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**Cross-Cultural Deception Detection**

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**Abstract**

The cultural diversity of people encountered by front-line investigators has increased substantially over the last decade. Increasingly, investigators must try to resolve their suspicions by evaluating a person's behaviour through the lens of that person's social and cultural norms. In this chapter we consider what is known about cross-cultural deception and deception detection. In the first section we examine cultural differences in perceptions of deception and review evidence suggesting that the accuracy of deception judgements deteriorates when made across cultures. We examine the roots of this poor performance, showing how eight cultural norms lead to behaviours that appear suspicious to judges from other cultures. In the second section we review evidence suggesting that verbal and nonverbal cues to deception vary across cultures. In particular, we show that the observed variation in cues is consistent with, and can be predicted by, what is known about cultural differences in fundamental interpersonal and cognitive processes. In our conclusion we speculate about likely areas of development in this line of research.

### **Cross-Cultural Deception Detection**

The cultural diversity of people encountered by investigators who interact with the public has increased substantially over the last decade (Giebels & Taylor, 2009; Gould, 1997). This has inevitably meant that these investigators face a harder interpersonal challenge when answering key questions such as: has the suspect understood what is at stake?; why do they avoid answering the question?; and, why are they being aloof and distant? In cross-cultural interactions, the usual challenges of an investigator's role are compounded by the need to decipher whether the behaviour of a suspect is indicative of deceit, or a consequence of the suspect's culturally unique way of interacting.

The challenge investigators face stems from the fact that humans rely on culturally determined norms and expectations to guide their sense making during an interaction (Gudykunst, 1997; Tannen, 2006). These norms include differences in beliefs about how to interact with authority figures or those of the opposite sex (Rosenquist & Megargee, 1970), differences in the expression of emotions and thoughts (Scherer, Banse, & Wallbott, 2001), differences in what we understand by 'crime' and 'lying' (Mealy, Stephan, & Urrutia, 2007; Ning & Crossman, 2007), differences in how we respond to others' attempts at influence (Beune et al., 2010), and differences in the etiquette of interaction (e.g., turn-taking) (Gumperz, 1982). In within-culture interactions, such norms simplify the complex task of interaction by making it possible to anticipate the other person's behaviour. In cross-cultural interactions, the norms of one person are often not the norms underpinning the behaviour of their interlocutor. The result is that these contrasting foundations interfere with how behaviour is understood. In these

conditions, investigators (and everyone else) become less confident in their ability to make appropriate inferences from an individual's behaviour (Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

The need to improve this situation is recognised by many law enforcement authorities. The United Kingdom's Home Office and several Police Authorities list cultural differences and cultural awareness as one of the key issues in investigator training and development (Jones & Newburn, 2001). Similarly, in their report *Educating information*, the US Defence Intelligence Board acknowledged that current techniques and training "takes a 'one-size-fits-all' approach and fails...to adapt the techniques to differences in age, ethnicity, or culture of the suspect" (p. 230, Neuman & Salinas-Serrano, 2006). They suggest that this must change to allow investigators to feel better equipped to handle the diversity of the individuals they encounter.

The need for improvement is also beginning to be recognised in research. Over the last decade there has been a modest but steady increase in studies of other cultural groups, although, despite its clear relevance, very little research looking at interactions *across* cultures. In this chapter we review the emerging literature as it relates to two aspects of deception. First, we examine cross-cultural judgements of deception and the interpersonal factors that moderate the accuracy of these judgements. We begin by examining cultural variation in people's perceptions of what constitutes deception and we then review findings showing that people's subjective judgements about deception deteriorate when they are made across cultures. We discuss dominant accounts for why this is the case, and explore a number of moderators of this effect. We end by examining the roots of this poor performance and methods through which performance can be

improved. We show how eight cultural norms lead to behaviours that appear suspicious to judges from other cultures, and we discuss how familiarity with such norms can reduce the extent of incorrect judgements.

Second, we review evidence suggesting that verbal and nonverbal cues to deception vary across cultures. In particular, we show that the observed variation in cues is consistent with what is known about cultural differences in three areas of social and cognitive functioning: self-construal as it varies across key cultural dimensions, such as individualism-collectivism; episodic memory and the culturally differences in the way people encode and retrieve their experiences; and, interpersonal coordination and its association, at a subconscious level, with cooperation. We review recent work that demonstrates patterns of verbal and nonverbal correlates of deception that match the predictions made by these cultural differences. In some scenarios, these patterns show that the cues typically associated with deceit in Western student samples are associated with truthful accounts in samples from other cultures. In our conclusion we speculate about likely areas of development of research in this area.

### **Cross-Cultural Judgements about Deception**

The question of whether or not people can recognise deception across cultures is important, in part, because it distinguishes between two accounts of what occurs in cross-cultural interactions (Bond, Omar, Mahmoud, & Bonser, 1990). One account is that differences in social norms and expectations may reduce the accuracy of judgements because judges cannot draw on their usual heuristics when making an inference. This explanation implies that deception detection is derived from a culture-specific code that must be understood in order for behaviour to be deciphered. An alternative, opposing

account suggests that cues to deception may be consistent enough across individuals to remain effective despite the variance introduced by culture. Arguably, this second account is closer to the implicit assumption made by many researchers when they treat their participant groups as homogenous; most University campuses do not contain a random sampling of cultures.

One of the first studies of deception detection accuracy involved Jordanian and US undergraduate students, who were videotaped giving either a genuine or fabricated description of somebody they liked or disliked (Bond, Omar, Mahmoud, & Bonser, 1990). These videotapes were then watched by other Jordanian and US students, who were asked to identify the truthful and fabricated accounts. The student judges were able to identify deception with better than chance accuracy when judging their own culture, but not when judging across cultures. Specifically, the accuracy of within-culture detection for the Jordanian and US students averaged 56%, which is not untypical of the accuracies reported in research (Bond & DePaulo, 2006). The accuracy of cross-cultural judgements, however, averaged 49%. They may have well guessed.

This finding has since been replicated by a number of researchers. Bond and Atoum (2000) compared American, Jordanian, and Indian students, as well as an illiterate Indian sample, and showed that an above chance accuracy rate for within culture judgements dropped to chance when judgements were made across cultures. Similarly, Lewis (2009) found that the accuracy of Spanish judges was 59% when making judgements about other Spanish students, but only 51% when making judgements about US students. In an interesting twist to this line of research, Park and Ahn (2007) showed that Korean and US students based their judgements, in part, on how they felt others from

their culture would evaluate the message, rather than on some form of absolute criteria about behaviour. This implies that judgements are based on culturally determined cues, which may not remain valid across cultures.

So why does judgement accuracy decrease when judgements are made across cultures? One influential explanation is provided by the norm violation model, which proposes that people infer deception when the communicator violates what the receiver anticipates as being normative behaviour (Levine et al., 2000; see also, Bond et al., 1992, who argue for a broader 'expectation violation model' in which suspicion is aroused by all behaviour that violates expectations, regardless of whether or not it is normative). These social norms may reflect nonverbal behaviour or 'display rules' (Ekman & Friesen, 1971), or paralinguistic behaviours, such as turn taking and intonation. When an interlocutor behaves in a way that is unusual and unexpected, a speaker seeks a plausible explanation for that behaviour. In the absence of other information, a plausible account becomes that the interlocutor is being duplicitous. For example, a comparison of Arabic and American conversations shows that Arabs are more likely to confront one another, sit closer to one another, touch one another, make more eye contact with one another, and converse more loudly with one another than Americans (Watson & Graves, 1966). This can lead Americans to misinterpret their style as confrontational.

Cultural differences may also exist in the norms that dictate the purpose of certain behaviours and the interactions in which they should be used. Matsumoto and Kudoh (1993) found that Japanese students have a display rule to use smiles for social appropriateness more frequently than US students, and use smiles relatively less frequently to display true feelings of pleasure and joy. Such differences in normative

nonverbal behaviour may in turn lead to differences in perceived credibility during cross-cultural interactions. Consistent with this idea, Bond et al. (1992) found that observers perceived actors who performed strange and unexpected behaviours (e.g., head tilting and staring) as more dishonest than those who did not perform such behaviours. This was true regardless of whether the actor was actually telling the truth or lying. Similarly, Vrij and Winkel (1991, 1994) videotaped Dutch and Surinam actors displaying typical Dutch or Surinam nonverbal behaviour while giving a statement about an event. When Dutch police officers rated their opinion of the suspiciousness of the videotaped actors, they tended to rate both Surinam and Dutch actors as more suspicious when they showed nonverbal behaviour that was consistent with Surinam norms, compared to when they displayed normative Dutch behaviour (i.e., a within-culture judgement). This finding is interesting because it suggests that cross-cultural biases in behaviour can influence deception judgments above and beyond biases cued by visual appearance.

The studies described so far focus on nonverbal behaviour, but the impact of norm violations on veracity judgements has also been shown for verbal behaviour.

McCornack, Levine, Solowczuk, Torres, and Campbell (1992) found that messages containing violations of one or more of Grice's (1975) four maxims (quality, quantity, relevance, and manner) were rated by US students as less honest than messages that did not violate the maxims. In a replication involving Hong Kong students, Yueng, Levine, and Nishiyama (1999) found the same association for violations of falsification (quality) and evasion (relevance), but no association for violations of omissions (quantity) and equivocation (manner). This difference suggests that Hong Kong and US students have a different norm around what counts as a violation of the maxims; a difference that is

presumably driven at least in part by culture. Lastly, in a clever demonstration of how personal norms drive such judgements, Sagarin, Rhoads, and Cialdini (1998) found that those who were induced to lie to their partners tended to see their partners as less honest than did people who did not lie to their partners.

### **Cross-cultural Moderators of Deception Judgements**

Although this research suggests that violations of norms can drive misjudgements of veracity across cultures, the picture is not so straightforward. One moderating factor is the existence of considerable cultural differences in the acceptability of deception. For example, Fu, Lee, Cameron and Xu (2001) found that Chinese and Canadian students differed on their perception of lies about pro-social behaviour, with the Chinese endorsing lies as permissible modesty far more than the Canadians (Lee, Xu, Fu, Cameron & Chen, 2001, found the same effect for children). Similarly, Nishiyama's (1995) study of business negotiations found that some everyday Japanese business acts, such as agreeing to save the other party's honour, would be considered deceptive by observers in the US. Such differences in beliefs about acceptability impact on what people are prepared to lie about. Aune and Waters (1994) found that Samoans, who are dominantly collectivist in culture, were more likely to attempt deception for a group or for family concerns, while Americans, who are dominantly individualistic in culture, were more likely to deceive to protect self or a private issue. Similarly, Sims (2002) found that US employees were more likely than Israeli employees to deceive for personal gain. These differences are likely to influence the extent to which different cues to deception are shown by different cultural groups, since each has a different expectation about what is acceptable and what should be hidden (Seiter, Bruschke, & Bai, 2002).

A second moderator of deception judgements are cultural differences in how perceptions of lying translate into differences in what is felt and thought by liars while deceiving. This is particularly true when comparing individualistic and collectivist participants because the latter group's social norm is such that they accept lying when it saves the honour of the interlocutor. For example, Seiter and Bruschke (2007) found that Americans expect to feel more guilty than Chinese participants when lying to various interaction partners across a range of different motivations. Similarly, in their study of Singaporean participants, Li, Triandis and Yu (2006) showed a positive correlation between deception and collectivism in business negotiations. As might be expected for collectivist participants, this lying was particularly prevalent when the negotiation was around family issues.

Interestingly, the differences across cultures may be more specific than the broad differences found across individualistic and collectivist cultures. In his anthropological work, Abu-Lughod (1986) found that arousing guilt among Awlad Ali—a tribe of Bedouins living in the Egyptian side of the Western Desert—required unusual conditions. They experienced guilt only in situations that were perceived as shameful, which were primarily those in which an individual's autonomy is threatened. Thus, the experience of lying is likely quite unique for the Awlad Ali (Abu-Lughod, 1986).

A third moderator of deception judgements relates to evidence suggesting that people around the world have common misperceptions of what constitute signs of lying. In the most extensive survey of its kind (Global Deception Research Team, 2006), respondents from 75 countries using 43 languages were asked how they might tell when people are lying and completed a survey about lying stereotypes. The overwhelming

finding was that over 65% of the participants listed avert gaze as a marker of lying, followed by cues such as nervousness and incoherence. When probed, they also reported strong beliefs about less eye contact, more shifting of posture, more self-touching, and so on. This commonality in beliefs suggests that a common set of cues will be used by people of all cultures when making judgements about veracity, which contradicts the difference in rates of judgement accuracy observed across within- and cross-cultural comparisons. There are two dominant and as-yet untested explanations for this. One is that people from different cultures interpret these cues in different ways; they are using the same cues but interpreting them according to a unique cultural code. The second is that people's reporting of cues bears little relation to what they actually use in their judgements (cf. Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007). That is, people are unable to accurately report what cues they are utilising when making judgements, such that an external measure of their behaviour (e.g., through eye-tracking) is required to ascertain what behaviours they are relying on (Hartwig & Bond, 2011).

A fourth moderator is that people's cross-cultural judgements of lying depend on which language the suspect is speaking when being judged. Cheng and Broadhurst (2005) had Cantonese and English postgraduate students identify liars and truth tellers giving their opinion on capital punishment. Compared to targets speaking in their native language, judges tended to identify people speaking in a second language as liars. The effect of this shift in judgements was to remove the 'truth bias,' thereby increasing the correct identification of liars but also leading to more false accusations of truth-tellers. This difference in the relative bias toward truth and lie has also been found by Da Silva and Leach (2013) who found that participants were more likely to exhibit a truth-bias

when observing native-language speakers, whereas they were more likely to exhibit a lie-bias when viewing second-language speakers. Interestingly, in the Cheng and Broadhurst study, liars also reported less ability to control verbal and nonverbal behavioural cues when speaking a second language, suggesting that the cognitive load of interaction led them to resort to a culturally-normative interaction style rather than the one made salient by their interaction partner.

A final, more positive twist in complexity about judgements of deception across cultures comes from evidence suggesting that performance can be improved by exposing individuals to other cultures. Collett (1971) showed that UK workers trained in the nonverbal behaviour of Arabs (the article's terminology) were subsequently liked better by their Arab interlocutors than those who did not receive the training. More recently, Castillo and Mallard (2012) investigated whether informing people about cultural differences in nonverbal behaviour could counteract cross-cultural bias in deception judgments. Sixty-nine Australian students were randomly assigned to receive no information, general information, or targeted information about culture-specific behavioural norms prior to making credibility judgments of 10 video clips (5 norm consistent and 5 norm inconsistent). The results suggest that cross-cultural biases in deception judgements can occur but may also be prevented by providing appropriate examples prior to exposure.

### **Cultural Roots of Judgement Errors**

The research on improving performance raises the question of what it is about cultural differences in behaviour that leads to so many misjudgements. Zhou and Lutterbie (2005) suggest there are two approaches to answering this question and, as a

consequence, two ways to think about improving judge performance. One approach is ‘bottom up’ and involves learning the theoretical frameworks and research findings available in the literature, and then applying them to individual cases. The difficulty with this approach is that investigators must remember a significant amount of material and translate that material to the situation in front of them. In a high-pressured interaction, it is not realistic to expect a careful and considered application of aggregate findings about cultures to the behaviour of an individual (Eades, 1996). A second approach is to substitute prescriptive suggestions with a descriptive account in which the issues that are characteristically important to cross-cultural interactions are highlighted. In this top-down approach, the focus is on providing investigators an understanding of why differences are observed (i.e., information on *what* changes) rather than encouraging them to memorise a range of cultural differences (i.e., information about *how* communication changes).

Figure 1 gives an example of a top-down approach. In Figure 1, the top half—Communication Features—provides a description of issues that have been shown to result in misunderstandings, while the bottom half—Learning points—summarises the learning points that emerges from this research. The framework is structured according to four aspects of dialogue: orientation dialogue, which refers to communication used to establish interaction and the nature of the engagement; relational dialogue, which refers to behaviours that are geared to managing the relationship with the other party rather than handling any substantive issues (e.g., attempts to put them at ease); problem-solving dialogue, which refers to efforts to develop a mutually acceptable solution to the problem at hand, or involve a substantive exchange of interaction; and resolution dialogue, which focuses on resolving or concluding the interaction, or a particular part of the interaction.

These four aspects occur in many interpersonal encounters, including interviews and hostage negotiations (Donohue, Ramesh, Kaufmann, & Smith, 1991; Milne & Bull, 1999; Poole & Roth, 1989).

**Orientation dialogue.** Orientation dialogue dominates (though is not exclusive to) early stages of interaction, and so it appears first within Figure 1. An orientation may be as short as a few sentences to initiate dialogue, such as may occur during an airport screening. Or, it may take a longer period as parties define their relationship, such as may occur within a police interview. Two factors that often raise confusion during orientation are small talk and role differences. Small talk serves a number of purposes, which are often collectively described as “ticking over” behaviours (e.g., staying in touch). In investigative contexts, the importance of small talk is likely to be around “establishing that both parties inhabit the same social reality” (Donovan, 2008). However, there are cultural differences in the expectation for small talk. For example, when the children’s book “A Bear Called Paddington” was translated for the German audience, entire sequences had to be omitted to accommodate the characteristic absence of small talk in this language (House, 2006). To those accustomed to small talk, such omissions can appear cold or even rude.

The role of an individual, including their status but also how they act towards the other party, can have a significant impact on the way an interaction unfolds. Although such role effects are relevant to the whole interaction (Donohue & Taylor, 2007), they are critical during orientation dialogue because roles are typically determined at this stage. In law enforcement settings, the dimension of role that is likely to dominate is authority. For example, many East-Asian cultures (e.g., Chinese) value extensive hierarchies and

positions, and are likely to be respectful to an investigator who presents with authority (Hofstede, 2001). While this may appear as useful, it can often be detrimental to an interaction when the appropriate reaction to authority is to demonstrate deference by being silent (Jenkins, 2000). In contrast, many with Middle Eastern cultural backgrounds will respect but mistrust authority figures (Barker, Giles, Hajek, Ota, Noels, Lim, & Somera, 2008). This can manifest as aggressive or removed behaviour, which heightens tension and may inappropriately raise an investigator's suspicions.

A related influence of role concerns its influence on recall. Research suggests that people perceived as being in authority can influence what the perceiver remembers of an event. In particular, individuals are more likely to conform to a story presented to them by someone perceived as possessing a high-powered role (Skagerberg & Wright, 2008), and this effect is even more pronounced in stressful contexts (Whitson & Galinsky, 2008). This is perhaps why, in some cross-cultural interactions, investigators are confronted with agreements to everything that they mention; the interviewee's answers influenced by what she or he *thinks* the investigator wants to hear, resulting in a distorted recall of the event.

**Relational dialogue.** Relational dialogue refers to interaction that is focused on issues such as personal reputation, identity, and social belonging. It is critical to cross-cultural interactions because of the different ways in which cultures value social groups and personal face, and how these values manifest in conversations. One example of this, which we refer to as 'story telling,' relates to differences in the way people convey experiences. This aspect of dialogue is a central component of police interviews because such stories are later re-contextualised into evidential material (Alison, 2008). Native

speakers of English typically produce stories that contain a short orienting introduction, with sufficient scene setting, that then continue with an account of the main events in the story. By contrast, other cultural groups engage in a far more participatory form of storytelling, in which listener feedback and interjections are expected, and in which departures of the account to the background of actors and the wider context of the event form as much a part of the account as the description of event itself (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013). This contextualisation often overwhelms those accustomed to more fact-driven story telling, and leads to pejorative evaluations of stories as rambling and unfocussed, and ultimately not credible (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 2002).

A second area for misunderstanding in relational dialogue concerns empathising. Investigators often act kindly toward, or empathise with, their interlocutor in an effort to gain their trust. This is typically achieved with messages that present a willingness to listen to someone and have sympathy for their situation, or by indicating a commonality between the interviewee and self (Beune, Giebels, & Taylor, 2010). When examined in interactions involving individuals from cultures that place high value on social group, such as China, Kurdistan, Morocco, and Surinam, the reaction to empathy is surprising. Specifically, rather than improving dialogue, a frequent reaction by interviewees of these cultures was to react negatively (Beune et al., 2010; Giebels & Taylor, 2009). This may have to do with issues of face and honour, which are dominant concepts within these cultures. Empathising in situation where empathy is not due may be seen as undermining personal face, and therefore understood as a challenging behaviour.

**Problem-solving dialogue.** The third type of dialogue in Figure 1, problem-solving dialogue, typically emerges out of the earlier orientation and relational phases.

The bulk of investigative interactions involve problem solving as it relates to exploring issues and resolving suspicions. This may comprise a sequence of questions and answers as investigators seek to gather information (e.g., airport check-in), or it may involve persuading an individual to provide information based on the presentation of evidence (e.g., police interview) (Hartwig, Granhag, Stromwell, & Kronkvist, 2006). To many from Western cultures, the typical way of eliciting such information is to engage in argument and persuasion (Beune, Giebels, & Taylor, 2010). Identifying inconsistencies in a story, pointing out the absence of evidence, and debating relative values, are characteristic of a persuasion approach that is successful in cultures where communication focuses on message content (e.g., North American, Western European) (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). However, this is not true of all cultures. Cultures such as those associated with the Middle-East and Far-East typically solve problems and resolve conflicts in ways that are less direct, where meaning is located in the social or physical context of the interaction rather than solely in its content. As might be expected, persuasion is less central to the interaction of such cultures, and individuals from these cultures often fail to reciprocate debate (Beune et al., 2010; Giebels & Taylor, 2009). This can appear avoidant and suspicious to somebody who expects debate to be central to the interaction. Each interactant attempts to move forward in the way that he or she sees as appropriate, and the result is an interaction that ‘goes around in circles.’

When an issue cannot be resolved (or objective achieved), either because of procedural issues or because of an impasse, it is sometimes necessary to lay down an ultimatum. This ultimatum may suggest, for example, that it is not possible to move forward until a particular piece of evidence is available (e.g., “there is little I can do

until...”). It involves a somewhat forceful behaviour—often referred to as intimidation behaviour—that aims to provoke the interviewee into an action that they were reluctant to make (Deitsch & Krauss, 1962). While investigators know that it is generally best to avoid using ultimatums (Walton, 2003), some recent research of police interviews suggests that people from different cultures vary in their response to such behaviours. For example, Beune et al. (2010) examined the reactions of Dutch and Moroccan suspects to ultimatums. With the low-context Dutch suspects, the use of intimidation was found to be most effective when focused on personal issues. In contrast, with the high-context Moroccan suspects, intimidation was more effective when focused on friends and/or family. This finding again highlights the different values that cultures place on different forms of lying, and suggests that there may also be variation in the techniques that can be used to uncover the truth.

**Resolution dialogue.** The final aspect of communication that can give rise to cross-cultural misunderstanding is the closing stages of interaction, where decisions are made and resolutions reached. While the closure of interaction is often expected to emerge naturally out of problem-solving dialogue, evidence suggests that, in cross-cultural interactions, the conclusion that one party believes they are making does not always tally with the perception of the other party. For example, research suggests that many police detectives are unsure about what to do when a suspect shows signs of resistance, and that they often interpret the resistance as an indication of guilt (Moston & Engelberg, 1993). Yet, suspects may show resistance for a number of reasons, even when they are not guilty. For example, they may not trust the police to recognize their innocence, or they may be concerned about incriminating themselves in the enquiry

(Shepherd, 1993). This is why current interviewing in some countries (e.g., the United Kingdom) focuses less on how to obtain a confession and more on how to gather information about the person interviewed and the circumstances and actions surrounding the crime (Bull & Milne, 2004; Meissner, Redlich, Bhatt, & Brandon, 2012).

A second issue that is often prominent toward the end of interactions, though it is clearly important throughout, is ‘face.’ Face may be conceived broadly as an “individual’s claimed sense of positive image in the context of social interaction” (p. 398, Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Yokochi, Masumoto, & Takai, 2000). For some cultures ‘face’ is a paramount motivation during interaction. This is true to the extent that people will be willing to provide false information, or not reveal true information, if doing so ‘saves personal face’ or indeed the ‘face’ of the interlocutor (e.g., if the interviewer has made a mistake). A widely represented example in the literature is when business negotiations end in “yes” but the deal falls through because this context “yes” was to not embarrass the businessman at the end of the meeting, not in reality to reflect a done deal. It is perhaps inevitable that such behavior will be seen as deliberate evasion by some cultures, though the motivation behind the misdirection is more complex than may first appear.

One interesting consequence of examining cross-cultural interactions using the four aspects of dialogue in Figure 1 is that it becomes apparent how misunderstandings can emerge from interaction over time. Arguably, out of the four dialogues outlined in Figure 1, it is the Orientation and Relational dialogues that are most vulnerable to cultural misunderstanding. If interactants struggle over substantive (problem-solving) aspects of interaction, there is a good chance that such misunderstandings will surface in subsequent discussion, at which point they can be dealt with through careful re-discussion. In

contrast, issues relating to relationship or role may be difficult to spot, and these first impressions can shape the direction in which an interaction unfolds.

### **Cross-Cultural Differences in Cues to Deception**

The focus of this chapter so far has been judgement of deception and how cultural differences in normative behaviour can lead to suspicion and accusations of deceit. In this section we turn to a different question, namely, whether or not there are differences in the cues that differentiate liars and truth-tellers of different cultures. Given what is known about cultural differences in self-construal and episodic memory, there is a basis for predicting that there will be differences. For example, research suggests that people with individualistic backgrounds tend to root their memories to objects and perceptual stimuli that are personally seen, felt and understood (Oyserman, 2002). By contrast, a collectivist's remembering is tied to group actions and outcomes and so may be expected to emphasize social inter-connections and relationships among actors over perceptual details (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Wang, 2009). This single difference has important implications for methods of deception detection that associate the inclusion of contextual details with a genuine account (e.g., Criteria Based Content Analysis, Vrij, 2005). It suggests that collectivist liars may be differentiated by cues related to a description of the relationships among actors, which is quite distinct from the common association of contextual details with inclusion of perceptual and sensory details.

**Nonverbal behaviour.** Early explorations of cues to deception across cultures have tended, much like the literature on deception as a whole, to focus on nonverbal behaviour. In their analysis of simulated police-civilian encounters, Vrij and Winkel (1991) found that Black Surinam participants made more speech errors and trunk

movements, showed greater gaze aversion, and performed more self-manipulations and illustrators compared to Dutch participants. However, they did so regardless of whether or not they were lying, suggesting a difference in the magnitude of expression rather than a culture-bound differential in cues to deception. Similarly, Vrij, Semin, and Bull (1996) found no difference in the type of nonverbal behaviour shown by Dutch and British liars, despite the fact that British participants reported experience of significantly more cognitive load than the Dutch participants.

One explanation for both of these results is that the cultural difference between the participating groups is not significant. Arguably, Dutch and British liars are quite similar on many cultural dimensions, while the Surinam participants were both resident in The Netherlands and sufficiently engaged within the community to be willing to take part in a research study; thus their social norms may well have Western influences. There are two available studies where the cultural differences might arguably be larger, although in neither study was this measured. Cheng and Broadhurst (2005) report a number of behavioural differences across Cantonese and English truth-tellers and liars. For example, when telling the truth, Cantonese postgraduate students showed more gaze aversion and trunk movements compared to US students, but when lying they showed less gaze aversion and less trunk movements compared to US students. The opposite was true for head movements and speech aversions. Similarly, in her comparison of Spanish and US liars using computer-mediated communication, Lewis (2009) found commonalities across some indicators but not others. For the Spanish students, smiling and stronger swallowing were distinctive indicators of deception. Yet, both cultures

exhibited excessive hand and leg movements, fidgeting, vocal tension, repetition, illogical sentence structure, and brief replies while lying.

More recently, there have been several studies of differences in nonverbal behaviour that have monitored interpersonal coordination across cultures (Rotman, 2012; Taylor, 2013; Taylor, Miles, & Dixon, 2010; Van der Zee, 2013). The process of coordination may be defined as nonverbal movements by one person that coincide with the timing and rhythm of the movements of their interlocutor (Kendon, Harris, & Key, 1975). For example, behavioural coordination may take the form of discrete movements such as matched touching of the face (Stel et al., 2010), or more continuous patterns of behaviour such as mutual changes in posture (Cappella, 1997). Such mutual coordination of behaviour typically occurs unconsciously and it is associated with increased cooperation and liking (Chartrand & Lakin, in press). As a consequence, changes in the degree to which coordination occurs may reflect an unconscious response to a lack of cooperation, or a great reliance on autonomic behaviour due to the cognitive load associated with lying (or both). In either case, a change in the extent of nonverbal coordination observed between interviewer and suspect may signify deception.

To capture behavioural coordination, Taylor et al. (2010) used wireless motion capture sensors that measured the similarity in interviewer and suspects' arm, head and torso movement over the course of an interview. In this interview, a student participant of either South Asian or White British ethnicity told the truth about a prior task that they had experienced (e.g., having a chat in a coffee shop) and a lie about a second task that they had not experienced. A confederate who was of the same or different ethnicity interviewed them using a set of standard questions. Taylor et al. found that White British

interviewees increased their level of interpersonal coordination when lying during within-cultural interactions. This, they suggest, reflects the fact that behavioural coordination is an autonomic process that becomes more pronounced as interviewees' conscious efforts to control their behaviour (e.g., to gesture alongside verbal behaviour) is diminished by the cognitive load of lying. By contrast, however, they also found that South Asian interviewees did not show this change in nonverbal behaviour and, if anything, showed a decrease in the degree of their coordination. This reveals a critical cross-cultural difference in the way people naturally coordinate their behaviour, which may be responsible for suspicions about deception.

**Verbal behaviour.** The data on differences in verbal behaviour across cultures is equally sparse, but what exists fits hypotheses that are based on social and cognitive norms. One of the earliest examples of such differences comes from unpublished pilot data presented here for the first time. In this study, 60 individuals who self-identified being from four cultural groups (Arabian, Pakistani, North African, and White British) were asked to write one truthful and one deceptive statement about a personal experience. These statements were examined for a number of key language features, such as the amount of contextual details included in the statement, and the extent to which individuals expressed their feelings within the statement. People are known to change their use of such language features when writing fictitious and genuine accounts, and a comparison of the 120 statements sought to determine if this was true of all cultures.

Table 1 gives a schematic representation of the results that emerged from this research. In Table 1, an upward pointing arrow indicates that the feature of language being examined occurred significantly more often in deceptive statements compared to

genuine statements. A downward-pointing arrow indicates the opposite. The weight of the arrow indicates the significance of the difference, with heavier arrows indicating much larger differences between truthful and deceptive statements.

The variation among arrows in Table 1 demonstrates the complex nature of language use across cultures. There are at least three important lessons in this Table. First, some aspects of language use, such as positive affect, appear to be used consistently across all cultural groups (or at least those included in this study). When they are being deceptive, people typically compensate by using overly positive language compared to when they are telling the truth (Zhou et al., 2004). This is consistent with evidence suggesting that, for many cultures, the expression of socially engaged emotions (e.g., friendly) is a common way to avoid conflict and ensure group harmony (Ting-Toomey, 1988). It may also reflect the belief that appearing positive and happy will militate against the behaviours that may leak because of underlying feelings of anxiety (Frank & Ekman, 1997). Second, other aspects of language appear more critical to some cultures than to others. For example, the use of negations in a statement are indicative of deception for Arabian and Pakistani participants, but less so for White British and North African populations. This kind of finding is more nuanced, but, if found to be a robust effect, it is likely to stem from culturally normative differences in the way that cultures use negations (Zanuttini, 1997).

Third, and perhaps most critical, some aspects of language appear to reflect different intentions in different cultures. In Table 1, use of spatial information is more indicative of truth in Arabian and White British populations, but more indicative of deception in North African and Pakistani populations. This difference reflects the

cultural differences in people's sampling, processing and recall of experiences that were described above. The spatial elements of an experience are central to the memory constructed by the relatively more individualistic White British and Arabian participants, such that their genuine recall contains significantly more spatial detail than their lie (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). This difference is less apparent for the North African and Pakistani participants because spatial details were less central to the encoding that occurred when they experience the event, and so that kind of detail is less prominent in their genuine recall. This is a good example of why misunderstandings occur in cross-cultural interactions. If an investigator of White British culture has learned through experience that stories without spatial details should be treated with suspicion (i.e., what is often described as a story that sounds empty or lacking in texture), then there is a good chance that she or he will be mistaken when the interviewee is of North African or Pakistani culture.

Taylor, Tomblin, Conchie, and Menacere (submitted) extended this initial work in a study that involved participants from local community centres who self-identified as coming from one of four cultural groups (North Africa, South Asian, White European, White British). Each participant was asked to write one truthful and one deceptive statement, either about a past experience (or fabricated experience) or an opinion (or 'fabricated' counter-opinion). They were incentivised to produce good lies through payment, which they believed they would receive only if another participant was unable to identify their genuine and fabricated statement correctly.

The results of this study mirror the findings of the pilot work. They found that the use of first person pronouns and contextual embedding in a statement decreased for lies,

and that this effect was moderated by the participants' degree of individualism-collectivism. Specifically, in line with previous research, White British participants reduced their use of first-person pronouns and perceptual details when lying to the greatest extent. By contrast, the effect was weakest and in the opposite direction for North African participants (the most collectivist of the four groups, Oyserman, 2002). Instead, this group, and to a lesser extent the South Asian group, decreased their use of plural pronouns and inclusion of social details in their lies, and compensated for this by using more first person pronouns and contextual details. Taylor et al. argue that this behaviour is in keeping with a collectivist norm of wishing to protect the social group rather than self, which drives the change in behaviour for the individualistic White British participants. Indeed, the fact that these linear trends increased in significance when the analyses focused purely on references to family (rather than to anybody in a social group) serves to strengthen this explanation. Finally, Taylor et al. found no cultural effect in the use of affective language. Across all groups, participants used more positive emotion language and less negative emotion language when lying compared to when telling the truth.

Interestingly, Taylor et al. showed that differences in language use were moderated by event type. Specifically, differences in pronoun use and contextual embedding emerged for fabricated statements about personal experiences, but not statements on counter-opinions. The opposite was true for affective language. Differences in the use of positive and negative affective words emerged in statements about opinion, but not statements about personal experiences. This finding is useful for investigators as it suggests that different factors (cognitive/affect) are implicated in

different types of deceit. Efforts to identify interview questions that make lying difficult (e.g., Vrij et al., 2010) might focus on asking questions appropriate for the type of story being examined. If the event concerns one of personal experience, investigators may focus on how frequently the person makes reference to themselves versus those in their immediate social group. In this scenario, examining a person's use of emotive words is less likely to provide discriminatory evidence.

### **Summary**

The potential impacts of cross-cultural misunderstandings within security settings vary widely. As noted above, one possibility is that investigators become frustrated by, and suspicious of, the behaviour of an interviewee, when in fact the interviewee's behaviour is the result of cultural norms (i.e., false alarms). A second is that investigators are unsure about how to interpret an interviewee's behaviour, choose not to risk offending them, and give them the benefit of the doubt (i.e., misses). Both of these can have a significant impact within law enforcement and security settings. However, the latter arguably poses the greatest threat to law enforcement because it potentially overlooks a significant incident. This makes it particularly important for investigators to feel confident enough to make judgments during cross-cultural interactions and, of equal importance, for them to feel supported when they feel it is necessary to delay proceedings to resolve a suspicion.

The examples above serve to illustrate how misunderstanding across cultures can easily occur in a variety of situations. Common to all of these illustrations is the need to remember that one's own norms and expectations are not always applicable to other cultures. Communication with people whose cultural backgrounds are different to our

own is frequently associated with feelings of anxiety and awkwardness because of communication obstacles (McGovern, 2002). It is important to take this into account when involved with such interactions. Feelings of awkwardness and anxiousness could easily be interpreted as deceptive or dishonest behaviour but, as the examples in this chapter demonstrate, this is not necessarily the case.

As well as the potential for false alarms and misses, poor cross-cultural interactions may have a wider impact on public trust and satisfaction. This was made clear in a recent set of focus groups in which a culturally diverse set of attendees were encouraged to discuss their experiences with authorities (Tomblin, Taylor, & Menacere, 2010). One participant, describing his expectation of interacting with the police, highlighted the fact that misunderstandings emerge from both interviewer and interviewee. He noted, "...so in this case [it] is very important to speak and act properly and without, you know, providing any misunderstanding; but the other point is that 50% of this misunderstanding can come from the other person." Similarly, some participants provided clues as to the potential limits of the effectiveness of particular intervention/questioning approaches. For example, one participant noted, "I have been at conflict...where torture or such things...I see police, I [was] scared regardless of innocence or not, and here [in the UK] it is doubled because here I don't know the law plus I [am] scared of the police". This participant's negative reaction to UK authorities suggests that it may be important to evaluate the suitability of approaches that rely on provoking anxiety or guilt. An individual who is already fearful of authorities is perhaps better interviewed under conditions that encourage trust rather than conditions that further add to their anxiety.

There is little doubt that cultural differences among interactants can lead to misunderstandings and that, under certain circumstances, these misunderstandings will have a detrimental effect on investigations. To avoid such misunderstandings, investigators need to tread a fine line between not judging behaviour through their own cultural lens, while, at the same time, being confident enough to challenge individuals about their behaviour when it appears suspicious, regardless of their cultural background. Training in common misunderstandings and differences in deception across cultures will help investigators go a long way in achieving this goal (Castillo & Mallard, 2012). But, in order for that training to be effective, researchers need to derive a better understanding of cultural differences in cues to deceit.

There are arguably three broad questions that researchers must address to support investigative practice in this way. The first question concerns identifying the key individual difference dimensions that account for the variations in cues to deception observed across cultures. Current research in the field has only scratched the surface of this issue, which is, in effective, a question about the extent to which the field's studies of student can be generalised to populations beyond the University campuses on which they were conducted. However, addressing this questions serves not only to reaffirm the validity of the current literature, but it also pushes the boundaries of that literature, since it requires existing cognitive and social accounts of lying to encompass known cultural differences in the processes that they assert impact a liar's behaviour. For example, anxiety based accounts of why people change their behaviour when lying will need to be elaborated to encompass differences in the way cultures experience anxiety in social situations. The result of this elaboration is a set of new, nuanced hypotheses that enrich

the field's theoretical understanding of the link between liar's experience and behaviour.

The second question that will need to be addressed concerns the extent to which interviewing practices that have been shown to improve investigators' abilities to detect lies also generalise across cultures. By interviewing practices we refer to specific techniques that have been shown to make salient lie behaviours, such as asking for reverse-order recall (Vrij, Mann, Fisher, Leal, Milne, & Bull, 2008), asking a suspect to draw the critical location (Vrij, Mann, Leal, & Fisher, 2011), and using influence techniques to elicit information (Beune et al., 2010). These practices are rightly routed in the current literature, but this focus means that they also rely on some culturally-specific assumptions about the nature of memory and social behaviour. For example, the reverse order questioning practice is based on the notion that people construct and recall memories of their experiences in a linear form. In reality, however, the way in which people recall events that occurred in the past varies greatly across cultures (Boroditsky, Fuhrman, & McCormick, 2011; Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2008). Similarly, the practice of asking a suspect to draw the location is likely to work best with cultures whose memory emphasises the encoding of spatial and perceptual details, which, as we have argued above, is not true of all cultures.

The final question that will need to be addressed concerns how findings within the area can be translated into effective training. Castillo and Mallard's (2012) findings suggest that it may be possible to reduce the degree to which investigators rely on inappropriate norms. The extent to which this is possible and the extent to which some interviewing practices render this concern moot (i.e., because they work across all cultures) remain open questions. It is one thing to demonstrate a clear understanding of

cultural variation in behaviour within an experimental context, but quite another to implement that understanding within the field. Thus, the impact of research in this area will ultimately be determined by the degree to which the cultural differences in behaviour can be integrated into interviewing strategies in an utilisable way. It is difficult to speculate on how this will be achieved, but whatever the approach, the result is likely to shift our current understanding of deception and deception detection.

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| Communication Features | Orientation dialogue   | Relational dialogue  | Problem-solving dialogue  | Resolution dialogue   |
|------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Learning Points        | <p><b>Small talk</b>—dialogue that is tangential to the substance of interaction. Some cultures are not used to engaging in this way</p> <p><b>Role differences</b>—perceived differences in status and action towards the other. Can lead to avoidance and/or aggression. It can also lead to memory conformity</p> | <p><b>Story Telling</b>—dialogue that appears rambling is appropriate contextualised storytelling for some cultures. Not all cultures use a linear story line when recounting</p> <p><b>Empathising</b>—dialogue that seeks to gain trust and get the other “on side” is not effective in all cultures, because it is perceived as patronising</p> | <p><b>Persuasion</b>—arguments and discussion are less central to some cultures, and thus less effective as interaction tactics</p> <p><b>Ultimatums</b>—while necessary in certain circumstances, such forcing tactics can evoke a particularly negative reaction from Middle-Eastern cultures</p> | <p><b>Resistance</b>—dialogue that attempts to delay or stall a solution can be used for other legitimate, cultural reasons</p> <p><b>Issues of Face</b>—for some cultures, appearing honourable and leaving the interaction with the respect of others is critical</p> |
|                        |  | <p><b>Small talk</b>—be cautious not to pre-judge somebody as rude or distance because they don't engage in small talk</p> <p><b>Role differences</b>—if appropriate, identify the role to take to provide a strategic advantage</p>   | <p><b>Story Telling</b>—the more information the better, so remain patient and listen to the contextual storyteller</p> <p><b>Empathising</b>—avoid using with high-context cultures such as Middle Eastern and Far East, as it may lead them to become defensive</p>                               | <p><b>Rational persuasion</b>—consider more collaborative interactions with high-context cultures</p> <p><b>Ultimatums</b>—use sparingly and, rather than repeat, seek an alternative solution from the interviewee</p>   |

**Figure 1.** A summary of eight communication dynamics that often lead to misunderstanding during cross-cultural interaction.

**Table 1.** Summary of Differences in Language Use between Genuine and Deceptive Statements across Four Cultural Groups

| Language Indicator  | Description of indicator  | Cultural Group       |                      |                      |                  |
|---------------------|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|
|                     |   | <i>White British</i> | Arabian <sup>1</sup> | <i>North African</i> | <i>Pakistani</i> |
| Positive affect     | Language relating a positive affect towards person or object                      | ↑                    | ↑                    | ↑                    | ↑                |
| Negations           | Language that negates the main clause (e.g., denial)                              | --                   | ↑                    | --                   | ↑                |
| Spatial information | Language describing the locations or the spatial arrangement of people or objects | ↓                    | ↓                    | ↑                    | ↑                |

↑ = more in genuine; ↓ = more in deceptive; -- = no difference; arrow weight = significance

<sup>1</sup>It was necessary to combine Iraqi and Yemen responses in this category because of the unavailability of participant and the related problem of not being able to ascertain cultural background until after the individual has begun the study. We use the category Arabian here simply to provide a brief label for that combination of participants.