn is another factor influencing the learning process. This finding is supported by some models of intercultural competence that consider, for example, motivational cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003), or attitudes such as curiosity and open-mindedness (Deardorff, 2006), as part of intercultural competence.

Learning Process

An intercultural learning process needs to take place to move from an experience to intercultural competence development. Chapters 3 and 4 investigate the intercultural learning process in two different contexts, the university classroom and an international research consortium; and with two different samples, Master students, and Ph.D. students and their supervisors, respectively. While the contexts and samples are different, some similarities in the intercultural learning process can be noted. In both cases, interaction with diverse others, especially with peers, contributes to intercultural learning. In Chapter 3, students learned from other students in the diverse classroom and affirmations from other students about the theoretical knowledge presented in the course supported students in their learning. In Chapter 4, the types of interactions varied more, but friendship with peers from other cultural backgrounds provided participants with a safe space to explore cultural differences.

Similarly, experiencing dissonance can trigger intercultural learning both in the classroom and during intercultural experiences living and working internationally. In Chapter 4, some of the trigger events retold by the research consortium members involved dissonance. The participants were confronted with different ways of behaving or experienced a misunderstanding or conflict around differences in language, disciplines, cultural values, or communication styles. However, the incidents in Chapter 4 illustrated that some people also learned through identifying

commonalities or even similarities and differences at the same time. Likewise, in Chapter 3, some students focused more on similarities or felt uncomfortable with differences. This emphasizes the different needs of learners during their intercultural competence development process. For example, Bennett (2008) argues that learners in the developmental stage of defense can benefit from a focus on similarities, due to their discomfort with differences.

Reflection is another common factor that can be seen in the learning processes described in Chapter 3 and 4. In the model of intercultural learning, reflection on one's own cultural values and intercultural experiences, as well as during the incident analysis process, was part of the learning process. In the intercultural sensemaking model, reflecting on the intercultural incident is an essential step in making sense of said intercultural incident.

In both models, culture-specific knowledge was a factor in the developmental process. In the model of intercultural learning, providing information about different cultures created dissonance and opportunities to make sense of intercultural experiences. In intercultural sensemaking, culture-specific knowledge proved to be necessary to make sense of the intercultural incident. Different strategies are used to obtain this culture-specific knowledge, as well as applying culture-specific knowledge one already holds. Chapter 5 further evidentiates that previous cultural knowledge is a sensemaking strategy that leads to intercultural sensemaking. Two other sensemaking strategies, engaging in dialogue and using cultural informants, identified in Chapter 4, were also identified as facilitators for learning in Chapter 3.

The main difference between the learning processes identified in Chapter 3 and 4 is the degree of control and guidance. In the model of intercultural learning, guidance and facilitation is provided by a teacher or trainer and some of the intercultural contact and exposure is initiated through the training design. The intercultural sensemaking process documented in Chapter 4 occurred mainly through unplanned and unprompted intercultural experiences, even though the research consortium's design—bringing together a diverse group of researchers living and working in different countries and creating interaction opportunities such as summer schools—was intended to foster intercultural engagement. However, participants were not guided or supported in their sensemaking process. The results of Chapter 4 do give insights on how intercultural sensemaking could be facilitated. Moreover, Chapter 5 shows that the model can also be applied to prompted intercultural experiences, animations in this case.

Critical Incidents

Critical incidents play a role in all the studies in this dissertation, albeit in different ways, displaying the many uses of critical incidents for learning and research. Chapter 2 and 3 show how critical incidents can be used as a pedagogical tool, and Chapter 4 illustrates how critical incidents can provide experiential learning in intercultural interactions. Critical incidents can also be used as research instruments. In Chapter 4 the critical incident technique is used to conduct the interviews. In Chapter 5, critical incidents are employed as vignettes to test cultural sensemaking. Critical incidents can be used in different formats, namely written incidents (Chapter 2 and 3), real-life incidents (Chapter 4), and animation videos (Chapter 5). In sum, critical incidents can serve as a learning tool, as well as a research or assessment instrument in intercultural competence development.

Theoretical Implications and Contributions

The studies in this dissertation confirm that intercultural competence can be developed through formal training as well as international experiences. The studies in this dissertation also confirm that intercultural competence does not develop automatically from exposure to other cultures (J. M. Bennett, 2011). People need to process their experiences to come to intercultural learning and reflection is an important part of that process (Kolb, 1984; McAllister et al., 2006; Ng et al., 2009). Moreover, this dissertation illustrates how individuals can respond very differently to similar interventions and experiences, supporting the theory that learners at different developmental stages of learners need different pedagogies and types of support (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

This dissertation contributes to the literature by studying some of the less researched intercultural learning experiences. Specifically, Chapter 2 shows that intercultural competence can be developed through a cross-cultural management university course that includes an intercultural skill development component. This aligns with previous research (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Krebs, 2020; Rosenblatt et al., 2013) that incorporating experiential training into a theoretical course at a higher education institution is a method to enhance students' intercultural competence. It implies that a form of internationalization at home can be a suitable alternative or complement to study abroad programs to develop intercultural competence. In addition, Chapter 4 adds to the literature by showing that working in an international research consortium, and academic expatriation can contribute to intercultural competence development. Chapter 5 contributes to resolving the

academic discussion on whether growing up as a TCK develops multicultural personality traits by showing that ATCKs have more open-mindedness, cultural empathy, and flexibility than non-ATCKs.

Both Chapters 3 and 4, contribute to the literature by giving more insight into the process underlying the development of intercultural competence. Chapter 3 identifies facilitators to intercultural learning, as well as learning dilemmas, and further enriches the existing literature by formulating a model of the intercultural learning process. Chapter 4 empirically assesses Osland et al.'s (2007, 2023) model of trigger events and intercultural sensemaking in a work environment, and expands on the model through data on real-life trigger events and grounded theory data analysis. Moreover, Chapter 4 puts forth a model describing the process of using strategies to come to cultural sensemaking.

Chapters 4 and 5 enhance the existing body of knowledge with strategies that facilitate intercultural sensemaking. The results confirm previous research (Nardon & Aten, 2016) that making comparisons and using previous knowledge are sensemaking strategies. Furthermore, the sensemaking strategies of dialogue, finding patterns, observation, and cultural informants, are additions to the cultural sensemaking literature. The results of Chapter 5 demonstrate the generalizability of the sensemaking strategies, and expand on the types of previous knowledge used, namely cultural knowledge, experiential knowledge, and knowledge of human behavior.

Synthesizing the results from Chapter 3 and 4, common factors in the processes underlying intercultural competence development are identified, namely interaction with diverse others, dissonance, and reflection. This enhances our understanding of essential elements in the intercultural learning process. Both studies also highlight the role that cultural informants and the use of dialogue can play in supporting intercultural learning. In addition, Chapter 4 shows that identifying commonalities could contribute to intercultural understanding, which supports the recent call from experts in the field to focus not just on cross-cultural differences but also on commonalities in global cooperation (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022).

Methodological Contributions

The methodological contributions of this dissertation mainly lie in the complementary nature of the qualitative and quantitative research methods used. By measuring

the effectiveness of the pedagogical intervention through quantitative and qualitative methods, Chapter 2 showed that these two methods can give a different picture of individuals' intercultural competence development. It questions whether the transformational nature of intercultural learning and the diverse learning experiences of students can be adequately captured using only quantitative pre- and post-test questionnaires. It is therefore recommended to measure intercultural competence through a mixed methods approach. The qualitative research in Chapter 3, with semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, and Chapter 4, with critical incident technique interviews and grounded theory analysis, resulted in enhanced insight into the learning process underlying intercultural competence development. Through a vignette style study, Chapter 5, used quantitative research methods to test the generalizability of the theory developed in Chapter 4. When studying the learning processes of intercultural competence development, qualitative research can best be used initially to grasp the complexity and dynamic nature of these processes to create conceptual frameworks and new theories. Qualitative research also gives voice to the learners by centering on their perspectives. Quantitative research can then be used to further establish the conceptual frameworks and theories brought forth by qualitative research.

This dissertation also showcases the methodological significance of critical incidents, employing them both as an interviewing technique and as vignettes to gauge participants' reactions to intercultural scenarios. Critical incidents could potentially be used for assessment purposes, as well as an alternative or complementary measurement instrument of intercultural competence, similar to a situational judgment test.

Practical Implications

Intercultural competence is more relevant and necessary than ever before, not only to navigate daily workplace interaction, but also to address the global challenges societies face, such as climate change, geopolitical tensions, and health crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic). At the same time, intercultural education and training is under pressure in the current political climate of nationalism and protectionism in many Western countries. Developing intercultural competence requires significant time, effort, and a thoughtfully crafted pedagogical approach. Despite this, companies and educational institutions, frequently constrained by reduced funding or limited time availability for learners, may seek quick and cost-effective solutions. As interculturalists, our challenge is to establish intercultural competence

as an essential set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, rather than a 'nice-to-have', as it is sometimes perceived. This means communicating the value of intercultural competence, using evidence-based methods in education and training, and developing new interventions. It is important to monitor the effectiveness of intercultural training and educational programs beyond participant evaluations. In addition, interculturalists can work on embedding intercultural competence development into job environments and educational curricula, rather than stand-alone programs.

As it is important for intercultural competence development to learn from intercultural experiences, the exposure and contact that learners have with people from other cultural backgrounds should be considered. When designing intercultural training or education, a needs assessment can give insight into how much exposure and contact learners have previously had. Depending on the outcome, the trainer or educator can include activities where one works with previous experiences or create more opportunities for learners to experience intercultural interaction. The latter can be in the form of, for example, diverse teamwork, collaborative online international learning (COIL) projects, and interviews with people from different backgrounds. In the workplace, opportunities for intercultural interaction can be created through working in multicultural teams, international secondments, traineeships, and job rotations, as well as expatriate assignments.

To increase the chances that these interventions will lead to intercultural competence development, they should be accompanied with support and facilitation of intercultural learning. For example, if students are working in diverse teams, then they could be supported by reflection exercises on their teamwork, teaching about and practicing strategies for effective multicultural teamwork in the classroom, which they can then apply in their teamwork. It may be necessary to train individuals in reflective skills and clarify the importance of reflection, as not everyone is accustomed to this practice.

When employees go on assignment abroad, their employers can support their intercultural competence development by providing support in processing and making sense of their international experiences during and after their assignment. This support could consist of intercultural coaching, reflection exercises, facilitated group sessions, or mentoring. This way employees have a dedicated time and space to process their experiences, as well as possibilities to discuss their experiences with others which may lead to enhanced insights.

In addition, employees as well as students, can be trained in sensemaking strategies so that they have the tools to make sense of incidents that they are confronted with during their intercultural experiences. For example, universities can work on observation skills, finding patterns, and engaging in meaningful dialogue. Besides, these skills will serve other purposes than merely successful intercultural interactions. It can also be beneficial to provide more opportunities for sensemaking by, for example, encouraging contact with cultural informants. This could be in the form of a buddy system with a local person (Van Bakel et al., 2015), facilitating dialogue within diverse teams and between locals and expatriates, as well as by inviting speakers or interviewees to a course, training, or company event.

Culture-specific and cultural knowledge is needed to make sense of intercultural situations. Providing training participants with frameworks on cultural dimensions, such as Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (2012), or Meyer's (2014) frameworks, can provide this information in a structured way to learners. At the same time presenting info about cultural groups, for example national cultures, also raises questions for trainers and training participants whether showing these differences could encourage stereotyping or 'us-them' thinking. While a framework provides structure, its simplification does not account for the heterogeneity within cultures and the complex intersectionality of people's identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, religion, generation). In addition, in a more globalized world, individuals, such as ATCKs, increasingly identify with multiple national cultures. However, the complexity of these topics may overwhelm learners who are developing their intercultural competence. Training in sensemaking strategies as ways to acquire and apply culture-specific knowledge to intercultural situations may be a way to give learners the tools to navigate this complexity. Using critical incidents that account for more heterogeneity within cultures and intersectionality of individual's identities may be another way to tackle this challenge.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While a variety of samples was used, the samples included mostly people with an academic educational background. This may affect the generalizability of the findings. Skills such as analyzing critical incidents, and sensemaking strategies such as finding patterns and making comparisons, may be more typical for those with an academic education. Future research could focus on intercultural competence development in people with a vocational educational background. In addition, some of the samples had an overrepresentation of women.

Since this dissertation shows that different people develop intercultural competence differently, and respond differently to the same interventions, it would be valuable to further research which individual or contextual factors influence intercultural learning for different types of learners to inform education and training design. More specifically, research could try to further explore why some learners show resistance to intercultural competence training interventions, in order to be able to better address this resistance. Similarly, researching why some people engage in cultural sensemaking and others do not, could shed light on how to provide appropriate training and support.

While this dissertation and a few other studies have researched intercultural sensemaking strategies, it is probable that the range of strategies identified is incomplete. More research on intercultural sensemaking strategies across different samples and contexts can lead to an exhaustive list of strategies. Moreover, in Chapter 5, the categorization of qualitative answers into the sensemaking strategies of 'finding patterns' and 'making comparisons' led to some ambiguity, as different raters sometimes classified the answers differently. Therefore, constructing a quantitative measurement instrument of sensemaking strategies could advance the research on this topic. From there, studies could further test the generalizability of the intercultural sensemaking strategies and process. In addition, future research could focus on investigating how sensemaking strategies can best be taught or developed.

Capturing the learning process underlying intercultural competence development is not an easy endeavor, as it involves capturing a process that partially happens internally and of which people are not always fully aware. Especially reflection was a concept that proved to be essential in intercultural competence development, but is not easily measured (Savicki & Price, 2021). In the qualitative data it was often implied, rather than explicitly stated. This is probably because sometimes people are not conscious of the fact that they are engaging in reflection. Future research could attempt to make reflection more explicit or use a quantitative measurement instrument (Savicki & Price, 2021).

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Description of Data Management

The data described in my dissertation have been collected with the consent of participants. Privacy sensitive data have been anonymized/ pseudonymized.

Data Storing

During research, privacy sensitive data have been stored on a protected computer.

After completion of my PhD, research data will be securely stored for reasons of scientific integrity for at least 10 years in the Radboud Data Repository.

Data re-use

Anonymized data are stored together with the necessary documentation in the Radboud Data Repository to which access is open access for registered users. It is not possible to link data to individuals in publications or published datasets.

In my project, I cannot make part of the data publicly available after research due to ethical reasons (privacy of respondents; confidential data). These data are archived internally in the Radboud Data Repository.

Summary

This dissertation provides insight into the development of intercultural competence and the underlying learning processes. Intercultural competence is defined as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 171). As workplaces have become more diverse and international, intercultural competence has gained importance for (future) employees across a wide range of sectors and professions. While employers and educational institutions increasingly recognize the need to foster the intercultural competence of their employees and students, respectively, (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017; Jones, 2013; Stier, 2006), the current supply of interculturally competent professionals falls far short of the organizational demand (Caligiuri, 2021). Moreover, educational institutions continue to struggle with embedding intercultural competence development into their curricula (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017).

There are many potential ways to develop intercultural competence. For employers and educational institutions to effectively foster this competence in (future) employees, they must be able to make evidence-based decisions about which intercultural experiences, educational approaches, and training methods to offer. Therefore, this dissertation examines several under-researched learning experiences, namely the integration of an intercultural training tool into a cross-cultural management course, the intercultural trigger events of members of an international research consortium, and the (cultural) sensemaking processes of adult third culture kids. The aim is to understand whether, and how these experiences facilitate the development of intercultural competence. By exploring the learning processes underlying the development of intercultural competence, this dissertation seeks to get more insight into why some methods and experiences are effective and others are not. These insights can inform the design of more impactful intercultural education and training, as well as the facilitation of more meaningful intercultural experiences.

The study presented in chapter 2 and 3 examines the integration of an intercultural learning tool, Cultural Detective, into an existing theoretical cross-cultural management course for Master's students in Business Administration at a Dutch university. Chapter 2 investigates the influence of this intervention on students' intercultural competence using quantitative pre- and post-intervention questionnaires with a comparison group, complemented with qualitative interview data. The quantitative results show improvements in cognitive and metacognitive

cultural intelligence, although the comparison group showed similar developments. No significant improvements in motivational and behaviorial cultural intelligence were found. In contrast, the qualitative findings demonstrate that students developed a broad range of intercultural competencies, including open-mindedness, curiosity, respect towards other cultures, culture-specific knowledge, cultural (self-) awareness, ethnorelativism, analysing and interpreting skills, listening and observation skills, the ability to withhold judgment, shifts in frame of reference, learning capabilities, and adaptation. Importantly, students developed different elements of intercultural competence, depending on their background, developmental stage, and intercultural experiences. The study also underscores the limitations of quantitative pre- and post-test self-report and single-method measures for assessing intercultural competence development.

Chapter 3 focuses on the learning process of intercultural competence for the students in the cross-cultural management course. A thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data was conducted to identify both facilitators and challenges of intercultural learning and to develop a model of intercultural learning. The model shows that intercultural learning follows Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, encompassing a concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Several factors facilitated students' intercultural learning, including specific teaching tools such as critical incidents, intercultural contact through teamwork, a multicultural classroom, and cultural informants, motivational factors, and intercultural experiences. Dissonance plays an important role in intercultural learning. A certain degree of dissonance is necessary to stimulate learning. However, it can also generate learning dilemmas that learners must work through. Some students faced learning dilemmas around stereotyping or adaptation. Motivation to learn and affirmation of cultural differences by individuals or experiences are factors that can support the learning, so that dissonance is a stimulus for learning rather than creating resistance.

Chapter 4's study explores how people develop intercultural competence by learning from trigger events during intercultural experiences. Trigger events in intercultural settings are interactions or situations that are surprising or unexpected, or involve different behavior than expected, allowing for intercultural learning. Using the critical incident technique, 48 critical incidents were collected through semi-structured interviews with members of an international research consortium. The participants, Ph.D. students, postdocs, research assistants, and supervisors, from 15 different nationalities, were living and working abroad and/or working in a multicultural research team. Applying a grounded theory approach, the interviews

were analysed, resulting in a model of intercultural sensemaking. Participants used several sensemaking strategies, including drawing on previous cultural knowledge or engaging in dialogue, consulting cultural informants, finding patterns, and making comparisons to develop culture-specific knowledge during or after the incident. Participants then made sense of the incident through reflection and application of this culture-specific knowledge. Several factors facilitated certain sensemaking strategies, for example, dialogue was facilitated by friendships, whereas hierarchical relationships tended to inhibit effective dialogue. Using stereotypes emerged as a counterproductive strategy. In addition, the findings showed that trigger events can be both positive and negative in nature. The main themes of the incidents involved misunderstandings or disagreements, friendships, collaboration, and different ways of behaving. The results expand on Osland et al.'s (2007, 2023) model of trigger events and intercultural sensemaking by adding minimization, awareness of cultural differences, and a differences-similarities dialectical perspective to the ways people learn from trigger events.

Chapter 5 extends on Chapter 4's findings with the aim of testing the generalizability of the intercultural sensemaking process. The vignette study used two animation videos of critical incidents to examine how participants made sense of the incidents and which sensemaking strategies they employed. The sample consisted of adult third culture kids (ATCKs), who grew up in multiple countries, and non-ATCKs. Intercultural competence was assessed by measuring participants' multicultural personality traits. The results show that ATCKs scored higher on open-mindedness, cultural empathy, and flexibility compared to the non-ATCKs. Some of the participants engaged in cultural sensemaking, while others made sense of the critical incidents in other ways, for example attributing the situation to differences in personalities of the characters or organizational culture. Participants with higher social initiative were more likely to engage in cultural sensemaking in response to the first animation, while open-mindedness predicted cultural sensemaking for the second animation. ATCKs engaged in cultural sensemaking more than the non-ATCKs, and this relationship was fully mediated by open-mindedness; ATCKs were more open-minded, which in turn led to more cultural sensemaking. Participants used the strategies of making comparisons, finding patterns, and engaging in dialogue for (cultural) sensemaking, whereas consulting cultural informants was not used. Participants also drew on previous knowledge, particularly cultural knowledge, experiential knowledge, and knowledge of human behavior, for (cultural) sensemaking. However, regression analyses revealed that only the use of prior cultural knowledge significantly predicted cultural sensemaking. While the other strategies were indeed used in cultural sensemaking, they were also used in other forms of sensemaking.

Synthesizing the results of the four chapters, the main findings confirm that intercultural competence development does not develop automatically through intercultural experiences, and that the learning experiences studied lead to different outcomes for different individuals. For intercultural competence to develop, an intercultural learning process must transform an experience into meaningful learning. Key components of this process include interaction with culturally diverse others, appropriate exposure to cultural differences, and reflection. The dissertation illustrates how people make sense of their intercultural experiences and the strategies they use in doing so. Across the studies, critical incidents play a role, highlighting their value for both learning and research.

Interculturalists can advance the field of intercultural education and training by emphasizing the importance of intercultural competence, relying on evidence-based methods, and developing new interventions. Training effectiveness should be monitored beyond participant evaluations, and intercultural competence development should be embedded into workplaces and curricula rather than offered as stand-alone programs. When designing intercultural learning experiences, the level and kind of exposure and contact with people from different cultural backgrounds should be considered. Educators and trainers can integrate activities based on learners' prior experiences or create intentional opportunities for intercultural interaction, such as diverse teamwork, COIL projects, and interviews. In workplaces, multicultural teams, international assignments, job rotations, and traineeships can offer similar opportunities. These should be supported with guidance, such as coaching, reflection exercises, facilitated sessions, or mentoring. Learners can benefit from training in reflective skills and in sensemaking strategies to help them interpret intercultural situations. Sensemaking can be further supported by encouraging contact with cultural informants through buddy programs, dialogue within diverse teams, or inviting guest speakers. Culture-specific knowledge is also essential. Frameworks on cultural dimensions (e.g., Hofstede, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, Meyer) can provide structure, though they risk encouraging stereotyping or oversimplification. Cultures are not homogenous and identities are intersectional, a complexity learners may struggle with. Training them in sensemaking strategies and using critical incidents that reflect cultural diversity and identity intersectionality can help them navigate this complexity more effectively.

Future research should investigate which individual and contextual factors influence intercultural learning for different types of learners. More insight is needed into why some learners resist intercultural competence training and why

some individuals engage in cultural sensemaking while others do not. Additional studies across diverse samples and contexts could help identify a more complete set of intercultural sensemaking strategies. Developing a quantitative instrument to measure these strategies would allow researchers to further test the generalizability of the intercultural sensemaking process. Future studies could also examine how sensemaking strategies can best be taught or developed.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Dit proefschrift biedt inzicht in de ontwikkeling van interculturele competentie en de onderliggende leerprocessen. Interculturele competentie wordt gedefinieerd als "het vermogen om effectief en gepast te communiceren in interculturele situaties op basis van iemands interculturele kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 171). Nu werkplekken steeds diverser en internationaler worden, is interculturele competentie belangrijker geworden voor (toekomstige) werknemers in uiteenlopende sectoren en beroepen. Hoewel werkgevers en onderwijsinstellingen in toenemende mate het belang erkennen van het bevorderen van de interculturele competentie van respectievelijk hun werknemers en studenten (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017; Jones, 2013; Stier, 2006), blijft het huidige aanbod van intercultureel competente professionals ver achter bij de organisatorische vraag (Caligiuri, 2021). Bovendien hebben onderwijsinstellingen nog altijd moeite om de ontwikkeling van interculturele competentie in hun curricula te verankeren (Gregersen-Hermans, 2017).

Er zijn veel mogelijke manieren om interculturele competentie te ontwikkelen. Om deze competentie bij (toekomstige) werknemers effectief te stimuleren, moeten werkgevers en onderwijsinstellingen evidence-based beslissingen kunnen nemen over welke interculturele ervaringen, onderwijsvormen en trainingen zij aanbieden. Daarom onderzoekt dit proefschrift een aantal minder bestudeerde leerervaringen, namelijk de integratie van een interculturele trainingstool in een cursus cross-cultural management, de interculturele *trigger events* van leden van een internationaal onderzoeksconsortium, en de (culturele) *sensemaking*-processen van *adult third culture kids*. Het doel is te begrijpen óf en hoe deze ervaringen de ontwikkeling van interculturele competentie bevorderen. Door de leerprocessen te onderzoeken die ten grondslag liggen aan de ontwikkeling van interculturele competentie, beoogt dit proefschrift meer inzicht te krijgen in waarom sommige methoden en ervaringen effectief zijn en andere niet. Deze inzichten kunnen bijdragen aan het ontwerpen van effectiever intercultureel onderwijs en training, evenals aan het faciliteren van meer betekenisvolle interculturele ervaringen.

Het onderzoek in hoofdstuk 2 en 3 onderzoekt de integratie van een intercultureel leerinstrument, *Cultural Detective*, in een bestaande theoretische cursus cross-cultural management voor masterstudenten Bedrijfskunde aan een Nederlandse universiteit. Hoofdstuk 2 onderzoekt de invloed van deze interventie op de interculturele competentie van studenten met behulp van kwantitatieve vragenlijsten vóór en na de interventie, inclusief een vergelijkingsgroep, aangevuld met kwalitatieve interview-

gegevens. De kwantitatieve resultaten laten verbeteringen zien in cognitieve en metacognitieve culturele intelligentie, hoewel de vergelijkingsgroep ook vooruitgang liet zien. Er werd geen verbetering in motivationele en gedragsmatige culturele intelligentie gevonden. Daarentegen tonen de kwalitatieve bevindingen aan dat studenten een breed scala aan interculturele competenties ontwikkelden, waaronder openheid, nieuwsgierigheid, respect voor andere culturen, cultuurspecifieke kennis, culturele (zelf)bewustheid, etnorelativering, analyse- en interpretatievaardigheden, luister- en observatievaardigheden, het vermogen om oordeelsvorming uit te stellen, verschuivingen in referentiekader, leervermogen en aanpassingsvermogen. Studenten ontwikkelden verschillende elementen van interculturele competentie, afhankelijk van hun achtergrond, ontwikkelingsfase en interculturele ervaringen. De studie benadrukt daarnaast de beperkingen van kwantitatieve voor- en nametingen op basis van zelfrapportage en van enkelvoudige meetmethoden voor het meten van de ontwikkeling van interculturele competentie.

Hoofdstuk 3 richt zich op het leerproces van interculturele competenties bij de studenten in de cross-cultural management cursus. Een thematische analyse van de interviewdata is uitgevoerd om zowel bevorderende als belemmerende factoren in intercultureel leren te identificeren en om een model van intercultureel leren te ontwikkelen. Het model laat zien dat intercultureel leren de leercyclus van Kolb (1984) volgt, bestaande uit concrete ervaring, reflectie, abstracte conceptualisatie en actief experimenteren. Verschillende factoren stimuleerden het interculturele leerproces van studenten, waaronder specifieke onderwijstools zoals kritieke incidenten, intercultureel contact via groepswerk, een multiculturele klas en culturele informanten, motivatiefactoren en interculturele ervaringen. Dissonantie speelt een belangrijke rol in intercultureel leren. Een bepaalde mate van dissonantie is noodzakelijk om leren mogelijk te maken; echter, het kan ook voor weerstand en dilemma's zorgen. Zo worstelden sommige studenten met dilemma's rond stereotypering of aanpassing. Motivatie om te leren en bevestiging van de culturele verschillen door personen of ervaringen zijn factoren die het leerproces kunnen ondersteunen, zodat dissonantie fungeert als een stimulans voor leren in plaats van weerstand op te roepen.

De studie in hoofdstuk 4 onderzoekt hoe mensen interculturele competentie ontwikkelen door te leren van *trigger events* tijdens interculturele ervaringen. *Trigger events* in een interculturele context zijn interacties of situaties die verrassend of onverwacht zijn, of waarbij gedrag anders is dan verwacht, en die ruimte bieden voor intercultureel leren. Met behulp van de critical incident technique werden 48 kritieke incidenten verzameld via semigestructureerde interviews met leden

van een internationaal onderzoeksconsortium. De deelnemers—promovendi, postdocs, onderzoeksassistenten en begeleiders, afkomstig uit 15 verschillende landen—woonden en werkten in het buitenland en/of werkten in een multicultureel onderzoeksteam. Door een grounded theory-benadering toe te passen, werden de interviews geanalyseerd, wat resulteerde in een model van interculturele sensemaking. De deelnemers gebruikten verschillende sensemaking-strategieën, waaronder het putten uit bestaande culturele kennis of het aangaan van dialoog, het raadplegen van culturele informanten, het herkennen van patronen, of het maken van vergelijkingen om cultuurspecifieke kennis te ontwikkelen tijdens of na het incident. Vervolgens gaven zij betekenis aan het incident door middel van reflectie en toepassing van deze cultuurspecifieke kennis. Verschillende factoren ondersteunden bepaalde sensemaking-strategieën. Zo werd dialoog bevorderd door vriendschappen, terwijl hiërarchische relaties open en effectief gesprek juist belemmerden. Het gebruik van stereotypen bleek een contraproductieve strategie. Daarnaast toonden de bevindingen aan dat *trigger events* zowel positief als negatief van aard kunnen zijn. De belangrijkste thema's van de incidenten hadden betrekking op misverstanden of meningsverschillen, vriendschappen, samenwerking en verschillende gedragswijzen. De resultaten breiden het model van *trigger events* en interculturele *sensemaking* van Osland et al. (2007, 2023) uit door het toevoegen van minimalisering, bewustzijn van culturele verschillen en een verschillen–gelijkenissen-dialectisch perspectief als aanvullende manieren waarop mensen leren van *trigger events*.

Hoofdstuk 5 bouwt voort op de bevindingen van hoofdstuk 4 met als doel de generaliseerbaarheid van het interculturele *sensemaking*-proces te toetsen. In het vignetonderzoek werden twee animatiefilmpjes van kritieke gebeurtenissen gebruikt om te onderzoeken hoe deelnemers betekenis gaven aan de situaties en welke *sensemaking*-strategieën zij toepasten. De steekproef bestond uit *adult third culture kids* (ATCK's), die in meerdere landen zijn opgegroeid, en niet-ATCK's. Interculturele competentie werd gemeten door de multiculturele persoonlijkheidskenmerken van de deelnemers te meten. De resultaten laten zien dat ATCK's hoger scoorden op openheid, culturele empathie en flexibiliteit dan de niet-ATCK's. Sommige deelnemers hielden zich bezig met culturele *sensemaking*, terwijl andere op andere manieren betekenis gaven aan de kritieke incidenten, bijvoorbeeld door de situatie toe te schrijven aan verschillen in persoonlijkheden van de personages of aan de organisatiecultuur. Deelnemers met een meer sociaal initiatief hadden een grotere kans om aan culturele *sensemaking* te doen in reactie op de eerste animatie, terwijl openheid culturele *sensemaking* voorspelde voor de tweede animatie. ATCK's hielden zich meer bezig met culturele *sensemaking* dan

de niet-ATCK's, en deze relatie werd volledig gemedieerd door openheid: ATCK's scoorden hoger op openheid, wat op zijn beurt leidde tot meer culturele *sensemaking*. Deelnemers gebruikten de strategieën van vergelijken, patronen herkennen en het aangaan van dialoog voor (culturele) *sensemaking*, terwijl het raadplegen van culturele informanten niet werd gebruikt. Deelnemers maakten ook gebruik van eerdere kennis, met name culturele kennis, ervaringskennis en kennis van menselijk gedrag, voor (culturele) *sensemaking*. Regressieanalyses toonden echter aan dat alleen het gebruik van eerdere culturele kennis een significante voorspeller was van culturele *sensemaking*. Hoewel de andere strategieën wel werden toegepast in culturele *sensemaking*, werden zij ook gebruikt bij andere vormen van *sensemaking*.

De resultaten van de vier hoofdstukken tezamen bevestigen dat interculturele competentie niet automatisch ontstaat door interculturele ervaringen, en laten zien dat de onderzochte leerervaringen bij verschillende individuen tot verschillende uitkomsten leiden. Voor de ontwikkeling van interculturele competentie moet een intercultureel leerproces plaatsvinden waarbij een ervaring wordt omgezet in betekenisvol leren. Belangrijke elementen in dit proces zijn interactie met cultureel diverse anderen, passende blootstelling aan cultuurverschillen en reflectie. Dit proefschrift laat zien hoe mensen betekenis geven aan hun interculturele ervaringen en welke strategieën zij daarbij gebruiken. In alle studies speelden kritieke incidenten een rol, wat hun waarde voor zowel leren als onderzoek onderstreept.

Voor het intercultureel werkveld is het belangrijk dat het belang van interculturele competentie wordt benadrukt, evidence-based methoden worden gebruikt en nieuwe interventies worden ontwikkeld. De effectiviteit van trainingen moet verder worden gemonitord dan alleen via deelnemersevaluaties, en de ontwikkeling van interculturele competentie zou beter ingebed moeten worden in werkomgevingen en curricula in plaats van het aanbieden van enkel losstaande trainingen of interventies. Bij het ontwerpen van interculturele leerervaringen moet rekening worden gehouden met de mate van en het soort blootstelling en contact van deelnemers met mensen uit andere culturele achtergronden. Docenten en trainers kunnen activiteiten integreren die voortbouwen op eerdere ervaringen van de deelnemers of doelbewust mogelijkheden creëren voor interculturele interactie, zoals werken in een divers team, COIL-projecten en interviews. In werkomgevingen kunnen multiculturele teams, internationale opdrachten, taakrotaties en traineeships vergelijkbare mogelijkheden bieden. Deze ervaringen moeten worden ondersteund met begeleiding, zoals coaching, reflectie-oefeningen, gefaciliteerde sessies of mentoring. Lerenden kunnen baat hebben bij training in reflectieve vaardigheden en sensemaking-strategieën om hen te helpen

interculturele situaties beter te interpreteren. Culturele *sensemaking* kan verder worden ondersteund door contact met culturele informanten te stimuleren, bijvoorbeeld via buddyprogramma's, dialoog binnen diverse teams of het uitnodigen van gastsprekers. Cultuurspecifieke kennis is eveneens essentieel. Modellen van culturele dimensies (bijv. Hofstede, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, Meyer) kunnen structuur bieden, al bestaat het risico dat ze stereotypering of oversimplificatie in de hand werken. Omdat culturen niet volledig homogeen zijn en identiteiten intersectioneel, kunnen lerenden worstelen met deze complexiteit. Training in *sensemaking*-strategieën en het gebruik van kritieke incidenten die culturele diversiteit en intersectionaliteit weerspiegelen, zouden hen kunnen helpen om met deze complexiteit om te gaan.

Toekomstig onderzoek zou verder moeten nagaan welke individuele en contextuele factoren intercultureel leren beïnvloeden voor verschillende personen. Er is meer inzicht nodig in waarom sommige individuen weerstand bieden aan trainingen in interculturele competentie, en waarom sommige individuen zich wel met culturele *sensemaking* bezighouden terwijl anderen dat niet doen. Aanvullende studies met diverse steekproeven en contexten kunnen bijdragen aan het creëren van een volledigere overzicht van interculturele *sensemaking*-strategieën. Het ontwikkelen van een kwantitatief meetinstrument voor deze strategieën zou onderzoekers in staat stellen om de generaliseerbaarheid van het interculturele *sensemaking*-proces verder te toetsen. Toekomstige studies kunnen bovendien onderzoeken hoe *sensemaking*-strategieën het best aangeleerd of ontwikkeld kunnen worden.

Curriculum Vitae

After an international education and childhood as a third culture kid, Pauline Vromans studied Human Resource Studies at Tilburg University from 2001 to 2005. A semester abroad studying intercultural communication, Mexican culture, and Spanish at Tecnólogico de Monterrey, Querétaro, Mexico, deepened her interest in intercultural issues. In 2005, Pauline graduated cum laude with a thesis on the presumed cultural similarity paradox in expatriate adjustment, which was later published in the *Journal of Global Mobility*. She went on to study a Master's in Culture, Organization, and Management at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam during which she conducted research in Costa Rica on local entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

She subsequently spent two years working in the tourism sector in a remote area of Costa Rica. During and after her studies, she was involved in establishing the family business in the representation and distribution of several international baby-product brands in the Netherlands.

In 2013, Pauline decided to pursue a career in the intercultural field. She became actively involved in the events, committees, and conferences of the Society of Intercultural Education, Training, and Research (SIETAR) and completed a training program at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication. She founded her company, Intercultural Minds, delivering intercultural training to expatriates relocating to or from the Netherlands. She also began teaching academic skills and research methods courses at the University of Amsterdam.

In 2014, she moved to San Diego, USA, to begin her Ph.D. at the School of Leadership and Education Sciences. In 2015, she returned to Amsterdam to continue her doctoral research as an external Ph.D. candidate at the Nijmegen School of Management at Radboud University. Her research focused on the development of intercultural competence and was presented at several conferences, including those of SIETAR, the International Academy of Intercultural Research (IAIR), and the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP). Chapter 3 of her dissertation has been published in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*.

Over the years, Pauline has continued to teach courses such as Cross-Cultural Management, Organizational Behavior, and Organizational Culture and Communication at the University of Amsterdam and Radboud University. She

has also delivered guest lectures at Luiss Business School, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico.

Pauline has initiated several intercultural projects at the University of Amsterdam, such as "Feeling at Home in the Netherlands" workshops, an international student support group, and intercultural awareness workshops for social mentors, lecturers, and researchers. She designed and taught multiple intercultural skills courses for Bachelor's and Master's students, drawing directly on insights from her Ph.D. research. From 2021 to 2025, she worked on the Local Global Think Tank project team of the Education Lab of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies, where she co-designed and implemented Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) courses for various programs at the University of Amsterdam.

Through her company, Intercultural Minds, Pauline continues to design and facilitate intercultural training for individuals and teams, and provides research-driven intercultural consulting.

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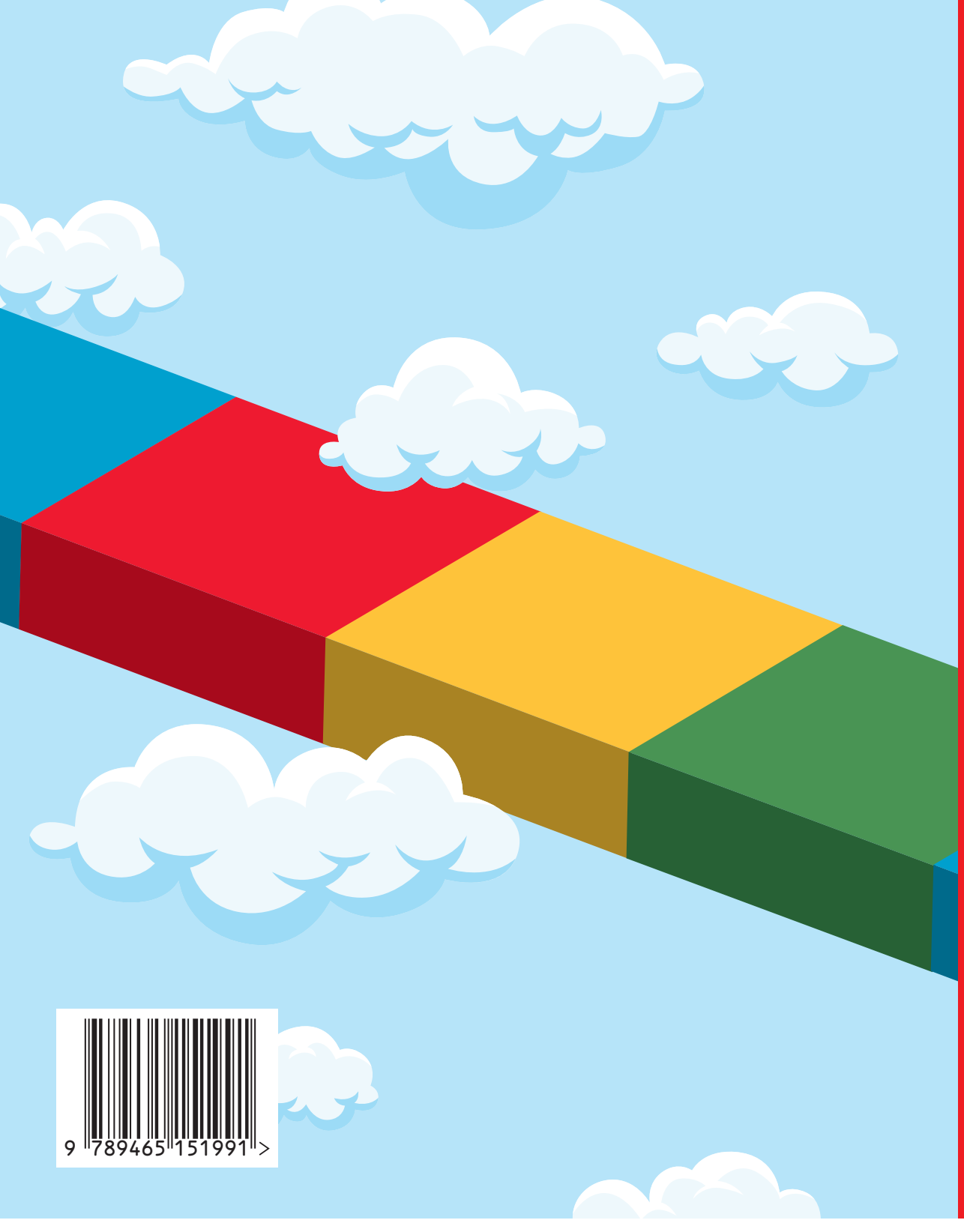

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