Intercultural relational development between Australian students and host Japanese students: A longitudinal study of students’ socio-emotional experiences and interpretations

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This dissertation is the report of an investigation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Murdoch University.

2006
I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

__________________________________________
ABSTRACT

Since the “Project of Accepting 100,000 Students from Abroad” was proposed by the Japanese government in 1983, the number of international students in Japan has increased dramatically to reach ten times the level of 23 years ago. Yet, despite the enhanced opportunities for international and local Japanese students to interact, there is evidence that meaningful intercultural interactions between the two groups have not taken place consistently (Hicks, 1988; Jou & Fukuda, 1995; Tanaka, et al., 1997).

The aim of this research was to develop a better understanding of the process of intercultural relational development between international and Japanese students in a Japanese context. More specifically, the research aimed to identify elements which facilitate or inhibit the two groups' intercultural relational development over a period of time, the nature of socio-emotional challenges that are experienced along the way, and how these are interpreted by students themselves. Several interpersonal relationship theories, cross-cultural communication theory, and research on cross-cultural and intercultural relational development were reviewed to form the conceptual background of the research. In combination, they contributed to provide a holistic approach to studying the complex dynamic, interactive and reciprocal nature of intercultural relational development.

Using naturalistic inquiry at a single site over a period of nine months, an empirical study investigated the intercultural relational development taking place among a small number of Australian and Japanese students who lived at the International House of a private Japanese university. Research methods included four semi-structured interviews with each participant, the use of various stimulus materials, including critical incidents to elicit multiple interpretations, as well as the researcher's continuous field observations.

The study revealed some of the factors that facilitated and alternatively inhibited social interactions between the two groups, at different stages of their relational development. Students' spontaneous accounts of critical incidents, combined with their subjective
interpretations of the same incidents provided insight into the socio-emotional challenges experienced by students in the process of intercultural relational development. Whereas most students' accounts and interpretations could be related to cultural background and experience, there was also evidence that some strategies for developing intercultural relationships as well as some interpretations of socio-emotional challenges were related to gender rather than cultural background. Unexpectedly, the research also found that social drinking was perceived by many students, across the two groups, as a facilitating factor at the early stage of intercultural development.

Overall, the empirical study revealed that Japanese students experienced more socio-emotional challenges than Australian students. Differences in sense of humor and in perceived appropriateness of introducing conversational topics of a private nature were given special attention as these appeared to present major socio-emotional challenges for Japanese students. Both cultural background and gender seemed to have an impact on students' interpretations of these challenges.

The thesis concludes with some suggestions for future research and for how intercultural learning between international students and host nationals could be enhanced in the Japanese context. Finally, the study makes a unique methodological contribution to research related to international students, through the use of a longitudinal design, a focus on situated experiences and socio-emotional challenges, and more generally, through a reciprocal approach to the study of intercultural relational development in the context of the internationalisation of higher education.
I wish to thank the following people for their part in this research project. Without their assistance, I could not have come this far.

Professor Simone Volet, my main supervisor, for her constant support and guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. She was always there to help me and guided me in the right direction whenever I got lost in this long and sometimes lonely journey. I would also like to thank my other supervisor, Dr. Wendy Cumming-Potvin who gave a tremendous amount of time and energy to read and comment on my thesis.

Appreciation is also expressed to Yasmina Volet and Geraldine Stack who transcribed the recordings of my Australian participants, Angelina Chilino and Louise Dixon who made sure that I would have a place to work during my short visits at Murdoch, Ruth Drake-Brockman who proof-read my whole thesis and my fellow students, Susan Beltman and Craig Whitsed who gave me many insightful comments.

My husband, Harvey Chervitz, who supported me by doing language editing and providing a workable environment by being a house-husband. My nine-year old son, Yujin, who accepted his mom's disappearances for two weeks at a time to the other side of the globe. My mother, who encouraged me to continue my studies.

And, finally I would like to thank the seventeen participants of this research, who kindly shared with me their experiences of cross-cultural relational development at the International House.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background to the present study. The first section explains how internationalization in higher education has been promoted in Japan. The next section explains how previous studies on international tertiary students, and the researcher's personal experiences, motivated her to conduct this study. A summary of relevant research follows, and the significance of this study is discussed.

BACKGROUND

Over the past ten years, interaction between people, companies and governments of different nations has dramatically increased through migration and the amalgamation of companies due to globalization. In particular, globalization has greatly impacted on internationalization in higher education. As globalization advances, higher education is expected to produce graduates who have the capacity to collaborate with people who have values and beliefs different to their own. The internationalization of university campuses provides valuable opportunities for students to acquire cross-cultural competence. United States, England, Australia, France and Germany are countries which accept 77% of international students in the world (Yokota & Shiratsuchi, 2004). From 1988 to 1998, the number of international students in these countries significantly increased (Ministry of Education, 2003). During this period, international students in the United States increased from 370,000 to 490,000, international students in England
increased from 70,000 to 220,000, international students in Australia increased from 20,000 to 70,000, international students in France increased from 130,000 to 150,000 and international students in Germany increased from 90,000 to 170,000. By contrast, the number of international students in Japan increased only from 25,643 to 51,298.

Countries that have succeeded in recruiting large numbers of international students have implemented strategic plans (Ministry of Education, 2003). In Australia, for example, many universities have developed internationalized curricula through the broadening of traditional subjects, and the introduction of an internationally comparative approach, including interdisciplinary programs addressing more than one country, preparing students for international professions and including foreign languages and intercultural communication training (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1995).

Japan, the country in which this study took place, is no exception to this government driven process. In 1983, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture announced a plan to have 100,000 international students studying at higher education institutions in Japan by 2000 (Ministry of Education, 1983). The government’s rationale for internationalizing Japanese higher education was clearly indicated in a recent report of Government Policy Statement compiled by an ad hoc council established by the Ministry of Education (1999), which claimed that Japan could contribute to the stability and development of the world by hosting an increased number of international students. The Ministry of Education called this phenomenon “intellectual international contribution” and claimed it benefited countries around the world, as well as, the host country.
In the same report the multiple benefits Japan would gain by accepting more international students were further explained (Ministry of Education, 1999). The report made explicit the purpose of internationalizing higher education in Japan was to promote mutual understandings and develop good relationships between Japan and the countries from which international students originate. It argued that positive relationships established between Japan and other countries play a crucial role in maintaining Japanese national security and world peace. The report also asserted that increasing the number of international graduates from Japanese universities, would facilitate the Japanese government adopting a leadership role in academic scholarship internationally, and to economic global standards. As a consequence, Japan would be expected to increase its influence around the world. Finally the report stressed that cross-cultural exchange with international students would provide opportunities for Japanese policy makers to evaluate their own educational system from a broader perspective. According to the authors of the report, this may lead to reconsideration of outdated systems, and the reform of economic and social structures, allowing the Japanese government to cope more effectively with internationalization.

Due to the high cost of studying in Japan, international students, especially from developing countries, have often been found to experience financial problems. In order to increase the numbers of international students, the Japanese government provided financial support, and increased the number of scholarship students from 2,000 in 1983 to 10,000 in 2000. According to Horie (2002), from 1983 to 1995, the number of international students in Japan steadily increased from 10,428 to 53,847. However, in 1996, numbers suddenly decreased due to diminishing financial support for internationalization on university campuses, the result of a national economic crisis.
Horie (2000) further speculated that difficulty international students experienced in adjusting to Japanese culture could also have contributed to the decline in numbers. In response, policy in Japan was revised to focus on qualitative improvement of the educational system for international students.

The Japanese government became increasingly aware of the importance of raising the quality of education so that universities could respond to the needs of international students, particularly from developed countries. According to Yokota and Shiratsuchi (2004), students from North America or Europe tend to prefer studying abroad from one semester to a year, to earn credit required by home universities. To attract students from these countries, short-term programs using English as the language of instruction were offered to international students, as suggested in recent publications (Horie, 2002; Ministry of Education, 1999; Tsuneyoshi, 2005; Walker, 2005). These programs included courses in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences at the undergraduate level, as well as, Japanese language courses. Along with other reforms, such as the establishment of the Centre for International Students, simplifying the process of obtaining student visas (particularly for students from other Asian countries) and offering courses in English at graduate schools, the establishment of short term courses resulted in an increased number of international students from more diverse countries (Horie, 2002). In 2003, the number of international students studying in Japan eventually reached 109,508, exceeding the government’s original goal.

Rather than being judged solely on increased number of enrolments, these types of programs should also be evaluated on the quality of cross-cultural interactions between local and international students. The positive outcomes mentioned above will not be
realized simply by hosting an increased number of international students. Unless international students experience a satisfactory life in Japan through meaningful cross-cultural exchange with local people, the purpose of studying in Japan is defeated. Cross-cultural interactions contribute to psychological, social, and academic adaptation. A greater amount of interaction with host nationals is related to lower levels of stress (Berry & Kostovcik, 1990; Redmond & Bunyi, 1993), fewer social difficulties (Ward & Kennedy, 1993), and fewer academic problems (Pruitt, 1978). However, international students in Japan have not experienced these benefits due to difficulties in making local friends (Hicks, 1988; Jou & Fukuda, 1995; Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama, Fujihara, Minami, 1997; Yokota, 1991b). According to Tsuboi (1999), one third of international students studying at their own expense have no close Japanese friends. Takai (1989) suggested that a Japanese “exclusive” attitude toward foreign people might prevent international students from developing relationships with local people.

Another possible reason international students experience difficulty establishing friendships with local people, is related to their nationality. A large percentage of international students in Japan come from other Asian countries (mainly China). These students appear to experience more difficulty than Westerners as Japanese people are more likely to discriminate against them (Tanaka et al 1997). Difficulty in establishing interpersonal relationships with local students might either encourage international students to stay with conationals or feel more dissatisfied about their sojourn in Japan.

Overall however, and according to Tsuboi (1999), internationalization of higher education on Japanese campuses is expected to have a positive impact on both local and international students. Several researchers (Mestenhauser, Page, Burn and Useem, 1984;
Tsuboi, 1999; Volet, 2004; Ward, 2001) have argued that multicultural campuses are beneficial not only for international students, but also for local students. Having international students on campus provides opportunities for local students to embark on intercultural learning. However, students studying on multicultural campuses cannot experience these benefits unless meaningful interactions between international and local students are facilitated.

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Motivation Arising from Previous Research

Several empirical studies exploring the experiences of international students have suggested a correlation between satisfaction of international students and their interactions with host nationals (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987; Searle & Ward, 1990; Zimmerman, 1995). However, as discussed in the previous section, many international students return home without forming friendships with Japanese people. In order to make the experience of international students in Japan more satisfactory, and reciprocally to enhance the intercultural learning of Japanese students, through interactions with their international peers, more research about which factors prevent or promote all students’ intercultural relational development needs to be undertaken.

With the Japanese national government’s focus on internationalizing Japanese universities, systematic and comprehensive research on intercultural relational development is needed. There are limited published studies investigating the experience of international students in Japan, in comparison to those conducted in the United States,
England or Australia. This position was highlighted over ten years ago (Tanaka, 1998), and the situation has not changed. Furthermore, the majority of these studies treated international students as if they were a homogenous group. Such an approach has been criticized by researchers investigating the experience of international students in Australia (e.g., Volet, 1999) on grounds that neither Western nor Asian students form homogenous groups. The same applies to the Japanese context. There is established evidence that the experience of students from Western countries, even when not differentiated, is different to students from Asian countries. Yokota & Tanaka (1992) argued that Western students experienced greater social interaction with Japanese people than Asian students, because Japanese people are more willing to make friends with Westerners. In studies about international students in Japan, the description of Asian students mainly refers to Chinese students as they make up the largest number of international students (Yao & Matsubara, 1990).

Since national universities started offering short-term programs after 1995, students from a wider variety of countries started studying at Japanese universities. According to Taura (1996), the international students in these programs are roughly half Asians and Westerners. To date, little is known about the experience of these Western students enrolling in short-term programs in Japan. Most of the studies have been conducted at national universities that accept graduate, undergraduate, and research students. It is worth investigating the experience of language students at private universities because their lives are very different from regular students at national universities. For example, foreign graduate students at Japanese public universities have numerous opportunities to interact with Japanese people, such as classmates or supervisors, while language students can choose to mingle only with other international students as they are usually
segregated from Japanese students in terms of class activities and living arrangements.

To date, only a few studies have examined intercultural interactions involving international students in Japan and exclusively from the perspective of the international students (Jou & Fukuda, 1995; Tanaka et al., 1997; Tanaka, 2000). In reality the internationalization of universities involves not only international students, but also host nationals. To better understand the development of intercultural relational development, it is therefore imperative to also include the perceptions and experiences of local students with whom international students develop relationships, because intercultural relational development is by nature a reciprocal psychosocial phenomenon.

Personal Motivation for Undertaking this Study

My motivation for undertaking the study goes back to my experiences as an international student in the United States and Australia. When I was in my mid-twenties I spent two years as a graduate student at a university located in the mid-Western region of the United States. I still consider these two years to be one of the most fruitful periods of my life. During my stay, I interacted with many American people, including my roommate, dorm mates, classmates, professors, staff members in the international office, and host families. I became acquainted with some of them, and close friends with others. When I reflected on this experience, and in spite of different degrees of closeness, I realize that I experienced, both consciously and unconsciously, enormous support from the all the American people with whom I interacted. Forming a study group with classmates reduced my anxiety about the first examination I took at the
campus of an American university, which helped me to achieve acceptable grades. Visiting host families on special occasions such as Thanksgiving and Christmas made me feel more comfortable in my new environment and reduced my feelings of loneliness.

Since then, like the majority of students who have had positive experiences at foreign universities, I consider that reciprocal favors ought to be returned to foreign visitors in home countries. By interacting with international students, listening to their adjustment problems, and suggesting what could be done to promote a positive relationship between international students and their host counterparts, I am hoping to return personal favors, and also to contribute more broadly to fostering the development of rich intercultural learning experiences by all students in my home country.

My profession is also a motivation. I have been teaching English major students at a private Japanese university for 15 years. Many of my students go abroad as exchange students and one of their biggest interests is making friends with local students. Over the years, I have noticed that developing relationships with local students seemed to be particularly challenging for Japanese students. More recently my university started hosting more international students. Both international students and my Japanese students were highly motivated to make friends with each other, but both groups seem to find the experience rather challenging. As a teacher of English and intercultural communication, I am deeply interested in better understanding what inhibits intercultural relational development between Japanese and international students, and in finding ways to promote intercultural relational development.
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL STUDENTS

To maximize the benefit of having both international and Japanese students on the same campus, it is crucial to foster meaningful interaction, enabling relationships between host nationals and international students to develop. Considerable research (Bochner, 1977; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987; Kudo, 2000; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ying & Liese, 1994; Zimmerman, 1995) has examined the nature of intercultural relational development in higher education institutions. Most of these studies have identified the positive impact of social interactions between international students and host nationals on both groups.

The most widely researched effects of social interactions in unfamiliar environments concern intercultural adaptation. Much earlier, intercultural adaptation was viewed as an outcome of psychological wellbeing (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lysgaard, 1955). Seale and Ward (1990) added a new dimension to intercultural adaptation; namely sociocultural, which describes feelings of wellbeing and satisfaction, while sociocultural adaptation describes the ability to “fit in” or to carry out effective interaction in a new cultural situation. Gudykunst and Hammer (1987) viewed intercultural adaptation similarly, and claimed that in encountering foreign cultures, sojourners feel insecure (experience anxiety), and are not sure how to behave (experience uncertainty). Reducing both anxiety and uncertainty is assumed to be necessary and sufficient for intercultural adaptation. In order to be an effective communicator in the intercultural context, several other intercultural communication researchers (Brislin, Landis & Brandt, 1983; Kim, 1988; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Taft, 1977) postulated three dimensions of host communication competence: cognitive, affective and behavioural.
Koyanagi (1999) who conducted a study about intercultural adaptation of Japanese students at an Australian university found that these three dimensions were interrelated and would take place in this respective order.

Social Support

The relationship between social support and adaptation of international students has been investigated widely (Adelman, 1988; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Sykes & Eden, 1987; Wan, Chapman & Biggs, 1992). These studies found that support from both host and conational contributors greatly to psychological wellbeing. Adelman, for example, claimed that social support has two functions; namely reducing the uncertainty experienced when encountering a new culture, and increasing control over the new circumstance. According to the author, social support, defined as communication between recipients and providers, provides the type of feedback and assistance sought when recipients experience high uncertainty. Providers of social support were divided into two groups, close-ties such as family members, close friends and comparable others, and weak-ties such as local people who live close to sojourners. Both groups appear to be critical in the initial stage of cross-cultural adaptation.

Other researchers (Bochner, 1977; Kudo, 2000) investigated the function of interactions with conationalists, noncompatriot international students, and host nationals at a university. Bochner’s functional model, suggests that international students in higher education belong to the following three social networks (1) a most salient conational network whose function is to affirm and express the culture of origin (2) a secondary network
with host members, whose function is language and academic assistance, and (3) a multinational network whose function is recreational. The instrumental function of host members, as providers of language and academic assistance, was supported by several studies (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Tanaka, Takai, Kohyama, Fujihara, & Minami, 1994; Westwood & Barker, 1990). Kudo (2000) who conducted a qualitative study with Japanese students at an Australian university, however, criticized Bochner's function model, as it does not include the existence and the function of close intercultural friendships. Kudo found that close intercultural friendships provide intercultural learning, cultural identity management, recreational, and emotional and behavioral support, in addition to academic support.

The Association Hypothesis

Similar to the social support hypothesis, association hypothesis is supported by positive relations between social interaction and adaptation. The association hypothesis suggests that more social interaction with host nationals provides more favorable attitudes towards the hosts. However, some researchers question whether it is only a particular type of contact that is effective for adaptation. Amir (1969) suggested several conditions to make the contact successful, such as the status of relations between the ethnic groups, the intimacy and pleasantness of the intergroup contact, and opportunities for working on common or superordinate goals important to each group.

Based on association hypothesis theory, Klineberg and Hull (1979) identified a modified culture contact hypothesis, suggesting that increased social interaction is
associated with better personal adjustment and general satisfaction in international students. In their study, international students who were more satisfied with their frequency of contact with Americans, were more likely to report having made good friends, to report less homesickness, and to have a more favorable attitude towards their sojourn.

Several studies (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ying & Liese, 1994; Zimmerman, 1995) examined how interactions with host members promoted intercultural adaptation. For example, Zimmerman found that frequency of interaction with American students was an important factor in adjusting to American life. Searle and Ward further investigated the relationship between quality and quantity of interaction, and intercultural adaptation. They found that satisfactory relationships (quality) with host members were more likely to promote feelings of wellbeing for international students.

To increase intercultural interactions, several facilitating and inhibiting factors have been examined. Volet and colleagues (Volet & Ang 1998, Smart, Volet & Ang 2000) for example, identified factors inhibiting interactions between international students and local students at an Australian university. Student-related inhibiting factors were identified in terms of cultural-emotional connectedness, perceived cultural differences, together with negative stereotypes, ethnocentric views and apathy. Context-related inhibiting factors were also identified, including separate orientation programs for international students, and insufficient attention to facilitating international students’ adaptation to local educational practices.

Several other researchers (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Kudo, 2000; Kudo & Simkin, 2003;
Sudweeks, Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey & Nishida, 1990) focused on relational
development between local and international students rather than interactions, and
identified facilitating and inhibiting factors in forming intercultural friendships. The
details of these studies will be provided in Chapter Two. The limited number of studies
about intercultural interaction in Japanese higher education is divided in the same way.
The first type of study focuses on social networks and explores its impact on
intercultural adaptation. The second type of study examines what facilitates or inhibits
international students’ interactions with host members.

In order to investigate the impact of social interaction with host members, several
researchers (Hicks, 1988; Jou & Fukuda, 1995; Takai, 1994; Tanaka et al., 1997)
examined whether Bochner’s (1977) function model was applicable in a Japanese
context. For example, Hicks found that support among international students is more
important than from the host, a contrast to Bochner’s findings. Tanaka et al., on the
other hand, conducted a survey of 221 international students and found that academic
support from host members, as well as, frequency of interactions with Japanese were the
most important elements in determining adjustment. Jou and Fukuda who conducted a
similar study at Japanese universities discovered that Chinese students who received
more support from Japanese professors were better adjusted. Additionally, Takai
investigated sources of social support, and found that different types of support were
offered depending on the cultural background of interactants. His findings, in
accordance with Bochner’s (1977) function model, revealed that the main function of
local students was to provide academic support. Tanaka (2000) further divided host
members into those on campus, and those outside campus, and found that host members
on campus provided academic support, while host members outside the campus
provided psychological support. Her study suggests that a broad network with host members might be the key to intercultural adaptation.

However, several researchers (Moyer, 1987; Tanaka & Yokota, 1992) found that too much interaction with host members also caused stress on international students. Tanaka and Yokota, for example, found that international students who lived in a mixed dormitory felt stressed about interpersonal relationships with Japanese residents, while international students in a dormitory segregated from Japanese students, felt stressed because of minimal interactions with Japanese students. This suggests that there needs to be a good balance, with interactions within and across national groups.

Secondly, facilitating and inhibiting factors were investigated in several studies (Moyer, 1987; Murakami, 2005; Yokota, 1991a, 1991b). Yokota, for example, examined the impact of self-disclosure on intercultural relational development between Japanese and international students. He discovered self-disclosure occurred more among conationals, than between local and international students. In addition to self-disclosure, Murakami found that frequent contact was a major facilitating factor in developing intercultural relationships with American exchange students on a one year study program. Her findings revealed that American international students became intimate with Japanese students through language exchange or participating in events.

The same studies (Moyer, 1987; Murakami, 2005; Yokota, 1991b) also investigated inhibiting factors for intercultural interactions between Japanese and international students. These studies revealed that Japanese students’ lack of expressed opinions (Murakami, 2005; Yokota, 1991b), language barriers (Moyer, 1987; Ohashi, 1991; Yokota, 1991b), Japanese communication style (Moyer, 1987; Ohashi, 1991; Yokota,
length of stay (Murakami, 2005), anxiety about being a burden (Murakami, 2005), being treated as gaijin (outsider) (Ohashi, 1991), and Japanese values (Ohashi, 1991), were perceived as inhibiting factors by international students (in nondifferentiated cultural groups). Moyer included both other Asian and Western students in her study, and found that students’ countries of origin related to the type of stress experienced. For example, being treated as gaijin (outsider) based on their looks caused high stress for Western students, while it was Japanese people’s perceived indifference towards foreigners that seemed to upset Asian students. Another possible inhibiting factor, differing cultural values, was found to be less salient among Western students, because Western students expected to encounter cultural differences, due to the cultural distance between Japan and their culture. Moyer’s study suggests that countries of origin should be taken into consideration when inhibiting and facilitating factors in intercultural relational development are examined.

Yokota (1991b) conducted one of the only studies examining Japanese students’ experience of interacting with international students. Yokota explored the nature of inhibiting factors from the perspective of both international and local students. His study revealed that Japanese and international students experienced different inhibiting factors in developing intercultural relationships. For example, Japanese students appeared to experience anxiety toward foreign students, which they attributed to language barriers, whereas international students appeared affected by not being able to participate in Japanese group activities, such as club activities or class parties.
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As previously discussed, intercultural relationships between international students and local students in higher education have been investigated both inside and outside Japan. However, the bulk of this research either focuses on the positive impact of cross-cultural interactions on international students’ adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990; Tanaka et al., 1997; Zimmerman, 1995), or on the function of different types of interactions (Bochner, 1977; Kudo, 2000; Takai, 1994). As a result, what inhibits or alternatively facilitates, intercultural relational development on international campuses is not well known. The present study intends to address this gap.

While there is a growing body of empirical studies about international students at Japanese universities, there has been limited attention given to the reciprocal and dynamic nature of relational development, and to the unique cultural-educational background in Japan, and therefore, to expectations that diverse groups bring to the process of relational development. Investigating the relational development between students from one single cultural group of international students (Australia in the present study) with a group of local Japanese students, over an extended period of time, was expected to provide a more in-depth understanding of the process of intercultural relational development.

Furthermore, little has been published about Western students who attend language programs in Japan. Of the few studies conducted, the majority has involved graduate students, undergraduate students, and research students at public universities. As the number of language learning students in private Japanese universities has grown
significantly in recent years, it is important to examine their experience because their learning contexts are different from regular students in terms of length and goals of sojourn, Japanese proficiency, and intercultural interactions with host members. Language students who are attending Japanese language courses offered by private universities usually stay in Japan for one year to acquire language skills and to learn about Japanese culture. These language students reside in segregated international houses. Moreover, they attend courses designed for language students since their Japanese skills are not sufficient to attend regular classes with Japanese students. Therefore, their opportunities for interactions with Japanese students are limited, even though they study on the same campus. Exploring the experiences of these international language students contributes to a deeper understanding of intercultural relational development.

One limitation of previous research related to international students is the lack of longitudinal studies. This is important because longitudinal designs are essential to studying processes of development. Although several researchers (Church, 1992; Kim, 1988; Ward & Searle, 1991) recognize the necessity of longitudinal research, most studies about intercultural relational development (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Kudo, 2000; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990) have been conducted at a single point in time. This is particularly important if the research focus is on intercultural relational development, because interpersonal relationships are not static but dynamic, and may reveal stages of development and levels of friendships.

Finally, and as several researchers have identified (Smart, Volet, & Ang, 2000; Ward, 2001), there is limited research that examines intercultural interactions from the
perspective of both international and local students. This is a significant limitation (Kudo & Simkin, 2003) because intercultural interaction is a two way process and needs to be studied as such. Combining the perspectives of both international and local students in this study was viewed as necessary to acknowledge the reciprocal nature of intercultural relational development.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To investigate the reciprocal nature of intercultural relational development as it unfolds over time, the following interpersonal relational development theories were examined. Firstly, stage theories were reviewed since they describe relational development over a period of time. Stage theories (Altman & Tailor, 1973; Knapp, 1978) view relationships as advancing toward intimacy in stages. They provide a useful initial framework to examine the dynamic nature of intercultural relational development.

Secondly, uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) was reviewed because it provides a useful set of concepts to explore communication strategies and facilitating factors in the development of intercultural relationships. Uncertainty reduction theory assumes that reducing uncertainty facilitates the development of interpersonal relationships. This theory suggests a number of axioms that influence uncertainty reduction, such as amount of communication, nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, and similarities between people. Gudykunst and his colleagues (Gudykunst, 1983b; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986a, Gelfand, Spurlock, Sniezel, & Shao, 2000) further examined the applicability of these axioms in other cultural contexts. In
the present study, these axioms were used to explore communication strategies and facilitating factors in intercultural relational development.

To examine the interactive nature of intercultural relational development, relational dialectic theories were also reviewed (Baxter 1988; Baxter & Montgomery, 1997). The basic assumption of these theories is that two dialectical themes are typically present for close relationships to develop. Furthermore, these contradictory forces must be negotiated continually by dyads to sustain and improve relationships (Baxter 1988; Rawlins, 1983b). These theories were expected to be useful to examine relational development between the two target groups in this study, namely Japanese and Australian students.

In combination, stage theories, uncertainty reduction theory, and relational dialectic theories provided an overarching conceptual framework for the present study. Each body of literature will be reviewed fully in Chapter Two.

**STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This first chapter presented the background to the study and its significance. It described the motivation for undertaking the study, the conceptual framework used, and previous research focusing on interaction between international and local students. Chapter Two reviews interpersonal relationship theories, such as stage theories, uncertainty reduction theory, and relational dialectic theories; cross-cultural communication theories; and cross-cultural or intercultural relational development. Chapter Three presents the research methodology, the data collection instruments and
procedures, data management, as well as, methodological issues. The following two chapters present the findings of the research. Chapter Four focuses on how interactions and relationships between Australian and Japanese students develop over time, and what prevents and facilitates these interactions. Chapter Five focuses on the challenges that emerge in the process of intercultural relational development between Australian and Japanese students, and the significance of subjective interpretations of these challenges. Chapter Six discusses the major findings and summarizes the major conceptual and methodological contributions of this study to the understanding of intercultural relational development. The final chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the research, and some key implications for future research and educational practices on international university campuses.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This review of the literature is divided into three major sections, interpersonal relationship theories and friendship development studies, culture and dimensions of cultural variability, and relational development in a cross-cultural or intercultural perspective.

Major interpersonal relationship theories will be reviewed first, as they are highly relevant to the examination of relational development between Japanese and Australian students. These include stage theories, uncertainty reduction theory, and relational dialectic theories. Social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) was chosen because of its applicability to nonromantic relationships, which is the focus of this research. Numerous intracultural and intercultural empirical studies on friendship development are based on this theory. Knapp’s model of relational development (1978) is derived from social penetration theory. It was expected to be helpful in analyzing the strategies reported by students when interacting with each other, and in examining the extent to which a stage approach is useful to understand relational development.

Uncertainty reduction theory (1975) was included, as Gudykunst and his colleagues (Gudykunst, 1983b; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986a, Gelfand et al., 2000) have extensively examined its conceptual usefulness to understand intercultural contexts. This theory is highly relevant to the present research because many of Gudykunst’s experimental studies have focused on interpersonal relationships between Japanese and...
Americans. Relational dialectic theory is also highly relevant to this research because it emphasizes reciprocity, and focuses on contradictions and tensions between two parties. A review of the literature on friendship development was added as a complement to this section because of its focus on friendship maintenance strategies, one aspect under-examined in interpersonal relationship research.

The second section of this chapter is dedicated to the extensive body of research on dimensions of cultural variability and the significance of context. After a brief examination of various conceptualizations of culture, two bodies of research related to dimensions of cultural variability, namely, individualism and collectivism, and high-context and low-context are reviewed. These cultural dimensions were chosen because they are often perceived as representing the contrasting underlying cultural characteristics of the two groups represented in this empirical study. That is, Australian communication behaviours are expected to be influenced by individualistic and low-context tendencies, while Japanese communication behaviours are expected to be influenced by collectivistic and high-context tendencies, including stronger in-group and out-group distinctions. Moreover, these cultural dimensions have been used extensively in other cross-cultural studies on interpersonal relational development.

Cross-cultural or intercultural relational development is the focus of the final section of this review of the literature. It examines cross-cultural studies based on interpersonal theories, intercultural studies based on interpersonal relationship theories, and friendship development across cultures. Empirical studies examining interpersonal relationship theories in cross-cultural contexts are reviewed, followed by a discussion of how relationships develop between people with different cultural backgrounds. Finally,
empirical studies exploring intercultural friendship development are reviewed.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP THEORIES AND FRIENDSHIP DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Stage Theories

Social Penetration Theory

Social penetration theory was originally proposed by Altman and Taylor (1973). Their theory views rewards and costs as driving forces towards relationship intimacy. It assumes that intimacy is gained through increasing both breadth and depth of penetration, and the unidirectional journey towards intimacy is described in a number of stages. Social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) derives from social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which is based on weighing rewards against costs in a relationship. A basic assumption is that rewards must outweigh costs for people to feel satisfied with a relationship. Thibaut and Kelley suggested that people engaged in a relationship compare the outcomes of their current relationship, with the outcomes of past relationships, and the outcome of future relationships. This standard of comparison is called the comparison level and is used as the yardstick to evaluate relationship satisfaction.

According to social exchange theory, the process of assessing satisfaction involves comparisons with the outcomes other people experience in their relationships, as well as, comparisons with past relationships with the self. As a result of these comparisons, people develop a sense of the level of rewards and costs that they deserve in a
relationship. That is, if the outcomes of a current relationship meet this standard, the theory predicts they will be satisfied with the relationship. On the other hand, if outcomes are below the comparison level, they will be dissatisfied.

Altman and Taylor (1973) applied the reward/cost explanation to relational development and developed the social penetration theory. According to the authors, rewards refer to those relational events or behaviours that stimulate satisfaction, and costs are those relational events or behaviours that stimulate negative feelings. The idea is that if a partner feels there are more rewards than costs, the faster the relationship will progress, and the more intimate it will become. In contrast, if more costs are perceived than rewards, the relationship is likely to dissolve. This balancing of rewards and costs of the relationship is a driving force for relationship growth or dissolution.

Social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) views relationships as advancing toward intimacy. It hypothesizes that increases in self-disclosure develop relationship intimacy. According to the theory, self-disclosure is judged on breadth and depth of revealed information. Breadth refers to the number of topics discussed in the relationship, and is related to the amount of time that relational partners spend communicating with each other about those topics. More interaction usually leads to greater information penetration. Depth refers to the level a partner reveals about themselves through sharing private thoughts and feelings. Altman and Taylor (1973) claimed that both breadth and depth of information are necessary to develop interpersonal relationships. For example, in the initial stages, relational partners exchange superficial (shallow) and limited information (narrow). As people move from strangership to acquaintance, and later to friendship, deeper and more extensive
(broader) interpersonal exchanges are expected. According to Altman and Taylor, self-disclosure is also reciprocal. That means one’s self-disclosure is more likely to elicit self-disclosure from one’s interactants. They further claimed that the reciprocity of self-disclosure seems to be more salient in the early stage of relational development.

Altman and Taylor (1973)’s social penetration theory posits four stages of relationship development: orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange. At the orientation stage, interactions are rather superficial, and people reveal only limited information about themselves. They act in socially desirable ways and are cautious not to disturb societal expectations. The second stage is known as the exploratory affective exchange, and occurs when personalities begin to emerge. People let down their guard and begin to explore each other, they reveal more of their individual personality, and become less cautious. This is typical behaviour between casual acquaintances and friendly neighbours. The third stage is called the affective exchange stage. At this stage, an even deeper level of self-disclosure takes place through penetration of each partner’s core selves. Relationships at this stage are more friendly and relaxed. Personal idioms, private intimate expressions, or even criticisms are exchanged, and these are typical behaviours among close friends or intimate partners. The final stage known as the stable exchange is assumed to be the highest level that one can achieve in a relationship. This stage results in complete openness and spontaneity. Partners are so intimate that there are no secrets between them. Since partners know each other at the deepest level, they are able to interpret and predict the feelings and behaviours of the other fairly accurately, and without verbal exchange.

Social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) has been applied to friendship
development (Hays, 1984, 1985, 1989). Hays discussed how interpersonal relationships develop with interpersonal exchange progressing from superficial to more intimate on two dimensions: breadth (content areas of exchange) and depth (intimacy level of exchange). Hays (1984) criticized much of the research focusing on depth and ignoring analysis of change in content areas. Since very little is known about friendship behaviours other than self-disclosure, Hays conducted several empirical studies on friendship behaviour content areas that are reviewed later in this chapter.

Knapp’s Model of Relational Development

Based on social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973), Knapp (1978) constructed a new model of relational development. It is similar to social penetration theory in that self-disclosure plays a significant role, however, there are some differences. One of them is the complexity of Knapp’s model. His model of relational development is more complex than social penetration theory because it also attends to relationship decline, which was a neglected aspect in social penetration theory. As a result, Knapp’s model includes two unidirectional sets of stages, including coming together and coming apart stages.

Each of these sets are further divided into five stages: initiation, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding for the coming together stage, and differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating for the coming apart stage. The first four stages of coming together are particularly relevant to this study because they describe relational development moving toward intimacy. Furthermore, these are almost
identical to the four stages suggested by Altman and Taylor (1973). The first stage, initiation, allows an individual to initiate communication if their interactant is attractive and available. At this stage, people tend to be cautious and communicate according to conventions. The second stage, experimenting, allows people to discover unknown elements of the interacting person through small talk. The relationship at this stage is becoming more relaxed and pleasant. The intensifying stage allows acquaintances to intensify their relationships through self-disclosure. The fourth stage, integrating, is like coupling, and allows two individuals to almost form a single entity. People become so close that they can predict each other’s behaviour easily.

The second difference between Knapp’s model and social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) is the movement of the relationship. Social penetration theory suggests a linear progress towards intimacy, whereas Knapp’s model allows the relationship to go backwards or to skip certain stages. In contrast to social penetration theory, Knapp presented factors affecting the speed of relational development. These include availability, proximity, individual needs, and situational factors. This view is highly relevant to the present research, and the significance, and nature of facilitating or inhibiting factors will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Another difference between social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) and Knapp’s model is the inclusion of communication behaviours at different stages. For example, greetings and small talk are mentioned in relation to the initiating stage, and self-disclosure is mentioned in relation to the intensifying stage. Knapp claimed that these particular communication behaviours are critical to developing relationships. This distinction is highly relevant because one of the purposes of this study was to
investigate strategies employed by students at different stages in relational development.

The last difference between social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) and Knapp’s model is related to boundary conditions. Although Knapp noted that his model also applied to same gender pairs, his model is heavily oriented toward mixed gender pairs. Since his theory is based on romantic relationships, some stages such as bonding, in which couples publicize their connection through marriage, do not appear to be relevant to same gender friendships. Knapp argued that bonding could be realized through an act of becoming “blood brothers” but very few same gender pairs reach this intimate stage. In order to make Knapp’s model more applicable to friendship development, different interpretations that suit the context of friendships might be necessary.

Overall, the primary difference between social penetration theory and Knapp’s model is the number of stages. As a result of including deteriorating stages, Knapp’s model has stages moving in different directions. Knapp’s elaboration of communication behaviours commonly observed at different stages, and the inclusion of factors affecting the rate of relational development, were helpful to frame this study. To date, there appears to be no empirical work based on Knapp’s model. This might be because Knapp’s stage model does not fully explain when each stage starts and how long it lasts, a common feature of other stage theories.
Critique of Stage Models

While theories such as social penetration theory and Knapp’s (1978) model of relational development have contributed to our understanding of relational development, some limitations have been identified. Firstly, both of these stage theories were developed to examine the development of romantic relationships (Fehr, 1996; Johnson, Wittenberg, Villagran, Mazur & Villagran 2003; Johnson, Wittenberg, Haigh, Wigley, Becker, Brown, Craig, 2004). It has been argued that the advanced stages described by these theories may not be applicable to friendship development, because many friendships do not develop to the same level or kind of intimacy. For example, Johnson et al. (2003) claimed the bonding stage in Knapp’s relational model describes a public ritual that announces to the world that commitments have been formally contracted through engagement or marriage, and is not relevant to friendship. In contrast, according to Rawlins (1983b), friendship is based on freedom of choice and nothing else, and personal choice bonds friends. Unlike romantic relationships, many friendships may stabilize at the level of lower intimacy for a long time. Therefore, as Johnson et al. (2003) claimed, stage models based on romantic relationships are only partially applicable to friendships.

The stage theories mentioned above also view interpersonal relationship development as a serial process. They conceptualize development as a series of stages of developing intimacy through which dyads progress in a unidirectional manner. However, Baxter and Montgomery (1997) described relationships that involve moving toward and moving away from each other, rather than progressing in an orderly manner. The idea that the development of successful relationships always follows a unidirectional path is
not shared by all. Years earlier, Altman, Vinsel, and Brown (1981) argued that relational development should be conceptualized as a cyclical rather than a linear process, and yet, they still described a four-stage sequence for the evolution of a relationship. Another criticism has been directed at the lack of definition of each of the stages. Bochner (1984) argued that each stage is a general description only, and needs to be defined more clearly. He noted that it is often not directly stated when one stage ends and another stage begins, making it difficult to conduct empirical research.

Relational development theories also claim that the ultimate goal of a relationship is the highest level of intimacy. However, dyads may be satisfied with a casual relationship at a lower level of intimacy. Friendships could be, for example, categorized into casual, close, and best friends. Therefore, it might be unrealistic to set the goal as high as bonding when describing friendships.

Another criticism of the stage model is a lack of attention to factors other than self-disclosure. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) claimed that intrinsic factors that reside in the individual relationship parties or between the parties, and extrinsic factors outside the dyadic boundaries such as society, social networks, and the physical environment also influence the development of a relationship. However, these have been neglected by stage-based theories since they are unrelated to self-disclosure.

Lastly, several researchers criticized the principle of rewards and costs, considered by stage theories as the driving force of relational developmental change. Others have argued that personal gain is not the primary goal of relational development. Bochner (1984), for example, questioned the view that social interactions are as simple as marketplace transactions. Social exchange theory assumes that individuals constantly
compute costs and benefits, and compare outcomes with preestablished standards, but in reality, as Wood (1995) claimed, very few people were preoccupied with gains and losses. She further explained that the boundary between two individuals becomes vague once intimacy is established, making it difficult to distinguish benefits to oneself from that of one’s partner.

The driving force of relational development in stage models has also been challenged in several empirical studies. For example, O’Connel (1984) found that people accepted imbalances in rewards and costs in long-term intimate relationships, Lund (1985) reported that rewards are not as important as investments in maintaining intimacy, and Clark, Quellette, Powell, & Milberg (1987) found that reciprocity of exchange is actually disliked in close friendships. These findings have suggested that social exchange theory might not reflect relational development accurately.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Uncertainty reduction theory focuses on the micropsychological processes underlining relational development. This theory was formulated by Berger and Calabrese (1975) to explain initial interactions in interpersonal relationships. In contrast to social penetration theory and Knapp’s relational developmental model (1978) driven by reward and cost, Berger and Calabrese explain relational development as driven by uncertainty reduction. Altman and Taylor (1973) and Knapp (1978) claimed that whether or not an interaction continued was dependent on reward and cost ratios previously explained. In contrast, Berger and Calabrese argued that it would be difficult to explain uncertainty reduction in those terms, as the reward and cost principle appeared to be tautological (Bochner,
1984). Berger and Calabrese further explained that although it may be rewarding to a
certain point, uncertainty reduction could also be considered a cost as the ability to
accurately predict another person’s behaviour might lead to boredom.

According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), the primary function of interpersonal
communication is uncertainty reduction. When people meet for the first time, their
primary concern is reducing uncertainty. Uncertainty in this context refers to two
phenomena: the ability to predict how strangers will behave during an encounter and the
ability to explain how strangers behaved. Uncertainty reduction, therefore, involves
both proactive predictions and retroactive explanations about strangers’ behaviour.

The major assumption of uncertainty reduction theory is that people try to reduce
uncertainty about others under three conditions: people tend to reduce uncertainty when
they can provide rewards or punishments, when the other person behaves contrary to
expectations, or when they expect future interactions with another person (Berger,
1979).

Berger and Calabrese (1975) initially posited seven axioms and 21 theorems based on
communication patterns of people in the United States. These axioms address the
relationship between uncertainty and (1) amount of communication (2) nonverbal
affiliative expressiveness (3) information seeking (4) intimacy level of communication
content (5) reciprocity (6) similarity, and (7) liking. Berger (1979) later suggested three
general strategies people use for reducing uncertainty: passive strategies that involve
unobtrusive observation of others, active strategies that involve making efforts to obtain
information without direct contact with others, and interactive strategies that involve
direct interaction with others such as interrogation and self-disclosure.
There are a number of empirical studies grounded in Berger and Calabrese’s uncertainty reduction theory (1975). These studies have revealed strategies used by individuals to collect information about others in order to reduce their uncertainties, and thus support Berger and Calabrese’s theory. For example, research about passive strategies has revealed how individuals judge information about a target person from third party sources (Hewes, Graham, Doelger, & Pavitt, 1985). Although information provided by a third party may be biased, participants in this study felt that they could compensate for the biases.

Research about interactive strategies (Berger & Kellermann, 1983) has identified three common approaches individuals use to acquire information about others in direct encounters. These are interrogation, disclosure, and relaxing the target person. These approaches may be used alone or in combination. Kellermann and Berger (1984) suggested that potential efficiency and social appropriateness need to be taken into consideration when individuals select strategies, because at times the most efficient way may be the least socially appropriate.

Similarly to Altman and Taylor (1973) and Knapp (1978), Berger and Calabrese (1975) viewed interpersonal communication as a developmental process occurring in stages. Their developmental stages are simpler though, and include only three stages: entry, personal, and exit. The entry phase is the beginning stage of interaction between strangers. During the entry phase, the content of conversation is structured, tends to focus on demographic information of each other. The personal phase is the second stage when people begin to communicate more spontaneously and personally. In contrast to the previous stage, communication is less constrained, and people may talk about
socially undesirable aspects of their personalities and social relationships, as well as, reveal attitudes, values, and personal problems. The exit phase is the final stage when people decide whether to continue or leave. The exit phase of a relationship may occur over a series of interactions and decisions before the final behaviour, such as divorce. To my knowledge, there is no empirical work that supports this stage model.

*Critique of Uncertainty Reduction Theory*

One of the major criticisms of the uncertainty reduction theory is the lack of knowledge about its generalizability. Since the theory has been developed and researched primarily in the United States, the findings might be limited in scope. In order to claim universality, several studies have been conducted both in different cultures and across cultures. These cross-cultural or intercultural studies based on the uncertainty reduction theory will be presented later in this chapter.

Another shortcoming of uncertainty reduction theory is its limitation to initial interactions between strangers. Berger and Calabrese (1975) pointed out that the theory could also be applied to established relationships. However, Gudykunst, Yang, and Nishida (1985) stressed that subsequent discussions of uncertainty reduction theory had not clarified this point. For example, as Bochner (1984) argued, Berger and Calabrese “… have not yet developed any valid operational procedures for measuring uncertainty independently from the other variables included in their axioms.” (p. 574). Since uncertainty is an elusive term, it is difficult to conduct experimental research.

Uncertainty reduction theory assumes that people try to reduce uncertainty in their
interactions with others and that certainty, rather than novelty, is correlated with intimacy and satisfaction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Berger & Gudykunst, 1991). Baxter and Montgomery (1996) argued that, although people look for certainty in relationships, they simultaneously need novelty to avoid boredom. Baxter and Montgomery noted that the simultaneous need for both certainty and uncertainty was not explored in uncertainty reduction theory. They further argued that social penetration theory also ignored the simultaneous demand for openness and a lack of openness, although both of them are necessary for the wellbeing of relationships. They concluded that a basic limitation of stage-based theories was their “… theoretical one-sidedness and neglect of the ‘both/and’ ness of relating …” and believe a healthy relationship is achieved by satisfying both opposing demands (p. 6). Their position was formalized in relational dialectic theory.

Relational Dialectic Theory

In response to the criticism of linearity implied by relational development theories, Baxter (1988) suggested a dialectic perspective as an alternative conceptualization of interpersonal relationships. Other theorists (Altman et al., 1981; Bochner, 1984; Rawlins, 1992) applied a dialectic approach to relational research as well. However, in this study, only Rawlins’ (1992) theory of dialectics in friendship will be reviewed as his theory deals with friendship, one of the central themes of this study.
Baxter’s Relational Dialectic Theory

Baxter and Montgomery (1997) argued that their relational dialectic proposal is not a theory because it offers neither axiomatic or propositional arguments, nor a single statement of generalizable predictions. Dialectics describe a set of assumptions that revolve around the concepts of contradiction, change, praxis, and totality. These core concepts also distinguish dialectic theory from stage-based theories. Several major differences are examined in turn.

Although stage-based theories emphasize one-sidedness such as closeness, certainty, and openness, Baxter (1988) argued that people also seek the opposing forces, such as autonomy, novelty, and privacy. According to her relational dialectic theory, contradiction is the central feature of a dialectical analysis. Baxter claimed that contradictions are formed when two forces are interdependent, and yet independent of each other. Baxter identified three contradictions that people have to deal with to maintain and improve a relationship. These are autonomy-connection, novelty-predictability, and openness-closedness. Dialectically oriented research has tended to view contradictions as binary oppositions. Referring to multivocal contradictions found in several empirical studies, Baxter and Montgomery (1997) later claimed that their initial binary opposition proposal was too limited. For example, Goldsmith (1990) found five different meanings of connection and autonomy depending on different developmental moments in a romantic relationship. Another study by Stamp and Banski (1992) revealed that married couples’ interpretations of connection and autonomy changed after the birth of their first child. In response to these studies, Baxter and Montgomery argued that a shift from binary to multivocal contradictions
Another core concept of dialectic theory is change. The dialectic approach views relationships as a process of developmental movements, while previous relational developmental theories implicitly viewed them as static or stable states. Relational development theory assumes that a relationship may stabilize at certain levels of closeness for a time, but dialectics theory predicts that change is likely. Dyads are continually negotiating between stability and change, and their relational life is characterized by change.

The third core concept of dialectic theory is praxis. Rawlins (1992) claimed that praxis views “… the human communicator as an ongoing producer and product of his or her choices within an encompassing cultural matrix.” (p. 7-8). Baxter and Montgomery (1997) argued that dyads react to dialectic tensions by communicating, and these messages modify the future dialectical tensions that the pair will face.

The fourth core concept of dialectic theory is totality. It refers to the assumption that phenomena can be understood only in relation to other phenomena (Baxter & Montgomery, 1997). The authors argued that one must not only observe the interactions within a relationship, among its individual members, but outside a relationship, including the larger social and cultural systems in which the members reside. Their theory acknowledges that forces both within and outside the dyad can affect the relationship.

The emphasis on contextuality in dialectic theory is a unique feature that is absent in stage-based theories. Ting-Toomey (1989) stressed the importance of incorporating
context as a critical variable in research on uncertainty reduction and social penetration. However, there have been only a few studies that have treated context as an important variable. Another major difference regarding the concept of totality is the location of contradiction. Stage-based theories focus on the individual and are often goal-related (e.g., the goal is marriage or bonding). In contrast, Baxter’s relational dialectic theory (1988) focuses on the relational change process of dyads, and the continual modification of relationships.

There are also differences between dialectic theory and stage-based theories in terms of developmental phases. As previously indicated, relationships begin when people shift from strangers to acquaintances, and end when people become strangers again. In relational dialectic theory, Baxter (1988) discussed when each stage (or phase) begins and ends, and when dialectical change occurs. She further explained how relationships begin with the interplay of contradictory forces and how they end when contradictions are no longer present. Baxter presented four developmental phases in the principal contradiction of autonomy-connection with two secondary contradictions. They are autonomy to connection (phase 1), autonomy and connection (phase 2), autonomy-connection synthesis (phase 3), and connection to autonomy (phase 4). In the first phase, people are expected to explore each other to determine whether they want to form a further relationship or not. The driving force in this phase is predictability and knowing the other as an individual, realized through small talk or indirect communication behaviours, such as seeking information of the other from a third person. The second phase refers to negotiating the details of the connection, such as the amount of freedom allowed outside the relationship or responsibilities each party has to oneself, to one another, and to the relationship. This phase is characterized by ambivalence in
the relationship as partners wonder whether or not it is worth investing in the relationship. In this phase, people make an effort to increase certainty about the state of relationship through using private codes and idiomatic expressions such as nicknames, affectionate phrases, and private jokes (Hopper, Knapp, & Scott, 1981). In the third phase, relationships shift to a synthesis of autonomy with connection. In this phase, autonomy and connection are no longer viewed as opposites. However, excessive predictability about daily relational life and each other has the potential to destroy the relationship, so people need to enhance novelty by planning a joint trip or giving a surprise gift to sustain a healthy relationship. The final stage reflects the dissolution of a relationship. Conflict experienced in this phase does not lead to reviving the relationship with novelty but leads to dissolution.

On the surface, relational development in dialectic theory appears to be as linear as it is described in stage-based theories. Relationships are more likely to move in a unidirectional manner quantitatively towards some idealized end state, from less to more interdependence, less to more openness, less to more certainty. However, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) claimed that relational development has “… no clear end-state and no necessary paths of change.” (p. 341). That is, relationships can move in any direction both upwards and downwards, both towards and away from, both forwards and backwards, rather than always progressing serially. Baxter and Montgomery noted that changes in a relationship could not only be quantitative (e.g., less or more intimate) but also qualitative. Qualitative change means either redefining the relationship as a different relational state or redefining terms, such as commitment.

Finally, strategies to manage two contradictory ideas will be presented. Baxter (1988)
identified three basic strategy types. The first strategy is *selection*. Individuals may choose to select one of the opposites consistently over another. The second strategy, *temporal special separation*, takes two forms. *Cyclic alternation* occurs when people choose one of the opposites at a particular time, alternating with the other. *Segmentation* occurs when people isolate separate arenas for emphasizing each of the opposites. For example, a couple may stress openness when they talk about certain topics, but they may not disclose to the same depth when talking about other issues. The final strategy is *integration* where an individual tries to respond simultaneously to both opposites. It takes three forms: *moderation*, *disqualification*, and *reframing*. People may do integration by moderation in which messages are not biased towards any polarities. The small talk in initial encounters is a good example of this strategy. Disqualification occurs when individuals avoid either polarity. Reframing involves redefining contradiction so that the poles are not seen as opposing forces. For example, the autonomy-connection may be redefined as a unity rather than an opposition. If a couple sees their ability to be separate from each other as a symbol of closeness, they are reframing what it means to be close.

*Rawlins’ Theory of Dialectics in Friendship*

While Baxter’s theory (1988) was derived from romantic relationships, Rawlins’ studies (1983a, 1983b, 1992) focused on friendship. Rawlins described friendships in North American culture as having the following characteristics: voluntary, personal, equal, mutual, and affective. Based on an interpretative analysis of interviews, Rawlins (1992) identified two types of contradictions: contextual dialectics and interactional dialectics.
Contextual dialectics refer to the tension between public (what society expects) and private (how two friends actually view their friendship) enactments of friendship, and between ideals (cultural ideals) and realities (actual nature of the relationship) of friendship. Friends must create and manage these contradictions between public and private, and also between ideals and realities.

Interactional dialectics on the other hand, include all the contradictions that friends manage or sustain in their relationship on an ongoing, everyday basis. Interactional dialectics include four primary relationship dialectical tensions: a dialectic of independence versus dependence, a dialectic of affection versus instrumentality, a dialectic of judgement versus acceptance, and a dialectic of expressiveness versus protectiveness. The dialectic of independence versus dependence refers to the freedom to pursue one’s life and interests without a friend’s help, and the liberty to rely on one’s friends when it is needed. The dialectics of affection versus instrumentality refers to the tension between caring for a friend as an end-in-itself, and caring a friend as a means-to-an-end. Since a spirit of equality suffuses friendship, friends must carefully balance requests for help and expressions of affection. When practical needs dominate, friends potentially become resentful and suspicious about being exploited.

The dialectic of judgement versus acceptance refers to the tension created by offering evaluative judgement versus offering unconditional acceptance. The dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness refers to expectations of openness and honesty among friends, and expectations of confidentiality by being strategic. Interactional dialectics need to be continuously understood and negotiated by both partners in a relationship. Furthermore, “… to maintain a friendship, these tensions must be resolved
Rawlins (1992) stressed totality that hinges on relatedness and contextuality. He claimed that “… a dialectical perspective calls for investigating and situating enactment of friendships in their concrete social conditions over time.” (p. 273). The concrete social conditions of friendships, according to Rawlins, include marriage, work affiliations, family, retirement, and personal crises. Time is described as the life stages of childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood, and later adulthood.

**Empirical Work Based on Relational Dialectic Theory**

Since dialectic theory describes a set of conceptual assumptions and does not offer axioms or propositional arguments (Baxter & Montgomery, 1997), it has not led to a large body of empirical research. A small number of studies have investigated the significance of dialectic contradictions (Baxter, 1990; Goldsmith, 1990; Rawlins, 1983a, 1983b), dialectic strategies (Baxter; Hoppe-Nagao & Ting-Toomey, 2002), and dialectic relational developments (Johnson et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2004), and these are reviewed below.

Baxter (1990) examined three fundamental contradictions; namely autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and predictability-novelty. As a result of interviewing 106 romantic relationship parties, these contradictions were reported across the stages of relationship development. A more recent collaborative study (Baxter & Erbert, 1999) revealed that autonomy-connection and openness-closedness were perceived as more salient than other contradictions. Goldsmith (1990) examined...
the autonomy-connection dialectic in relation to a sequence of five different types of tensions. Her findings revealed how the need for autonomy and connection changes as a relationship moves towards intimacy.

All three studies discussed above explored contradictions in romantic relationships. In contrast, Rawlins (1983a) investigated the dialectic of autonomy (independence) and connection (dependence) in close friendships by interviewing ten pairs of close friends. He found that managing autonomy and connection is a fundamental requirement for maintaining friendships, since friendships are based on freedom of choice in Western countries, unlike ceremonially bound relationships such as marriage. In his view the “… continuous negotiation and enactment of two contradictory liberties appears requisite for maintaining a close friendship.” (p. 263).

Based on other interviews with pairs of close friends, Rawlins (1983b) identified another dialectic, expressiveness verses protectiveness. He argued that in order to develop and maintain a friendship, it is important to reveal personal thoughts and feelings. At the same time, there is a risk of hurting the other when friends communicate more openly and honestly. In contrast to stage-based theories that emphasize the importance of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationship, Rawlins highlighted the balance between self-disclosure and restraining remarks, crucial to friendship formation. Overall, the empirical studies on dialectic contradictions in romantic and friendship relationships have revealed that tensions need to be continuously negotiated to maintain either form of relationship.

The second group of empirical studies investigated strategies for managing dialectical tensions. Baxter (1990), for example, investigated coping strategies for three dialectical
tensions in a study with 106 premarital couples. She found that separation through alternation and selection were the most common coping strategies used for managing tension associated with the autonomy-connection dialectic, and separation through segmentation, neutralization through moderation, and selection, were often employed for coping with openness-closedness. In coping with novelty-predictability, respondents chose separation through segmentation, followed by separation through alternation. The findings of this study were supported by another study using married couples (Hoppe-Nagao & Ting-Toomey, 2002). In that study, they identified additional communication strategies married couples used to deal with contradictions between autonomy and connection (such as interaction climate and compromise), and between openness and closedness (such as withdrawal, probing, deception, and anti-social tactics). The extent to which strategies for managing dialectical tensions within married couples are also found in friendships is not well documented.

Johnson et al. (2003) and Johnson et al. (2004) found it useful to conceptualize relational development in a dialectic manner (e.g., greater degrees of closeness and lesser degrees of closeness). They claimed that relational development and deterioration are dialectic. In their view, one reason for viewing relational development as dialectic is that relational development is not serial. Therefore, both poles of the dialectic are perceived as a natural part of relationships in dialectic theory. They also argued that both relational development and deterioration play important roles. In stage-based theories, once a relationship deteriorates, this leads to termination. However, as several researchers have claimed (Altman et al., 1981; Johnson et al., 2003), deterioration may also provide opportunities for relational escalation even though it may initially lead to relational deterioration. As noted previously, Altman et al. began to feel ambivalent
about the serial, smooth path to intimacy posited by social penetration theory in their seminal work on dialectics.

**Critique of Relational Dialectic Theory**

Although relational dialectic theory seems promising as a conceptual tool to explain dynamic experiences in relationships, it has also some limitations. As Baxter and Montgomery (1997) suggest, dialectics is not a traditional theory in that it does not offer axioms or propositional arguments. They argued that it describes a small set of conceptual assumptions which can lead to practical hypotheses, but since these are often so situation specific, it becomes difficult to make generalizations.

Baxter and Montgomery (1997) argued that linear progress is still dominant in theory and research on relational development. However, the four phases of relationship development resemble previous conceptualizations of relationships, such as social penetration theory (Baxter, 1988). The main difference is that Baxter stressed the notion of dialectics as a means to examine how relationships develop. Although Baxter admits that it might be too simplistic to suggest that all relationships evolve in a sequential manner, from phase 1 to phase 4, she insists that the assumption of a linear movement remains valid.

Thirdly, an interpersonal relationship is not clearly defined in Baxter’s relational dialectic theory (1988). The term interpersonal relationship is so general that it includes many types of relationships such as romantic relationships, relationships between wives and husbands, relationships among colleagues, and friendships. Yet, Baxter’s relational
dialectic theory seems to have been applied mainly to romantic relationships judging from the extensive number of studies in this area. The extent to which the findings generated from these studies are applicable to friendships is unclear. For example, the novelty/certainty dialectic may not be applicable to friendships because many friendships never develop intimacy to the level where predictability leads to the emotional deadening of a relationship. Instead, tensions of judgement and acceptance are more likely to occur because, as Rawlins (1992) pointed out, people usually appreciate criticism or judgement from a friend who cares about them, even though acceptance is a crucial aspect of communication among friends. Since friendships are different from romantic relationships in terms of the level of intimacy and the freedom to develop or demolish relationships, it is necessary to define which types of relationship the theory can be applied.

Baker (1991) questioned whether the three relational dialectics (autonomy and connection, novelty and predictability, and openness and closedness) may only be typical of American interpersonal relationships, and therefore not easily generalized to other contexts. Baxter (1988) identified autonomy and connection as a primary dialectic, but Baker argued that interdependence and empathy might be more salient than autonomy in a collectivistic culture like Japan. It appears important, therefore, to identify which dialectics may be the most meaningful for examining intercultural relational development across cultures. One may speculate that some dialectics may be more relevant to some cultural groups and less to others.

The importance of culture on dialectics was acknowledged by Baxter and Montgomery (1997). They noted that the interplay between autonomy and connection among people
from individualistic cultures might be different to the autonomy and connection interplay among people from collectivistic cultures. This raises the importance of considering cultural and social contexts when identifying contradictions. Cross-cultural research is needed to establish the universality of Baxter’s theory. Research examining the role of culture in relational development will be examined later.

This concludes the review of interpersonal relationship theories. As discussed above, most of these theories were derived from romantic relational development, and therefore provided a view limited to the relational development of opposite genders. As this research focuses on intercultural friendship development within and across genders, with expectations of similar levels of intimacy as in romantic relationships, the substantial body of empirical work related to friendship development was also reviewed and added to this section.

Friendship Development Studies

The literature on [intracultural] friendship development is relevant to this research project because it deals with friendship maintenance strategies. Empirical studies grounded in uncertainty reduction theory have mainly concentrated on strategies for initiating relationships, and have therefore been useful to explain friendships only in the early stages. Friendship development studies provide useful complementary concepts to explain how individuals develop or maintain relationships once friendships have been established.

Several studies have investigated friendship maintenance behaviours. For example,
Hays (1984) developed the friend observation checklist (FOC) for assessing friendship behaviour. The items for FOC were based on interviews with 172 American students, and were categorized into four content areas: companionship (sharing an activity together), consideration (providing support), communication (disclosing information about oneself), and affection (expressing any sentiment felt towards the other) scaled at different intimacy levels (superficial, casual, intimate) and based on social penetration theory. For example, both “watching television” and “visiting his or her relatives” are behaviours of companionship, but the latter item was scaled at a deeper level of friendship. Similarly, Rose and Serafica (1986) asked open-ended questions about the maintenance of same-sex friends to 90 American students, and their responses were classified into four types of maintenance behaviours: physical proximity, affection or commitment, quality and quantity of friendship interaction, and self-maintaining (or no active effort required). Oswald, Clark, and Kelly (2004) also developed a measure of friendship maintenance behaviours. As a result of factor analyses of responses from 666 American students, they identified four key factors: positivity (e.g., trying to make interactions pleasant), supportiveness (e.g., providing each other with emotional support), openness (e.g., sharing private thoughts or having stimulating conversations), and interaction (e.g., going to social gatherings).

Although each of these studies proposed different maintenance typologies, there seems to be some conceptual similarity. Fehr (1996) reviewed the literature on maintenance typologies, and summarized them as four key strategies: self-disclosure, providing support and assurance, maintaining levels of rewards, and spending time together.

Several studies have identified friendship maintenance behaviours that differ depending
on relationship type. Several researchers (Oswald et al., 2004; Rose & Serafica, 1986) found that best friends engaged in more maintenance behaviours than close or casual friends. In a 12-week longitudinal study of friendship development previously mentioned, Hays (1984) also found that closer friends practised not only more varied but also more intimate types of interactions. For example, affection was reported to be particularly critical in best friendships compared to close friendships (Hays; Rose & Serafica). While companionship was frequently reported by both casual and close friends, intimate behaviours such as emotional support, was found to be much more common for close than casual friendships (Hays, 1985). In a later study on day-to-day friendship maintenance behaviours of university students, Hays (1989) found that not only a greater amount of emotional support, but also information support among close friends. In the same study, Hays also reported that interactions of close friends were more exclusive and deliberate (organized interactions at one’s home rather than interactions by chance on campus).

Unlike affection or companionship, proximity was reported to be more critical in casual friendships than in close or best friendships. Frequent interactions were found not to be critical once friendships reached a certain kind of closeness (Hays, 1988; Rose & Serafica, 1986). These findings about best friendships seem to support Altman and Taylor’s (1973) and Wright’s (1984) theories, suggesting that best friendships are more self-maintaining, more dependent on affection, and more tolerant to lack of contact than close friendships.

The literature also revealed that friendship maintenance behaviours might be influenced not only by friendship type but also gender. Several studies (Hays, 1989; Oswald et al.,
2004) found that female same-sex friendships offered more emotional and informational support (Hays; Oswald et al.), and openness and interaction (Oswald et al.) than male same-sex friendships. In addition, males reported experiencing more costs, such as wasting time, irritation, and boredom with their same-sex friends (Hays). However, the effect for gender differences appeared to be smaller than the effect for friendship type (Oswald et al.). Hays (1988) summarized the literature on friendship interactions, and noted that females were more likely to emphasize emotional sharing, trust, and confiding in their interactions, while friendships between males tended to revolve around shared activities. In other words, females tended to get together just to talk, more than their male counterparts.

As Rose and Serafica (1986) pointed out, there is a lack of agreement across empirical studies, in the number of levels of friendship, definitions of friendship, and characteristics associated with a particular friendship type. For example, some studies (Hays, 1985, 1989) distinguished between two types of friendship (casual and close friends) and other studies (Rose & Serafica; Oswald et al., 2004) distinguished between three types of friendship (casual, close, and best friends). This lack of common understanding of friendship types makes it difficult to generalize findings across studies. This problem is even more salient in cross-cultural studies because the number of categories of friendship, and the definitions of friendship differ across cultures.

The studies on interpersonal relationships reviewed so far tend to reflect one culture, overwhelmingly the culture of the United States. This is because the bulk of studies published in English were from the United States. An important question is whether interpersonal relationship development within other cultural groups would produce
similar findings. With regard to this research, the critical question is whether relationship development across cultures develops in similar or different ways. In the next section, one of the salient variables, culture, is discussed in relation to cross-cultural communication theories.

CULTURE AND DIMENSIONS OF CULTURAL VARIABILITY

Since the aim of this research is to investigate intercultural relational development, it is important to examine the notion of culture. A number of cultural dimensions expected to distinguish between the backgrounds of participants in this study will also be examined. These dimensions are individualism and collectivism, high-context and low-context, and in-groups and out-groups.

Conceptualizations of Culture

It is crucial to define culture first, because the values and belief systems shared by a particular group of people shape their expectations regarding the friendship formation process and communication behaviour. Overall and traditionally, culture has either been viewed as a system of shared meaning (Geertz, 1973) or everything that is human-made (Herskovits, 1955). Many researchers in the field of cross-cultural psychology have endorsed the notion that culture holds human groups together and provides a cognitive map for behaving, believing, and evaluating (Kluckhohn, 1944), as well as, a set of principles for map-making and navigation (Frake, 1981). Culture is conceived as
learned, transmitted, and shared (Jenks, 1993), and comprised of attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and interpretation of the meaning of other member’s behaviour (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Culture is regarded not as something to be observed, but as something that individuals live within and interact with. Individuals are regarded not only as victims of cultures but also as cognizers, evaluators, and interpreters of cultures (Segall, Lonner, & Berry, 1998). Thus, culture is not a given but is created daily through interactions between individuals and their surroundings.

Culture has long been conceptualized, and in particular operationalized in cross-cultural research, in relation to national boundaries. Over the last few decades, however, the tendency to equate culture with nations or ethnic groups has been increasingly challenged and questioned. Rather than focusing on geographical differences and treating culture as an independent variable, many researchers have searched for dimensions of culture that could explain the findings of their cross-cultural studies.

Dimensions of Cultural Variability

Different dimensions of sociocultural variability, such as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s (1961) variations in value orientations, Schwartz’s (1992) theory of universal values, Hall’s (1976) differentiation between low- and high-context cultures, and Hofstede’s (1983) four dimensions of culture, have been used extensively in cross-cultural studies (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986b). Among them and directly relevant to the present study are individualism and collectivism, and low- and high-context culture. These are
reviewed because Australian people are considered members of an individualistic and low-context culture, whereas Japanese people are considered members of a collectivistic and high-context culture. The importance of ingroup/outgroup distinctions in research on dimensions of cultural variability will be highlighted.

*Individualism/Collectivism*

Individualism/collectivism has been identified as one of the major dimensions of cultural variability across groups and nations (Kagitçibasi, 1997; Triandis, 1988). References to the significance of this cultural dimension can be found in many disciplines such as anthropology, comparative sociology, and cross-cultural psychology. Since it has emerged in analysis of Western and Eastern belief systems and values, individualism/collectivism has been considered a powerful framework for explaining cultural differences in interpersonal communication (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

One of the best known studies of individualism/collectivism was conducted by Hofstede (1980). Hofstede administered questionnaires in 1968 and 1972 to 117,000 IBM employees in 40 countries and identified the principal values of different cultures through factor analysis. He identified four factors: individualism, power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Among these four factors, individualism/collectivism has been used extensively in subsequent empirical research.

Hofstede (1991) stated that his definition of individualism and collectivism was derived from the Western notion of “mental programming”. He defined individualism as a
society in which people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family only, while collectivism is a society in which people belong to strong, cohesive in-groups, which provide lifetime support in exchange for loyalty.

Triandis (1988) is another researcher who promoted the concept of individualism/collectivism in cross-cultural psychology. Triandis et al. (1986) differentiated between collectivistic and individualistic cultures in relation to in-groups and out-groups. According to Triandis (1988), the notion of in-groups refers to “… groups of people about whose welfare one is concerned, with whom one is willing to cooperate without demanding equitable returns and separation from whom leads to discomfort or even pain.” (p. 75). Out-groups, in contrast, are groups of people whose welfare one is not concerned about, and with whom one requires an equitable return in order to co-operate.

Even though the distinction between in-groups and out-groups can be found in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, it has been argued that members of collectivistic cultures tend to have a greater distinction between in-groups and out-groups, than members of individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1995). For example, Triandis and Trafimow (2001) argued that members of collectivistic cultures are more likely to support, co-operate, and even sacrifice for strangers who belong to in-groups, while they tend to respond to strangers who belong to out-groups with distrust, competition, and hostility. Members of individualistic cultures, on the other hand, do not show such a sharp difference in the way they deal with strangers in out-groups, from strangers in in-groups.

Ways of forming in-groups have also been found to be different between individualistic
cultures and collectivistic cultures. Triandis (1989, 1994) argued that in-groups in individualistic cultures tend to be formed on the basis of similar beliefs, attitudes, values, and occupations, whereas in-groups in collectivistic cultures tend to be ascribed and membership is more involuntary. Since in-groups in individualistic cultures tend to be formed on the basis of similarities, according to Gudykunst and Kim (2003) there can be more specific in-groups (family, company, church, school, club). In collectivistic cultures there seems to be fewer and more general in-groups (work, university, family).

According to several researchers (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Triandis et al., 1986), members of individualistic cultures have many specific in-groups, and as a consequence, in-groups have relatively less influence on their behaviours. People in individualistic cultures tend to maintain independence and some detachment from their in-groups so that they can leave a group that is too demanding. Members of collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, tend to have higher commitment to an in-group across all situations. Members of collectivistic cultures are expected to stay interdependent and maintain harmony with their in-groups in spite of potentially high costs.

Besides the in-group/out-group distinction, several other indicators of individualism and collectivism have been proposed. One of them is hierarchy. Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Nydia (1988) noted that the most important relationships in collectivistic cultures were vertical, whereas the most important relationships in individualistic cultures were horizontal. They provided examples of relationships among family members in collectivistic and individualistic cultures to illustrate this proposition. In collectivistic cultures, interdependence between parent and child was often maximized, whereas in individualistic cultures growing independence between the
parent and child was expected. Triandis et al. also argued that the bond of horizontal relationships between wife and husband was stronger than parent and child relationships in individualistic cultural groups, compared to collectivistic cultural groups.

Triandis et al. (1988) also described differences in friendships between groups that were dominantly collectivist, and groups that were dominantly individualistic. They argued that members of individualistic cultures might be more skillful in establishing a new friendship but that friendship may not develop beyond the level of acquaintance. In contrast, members of collectivistic cultures might not be as confident in establishing a new relationship, but once they have made a friend, he or she will become a life-long friend.

So far, individualism/collectivism has been presented as a cultural trait. However, Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clark (1985) claimed individualism/collectivism could also be conceptualized as a personal trait, because people show different tendencies within a cultural group. Generally speaking, members of individualistic cultures tend to be individualistic, and the members of collectivistic cultures tend to be collectivistic. However, some members of individualistic cultures may show highly collectivistic tendencies, and the same applies to members from collectivistic cultures.

Triandis et al. (1985) stressed the importance of distinguishing the individual level of individualism/collectivism dimension from the cultural level. To reflect this distinction, they coined the psychological concepts of idiocentrism-allocentrism that correspond respectively to cultural individualism and collectivism at the group level. Triandis et al.’s research found that ideocentric people in individualistic cultures tend to ignore the needs of their in-groups, and allocentric people in individualistic cultures tend to be
concerned about their in-groups. According to Triandis et al., allocentric people in collectivistic cultures tend to be more willing to accept in-group norms without question, and ideocentric individuals in collectivistic cultures tend to have contradictory feelings about the acceptance of in-group norms.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed another individual level dimension, self-construals. They claimed that people could operate from two different construals of the self, namely independent or interdependent. Independent construals view the self as a unique and independent entity. They strive for their own goals and tend to express themselves in direct ways. In contrast, interdependent construals view the self as a part of surrounding social relationships. They recognize that one’s behaviour is determined, controlled and organized by the thoughts, feelings and actions of others in the relationship. According to Markus and Kitayama, while each individual is expected to hold elements of both independent and interdependent self-construals, independent self-construals are predominant in individualistic cultures, and interdependent self-construals in collectivistic cultures.

Although references to cultural individualism and collectivism at the group and individual level have been made in numerous cross-cultural studies, the notion of individualism/collectivism has been criticized. Kagitçibasi (1997) argued, “These constructs do not necessarily form opposite poles and may coexist in individuals or groups at the same time in situations or with different target groups or toward different interactional goals.” (p. 31-32). Kagitçibasi noted that individualism and collectivism tended to be treated as a determiner of a trait like characteristic. She claimed that alternatively, situations could be possible determiners. Leung and Bond’s (1984)
research, for example, seems to support Kagitçibasi’s claim. These authors found that Chinese students used an equality norm (norm expected for members of collectivistic cultures) when they dealt with in-group members, and subscribed to an equity norm (norm expected for members of individualistic cultures) with out-group members, more so than American students. If an individual can behave alternatively in an individualistic or a collectivistic way, this suggests that the two dimensions need to be interpreted in probabilistic terms, a point stressed by both Kagitçibasi (1997) and Triandis (1995).

The significance of individualism and collectivism was also questioned in a later study by Takano and Osaka (1999). They reviewed 15 empirical studies comparing Americans and Japanese on individualism and collectivism, and found that 14 of them did not support typical expectations of individualistic Americans and collectivistic Japanese. They questioned the internal validity of the studies as they were largely based on personal experiences, anecdotes, and proverbs (Mouer & Sugimoto, 1986). Several researchers (Morisaki, 2003; Takano & Osaka) have suggested that more commonly agreed definitions of individualism/collectivism should be employed in order to produce more rigorous empirical studies.

However, Oyserman, Kemmelmeier, and Coon (2002), examined 170 studies and noted that the distinction between individualism and collectivism was valuable since it reflected “… systematic differences in values, ways of thinking, ways of relating to others, ways of being a self and bases of well-being.” (p. 111). Kagitçibasi (1997) also argued that even though the significance of cultural norms underpinning the individualism and collectivism dimensions have been criticized, they are still crucial concepts in cross-cultural research, both theoretically and empirically.
**High-Context/Low-Context Cultures**

The distinction between high-context and low-context cultures comes from the work of Hall (1976), who differentiated between cultures based on their predominant communication style. According to Hall, cultures can be located along a continuum ranging from high- to low-context. High-context cultures predominantly use high-context communication in which most of the information is either implied by the physical context or internalized in an individual’s beliefs, values, and norms; very little is provided in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. Low-context cultures use predominantly low-context communication, in which the majority of the information is vested in the explicit code. Even though no culture exists exclusively at one end of the continuum, Hall provided empirical evidence that suggests Japanese, African American, Mexican, and Latino cultures tend to be located towards the high-context end of the continuum, and American, German, Swedish, and English cultures toward the lower end of the continuum.

According to Hall and Hall (1998), high- and low-context dimensions seem to also affect relationships. Members of high-context cultures tend to have extensive information networks among people who are involved in close relationships (in-groups) so that they do not require in-depth background information in their daily interactions. On the other hand, members of low-context cultures need more detailed background information at each interaction because grouping tends to be more loose and multiple, typically based around work and other aspects of day-to-day life.
The dimensions of low- and high-context communication styles appear to have a close association with the dimensions of collectivism and individualism. According to Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), all the cultures classified by Hall (1976) as high-context cultures were those claimed by Hofstede (1983) as collectivistic, and all the cultures classified by Hall (1976) as low-context cultures were classified as individualistic. Combining Hofstede (1983) and Hall’s (1976) cultural dimensions and assumptions, high-context communication is therefore expected to be predominate in collectivistic cultures and low-context communication to be predominate in individualistic cultures.

Hall and Hall (1998) tried to describe the underlying structures of culture not only according to the distinction between high- and low-context, but also other dimensions. One that is particularly relevant to relational development is fast and slow messages. Hall and Hall, for example, compared the United States with Europe and claimed that it generally does not take time for Americans to know others in a relatively superficial way, but in Europe it tends to take a long time to solidify relationships since personal relationships and friendships are highly valued.

Another dimension of cultural variability is high- and low-contact culture, a concept used by Hall (1966) to explain nonverbal behaviours. Hall argued that culture could be differentiated in terms of the degree of contact between people. Cultures in which people tend to stand close and touch a lot are identified as high-contact cultures, and cultures in which people stand apart and tend not to touch are identified as low-contact cultures. Gudykunst and Kim (2003) argued that this conceptualization of contact is useful in analyzing cross-cultural nonverbal behaviours.
To summarize, the literature identifies a number of cultural dimensions and assumptions to distinguish between the belief systems and communication patterns of different cultural groups, such as the Japanese and Australian students in this study. The concepts of in-groups and out-groups, ideocentrism and allocentrism, independent and interdependent self-contruals, and high-context and low-context communication have been discussed. All these concepts appear to be associated with a major overarching cultural variable, individualism and collectivism. Members of predominantly individualistic cultures are expected not to distinguish too closely between in-groups and out-groups, they tend to be ideocentric and value independence, and often employ low-context communication styles. In contrast, members of predominantly collectivistic cultures are expected to make a firmer distinction between in-groups and out-groups, they tend to be allocentric and value interdependence, and often use high-context communication styles. These dimensions of cultural variability were selected for discussion because they influence the communication behaviour of members of cultures that value cultural norms and rules. This is one of the reasons why these dimensions have been widely used in cross-cultural research. Furthermore, these dimensions are also widely claimed to distinguish between the belief systems and communication styles of people from Japanese and Australian backgrounds, the two groups represented in this research.

RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A CROSS-CULTURAL OR INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The previous section described researchers’ attempts to develop tools to categorize
cultures. In this section, cross-cultural and intercultural studies related to interpersonal relationship theories and dimensions of cultural variability will be reviewed. The section starts with the examination of cross-cultural studies relating cultural dimensions to interpersonal relationship theories, followed by the review of selected intercultural communication research. The section concludes by a review of interpretive studies of intercultural friendship development.

Cross-cultural Research Relating Cultural Dimensions to Interpersonal Relationship Theories

Studies Relating Cultural Dimensions to Uncertainty Reduction

Despite its shortcomings, the significance of individualism and collectivism on relational development has been investigated extensively by Gudykunst and his colleagues (Gelfand et al., 2000; Gudykunst, 1983b; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986a). Gudykunst’s main research aim was to examine if the seven axioms of uncertainty reduction theory could be applied to other cultural contexts. Exploratory research by Gudykunst with Japanese students at an American university revealed that some of Berger and Calabrese’s original axioms might not be directly generalizable to high-context cultures. For example, Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) first axiom, which suggests that as the amount of verbal communication between strangers increases, the level of uncertainty decreases, was not supported in high-context cultures. Gudykunst found that greater amounts of communication might not be necessary in high-context cultures such as Japan, because the Japanese students were making assumptions about
strangers based on their cultural background. This finding is consistent with Hall (1976), who claimed that the information necessary for relational development in collectivist cultures resides in the context or is internalized, which means that members of collectivistic cultures are less likely to depend on verbal messages for effective communication than members of individualistic cultures.

Another one of Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) axioms was found not to be applicable in a Japanese context (Gudykunst, 1983b). The second axiom suggests that as nonverbal affiliative expressiveness increases, uncertainty levels will decrease in initial interactions with strangers. Yet, Gudykunst found that Japanese students displayed less nonverbal behaviours than can be commonly observed among Americans, such as standing close, direct eye contact, and smiling. This finding is consistent with Hall (1966)’s description of low-contact cultures as previously discussed. Nakane’s (1974) finding that Japanese people rarely greet or smile at a stranger, even one they are sharing a table with, provides empirical supports for this assumption. The absence of smiling is due to the cautiousness Japanese people feel towards strangers, and may explain why nonverbal affiliative expressiveness does not help to decrease uncertainty levels, particularly in the initial relational developmental stage.

Uncertainty reduction strategies were also found to be different across cultures. In a study with Japanese students in Japan, and American students in the United States, Gudykunst and Nishida (1984), found that Japanese respondents showed lesser intent to use the interactive strategies of interrogation and self-disclosure. This finding implies that Japanese people may use other strategies to reduce uncertainty (Gudykunst & Nishida), including active, as well as, passive strategies (Berger, 1979).
According to several studies (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Gelfand et al., 2000; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986a; Nakane, 1974) members of collectivistic cultures seek out group-based information such as age, status, and group memberships to initiate a relationship. In contrast, members of individualistic cultures seek out person-based information such as attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and values. Gudykunst (1995) suggested that seeking out person-based information might assist members of individualistic cultures searching for personal similarities, which is consistent with the in-group/out-group formation literature. Additionally, seeking out group-based information may assist members of collectivistic cultures in gathering information on group similarities, which is also consistent with the in-group/out-group literature.

Overall, cross-cultural studies have shown that in-group and out-group membership appears to influence uncertainty reduction in collectivistic cultures. Gudykunst and Nishida (1986a), for example, reported that members of collectivistic cultures such as Japan have more attributional confidence (lower uncertainty) regarding classmates than acquaintances, and that members of individualistic cultures such as the United States, in contrast, have more attributional confidence regarding acquaintances than classmates. Gudykunst et al. (1992) examined uncertainty reduction processes between in-group and out-group relationships in Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, and the United States. They found that differences between in-groups and out-groups influence uncertainty reduction in Japan and Hong Kong, but not in the United States and Australia. In other words, uncertainty was lowered when people communicate with in-group members more than out-group members in Japan and Hong Kong, but there was no difference in Australia and the United States. Berger and Gudykunst (1991) reviewed a number of empirical studies on uncertainty reduction, and concluded that members of collectivistic
cultures perceive relationships with classmates as more intimate, whereas members of individualistic cultures perceive relationships with acquaintances as more intimate.

This conclusion was also supported by a cross-cultural study about intimacy ratings of relationship terms (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986b). Gudykunst and Nishida found that Japanese students rated in-groups such as classmates as more intimate than respondents from the United States. One of the possible reasons for this finding is that members of collectivistic cultures draw sharper distinctions between members of an in-group (e.g., classmates or colleagues) and members of an out-group (Triandis, 1995). Members of collectivistic cultures perceive in-group relationships to be more intimate than members of individualistic cultures (Triandis). The distinction between in-groups and out-groups seems to play a critical role in interpersonal relationships in Japan.

*Studies Relating Cultural Dimensions to Social Penetration*

As discussed earlier, social penetration theory claims that people tend to disclose themselves more extensively and deeply as they become more intimate. However, there seems to be a difference in the degree of self-disclosure between individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures. It appears that members of individualistic cultures may be expected to engage in more self-disclosure than members of collectivistic cultures. This assumption is supported by Barnlund’s (1975) early research in Japan and the United States. Barnlund examined topics of conversation, target preferences for self-disclosure, and overall levels of self-disclosure by topic and target person. The results indicated that overall, levels of self-disclosure were higher for Americans than for Japanese.
Similarly, Ting-Toomey’s (1991) research in France, Japan, and the United States revealed that levels of self-disclosure for American respondents were greater with opposite-sex friends than for Japanese respondents. These results suggest that members of individualistic cultures are more likely to self-disclose than members of collectivistic cultures. Chen (2002) argued that this could be related to the communication style of members of individualistic cultures. She speculated that members of individualistic cultures prefer a direct communication style, which somehow facilitates self-disclosure.

In contrast to the inferences made from the work of several researchers (Barnlund, 1975; Chen, 2002; Ting-Toomey, 1991), Gudykunst and Nishida (1983) found that there were more similarities than differences when close Japanese and American friendships were compared in terms of social penetration. Their research revealed that Japanese and American close friends disclosed equally about many topics, such as relationships with others, parents, family, physical conditions, school, money, interests/hobbies, and attitudes/values. The topic Japanese students seem to disclose less about to their close friends was current or potential relations with members of the opposite sex, such as love, dating, and sex. As far as self-disclosure in close relationships is concerned, Gudykunst and Nishida found more similarities than differences between Japanese and American friendships.

Studies Related to Dialectical Relationships

As mentioned in the section on dialectical relationship theory, dialectics may vary across cultures. Chen, Drzewiecka, and Sias (2001), for example, studied friendships
between Taiwanese international students at a number of American universities. She found two extra tensions that seemed unique to Taiwanese students: resentment-affinity and favouritism-impartiality. The first tension between resentment and affinity refers to the negative perception of one’s own group, and the simultaneous preference for members of this group as friends. Taiwanese international students in this study stated that they disliked other Taiwanese international students, but they also needed these students as friends. The second tension between favouritism and impartiality refers to wanting to support favoured group members, and yet wanting to be fair and treat all group members equally. As Taiwanese international students have two roles (group member and friend) they experienced a dilemma when a friend, who was also a group member, was involved in in-group difficulties. In sum, this study provided important information about the management of friendships among international students by suggesting two new tensions.

Critique of Cross-Cultural Studies Relating Cultural Dimensions to Interpersonal Relationship Theories

In the previous section, a number of empirical studies, many conducted by Gudykunst and his associates, were discussed. These studies examined the influence of cultural variability such as individualism and collectivism, as well as, low-context cultures and high-context cultures on uncertainty reduction and social penetration. One of the limitations of these studies resides in the number of cultures examined. Most studies examined only two cultures, typically Japanese and American, with a couple of exceptions (Gudykunst, Yang & Nishida, 1985; Ting-Toomey, 1991). As Gudykunst,
Nishida, and Schmidt (1989) pointed out, at least two cultures from each cultural dimension would be preferable to verify the findings of the above studies.

Another limitation is the reliance on cultural interpretations of individualism/collectivism to explain interpersonal communication. In some studies, for example, American respondents were simply categorized as individualistic and Japanese respondents as collectivistic on the basis of Hofstede’s (1980) scores for the two cultures, and no attempt was made to establish the extent to which respondents endorsed cultural group characteristics (Gudykunst, Nishida & Schmidt, 1989). Morisaki (2003) argued that participants’ tendency to display individualistic or collectivistic belief systems should have been taken into consideration since some communication behaviours, such as communication style are closely linked.

Overall, it seems that no cross-cultural studies based on social penetration theory have focused on the developmental aspects of relationships. Since past research has focused specifically on perceived intimacy and relationship terms, the developmental processes of social penetration theory have not been examined cross-culturally. Testing the propositions of social penetration theory in a cross-cultural context is necessary to validate its universality.

Intercultural Communication Research

Cross-cultural studies mentioned in the previous section have been conducted with the implicit assumption that cultural dimensions influence relational development. However, and as briefly alluded to before, when people from different cultural backgrounds meet,
they do not always follow the dominant cultural norms in their cultural groups, because of individual and contextual differences. For example, the strategies a Japanese person uses when they communicate with another Japanese person might be different from the ones they use when they communicate with a person from another culture. If so, how are ways of developing intercultural relationships different to developing intracultural relationships?

Gudykunst and his colleagues conducted numerous studies (Gudykunst 1985c; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984; Gudykunst & Lim 1986; Gudykunst, Chua, & Gray, 1987) to examine if intercultural communication differs from intracultural communication in terms of relational development. Gudykunst and Lim (1983) claimed that both interpersonal and intergroup (intercultural) factors were salient in every encounter, and that intergroup salience affected interpersonal processes (and vice versa).

Although a number of factors appear to impact both interpersonal and intercultural relationships, some factors seem more crucial in intercultural relationships. One of them is anxiety. Anxiety refers to the feelings of being uneasy, tense, worried, and apprehensive about what might happen (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Anxiety was found to be higher in intergroup encounters than in interpersonal encounters (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996). Several researchers (Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 1985, 1992; Wilder & Shapiro, 1989) claimed that high intergroup anxiety could impede both contact and its positive effects. Taking intergroup anxiety into consideration, Gudykunst (1988) extended his initial uncertainty reduction theory, to an anxiety and uncertainty management (AUM) theory by including anxiety as another factor influencing effective communication. In this theory, he discussed how managing both anxiety and uncertainty
leads to effective interpersonal and intergroup communication.

Several assumptions in AUM theory (Gudykunst, 1995) are concerned with levels of anxiety and uncertainty. When anxiety is too high, for example, the way individuals process information becomes simplistic, and therefore, they cannot communicate effectively. When uncertainty is too high, individuals no longer have confidence in their predictions and explanations of the behaviour of others. In contrast, when anxiety is too low, individuals may not be motivated to communicate, and think the behaviour of others is highly predictable. If either anxiety or uncertainty is too high, individuals may avoid encountering others, or try to end conversations as soon as possible. Communicating effectively, therefore, requires that levels of anxiety and uncertainty be neither too high nor too low.

AUM theory was first examined within culture. Some studies (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Hubbert, Gudykunst, & Guerrero, 1999) found significant relationships between anxiety, uncertainty, and effectiveness of communication in intergroup relationships in the United States. These studies also suggested that anxiety and uncertainty are related negatively to perceived effectiveness of communication in interpersonal and intergroup relationships in the United States.

Studies Based on Intercultural Communication Theory

To test the generalizability of the theory, Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) investigated anxiety and uncertainty in two separate studies. The design of these studies included two types of relationships (strangers and close friends) and two cultures (American and
Japanese). They found that anxiety and uncertainty were positively associated across relationships and cultures. Both studies also revealed that anxiety and uncertainty negatively predicted perceived effectiveness of communication across relationships and cultures. Interestingly, there was a greater influence of anxiety over uncertainty in predicting perceived effectiveness in the Japanese context. Gudykunst and Nishida interpreted this finding in terms of the cultural characteristics of Japanese society, and argued that people experience high levels of anxiety interacting with others in a high uncertainty avoidance culture such as Japan.

Duronto, Nishida, and Nakayama (2005) recently investigated interpersonal (Japanese-Japanese) and intercultural (Japanese-international students) relationships in Japan. In their study, they examined the association of anxiety and uncertainty with avoidance of encounters, instead of effective communication. Their results indicated that anxiety and uncertainty predict avoidance of both interpersonal and intercultural encounters. They also found that uncertainty was the only one of three variables (anxiety, uncertainty, and avoidance of encounters) that was significantly higher during intercultural communication, compared to encounters with other people from the same culture. This may indicate, according to Duronto et al., that when the Japanese meet others for the first time, both anxiety and communication avoidance is generated, whether the interactants are Japanese or not, but uncertainty is higher only when meeting others from a different culture.
Three other unique factors that possibly influence intercultural relationships were identified by Gudykunst (1985a). These are second language competence, cultural differences, and previous experience in the other culture, all of which are relevant to this research. Several studies (Gudykunst, 1985a, 1995; Gudykunst, Nishida, & Chua, 1986) have suggested that second language competence reduces intercultural uncertainty and anxiety. The second factor, cultural differences, was found to influence only initial intercultural interactions when interrogation and self-disclosure frequently took place. Other researchers (Gudykunst, 1985c; Rose, 1981) claimed that cultural differences are not a salient factor influencing communication after the initial interaction. The importance of previous experience is a complex issue. As research on the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1976; Miller & Brewer, 1984; Pettigrew, 1986) suggests, previous experience with the culture of the other is expected to reduce uncertainty only when the contact occurred under favorable conditions (e.g., equal status, intimate, co-operative). On the other hand, no prior experience with the out-group might raise anxiety and both intercultural contact and its positive effects may be inhibited (Pettigrew, 1998).

Other intercultural studies have focused on the relationship between stages and strategies. They revealed that intergroup communication tends to be more difficult in the beginning stage. Simard (1981), for example, noted that people tended to feel more puzzled about how to initiate conversation, and what to talk about when communicating with strangers from a different culture, than when communicating with strangers from similar cultures. Assuming that initial intercultural interactions are more problematic,
Gudykunst (1983a) compared intercultural and intracultural interactions of North American students in the initial stage of relational development. He found that people make more assumptions about strangers, prefer to talk less, ask more questions about strangers’ background, and have less attributional confidence about predicting strangers’ behaviour in intercultural encounters, than intracultural encounters. Similarly, in a study of Japanese and North American students, Gudykunst and Nishida (1984) found that self-disclosure, interrogation, and nonverbal affiliative expressiveness were used more frequently in initial intercultural encounters than in initial intracultural encounters.

The desire to reduce uncertainty does not stop with initial encounters. Gudykunst (1985c) found not only cultural similarity (intracultural verses intercultural relationships) but also type of relationship (acquaintance verses friend) has an impact on uncertainty reduction. With respect to self-disclosure, for example, people disclose more to others with different a cultural background while they are acquaintances, but disclose more to others with the same cultural background when they become friends.

Even though there appears to be different strategies used in the initial stage, between intercultural and intracultural contexts, the differences becomes less significant as relationships develop. Gudykunst, Chua, and Gray (1987) suggested that cultural dissimilarities have less effect on uncertainty reduction as relationships become more intimate. Altman and Taylor (1973)’s earlier work is consistent with this suggestion. They argued that cultural stereotypes could be broken down at the later stage of relational development, and that culture should no longer be a major factor influencing interaction. Interestingly, Gudykunst, Gao, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey, and Nishida
(1991)’s study of opposite-sex relationships between North Americans and Japanese people revealed that the more individuals interacted with members of different groups, the more they perceived members to be less typical of those groups.

Other research also suggests that the significance of cultural dissimilarities may be dependent on relational development stages. Sudweeks, et al. (1990) conducted a qualitative study on female intercultural relationships between Japanese and North Americans. They found that cultural dissimilarities prevented women from developing intimacy in low-intimacy relationships only, and cultural dissimilarities were sometimes perceived as positive factors in developing intimacy. In the same study, Sudweeks et al. also found that factors such as communication competence, similarity, involvement, and turning points were important in maintaining intercultural relationships. They further revealed that language/cultural knowledge and accommodation were mentioned more frequently in intercultural relationships than intracultural relationships.

Only intercultural and interpersonal relationships in intracultural studies appear to influence relational development. However, culture may also influence intercultural relational development. Gudykunst and his colleagues (Gudykunst, 1983, 1985b, 1985c; Gudykunst and Nishida, 1984; Gudykunst, Chua and Gray, 1987), conducted numerous studies assuming that culture (e.g., Japanese, American, cultural collectivism and individualism, self-construals, individual values) has an influence on intercultural communication.
Critique of Intercultural Communication Research

Most of the empirical studies on intercultural relational development have been conducted from an etic perspective, where the theoretical framework is determined by the researcher. However, as several researchers (Hall, 1986; Kudo, 2000; Triandis, 1972) have discussed, using an etic approach in undeveloped and unexplored fields of cross-cultural relational development might not be sufficient. In order to understand the lived experience of individuals, it is critical to investigate the phenomenon from an insider’s perspective, and therefore an emic approach is preferable.

Given the phenomenon of intercultural relationship development is so complex, it is also important to investigate it across multiple specific contexts. Intercultural relationships may be influenced by the type of relationship (romantic or friendship, acquaintance or close friends), or the culture interactants belong to (including what friendship means in that cultural context), or by the situation where the relationship occurs (dorm or classroom), and relationship strategies and processes might vary according to a specific context. Therefore, and as stressed by Ting-Toomey (1989), considering the impact of context is expected to bring new insights into our understanding of intercultural relationships.

Interpretive Studies of Intercultural Friendship Development

Since the early 1990s, a number of researchers have conducted interpretative studies to investigate intercultural friendship formation. Sudweeks et al. (1990) examined themes
in intercultural relationships and how these themes related to intercultural relational development. Through interviewing Japanese-North American, female-female dyads of low-, moderate-, and high-intimacy, the following themes emerged across intimacy levels of the relationships. Communication competence (language/cultural knowledge, empathy, and Japanese students’ accommodation to North American communication styles), similar background/lifestyle, and attitudes/values, all seem to become more prominent in high-intimacy dyads.

Interestingly, lack of cultural similarity was reported as a problem in low-intimacy dyads, but was a positive factor in high-intimacy dyads. The frequency of interactions (involvement), intimacy, and shared networks seemed to increase in higher-intimacy dyads. Turning point events, such as neglecting to visit a friend deliberately to test the state of a relationship, seemed to be more popular in lower-intimacy dyads, and reciprocal attempts to develop the relationship were mentioned more in high-intimacy dyads. Finally, episodes that increased understanding of the partner through self-disclosure or asking questions promoted intimacy only in high-intimacy dyads.

Gudykunst et al. (1991) expanded on the work of Sudweeks et al., (1990) by examining cross-gender relationships (romantic, friend, acquaintance) between Japanese and North Americans. Three themes were found to be the same as in the previous study on same sex friendships: communication competence, similarity, and involvement. The language/cultural knowledge theme of communication competence was found to be the focus of the conversation only in the initial stages of cross-gender relationships. In particular, North Americans’ knowledge and interest in Japanese culture appeared to be salient in romantic relationships and friendships. Attitude/interest similarity was found
to be more important in romantic relationships, and less important in friendships. This finding is consistent with both cross-cultural (Sudweeks et al., 1990) and intracultural studies (Gudykunst, 1985b), and supports the significance of common interests and attitudes in the development of intimate relationships.

Furthermore, the amount of time partners spent together was found to be a critical factor in their relationship development (Sudweeks et al.), a finding similar to several intracultural studies (Hays, 1988; Rose & Serafica, 1986). Finally, self-disclosing personal information and spending time alone with partners appeared to promote the development of intimate interpersonal relationships.

Unlike previous interpretative studies which investigated strategies used by a whole range of relationships, from acquaintances to close friends, Gareis (1995) and Kudo and Simkin’s (2003)’s work focused only on intercultural friendship development between international and host students. Gareis, for example, identified 12 key factors for friendship formation among American and international students (German, Indian, and Taiwanese) in the United States. In a more recent study she reduced these to six factors: cultural differences, personality, similarity between friends, adjustment stage of the sojourner, communicative competence, and proximity (Gareis, 2000).

In order to examine how these factors apply to other cultural contexts, Kudo and Simkin (2003) conducted a similar study on friendship formation among Japanese and local students at an Australian university. Although all of Gareis’ (2000) six processes were observed in the development of friendships among Japanese and Australian students, Kudo and Simkins conceptualized the development of friendship processes in a more precise and functional way. They found that cultural differences created obstacles in the
development of relationships for Japanese students, just as they did for German students in the United States. Nevertheless, according to Kudo and Simkin, the receptivity of local students was important to overcoming this obstacle. In other words, host nationals’ knowledge and interest in sojourners’ culture facilitated cross-cultural relational development. This finding is consistent with Gudykunst et al. (1991)’s work.

Regarding personality, Kudo and Simkin (2003) found that having compatible personalities was more important than having an outgoing personality as suggested by Gareis (2000). Similarity was also found to be a salient factor in Kudo and Simkin’s study. Individual similarity, in particular, was found to be more important than cultural similarity for intercultural friendship formation since close friends tended to view each other as unique individuals, rather than as representatives of certain cultural groups (Gareis, 1995, Gudykunst, 1985c; Gudykunst et al., 1987). Similar to Gareis’ study (2000), Kudo and Simkin’s study revealed that adjustment to the host society and English language competence provided opportunities to develop friendships. Kudo and Simkin combined these two factors into one factor, self-disclosure, and claimed that depth and width of self-disclosure reflected degrees of intimacy in friendships.

Finally, proximity was found to be another critical element of intercultural friendship development. In addition to shared accommodation and classrooms, or participation in the community, and other activities (Gareis, 2000), shared networks were found to influence the formation of friendships with compatriots, and other international students for Japanese students. However, they did not meet Australian students through shared networks since their international friends did not have a large number of local friends.

Overall, the major findings of the intercultural studies mentioned above show that
intercultural relational development is expected to be influenced by a number of factors: communication competence (language/cultural knowledge, empathy, international students’ accommodation to local cultural norms), similarity (individual and cultural similarity), proximity (amount of interactions, shared networks), and self-disclosure. In comparison with intracultural studies, themes such as language/cultural knowledge, accommodation, and cultural similarity were also found to be more prominent in intercultural relationships (Sudweeks et al., 1990).

While all the studies discussed have contributed substantially to the investigation of intercultural friendships, there are some limitations in their research design. One of the most important is time. As some studies on intercultural friendship (Gudykunst et al, 1991; Sudweeks et al., 1990) suggest, types of strategies people use vary depending on the stage of their relationship. In the studies with international students that have been discussed, the process of friendship formation was not taken into consideration. Participants’ reflections and personal accounts may therefore refer to vastly different stages of intercultural relationships. As none of the studies were longitudinal in their design, these studies may have revealed facilitating and inhibiting factors experienced either at the initial developmental stage, or at any stage of relational development.

Another limitation of these studies, with the exception of work completed by Gudykunst et al., (1991) and Sudweeks et al. (1988), is not conceptualizing and operationalizing intercultural friendship development as a reciprocal process. Typically, only international students were interviewed, and therefore results reflect only one side of the story. In order to establish the complete picture of intercultural relational development, it is essential to include the experiences of both host national and international students.
The work of Volet and colleagues (Volet & Ang, 1998; Volet & Karabenick, 2006) has highlighted the significance of understanding how each group perceives the other, in order to interpret students’ willingness to interact, to mix across cultural groups, to seek help from each other, and ultimately develop intercultural friendships.

As discussed by Ting-Toomey (1989) both intercultural and intracultural relationship development is a process of negotiation and redefinition. This means that interactants from different cultures may need to negotiate and redefine different conceptualizations and expectations about how a relationship develops, and practise appropriate behaviours at each relational stage. The mechanism for intercultural relational development, is therefore expected to rely heavily on reciprocity. In an international education context, both hosts and sojourners are involved in friendship development, each influencing the other in reciprocal ways. This research is aimed at investigating this process.

CONCLUSION

The three bodies of literature reviewed above all contributed to the conceptualization of this research. As mentioned in the review of stage theories, the vague definition of each stage has been criticized by several researchers (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Bochner, 1984). However, stages can be perceived in relational development in spite of the difficulty in describing how long each stage lasts, or if stages always occur in the same order. Baxter (1988), for example, found it difficult to discuss relationship strategies without employing the concept of phases even though she heavily criticized the linear stage models. As Bochner pointed out, the concept of stages may be appropriate for
descriptive use, as was the case in the first phase of this research.

Uncertainty reduction theory was examined extensively because of the focus on strategies used in cross-cultural contexts. However, uncertainty reduction theory conceptualizes interpersonal relational development as a unidirectional process, and therefore is unable to capture the dynamic and reciprocal nature of interpersonal relational development. More recently, relational dialectic theories have investigated interpersonal relational development within a dialectic perspective. This perspective stresses that development is a dynamic process, that all relationship experiences reflect dialectic tensions, and that these tensions produce change in relationships.

Jointly, these theories are useful in providing a holistic picture of the complex, dynamic, interactive, and reciprocal nature of relational development. More specifically, social penetration theory and Knapp’s model of interpersonal development (1978) provided a framework to describe the relational development stages that students go through over a period of time. Knapp’s model of interpersonal development and uncertainty reduction theory (1975) were useful in enabling the researcher to analyze interpersonal development strategies. Uncertainty reduction theory provided theoretical and empirical support for the identification of interpersonal development strategies used by students. In turn, relational dialectic theory provided an interpretive angle to explain the tensions experienced by the two groups of students, and to understand their cultural learning.

Finally, cross-cultural communication theory provided a broad sociocultural framework to explain cross-cultural differences in interpersonal development strategies, and to discuss salient themes emerging from students’ accounts of their experience and critical incidents.
Research on dimensions of cultural variability were also considered because culture is assumed to be a crucial element in exploring intercultural relational development. Strategies for developing friendships might be influenced by contrasting cultural values such as collectivism and individualism, as suggested in many cross-cultural studies. Not only cultural individualism/collectivism, but also self-construals such as the independent self and the interdependent self, and other individual values identified by Gudykunst et al. (1996) as factors which influence communication styles across cultures.

Finally, interpretive studies of intercultural friendship formation involving international students were examined because of their direct relevance to this research. There appears to have been only a limited number of empirical studies (Gareis, 2000; Kudo & Simkin, 2003) exploring relational development across cultures, and most concentrated on the identification of facilitating and inhibiting factors. The limitations of that work include a reliance on data collection at a single point in time (thus making it impossible to trace development) and the focus on international students only (thus not acknowledging the reciprocal nature of relational development).

In order to address these gaps, this study adopted a longitudinal design, making it possible to investigate cross-cultural differences in strategies over time. Two cultural groups (local Japanese students and international Australian students) were included. Furthermore, as the study was carried out in the context of student housing where the two groups of students shared accommodation and general living facilities, there was an expectation of rich data, which could be interpreted in context. The notion of context was also stretched in the present research, to include multiple contexts, each expected to provide opportunities but also limitations for the development of intercultural relational
development. Therefore, and most importantly, this study provided an opportunity to explore multiple dynamics between these two groups of students, across multiple contexts and over time.

Research Questions

Four questions guided the empirical part of this research.

1. What strategies for intercultural relational development between Australian and Japanese students emerge at different stages of development?

2. What factors are perceived as facilitating or inhibiting that development?

3. What social challenges emerge in the process over a period of time, and how do these challenges relate to cultural values?

4. What is the significance of students' subjective interpretation of social challenges in a perspective of intercultural relational development?
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology used in this study. The first section discusses the selection of research methodology and interpretive approach. The second section describes the research method, including participants, research design and data collection, the interview process and ethical considerations. The third section explains how data was analysed. Methodological issues such as data collection, checking for researcher effect, triangulation, generalizability and reliability and peer debriefing and participant checks are considered.

SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology can be described as guided by a number of conceptual paradigms, including the interpretive approach, which influences how the researcher acts in and views the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba, 1978). According to Ary Cheser, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) qualitative research aims to understand human actions, customs, culture and institutions with in-depth and detailed inquiry to allow someone who has not experienced the situation to understand it. On the empirical level, qualitative research involves a situated activity consisting of interpretive and material practices with which researchers observe and comment on the world. Further, Denzin and Lincoln argue that qualitative researchers can use a variety of empirical materials or techniques, such as the case study, personal experiences, interviews,
artifacts, cultural texts, etc. From this perspective, qualitative researchers focus on the social construction of reality and how multiple versions of reality play out within participants' experiences, which appears pertinent for the research questions guiding the present study.

As the research questions of this study also focus on understanding human perceptions and actions over time, the interpretive approach appears particularly pertinent for studying intercultural relational development between Australian and Japanese students in the natural environment of a university setting. An interpretive approach, which aims to understand, rather than predict human behaviour (Martin, Nakayama & Thomas, 1999) is based on the assumption that social reality, such as culture, is constructed and emergent through the experience of the actors in the scene (Ting-Toomey, 1984). The interpretive approach employs the emic or insider’s perspective, to examine how participants construct meanings about particular subjects or problems. As discussed in Chapter 2, the notion of culture (i.e., defining culture as dynamic) is also consistent with the interpretive approach used in this study, for interpretive researchers share the assumption that culture influences communication. Moreover, culture is viewed as constructed and enacted through communication, and the relationship between culture and communication interpreted as reciprocal rather than causal.

Despite its usefulness for examining the perceptions of participants from multiple interpretations and lived experiences, there have been many challenges to qualitative research methodology, the most popular being that such disciplines involve work that is unscientific, exploratory or subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Peshkin, 1988). Since the researcher is considered to be the instrument of both data collection and data
interpretation in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002), it appears impossible to eliminate researcher bias completely. However, detachment is not the solution to this limitation for the researcher’s observations will always be coloured through a window of class, race, gender and ethnicity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). Patton further claimed that authenticity including “… reflexive consciousness about one’s perspective, appreciation for the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting constructions in the values that undergird them …” (p. 546) was crucial to increase validity. To raise reflexive consciousness, McCotter (2001), for instance, suggested the use of a reflective journal in which researchers explore how their assumptions have influenced the data. In doing so, qualitative researchers should be explicit about their own values, as well as, those of participants (Ary, et al., 2006; Berg, 2001; Kouritzin, 2002).

Regarding this natural limit to generalizability, Guba (1978), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that researchers should view each possible generalization as a working hypothesis only, which needs to be tested again and again in future encounters. Additional studies need to be conducted, particularly when discussing results in relation to a new context. Whilst the generalizability of a qualitative study may be increased when other researchers investigate the development of the same relationships in other contexts, the purpose of the present study is to promote a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of intercultural relation development in a single setting, as experienced by a group of Australian and Japanese university students.

In addition to the focus on a single research site, qualitative research methodology, because it is context sensitive, can be considered appropriate for exploring relational development from a multiple perspective. Ting-Toomey (1989) claimed that relational
development is critically influenced by relational contexts, such as family or friendship networks, and situational contexts, such as the psychological and the physical characteristics of the setting. Therefore, relational development needs to be investigated from multiple perspectives in order to be better understood. Additionally, the interpretive approach often involves the investigation of people in their natural environment. As such, the interpretive approach is suitable for this study because it is concerned about a contemporary phenomenon, which takes place in a natural setting and over which the researcher has no control. Several researchers (Creswell, 1998; Lee, Michell, & Sablynski, 1999) also suggested that research questions beginning with how or what, lend themselves to qualitative investigation. As the research questions of the present study focus on understanding human perceptions and actions over a period of time, qualitative methodology appeared particularly pertinent.

Another reason for choosing qualitative methodology was based on the assumption that the variables under investigation are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As discussed in the previous chapter, there are numerous factors that influence cross-cultural relational development, and an integrative and holistic understanding of the process of intercultural relational development is necessary. Therefore, qualitative methodology was more appropriate to uncover the complexity of relational development between international students and Japanese students at a Japanese university.

Additionally, within a qualitative research design, context is viewed as critical to understanding the social phenomenon. The context becomes the framework for investigation, and provides clues for interpreting the experience of the ‘actors in the
setting’ (Patton, 2002). As discussed in the previous section, cross-cultural relational development cannot be understood in isolation from its context, and to describe human experience adequately, in-depth data need to be collected. In this study, in-depth data were gathered through multiple interviews with participants from one setting, over a period of time.

Finally, qualitative research methodology is useful when describing a phenomenon from an emic perspective, and is based on the assumption that reality is created by the actors in the scene (Ting-Toomey, 1984). Researchers spend considerable time in the scene, examining the experiences, feelings and understandings of participants and in the process discover a great amount of information from an insider’s perspective. This is particularly useful when studying a previously little explored area. As discussed in the previous chapter, the fact that few studies have been published about intercultural relational development suggests that more researchers should consider using an emic approach.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Site

The research site was the International House of a private Japanese university of foreign language. The International House was built in August 2001 to accommodate international students attending the Japanese Language Institute, as well as, Japanese students. When the researcher started conducting this study, 40 international students and 11 Japanese students were living at the International House. The international
students cohort consisted of eleven Australians, eight Chinese, five Americans, five French, three British and eight students from other countries. The primary objective of the International House was to facilitate interactions between international students and Japanese students in a safe community environment. The university staff expected international students to improve their language skills and develop their cultural knowledge of the host country through interactions with Japanese students who also lived in the International House. In order to increase intercultural interactions between international students and Japanese students, the university provided facilities and events. One facility was the English Lounge, a room with comfortable sofas and tables, which made it possible for international and Japanese students to chat in English over lunch. The university also held official events both on campus and at the International House, such as barbeque, Halloween and Christmas parties.

The International House is located just outside of the university grounds next to the university tennis courts. Because the International House is only a short walk to all campus facilities, it is easy for Japanese students to visit residents while on campus. The campus is located in the suburbs of the nearest major city, Nagoya and students have to take a school bus and then transfer to the subway in order to travel downtown. The trip takes approximately forty minutes. Within walking distance from the International House, there are a few restaurants, one convenience store, and one grocery store, so students can purchase daily items without going to Nagoya.

The International House is a modern two story building surrounded by shrubs. Both international and Japanese students live in single furnished rooms in the building. There are also some shared spaces to facilitate intercultural interactions. For example, a group
of four students share one dining area and there are seven dining areas all together. Furthermore, all residents share a living area with a television and computers, a laundry, a conference room, and a small Japanese style room covered with TATAMI mats. There is also a courtyard in the middle of the building where residents can hold events such as barbecues.

Since the International House is a campus facility, there are dorm rules, some of which may influence intercultural interactions. For example, visitors are only allowed in the living area and courtyard, and must leave the International House by 9:00pm. Although the location of the International House potentially facilitated easy interaction between international students and Japanese students, restricted visiting hours made it difficult for residents to engage in social activities in Nagoya. Neither residents of the International House nor visitors are allowed to enter rooms inhabited by the opposite gender.

The International House has one full-time female caretaker who works and lives in this facility during the day from Monday through to Saturday. In the evenings, and on Sunday, a few part-time male employees substitute for the full-time caretaker. Caretakers sit at the entrance to the International House and engage in jobs such as receiving packages or calling residents when they have visitors.

Participants and Recruitment Process

Out of a total of 40 international students, Australian students were chosen as participants for this study, because they were the dominant English-speaking sub-group
of international students living in the International House. The dominance of the Australian students sub-group offered greater opportunities for interactions with host Japanese students. Especially since the host Japanese students were keen to practice their English language skills.

The participants of this study were undergraduate Australian exchange students and undergraduate Japanese students who lived at the International House. Since this study focuses on interactions between these two cohorts, both Australian and Japanese students were interviewed on four occasions during the period spanning September 2002 to June 2003. Exploring the reciprocity of both parties was considered essential to capturing the dynamics of social interactions in this particular setting.

The researcher recruited Australian participants at a welcoming party for new international students who started courses in the second semester of the academic year of 2002 in Japan. The party was held in the afternoon, following a half day orientation. Catered food and soft drinks were served in an open area, and faculty members and members of the school staff were also invited to join the celebration. The party commenced with welcoming speeches, and after the toast, guests started mingling and chatting with each other. In such an informal atmosphere, the researcher approached several Australian students and explained the purpose of the proposed research and the nature of anticipated participation. The students who agreed voluntarily to participate in the research gave their names and an email address. They were contacted later by the researcher and invited to make an appointment for the first interview. Only one Australian student failed to respond to email contact, and did not participate in the research.
The Japanese participants were recruited via an informal network. One Japanese resident, who was previously known to the researcher, was approached to assist with the recruitment process. He expressed interest in the study and was happy to introduce the researcher to other residents. After the purpose of the research and the nature of anticipated participation were explained, all Japanese residents happily agreed to participate on a voluntary basis.

**Australian Students**

In September 2002, the Australian participants started attending a one year Japanese language program run by the Japanese Language Institute. The Australian participants were enrolled as language students and were distinguished from regular students who pursued undergraduate degrees. All of the Australian participants were of Anglo-Saxon background and English native speakers. There was one other Australian student with a Chinese background, who was not included in this study; her profile did not appear to be homogeneous with the remainder of the Australian participants, as she was an exchange student in Australia and her English skills were limited. A summary of the Australian participants’ gender and age, and interviews completed is presented in Table 3.1. As this table indicates, Australian participants turned out to be overwhelmingly male. Since this was a field study, it was impossible to control for a gender balance. This characteristic of the Australian cohort needs to be considered when interpreting the findings.
Table 3.1

*Summary of Interview Data with Australian Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13/09</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16/09</td>
<td>28/11</td>
<td>18/02</td>
<td>17/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17/09</td>
<td>25/11</td>
<td>13/02</td>
<td>24/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18/09</td>
<td>28/11</td>
<td>27/02</td>
<td>11/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20/09</td>
<td>02/12</td>
<td>21/02</td>
<td>19/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20/09</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>24/02</td>
<td>01/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22/09</td>
<td>03/12</td>
<td>19/02</td>
<td>17/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24/09</td>
<td>03/12</td>
<td>18/02</td>
<td>10/06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Japanese Students*

The Japanese participants represented a cohort of Japanese university students who were residents in the International House when the Australian cohort arrived in September 2002. There were two other Japanese residents in September, but they were not included in this study as they become too busy to participate after the first interview. The number of Japanese participants declined during the third and the fourth interviews, because some of these students went abroad to study or graduated in March 2003 at the end of the Japanese academic year. New Japanese residents replaced them. However, due to the focus on interaction over time, the new Japanese residents were not invited to participate in this study. A summary of the Japanese participants’ gender and age, and interviews completed is presented in Table 3.2. While Australian participants were
overwhelmingly male, Japanese participants were overwhelmingly female. The dominance of female participants in the Japanese cohort, combined with the dominance of male participants in the Australian cohort was expected to impact on the findings of this study, and has to be taken into account in interpreting and generalizing from the results.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satoshi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>17/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asako</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>27/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>08/10</td>
<td>26/12</td>
<td>24/02</td>
<td>01/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanako</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>07/10</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>25/02</td>
<td>15/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masako</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>04/10</td>
<td>20/12</td>
<td>08/02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyoko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>03/10</td>
<td>08/12</td>
<td>21/02</td>
<td>12/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natsuko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>03/10</td>
<td>19/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayoko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>02/10</td>
<td>17/12</td>
<td>22/02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masahiro</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>01/10</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td>19/02</td>
<td>19/06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Japanese participants were volunteer residents who had applied to stay at the International House. They were first asked to write an essay explaining why they wanted to live in the International House, and later office staff communicated the expectations of the International Office during interviews. Based on an essay, an interview and even class grades, potential residents were screened twice a year, and then
only a small percentage of applicants were accepted as residents. The explicit purpose of having Japanese students in the International House is to facilitate intercultural interactions. However, from the students’ point of view, the possibility of learning about another culture and language, as well as, obtaining inexpensive rent were the main reasons for applying.

Japanese residents have a role to play in the International House, and are not simply residents like the international students. The poster for recruiting new Japanese residents describes their role as assisting international students to learn about Japanese culture and language, facilitating international students’ adjustment to their new life, creating a comfortable living environment for all, and helping the International Office. Whenever office staff organized events such as parties or field trips, the Japanese residents were required to assist to ensure that things ran smoothly.

In addition to a weekly formal meeting with international students, caretakers, and staff from the International Office, Japanese residents were expected to attend an informal meeting involving only Japanese residents. At this informal meeting, which usually took place at the International House, Japanese residents and office staff discussed how to organize social events or how to assist international students who were experiencing adaptation problems.

Research Design and Data Collection

A longitudinal design was crucial to exploring the development of intercultural interactions of participants. Four semi-structured interviews, using stimulus materials
and eliciting critical incidents, were conducted with each participant at intervals of two to three months. Following each participant over eight months in a limited setting allowed the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the field of relational development (Kim, 1988; Takai, 1994; Searle & Ward, 1990).

Data was collected through a variety of sources. Four, one-to-two hour in depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with Australian and Japanese students (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2), at intervals of two to three months, between the arrival and departure of the international participants in this study. Eight Australian students were interviewed in the first and second rounds, but only seven in the third and fourth rounds (one student relocated to his own apartment from the International House). Nine Japanese students were interviewed in the first and second rounds, but only six in the third round (two students traveled to Australia as exchange students for one year, and the other one moved out of the International House), and four in the fourth round (two students graduated in March). The number of participants involved in each interview is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
<th>Interview 4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviewing was chosen as a main method of data collection to examine students' intercultural relational development because it is considered to be the most effective approach to understanding participants’ experiences. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) argued that a researcher could capture the unseen by listening to participants’ accounts of their thinking or feelings about a topic. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding a social phenomenon in its fullest possible complexity. Marshall and Rossman (1999) also argued that interviewing increases depth and authenticity of participant disclosure. By allowing participants to ask questions for clarification, interviewing promotes more flexible and open communication between the researcher and participants in comparison to using questionnaires.

A technique involving a combination of semi-structured questions and spontaneous accounts was employed. One of the advantages of semi-structured interviews, with a pre-determined structure and order to the questions, was to obtain comparable data across participants. Even though an interview guide was employed in this study, participants were encouraged to express their feelings and ideas spontaneously. The combination of the two different approaches offered the interviewer freedom to pursue a variety of topics, and participants a chance to mould the content of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Data collection was cumulative, as subsequent interviews built on information collected from the first interview. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggested that the interviewer conduct more exploratory interviews at the beginning of the project, and later conduct
more structured interviews to focus on particular topics that emerged during preliminary interviews. In this study, interview questions for the second, third and fourth rounds were based on themes that emerged in previous interviews. To discover themes to be further investigated, a preliminary analysis of the interview data was conducted immediately following transcription. Questions for the following interview were then revised, based on the themes generated from the analysis. In order to emphasize the developmental features of qualitative methods, Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggested that questions may emerge in the course of interviewing and may be added to or replace pre-determined questions. In this study, new questions were added to the list, and others created, based on emerging themes across the course of interviewing.

Stimulus Materials

Patton (2002) suggested that qualitative inquiry need not be restricted to interview protocols, and there is freedom to use stimuli to elicit responses. In this study, responses were elicited verbally, and also by providing participants with stimulus materials. The stimulus materials used in this study were lists and tables summarizing participants’ responses from previous interviews. The stimulus materials were shown to participants to elicit their reactions to the last three rounds of interviews. One advantage of using stimulus materials was that it allowed participants to prepare their responses to further questions. Having a printed summary of participants’ responses as a stimulus material also compensated for the gap in time between interviews, and assisted participants’ recollections of what had been previously discussed. Another advantage is generating comparable data across participants, as the same printed text was shown to all
participants. Obtaining comparable data allowed the researcher to complete systematic data analysis at a later point in time.

Critical Incidents

The critical incident approach was another method used to gather data in this study. Pedersen (1995) defines a critical incident as an “… important short description of an event that took place within a five- or ten-minute period of time …”. The critical incident technique was developed by Flanagan (1954) for task analysis in developing job descriptions. The technique involves collecting critical incidents, along with anecdotes describing effective and ineffective behaviours at a particular site or workplace. These incidents are then sorted into categories, and used as a test, or as the basis for training programs for aircraft pilots, dentists, and teachers.

Critical incidents are now more popular in cross-cultural training to prepare individuals to live and work in other countries. In the cross-cultural training context, critical incidents are based on real life experiences involving a dilemma where there is no easy solution. Through analyzing the critical incidents, trainees put themselves in the position of the character in the story, and develop strategies for dealing with problems, without having to leave their home country.

Critical incidents have been used not only in cross-cultural training, but also in cross-cultural empirical studies. Pedersen (1995), for example, collected 300 critical incidents from participants of an international shipboard educational program and analyzed them to assess development. Volet and Tan-Quigley (1999) selected
“awkward” cross-cultural incidents between South East Asian students and Australian staff at a university in Australia, and examined how differently Asian students and Australian staff interpreted incidents based on their cultural and personal backgrounds.


The recent popularity of the critical incident as an assessment tool perhaps reflects an acknowledgement that context has been neglected in past studies on interpersonal communication. As several researchers (Altman, 1990; Rawlins, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1989) have indicated, context is crucial in interpersonal relations. Moriizumi and Takai (2006) who conducted a study about interpersonal communication strategies argued that the Japanese communication strategies are highly context-dependent. Therefore, controlling the context by providing some kind of scenario might be useful in examining Japanese interpersonal communication strategies in particular (Moriizumi, 2005).

In this study, critical incidents were collected during interviews. In the first three interviews, participants were encouraged to volunteer critical incidents they had experienced. As Kain (2003) emphasized, the critical incident approach is useful particularly in the early stages of research, because it can help identify issues that may
deserve further investigation. The responses to critical incidents may generate exploratory information or even a theory.

In the last interview, two critical incidents were used as stimulus material for participants’ reflections. The researcher created these stories based on critical incidents generated by participants in previous interviews. The use of such incidents in research is considered to be ideal since the stories are based on actual experiences of participants (Wight, 1995).

The critical incident technique was employed in this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, due to the assumption of reciprocity concerning intercultural interactions, the critical incident approach was considered to be the most appropriate. The critical incident approach essentially involves asking a number of participants to identify events or experiences that were critical for some reason. Accessing multiple perspectives of many participants allows a researcher to explore reciprocity in their interpreting of intercultural incidents.

Secondly, it allowed the researcher to view an incident from a particular participant’s perspective. Respondents were invited to tell a story and explain why it was significant for a given context. This process minimizes the subjective input of the researcher.

Another advantage of this approach is that it encouraged participants to be more involved and talk at length, as they recounted memorable incidents. For example, some of the critical incidents used as stimulus materials in the last interview, seemed so real to participants, that they spontaneously substituted names of their friends, for the names of characters in the story. Critical incidents also allowed participants to volunteer
information, and pursue and elaborate on issues that were important to them. Since the critical incident technique elicits rich data it is an appropriate approach to explain complex phenomenon such as cross-cultural relational development.

The Interview Process

Most of the interviews were conducted either in the researcher’s office or in a small conference room at the International House. Closed locations were chosen for the purpose of recording interviews under quiet and private conditions. In order to create a relaxing atmosphere, the researcher offered refreshments and engaged in informal talk with participants before the interviews formally started. Questions about trips or common friends between the researcher and participants usually helped to establish rapport and allow the participants to feel at ease. Sometimes interesting information emerged from the initial informal talk, but in line with Bogdan and Biklen (1982)’s recommendations, the researcher always asked for permission before recording the conversation.

The interviews (except for the initial one) usually started with the researcher thanking participants and commenting on a few interesting things disclosed in the previous interview. Showing interest in what participants disclosed is an effective way to promote rapport because it is very rewarding to participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Reviewing what participants had said in the past also helped them remember the previous interview and prepare for the new interview questions. General questions about intercultural interactions between Australian students and Japanese students
followed. Asking participants to comment on their experiences since the previous interview helped fill the time gap between each interview. These types of open ended questions sometimes encouraged participants to answer some of the forthcoming questions. In such cases, the natural flow of the interview was always respected.

During interviews, probes were often used to increase the richness and depth of responses (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). When participants showed difficulty in responding to a certain question, the researcher paused in silence and waited for a reply, as silence can be one of the most effective probes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Another form of probe used involved asking further questions such as, “Could you please elaborate on that?” and “What do you mean by that?” Care was taken not to limit the range of possibilities offered by participants by asking leading questions.

Recording Data

Interview data can be recorded in several ways. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested using a tape-recorder, which has many advantages, such as assuring completeness and providing the opportunity for later review, over note-taking by hand. Taking these advantages into consideration, the interviews were recorded electronically.

For recording equipment, a digital recorder with the ability to transfer audio files to a computer was used in this study. The digital recorder was chosen instead of a tape-recorder since it has several advantages. First of all, the quality of sound is much better than a tape-recorder. The use of a microphone further increased the sound quality. Since the interviews were transcribed professionally, the quality of sound was crucial.
for accurate recording of data.

Another advantage was the large amount of data the digital recorder could store. Because the digital recorder could hold up to 160 minutes of audio data, unlike a tape-recorder, the interview was not interrupted to flip the side of the tape. The technology helped to create a more natural atmosphere, and participants seemed to readily forget the interview was being recorded.

Finally, storing data is advantageous with the digital recorder. Storing data on tapes can be risky since tapes can become tangled or broken if they are listened to repeatedly. While storing tapes takes up a good deal of space, the data recorded in the digital recorder can be easily transferred onto a personal computer. Once the data are stored in a computer, they can be reviewed as often as necessary without distortion. It does not take time to make backup copies, or transfer onto another digital source such as CD-Rom. In this study, the data recorded by the digital recorder was first transferred onto a computer. Then it was recorded on CD-Rom or tapes and sent to professional transcribers.

Language Used During Interviews

The researcher, who speaks both Japanese and English fluently, conducted all the interviews in the first language of the participants. The Australian participants were interviewed in English and the Japanese participants were interviewed in Japanese. Using native languages of the participants minimizes misunderstandings and misinterpretations that may arise due to participants’ difficulty in expressing themselves
in a second language (Kudo, 2000).

Nonetheless, there was one operational disadvantage of conducting interviews in the first language of the participants. Since Japanese students were interviewed in Japanese, it was necessary to translate the transcriptions into English, the language this study is written in. Whenever translation is involved, the original language is distorted through this process (Matsumoto, 1996). Even though professional translators translated the interviews with Japanese students into English, it is important to remember that perfect translations are not possible. To minimize the distortion of the language, the researcher carefully verified all of the translations by comparing the English versions of the texts with the Japanese transcriptions.

**Interview Questions**

The answers elicited by interview questions must account for the phenomenon of inquiry (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Questions about goals, expectations and personal development were created to investigate students’ feelings about their stay, and how they changed over time, how their first expectations were met, and how intercultural interactions impacted their personal development. Questions centered about strategies to facilitate intercultural interactions and intercultural competence were created to explore the development of interaction strategies, and facilitating or inhibiting factors based on cultural differences between the Australian and Japanese students. Questions about contextual issues related to intercultural interactions were created to explore contextual factors, which facilitate or inhibit interactions between the Australian and Japanese
students. Spontaneous experiences and critical incidents were also elicited to explore the nature of intercultural interactions between the Australian and Japanese students, and how differences in communication styles potentially inhibited intercultural relational development.

*Initial Interview*

Conducted in October, within two weeks of the commencement of the academic year, the initial interview served to capture the profile of participants at the beginning of their sojourn. Participants were asked about their expectations, feelings and strategies for intercultural interaction, such as how they might start a conversation, and how they might find an appropriate topic to talk about, and an appropriate setting to engage a conversation with a host/international student.

Questions about strategies were repeated in the third interview, and participants’ answers in the initial interview were used as a baseline for comparison. Questions about settings for interactions were also included to explore the relationship between intercultural interactions and location. In addition to questions about personal development, participants were encouraged to talk about their early experiences of intercultural interactions between the Australian students and Japanese people in general. These questions focused on when, where, and how interactions happened, what activities people did together, and what was done to initiate or maintain a relationship.

As they were experiential, questions about initial interactions were asked at the beginning of the interview. Participants’ experiences could then be used as a starting
point for follow-up conceptual questions. Another experiential question elicited participants’ experiences of critical incidents. Since most participants were unfamiliar with this concept, it was elicited by asking a participant to recall a situation when communication with a Japanese (or Australian) student (s) was not very successful, or when they felt annoyed, angry, intimidated, embarrassed, uncomfortable or upset. At the end of the first interview, information about participants’ age, country of residence, overseas experiences, level of Japanese language proficiency was collected.

Second Interview

In November, two months following the first interview, the second interview took place. This interview started with a focus on contextual issues related to intercultural interactions, such as settings where interactions occurred, and activities in which interlocutors engaged. In line with the evolitional approach, lists of settings and activities were prepared based on students’ responses in initial interviews, and used as stimulus material for the second interview. These lists were used to investigate which activities or settings were most important to each participant.

In terms of expectations and personal development, participants were asked to reflect on their responses to these issues in the first interview. Facilitating and inhibiting factors were elicited again, as it soon became evident in the initial interview, participants were not quite ready to talk about that topic due to their lack of experience of intercultural interactions. Unlike the previous interview, contextual factors that facilitated or inhibited interaction, and what participants did to facilitate or inhibit interactions were
elicited separately. If interviewees mentioned only external factors and blamed others for inhibited interactions, they were asked questions such as, “What about yourself?”.

Since the first interview had been conducted only a week after students’ arrival, few critical incidents had been experienced. As in the first interview, critical incidents were elicited towards the end of the interview. In many cases, however, students spontaneously reported such incidents before the formal question was asked. If that was the case, previously disclosed stories were confirmed and interviewees were asked if they had experienced anything else. At the end of the second interview, participants were asked to reflect on their initial goals and feelings. In many cases, participants were reminded of their initial responses since they did not remember them.

Third Interview

The third interview took place in February after the Christmas break. It started with questions about how the interviewee spent their holiday, and what intercultural interactions happened during that time. This was important since this interview was conducted in the middle of the spring session when no classes were offered for Japanese students. The impact of having no Japanese students around for intercultural interactions was elicited. Similar to the first interview, students were asked about their knowledge of strategies, such as how to start a conversation, and were asked once again if they had learnt any other strategies based on their five month experience.

Based on data generated in the previous interviews, a list of possible interaction challenges was established. The interviewees were asked if each item was an issue for
them, and to expand on it if it was identified as an issue. Based on the second interviews, two other lists were created and presented as stimulus materials. These lists presented possible obstacles to intercultural interactions and issues related to the development of a good intercultural relationship. Interviewees were asked to comment on each item.

Finally, and similar to the first two interviews, students were invited to report and discuss critical incidents they had experienced. Unlike previous interviews, critical incidents that students observed were elicited in addition to critical incidents that they experienced. On this occasion, interviewees were asked not only about situations where their own cultural group (e.g., a group of international students) were offended or hurt, but also about incidents where the other cultural group (e.g., a group of Japanese students) were offended or hurt.

Fourth Interview

The last interview was conducted to address all the themes that emerged in the past three interviews. Based on the information collected in past interviews, two lists of facilitating and inhibiting factors in intercultural interactions were created and presented to interviewees. The interviewees first rated the extent to which they thought each of these factors facilitated or inhibited intercultural interactions on a five-point Likert scale. Then they were invited to comment on the first and second most important factors.

Instead of eliciting students’ spontaneous critical incidents, two critical incidents created by the researcher were used as stimulus material in this last interview. They were based on critical incidents that the researcher frequently heard in the past
interviews. After reading each of the two critical incidents written on a card, interviewees were asked to interpret characters’ behaviours in the story. Interviewees were also asked to rate the frequency, seriousness, and typicality of each incident on a five-point Likert scale.

A summary of data sources is presented in Table 3.4, and a summary of the issues raised in the interviews is provided in Appendix G.

Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured set of questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous critical incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulus materials (lists of places and activities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethical Considerations

Before the Research

All potential participants received a consent form explaining the purpose of the study, the questions to be asked, and the research process. Participants’ consent was informed: they were informed about the nature of the research and were given the freedom to
refuse participation or to withdraw from the project at any time, without disadvantage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The forms also included contact details of the researcher and her supervisor if participants had any questions or concerns either then or later. All participants signed a consent form indicating they understood the nature of the research and agreed to participate. Collection of data started only after each participant had signed their consent form.

*During the Research*

Every effort was made to protect participants’ confidentiality and anonymity (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). All interviews were conducted in a private venue such as the researcher’s office or the meeting room at the International House. During the interview, the door was kept closed to ensure complete privacy. Moreover, the researcher did not discuss participants’ disclosures with anyone, except her supervisors.

The management of participants’ emotional reactions during interviews was another important ethical consideration. For example, in the final interview, some participants mentioned some conflictual issues between Australian and Japanese students. Some of them were sometimes emotional when discussing these issues. In order to support participants, the researcher took great care in listening to feelings without evaluating behaviours.
After the Research

When reporting the findings, participants’ anonymity was protected by using fictitious names. These fictitious names were chosen after consideration of participants’ gender and cultural identities. For example, Japanese female students were given typical names for Japanese women. Fictitious names, however, do not necessarily protect privacy in a study with limited number of participants. Despite the use of pseudonyms, people familiar with the site might be able to discern the identity of any given respondent (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Punch, 2005). Because this study involved a small number of participants in one setting, every effort was made to protect the identity of individuals.

Safeguarding the collected data further ensured confidentiality. Recorded interviews, interview transcripts, and coded data were stored on the researcher’s computer in her locked office.

DATA ANALYSIS

Managing the Data

All interviews were conducted by the researcher, recorded by a digital recorder, and stored on the researcher’s computer. Two Australian professional transcribers transcribed the interviews with Australian students, and a Japanese professional transcriber transcribed the interviews with Japanese students. Although it might be considered ideal for the researcher to transcribe the data herself, there are many
advantages to using transcribers.

One advantage is time. When a beginner tries to transcribe data, it takes a great amount of time. This problem is amplified if the interviews are conducted in the researcher’s second language. Using professional transcribers ensured all interviews were transcribed prior to follow-up interviews. This enabled the researcher to edit or add to the questions for the next interview.

Another advantage of using professional transcribers is the accuracy of transcription. In the case of interviews with Australian students, it was difficult for the researcher to transcribe the data accurately because of participants’ Australian accents. As the two professional transcribers were familiar with Australian English, complete and accurate transcriptions were obtained. When the transcribers had difficulty identifying Japanese names or an Australian phrase, the researcher also listened to the recordings.

Two professional translators later translated the transcribed Japanese data into English. One of the disadvantages of using professional translators is their lack of familiarity with the research context. Even though the researcher gave comprehensive information about participants, the inquiry site and research questions, the translators sometimes made minor translation errors. Consequently, the researcher compared the translations with the original Japanese transcriptions carefully, and made the appropriate changes.

Organizing the Data

After the interviews were transcribed and the Japanese interviews translated into
English, the data were ready to be analyzed. According to Miles and Huberman (1994),
data analysis is comprised of the following three activities: data reduction, data display,
and data verification. These three activities occur simultaneously, and are part of an
interactive and cyclical process, that reflects the continuous nature of a qualitative
approach.

Miles and Huberman (1994) defined the first activity, data reduction as “… the process
of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data …” (p.10).
These authors also identified deductive or inductive coding as a way to reducing data.
According to Miles and Huberman starting with codes (deductive coding) or getting
gradually to codes (inductive coding) are both legitimate and useful paths. Both
deductive and inductive coding procedures were used in this study. Some of the data
were coded deductively by using concepts introduced in related literature or theories.
Others were coded inductively to identify themes generated from the responses of
participants.

To manage and analyze rich data, the researcher used a computer software program,
QSR N6, designed for categorization analysis. Initially all transcripts of interviews were
imported into the program and each interview coded deductively by using concepts
introduced in related literature or theories.

In order to compress enormous amounts of coded data the researcher used the index tree
function available on this program. A tree display assisted in the identification of
themes. Each theme was examined frequently and sometimes divided into subthemes
through a process of clustering. Since the program made it easy to change coding
through the tree display, coding was frequently revised until “all of the codes fit into a
structure, that they relate to or are distinct from others” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.65).

Data Representation

The second stage of analysis is data display. Information was organized into an accessible and compact form so that the researcher was in a position to either draw conclusions or take further action (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The index tree helped the researcher identify what she knew and do not know about a particular cognitive domain (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The coding software, QSR N6, assisted in mapping the researcher’s categorization of data using the index tree function. Each category was probed for subcategories, and each subcategory probed for further subsidiary categories, until no more new categories were created.

Matrices allowed the researcher to see how two or more major dimensions or variables interacted (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Flowcharts were crucial in this study as they were used to describe the process of relational development.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Data Collection over an Extended Period of Time

As several researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005; Spradley, 1979) have claimed, long-term engagement is an efficient way to increase the credibility of findings and interpretations. Lincoln and Guba discussed how prolonged engagement is
necessary to learn the culture of a particular site, and build trust between the researcher and participants. Sufficient time at the site allows the researcher to become very familiar with the context. In this study, the researcher tried to spend her free time with participants by attending events organized for the students at the International House and immersed herself in their culture. This helped her to understand and appreciate the inquiry site, and also allowed her to build rapport and trusting relationships with participants.

Prolonged data collection enabled the researcher to be involved in simultaneous data analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argued that the process of continual data analysis increases the internal validity of a study, as it rules out false association and premature theories. In this study, the data collection period extended over eight months. A total of 58 interviews, ranging from one to two hours, were conducted. Many more hours were spent with the participants in both formal and informal situations. The prolonged involvement helped the researcher develop and test alternative hypotheses during the course of research (Maxwell, 2005).

Long-term involvement and intensive interviews naturally provide rich data. This detailed and varied data increases credibility since it provides a full picture of what is going on. Verbatim transcripts of the interviews rather than notes were used in this research (Maxwell, 2005). This prevented the researcher from recording or analyzing data that only supported her expectations or speculations.
Checking for Researcher Effect

It is challenging for qualitative researchers to report on their observations of the real world objectively. Several researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Madison, 2005; Peshkin, 1988) claim that there are no objective observations, as any observation is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity.

When conducting interviews, the researcher has an impact on the data collected and this may become a threat to validity in qualitative research (Maxwell, 1998). In a cross-cultural study where the researcher and participants do not share the same culture, researcher effects have the potential to be even more significant. This might be due to the fact that participants see the researcher as a social intruder, and become reluctant to reveal themselves (Shah, 2004).

As discussed previously, intensive long-term involvement encourages a researcher to build trust and rapport with participants. The Australian students were first reluctant to talk extensively, but the more time the researcher spent with them, the more comfortable they became, and they disclosed their feelings more openly from the second interview onwards. The longitudinal design of this study helped the researcher to establish rapport with the Australian students.

Regardless of the techniques researchers use, it might not possible to eliminate researcher effects completely, especially in a cross-cultural situation. Therefore researchers are obliged to acknowledge researcher effects and to counter them as far as possible. However, Glesne and Peshkin (1992), and Shah (2004) claimed, the “outside” researcher may have the advantage of bringing a “fresh” perspective, and be in a
position to identify important differences between their own culture and the culture of the other.

Triangulation

The use of multiple methods or triangulation increases the validity of research by reducing the risk of subjectivity generated from a single research method, single researcher or single theoretical interpretation (Maxwell, 1998; Patton, 1990). Triangulation refers to gathering data from as many sources as possible, but it actually includes the combination of multiple methodologies, multiple empirical materials, multiple perspectives and multiple observers in a single study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Triangulation in any form adds breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to the phenomenon in question (Flick, 1998).

One type of triangulation is examining the data from the perspective of different stakeholder positions with different theories of actions (Denzin, 1978). This type of triangulation is relevant to this study because participants were interviewed about the same issue, and their perspectives were compared and valued equally. This was especially evident when descriptions of critical incidents were presented as stimulus in the last interview, and multiple interpretations were disclosed and collected. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim, multiple perspectives add depth to the inquiry.

Another form of triangulations used in the present study was investigator triangulation. Denzin (1978) discussed using several different researchers or evaluators to review the findings in order to reduce potential bias. Two researchers coded the first interview with
Mary separately. This interview was selected to verify whether the interpretations of the two researchers were in agreement, despite the cultural differences of the researchers (Australian and Japanese). An initial comparison of coding categories indicated they were in agreement. The researcher coded the other interviews on her own, although several interview transcripts, and the researcher’s coding was shared with her two supervisors continuously throughout the research process. Their feedback on the coding process was incorporated into this study, increasing the credibility of the findings.

**Generalizability and Reliability**

Qualitative research has often been criticized due to its lack of generalizability. Lincoln and Guba (1985), for example, claimed that qualitative researchers cannot establish generalizability since elicited knowledge is influenced by each participant’s life, context, and situation. However, Lincoln and Guba further suggested that qualitative researchers could accurately describe the contexts and procedures of the study to enable other researchers to apply them. Therefore in this study, rich description of the research context was provided so that subsequent researchers could conduct a similar study.

Some researchers insist that the concept of reliability is irrelevant to qualitative research, and suggest other descriptions that more accurately reflect the qualitative paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested the terms, dependability or consistency, achieved by verification. Several researchers (Lincoln & Guba; Patton, 2002) suggested that the qualitative researcher should provide a complete audit trail that indicates how data were generated and analyzed. This audit trail should include all notes, a
comprehensive researcher’s journal, and documents to be judged if the researcher’s interpretation is based on the data generated, rather than pre-existing assumptions or speculations.

In this study, the researcher kept an audit trail (digital recordings of interviews, transcriptions of interviews, notes on the process of data analysis, and a reflective journal), so that data was available for examination if required.

Peer Debriefing and Participant Checks

Soliciting feedback from others, so called peer debriefing, is seen as another technique of establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1998) since it provides opportunities for a researcher to recognize bias or hidden assumptions, and even to develop new methodology. Furthermore, regular meetings with two supervisors who knew a great deal about the subject matter also took place. Their feedback and input were particularly helpful in relation to creating interview questions and additional stimulus materials, as well as, throughout data analysis and write up. Attending and presenting at informal gatherings with other graduate students provided psychological support, as well as, valuable feedback. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, people who listen sympathetically to the feelings of isolation of the inquirer assist them to devise coping strategies. This process eventually contributes to the quality of naturalistic study. Feedback was obtained not only from supervisors or other graduate students, but also from other experienced researchers who shared the same research interests. Face to face interactions with other researchers at conferences and email exchanges provided further
feedback.

Verifying the accuracy and interpretations of data gathered, and conclusions drawn from that data with participants, is another crucial technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research. Having participants check categories, analysis and conclusions, as Lather (1986) suggested, is useful to minimize researcher effect. At the beginning of all interviews (with the exception of the initial interview) the interview transcripts were shared with participants for confirmation of accuracy. The researcher and participant also clarified any potential misunderstanding and/or queries to protect the interests and rights of both parties. This technique not only helped make the researcher’s interpretation more valid (McCotter, 2001), but it also provided opportunities for participants to add additional details that were not previously mentioned (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a justification for the research paradigm used in this study, namely an interpretive and qualitative approach. Details of the inquiry site and participants were provided. Data sources were described, including interview questions and critical incidents. The interview procedure was outlined and a number of ethical issues discussed. The management and organization of the data was explained. Finally, strategies used to increase the reliability and validity of the findings were discussed.
CHAPTER FOUR
STRATEGIES FOR INTERCULTURAL RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises three sections. Participants’ initial expectations about their stay at the International House are reported in the first section. The second section presents and discusses the general strategies used by participants at different stages of their relational development. The final section focuses on student’s development across these stages, and highlights facilitating factors that created movement from one stage to the next, as well as, inhibiting factors that may have made participants stay at the same level or even revert back to an earlier level in their relational development.

As described in the methodology chapter, the participants for this study were Australian and Japanese students. However, the term international students will be sometimes used when findings are presented in this chapter. Even though this is a popular term that has been used in many studies, some researchers have raised questions about its definition. For example, in the Japanese context, Arikawa (2006) pointed to difficulty in finding an inclusive term for her research. Previously she used to distinguish Japanese and international students based on the language they used, but found it more and more difficult to do that in the context of increasingly global societies. Since researchers have tended to use the term international students carelessly, it has become necessary to define the term as it is used in each study.
In this study, international students refer to Western students (French, German, and American) who established close relationships with the Japanese participants through using either their first language or Japanese as means of communication. Even though this study mainly focuses on the relational development between Japanese and Australian students, it was difficult at times to totally exclude other international students as some Japanese participants made reference during interviews to their relationships with international students more generally. This is not surprising as these students are fluent speakers of English and spend a large amount of time with the Australian students. Together, they tended to form a similar cultural group at the International House. It was therefore difficult for the Japanese students to separate their interactions with the Australian students from other Western students such as German and French students, which complicated the reporting process.

INITIAL EXPECTATIONS

Participants’ initial expectations about their stay at the International House are examined first since these are expected to influence choice of strategies. It is reasonable to expect that Japanese students who were interested in teaching Japanese language and culture would be more likely to develop a relationship through offering a helping hand. Alternatively, Australian students who were motivated to improve their Japanese language proficiency perhaps viewed interactions with Japanese students as valuable opportunities to develop their communication skills in Japanese. The initial expectations were elicited in the first interview.
At the beginning of the first interview, Australian and Japanese students were asked what they hoped to get out of their stay in Japan (for Australian students) or their stay at the International House (for Japanese students). If they provided only general answers, such as learning about another culture, prompts were used to encourage students to focus on their expectations about interpersonal interactions between Australian and Japanese students.

One expectation common to both Australian and Japanese students was to learn more about Japanese (or other) culture and Japanese (or other) people. Five out of eight Australians and six out of nine Japanese participants mentioned learning about culture as reasons for their stay. One of the Australian students, Mary, commented in the first interview (the number after the name in parentheses at the end of an excerpt indicates which interview it is from):

   I’m interested in learning about Japanese culture and the Japanese way of life and experiencing Japanese daily life for myself and to feel what it’s like and to compare the differences with Australia back home. (Mary 1)

Since Japanese students live in their own country, their responses focused more on differences in perspective or values instead of differences in culture in general. All the Japanese students were highly interested in foreign cultures, since their majors were either languages or global business. They said they felt privileged to have an opportunity to live with international students as a student at a university of foreign studies. Hiroko reported:

   I wanted to do something related to international communications since I entered this kind of university [a university of foreign studies], and I also wanted to talk to foreigners about many things.
Researcher: DO YOU THINK YOU COULD OBTAIN SOMETHING THROUGH COMMUNICATING WITH THEM?

*It’s not only getting an English lesson but also understanding their various ways of thinking and it’d be better if I could talk to them about many things.* (Hiroko 1)

Another expectation, mainly reported by Australian students, was to improve language skills. As expected, all the Australian students expressed a strong desire to become fluent in Japanese.

*So I thought, well, if I can come and study and learn a language, or learn as much of the language as I can in a year, it can only be good and beneficial.* (Tom 1)

Australians’ enthusiasm toward language learning appeared related to their program of study. Most of them had experience in learning Japanese as a major or minor in their home institution and they had come to Japan to study language at a Japanese institution. Therefore, they were very keen to improve their Japanese language skills.

Since most of the Japanese students were language majors, it was expected that they would be highly motivated to improve their second language skills. However, surprisingly only one Japanese student mentioned improving her English skills as an important outcome of intercultural interaction. Kyoko reported the development of her English skills as an additional reason for moving into the International House.

*Yes, plus I also wanted to improve my English and make international friends with the same age.* (Kyoko 1)

The reason why most of the Japanese students did not mention the improvement of their English, perhaps relates to their special role as host residents at the International House. When they were chosen as residents of the International House, they were asked to help international students adjust to their new environment by teaching them Japanese
language and culture. Even though they wanted to improve their English through communicating with international students, they could not express it openly, as it may have been perceived as contradicting their responsibility as a Japanese resident of the International House.

One overlapping expectation reported by members of both groups was making intercultural friends. One Australian and three Japanese students expressed their willingness to establish friendships with, respectively, Japanese or international students. Most of the senior Japanese students had experienced how difficult it was to make friends with international students just by going to the same school. So they had great expectations in having numerous opportunities to become close to the international students by living together at the International House. Kanako commented:

*Of course I felt that I wanted to learn more about other cultures, but I also had never had a chance to mix with international students before. They sometimes have English lounges or parties, but I never had a chance to mix with them so closely.* (Kanako 1)

The other expectation common to both Australian and Japanese students can be described as character development. One student from each group reflected on how challenging it was to put themselves in an unfamiliar environment. They expected to experience personal growth as a consequence.

*... but there’s also my personal growth, development of character. Throw yourself in the deep end, putting yourself in a different situation out of your comfort zone I suppose you’d say. It’s an interesting challenge. Every day seems like real exciting and everything is different, like going into a restaurant is a big adventure.* (George 1)
There were several other expectations reported only by the Japanese students. One of them was teaching Japanese language and culture in accordance with their assigned role. Though the International Office required Japanese students to help international students, some Japanese students were concerned about how this could be achieved. Kanako explained how to assist Australian students in their learning about Japanese language and culture enthusiastically.

_I joined the International House knowing that the international students would be there, and expecting that we would therefore speak Japanese, and I wanted them to learn about Japan and its culture and background. I am actually thinking of teaching them Japanese cooking, which is a vital part of Japanese culture._ (Kanako 1)

Other motivations unique to the Japanese students were to experience intercultural communication, and to gain information about their future career. Two students showed an interest in intercultural communication because they had completed a course, and were highly motivated to expand their knowledge by living with international students. Another two Japanese students reported it would be beneficial to gain knowledge about their future plans, studying abroad, and becoming a Japanese teacher, by observing and interacting with international students at the International House. Kyoko, who was planning to become a Japanese teacher, reported:

_There is no opportunity to get to know international students and you need to be courageous to try to talk to them on campus. So I thought if I live with them, it’ll be a good training for me to teach Japanese and get to know their way of thinking and culture._ (Kyoko 1)

In summary, expectations such as learning about culture, improving the fluency of a second language, making intercultural friends, and personal development were expressed by both Australian and Japanese students. However, only the Japanese
students showed an interest in teaching others about their language and culture, gaining knowledge about intercultural communication, and their future careers.

Before moving to the next section, it is important to be reminded of the uniqueness of the Japanese participants for this study. As described previously, this group may not represent a typical group of Japanese university students. The Japanese participants in this study tended to be much more competent in terms of language and cultural knowledge, and probably more highly motivated to develop intercultural relationships than the average Japanese university student.

**STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Strategies for developing intercultural relationships were elicited during all the interviews. Strategies for initiating a conversation were specifically elicited in the first and third interviews. Since students had only limited experience in initiating relationships before the first interviews were conducted, they were asked in the third interview how their strategies for initiating a conversation had changed, based on their experiences. Other strategies for exploring and intensifying relationships were elicited by questions about facilitating conditions during the second interview, challenges in communication and social interactions during the third interview, and facilitating factors in intercultural interactions during the fourth interview.

In the following section, the seven major types of relational development strategies reported by participants over time are presented and discussed. These include: Meeting
through mutual friends, Presenting oneself as a pleasant person, Greetings, Small talk, Spending time together, Big talk (self-disclosure), and Supportiveness (see Table 4.1).

The number of students who reported a particular strategy in each interview is presented in Table 4.1. The strategies are listed in order of occurrence over time, rather than frequency. These strategies will be discussed in relation to several relational development theories and to research on intracultural friendship development and intercultural relational development. Meeting through mutual friends, presenting oneself as a pleasant person, and greetings are strategies that emerged in the initiating stage. Small talk and spending time together are strategies mainly reported in the subsequent exploratory stage. Finally big talk (self-disclosure) and supportiveness are strategies typically used in the intensifying stage. Strategies reported being used by Japanese and Australian students at each stage will be described in turn.
Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies Reported Over Period of Time</th>
<th>Interview 1&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Interview 2&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Interview 3&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Interview 4&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting through mutual friends</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting oneself as a pleasant person</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small talk</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending time together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big talk (self-disclosure)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportiveness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A = Australian students, J = Japanese students
<sup>1</sup> 8 Australian and 9 Japanese participants
<sup>2</sup> 8 Australian and 9 Japanese participants
<sup>3</sup> 7 Australian and 6 Japanese participants
<sup>4</sup> 7 Australian and 4 Japanese participants

Initiating Stage

The very first interactions between most Australian and Japanese students occurred when the Japanese students picked up the Australian students at the airport. Based on students’ accounts, this arranged meeting might well have helped their interactions start in a smooth way. In fact, a few students reported that they started chatting on the way back to the International House and later became close acquaintances. For the
Australian students, initial interactions with Japanese students who were not living at the campus residence were more challenging because they had to initiate communication in a foreign environment. In fact, initiating strategies did not appear at a single point in time but rather throughout the whole course of students’ stay at the International House (i.e., whenever Australian students met new Japanese people).

According to Knapp and Vangelisti (2000), the goals of the initiation stage of relational development are having the other person think that one is attractive enough to develop a relationship with, and showing one’s interest in the other person. To achieve these goals, strategies such as presenting oneself as a pleasant person and greetings were discussed in several studies (Knapp, 1978; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000; Wood, 1995). In addition to these two strategies, meeting through mutual friends, will be included in this discussion since people must meet first to develop a relationship.

Meeting Through Mutual Friends

As a way to seize opportunities to meet, meeting through mutual friends seems to be an efficient strategy (Fehr, 1996; Johnson et al., 2003; Parks & Eggert, 1991). As shown in Table 4.1, more Australian students reported the strategy of using shared networks than their Japanese counterparts. This is understandable because Australian students sought friends outside, as well as, inside the International House. In an unfamiliar environment, it might have been very helpful to find potentially new friends through existing social networks. Two Australian students mentioned this strategy in all their interviews.
George, for example explained how he used social networks to make friends outside the International House.

Yeah, if I usually go drinking or go out with people, it’s usually one friend I seem to go, and so I meet all their friends and that’s usually fun. But it’s not like a regular big group of friends, more changing little bit, and different people all the time, which is good. (George 3)

Another student, Robert discussed why he prefers this strategy.

I’ve actually met quite a few more Japanese and become very good friends with them. I’ve met them through other friends in the dorm, other foreigners in the dorm who, either their girlfriends and their girlfriend’s friends or things like that. We’ve become very close … but I tend to find my friends, and even in my own culture, I find my friends through other friends and so I’m in a comfortable position so that I feel confident enough to build groundwork with someone else. I don't expect them to make the groundwork, I just like to be in a situation where I feel comfortable so I do. (Robert 4)

Other Australian students reported using more direct strategies, especially at the beginning of their stay. Jason confessed that he approached a Japanese student at the bus stop on campus.

I was sitting at the bus stop and I had to wait for a bus. I’d just try and talk some Japanese and say hello and ask them what they’re doing, if they go to university. They’ll ask me where I’m from and have a conversation … I was just the only person there. So I feel maybe obliged to talk to someone if they’re just sitting there because, in Australia I’d probably do the same thing if there’s just two people there. (Jason 1)

Initiating a conversation with strangers in classrooms, in the cafeteria, or even at the supermarket was reported by several other students mainly in the initial interview. Yet, most students said they had stopped using this strategy six months later, because by that time they had made enough friends.
Another reason for no longer approaching strangers appeared to be due to their recognition of cultural differences in making initial contact. David, who stopped approaching strangers by the end of his stay, explained his understanding of the different cultural rules in Japan.

In Australia, if we find someone looking at a CD we might say, oh you like this band too, and we can even make friends that way. In Japan, we really don’t do that, because if we start talking to someone randomly in the street, it’s surprising. (David 4)

Kudo and Simkin (2003) found that Japanese students were reluctant to approach strangers on Australian university campuses, and this finding supports David’s comments. Kudo and Simkin discussed how Japanese people might adopt a defensive stance in regard to meeting strangers or acquaintances. The Japanese students who lived in the International House, however, did not show the same tendency. They willingly approached international students whom they met for the first time, probably because they were expected to facilitate the adjustment of international students as a receptive host in the International House.

Another interesting finding is that three Japanese students reported the effectiveness of meeting through mutual friends in the third interview. This was due to the arrival of new international students at the International House. When new students arrived on campus for the second academic session starting in April, they had planned to approach them in the same way, but the presence of senior international students (those who had been in the International House since September of the previous year) affected their initiating strategies. Senior international students actively and directly introduced the
Japanese students to the new international students. As suggested by Kyoko’s statement, Japanese students may have found this type of introduction easier and more efficient.

When we were doing it, I was asked, “Kyoko, have you already met everyone?” then I said, “Not yet”, then she introduced me everyone one by one. So it wasn’t a direct approach but indirectly. Someone who has been at the dorm since September introduced me to them saying, “Kyoko is such a person” ... It’s easier than approaching by myself since I can’t speak English very well. They could explain about me in English quickly so the new students might have easily recognized what kind of person I am. (Kyoko 3)

The crucial role mutual friends play in friendship formation was reported in several studies about intracultural friendship (Fehr, 1996; Johnson et al., 2003; Parks & Eggert, 1991). Mutual friends are considered to be a great source of friendship, and people tend to meet the friends of those who are already their friends (Fehr, 1996). As accounts of the participants of this study imply, social networks play a significant role in intercultural relational development (Sudweeks et al., 1990; Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Sudweeks et al. further state that reliance on shared networks may be more important for people who are out of their home environment than for people in their home environment, which is consistent with this result.

Presenting Oneself as a Pleasant Person

When people approach strangers they try to make favorable impressions on each other. Certain nonverbal behaviours such as smiling, moving closer, head nodding, pleasant vocal expressions, or making eye contact (Mehrabian, 1971; Neuliep, 2003; Wood, 1995) are used to show one’s willingness to communicate with strangers in Western
cultures. Uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) suggests that people use nonverbal affiliative expressiveness since it will raise the level of certainty. Berger and Gudykunst (1991) further argue that nonverbal affiliative expressiveness is used even more in intercultural settings where cultural dissimilarity exists.

As is illustrated in Table 4.1, more students reported using this strategy in the first and third interview, because presenting oneself as a pleasant person is a strategy specifically related to initiating relationships, and this issue was directly in the first interview, and was addressed explicitly through retrospective reflection in the third interview.

Students reported several different ways of presenting oneself as a pleasant person, for example, through smiling, touching, and laughing. The most popular strategy appeared to be smiling. Two Australian students and two Japanese students reported that they would approach strangers with a smile. Sayoko added that smiling creates a relaxing atmosphere in which international students feel at ease.

For the moment, I think you can get the message across as long as you can smile and laugh, so I think it is important to always have a smile and give a message that I won’t bite you. (Sayoko 1)

One of the Japanese students said that she would make others feel relaxed by touching. Natsuko said:

I try to speak to them and make a relaxing atmosphere and come home like, “You can talk to me. I am not scary”. I try to behave like that.

Researcher: HOW DO YOU EXPRESS THAT YOU ARE NOT SCARY?

I touch or pat on their shoulders and stuff. (Natsuko 1)

Showing interest in communicating with a stranger is the first step to relational development friendship. As stated in Chapter 2, smiling is perceived as one effective
way to convey interest to a potential partner, at least in Western cultures. As discussed before (Gudykunst, 1983b), people in low-contact cultures (Hall, 1966) such as Japan, are expected to use fewer nonverbal behaviours. Therefore, it was somewhat surprising to find that more Japanese than Australian students mentioned the significance of smiling as an initiating strategy. This may have been due to this group of Japanese students’ prior exposure to Western culture, or it may have been used more since the interactions occurred in conditions of cultural dissimilarity (Berger & Gudykunst, 1991).

As discussed in Chapter 2, communication strategies such as nonverbal affiliative expressiveness may be used more actively in intercultural than intracultural contexts (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984) since two interactants from different cultural backgrounds share fewer clues that enable them to interpret each other’s behaviour.

Greetings

Knapp (1978) noted that greetings are a quick, simple, and ritualized way of initiating communication. As far as content is concerned, greetings are clichéd, but nevertheless, an efficient way of communicating, “I’m interested in you, so that I would like to communicate with you” (Wood, 1995).

As highlighted in Table 4.1, greeting strategies were reported by more Japanese than Australian participants especially in the first interview. This could be due to a form of cultural transfer. In Japanese society greetings play a significant role in interpersonal communication since it initiates communication and is expected to reduce the anxiety of the other. In families, as well as at school, parents and teachers make sure that children
always exchange greetings with their teachers and with each other. Japanese students
who were raised with an emphasis on such cultural norms would naturally have applied
this familiar interpersonal skill to their interactions with the international students.

However, reported use of this strategy by Japanese participants decreased to a similar
level reported by Australian participants by the third interview. One of the possible
reasons for this change might simply be the fact that the Japanese participants did not
need to initiate conversations with the new international students as explained in the
previous section.

The types of greetings reported by participants will now be examined in greater details.
Knapp (1978) classified greetings into 13 types. The ones participants said they
typically used when initiating a conversation with a student from different cultural
background were verbal salutes (e.g., Hello or Ohayo, which is good morning in
Japanese), questions of personal inquiry (e.g., How was your class? Aren’t you tired?),
and direct references to the other person by name (e.g., Hi Mary), and references to
oneself (e.g., Hello, I’m Asako. Nice to meet you.).

One of the most popular types of greetings reported by Japanese participants was
reference to oneself. Seven Japanese participants reported that they used
self-introduction at least when they were still new at the International House. Asako
said:

When I saw someone I didn’t think I had met before, I would say, “Nice to meet
you”. I introduced myself and said, “I’m also living in the dorm, so I hope we can
become friends”. (Asako 1)
Another type of greeting mentioned not only by Japanese, but also Australian participants, was what Knapp labelled verbal salutes. Three Australian and six Japanese participants said that they use verbal salutes, such as, hello or good morning. Twice as many Japanese participants reported this type of greeting compared to Australian participants. Two Japanese participants, for example, even reported that they would use verbal salutes as a topic of small talk. Natsuko, for example, said she would greet others in Spanish.

Researcher: HOW WOULD YOU START IF THAT’S THE FIRST TIME?

My second language is Spanish so I say “HOLA”. ...They ask me, “What?” Then I say, “HOLA” means “Hello”.

Researcher: INTERESTING.

I used to say, “OSU” in Japanese and get asked, “What is OSU?” “It’s a greeting”. (Natsuko 1)

Satoshi said he would use Japanese verbal salutes with newcomers as an efficient strategy to initiate a conversation.

In any situations, I try to talk to them. If I meet them in the morning, I say “Good morning”. They all speak in Japanese if it’s greeting.

Researcher: WHAT ABOUT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THAT YOU’VE NEVER MET?

Same thing. They ask me, “What does it mean?” so I explain it and gradually communicate with them. It’s natural because it’s not something you get nervous about. (Satoshi 1)

The strategy of using greetings as a topic to initiate small talk seemed to be unique to some Japanese students. The remaining Japanese students said that they would ask questions after a verbal salute. Hiroko, for example said:
Researcher: HOW DO YOU TALK TO THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THAT YOU FIRST MEET?

After saying, “Hello” then I ask them, “How is university?” (Hiroko 1)

As indicated by Hiroko’s report she used questions of inquiry. Two other Japanese participants said they would ask questions such as, “Aren’t you tired?”, “You’ve finished your lesson?”, “Are you going now?” or “How was the lesson?”, but only one Australian participant said he would ask similar kinds of questions. The other two Australian participants said that they would first say hello, then ask demographic questions instead of question of inquiry. Asking for demographic information seems to be a popular strategy among Australian students and this strategy will be discussed in more detail in the next section on experimenting.

As discussed above, a verbal salute was rarely used by itself. The only exception may be when it was used to maintain established relationships. Four Japanese participants claimed that they tried to give a verbal salute such as, “Good morning” or “Hello” whenever they met international students. One of the Japanese students, Kanako, explained why.

I really think greetings are an important start. Especially when there are 40 people, there may be some people who you don’t speak to all that much, but you never become strangers.

Researcher: WHY DO YOU NEVER BECOME STRANGERS?

Because even to people we don’t talk to regularly, we always say hello. (Kanako 1)

Kanako’s comment indicates another important function of greetings, that is, maintaining relationships with acquaintances. This is critical because greetings have a reciprocal function. According to Ide (2005), responding to greetings creates a sense of solidarity between interactants. Perhaps Kanako unconsciously understood the
sympathetic function of greetings and used it strategically in order to maintain relationships between acquaintances.

Experimenting Stage

In the second stage, many Australian and Japanese participants reported that they often tried to find out more about each other. The following students' accounts came from the second interview which took place three months after their arrival at the International House. Frequent small talk enabled them to increase their understanding of each other. Kyoko explained how the information obtained through small talk assisted her in understanding why the other person reacted or was behaving in a particular way.

*But now we know more about what other people are like. For example if we make an agreement to meet at my room and she didn’t come I would just think, “She’s still sleeping”. (Kyoko 2)*

The information gathered about a partner could be used not only for predicting the other person's behaviour but also for selecting future friends. This is consistent with Fehr (1996) who argued that similarity is a good starting point for developing a friendship. When an individual finds something in common during the process of exploring what the other person likes and dislikes, one tends to form a friendship with that person. Masako reported that everybody was trying to find friends based on the personal information they gathered about the other, rather than nationality.

*I think as people join together as a group they notice lack of personality compatibility when they communicate with each other. So I think everyone now tries to find friends based on common interests etcetera rather than nationality. (Masako 2)*
As participants found out more about each other, they started forming different groups. The researcher noticed that initially students living in the International House formed groups based on common languages such as Japanese, Chinese, French, and English, but later on groups had broken into smaller and often mixed groups based on shared interests. Natsuko reported:

Yes, that’s true. The French and the German students would always only hang around with each other and it was a very closed atmosphere. But that has totally changed now. Now I join in doing things with the French, German, and Asian groups and students from the English speaking countries.

Researcher: WHY HAS THAT CHANGED?

Perhaps they found people in other groups who they could get along with despite cultural differences. (Natsuko 2)

Natsuko’s comment suggests that cultural and linguistic similarity became less important than attitude or value similarity in developing relationships. As discussed in Chapter 2, cultural differences tend to influence only initial interactions (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Gudykunst, 1985c) with similarity in lifestyle and attitudes, having greater influence in the development of more intimate interactions (Gudykunst et al., 1987; Sudweeks et al., 1990). The role that similarity played in the participants’ interactions will be discussed in greater detail in the next section on facilitating factors.

When individuals are mutually interested in pursuing a relationship, they engage in exploratory communication (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Knapp, 1978). The major goal of exploratory communication is to reduce uncertainty. As discussed above, people at this stage of their relationship try to find out more about each other by engaging in small talk. The purpose of exchanging information about each other is to establish common
ground. Through talking and observing each other, people also decide whether they wish to continue the interaction and pursue the relationship.

Engaging in Small Talk

One of the major strategies used in the experimenting stage is small talk. Three times as many Australian participants reported using small talk compared to Japanese students as shown in Table 4.1. Two types of small talk were reported in the interviews. They were asking about demographic information and topics derived from the situation or surroundings.

As reported in the previous section, asking for demographic information appeared to be a very popular strategy among the Australian participants. Six out of seven Australian participants reported that they would ask factual questions in their initial contact with Japanese students. John and Mary said:

That’s a good question. I’d probably ask them what they were studying at university, what their major was and see where it goes from there. (John 1)

Maybe ask them what they’re studying, if it’s a student. Ask them what they study, and where they live, what they like to do in their free time. Say nothing ... but just ask if he minds, but I’m not sure if there’s anything particularly Japanese, I’m not sure. (Mary 1)

From the Australian students’ perspective, asking about the other person’s study major, their hometown, and interests seemed to be an effective way of initiating relationships. This finding is consistent with several empirical studies conducted in the United States (Gudykunst, 1983a; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984). These empirical studies support the
view that demographic information tends to be disclosed in the initial stages of relationships. Knapp (1978) explained how exchanging biographical information is critical in a new relationship since it is generally non-threatening.

Unlike the Australian participants, asking for demographic information did not seem to be a popular strategy among Japanese participants. Only one Japanese participant saw it as an efficient strategy.

_It usually starts with me asking what their name is and where they are from and things like that and if they say Canada, then I tell them that I have been there, and I think it is the same as when I meet a Japanese person for the first time, you look for common points before anything else and develop communication from there. Then you can listen to what the other person has to say. (Sayoko 1)_

As she pointed out, one of the purposes of asking impersonal questions was to look for something in common to talk about. As several researchers (Knapp 1978; Wood, 1995) have discussed, people ask for demographic information to discover if they share common ground and interests, because shared experiences and interests provide greater opportunities to interact (Fehr, 1996).

Knapp (1978) explained that other topics commonly used in initial small talk are derived from the situation or surroundings. The weather, for example, is frequently talked about, because it is generally considered non-threatening. One of the Japanese participants, Masahiro, identified another type of neutral topic.

_For example, if we use PC and see any news, we start from a small talk related to that. I’d start from a harmless topic._

_Researcher: FOR EXAMPLE?_

_Something famous and good. Something like, “Who got married whom” or “Madonna had the second baby”. (Masahiro 1)_
Masahiro is the only Japanese participant who mentioned small talk as a strategy to initiate conversations with strangers. He might have learnt this strategy through interactions with international students since he also said, “If it’s before, I’d start from self-introduction kind of thing, but now I wouldn’t do it”. Mashiro’s change in strategy is a reflection of his cultural learning.

Spending Time Together

Spending time together was found to be another way of promoting closer relationships between Japanese and Australian participants, since it provided opportunities for participants to learn more about each other. Generally hanging around provided another informal opportunity to promote interactions between Australian participants and Japanese participants. Activities mentioned often by both groups of participants included watching television or videos, listening to music, or smoking. Participants engaged in these activities to socialize in groups.

Both Australian and Japanese participants reported the significance of spending time together over a period of time, as shown in Table 4.1. Mary, an Australian participant, stressed the importance of spending time together in every single interview and from different angles. In the first interview, she predicted that it would help develop friendships with Japanese students.

_Spend time with them and talking to people and having conversations and going out and doing things together, shopping or looking around Apita (local shopping centre), nothing they haven’t seen before obviously. Spend some time together._

(Mary 1)
Then in the second interview, Mary shared her observation how other students were becoming closer through spending a lot of time together.

That’s a good point actually. At the start everyone in the dorm spent a lot of time together, like in the courtyard and things like that. You kind of had to spend time together to get to know one another whether you wanted to or not. Whether you wanted to put the effort in or not, you kind of had to, and I think at that time, I didn’t realize then. I didn’t spend as much time interacting with people as I could have. Or I felt I should have, maybe. Maybe that’s how some other people made close friends at the start, and they got used to spending a lot of time with each other. (Mary 2)

Consistent with Mary’s observations, many Japanese participants reported that they made deliberate and consistent efforts to spend as much as time possible with the international students in the first interview, without necessarily realizing how their efforts contributed to establishing closer relationships. The details will be described later.

Finally, in the third interview, Mary reported her own experience of finding her best friend through frequent contact.

I guess it happened kind of gradually. How you become close with anyone really or anyone else at the house, just by spending time together. Yeah, it happens over a gradual period of time, just by being together and doing things together and talking, just like anyone else. (Mary 3)

The Japanese participants would definitely agree with Mary about the importance of frequent contact. Two of them further stressed the significance of regular contact rather than scattered long contact. Masahiro explained:

It’s important to keep in touch with every single day. For example, it’d be better to spend one to two hours together every single day than being with them for 24 hours
for three days then not seeing for long time. The key point is the time that you spend with them. (Masahiro 1)

Natsuko, who had difficulty in spending time with her friends on a regular basis, shared her experiences.

A think a few times a week is better. If you start off meeting for a long period of time once a week and then all of a sudden you get busy and you don’t meet for a long time, when you do actually meet up again, it’s like meeting for the first time all over again. It’s hard, but I think we need a special care to fill up the long absence. (Natsuko 2)

These two comments appear to explain not only the importance of regular contact, but also the difficulty of keeping regular contact due to other activities such as clubs or part-time jobs. It highlights that individuals need to make a conscious effort to maintain relationships.

Besides the significance of spending time together in developing intercultural relationships, different ways of spending time together were also discussed in the second interview. Participants’ responses have been divided into three broad types of activities: doing routine daily activities together, generally hanging around, and socializing outside the International House.

Doing Daily Activities Together

Daily activities done together took place both outside and inside the International House. Activities taking place outside included buying necessities, going to the bank or post office, studying, and cooking. The first two activities were mentioned more often in the initial interview, which took place when the international students were still
settling in. Doing these kinds of activities together was reported to be beneficial to the international students for a couple of reasons: they gained information about their new environment and opportunities to interact. Robert explained how he started becoming a friend with Sayoko.

*With Sayoko I needed the phone so I asked her about the place and that and she then offered to take me up to (the name of a shop) and help with that. Altogether spent the whole afternoon by the time we sorted it out and everything and during that time we had a lot of other conversations. She was telling me about how she had gone to Canada and everything that she’d done and ... and became friendly through that. Just started from me just asking about the phone. (Robert 1)*

Their trip to a phone shop allowed them to get to know each other. Some Japanese participants also realized that helping international students with daily necessities provided extra opportunities to interact with them. Masako, for example, said:

*I get very busy responding to their requests like taking them on a trip because there aren’t many Japanese. But we got close to some people whom we took to a bank or post office, because we could talk at that time. (Masako 1)*

According to Masako, Japanese participants seemed to make the best use of the time together to develop closer relationships with international students.

Most of the other activities done together took place inside the International House. Places for interactions were the living area, the dining area, the courtyard and students' own rooms. Watching television or videos was mentioned mainly in the first or second interviews before participants started going out for drinks or meals. There was a big television in the entrance hall at the International House, and students watched either television or videos rented by students while sitting on the couch. Several Japanese participants mentioned that interactions would usually start when they were watching
programs or movies in their second language. Either international students or Japanese participants would ask questions about phrases they could not catch or cultural details they were not familiar with.

Yes. I watch TV with foreigners and when we have any questions about languages, we answer them.

Researcher: YOU MEAN WHEN YOU WATCH ENGLISH MOVIE?

That’s also the case. And we also watch Japanese TV shows and I sometimes teach them Japanese. (Hiroko 1)

Watching television can be classified as passive leisure, and it is also how family members spend time with each other (Larson, Manell, & Zuzanek, 1986). Australian and Japanese participants at the International House engaged in family related activities since they lived together, almost as a family, but these activities seemed to have provided more than simply passive leisure for both groups of participants.

As well as the living area, the dining area was a most suitable place for international and Japanese participants to interact. Kanako and Mary explained the function of the dining area as follows:

They eat there or they do their homework there. Or they go there when they want to talk. (Kanako 2)

We don’t necessarily cook together and have the same food, but we’ll cook separately but sit down and eat together. And basically whoever is there, you sit down and have a chat with or do homework with. (Mary 2)

To most of the participants, a shared kitchen with a big dining table was the common place to study, share food, and chat.
Another important place for doing activities together was the courtyard. Several participants reported the courtyard as a good place to hang around during the first interviews. Kyoko, for example, said:

_We always drink in a courtyard or bring some cooked food to courtyard and eat together at night._

_Researcher: WE HAD A LOT OF EUROPEANS YESTERDAY._

_Yes. It’s always like that. The reason why Europeans gather in a courtyard is that it is a place to smoke. (Kyoko 1)_

Since the courtyard was the only place that could hold a lot of people, it became the most popular place for people to interact. Also and most importantly, this was one of the few places where visitors were allowed to go, so parties often took place there. However, as the weather became colder, fewer people hung out in the courtyard, except the smokers.

Finally, students' own rooms appeared to be critical private venues for closer intercultural relational development. Two Japanese female participants referred explicitly to their own room as a good place to have interactions with international students. Although there were not allowed to bring friends to their private room according to the dorm rules, these two Japanese participants enjoyed spending time with other female international students in their rooms. Kyoko and Sayoko explained the advantage of using private rooms.

_Location doesn’t really matter, when there are only two people we always talk about private things. (Kyoko 2)_

_Well, the kitchen is an open space but there is more privacy in my room. (Sayoko 2)_
Kyoko and Sayoko thought that private rooms were better than public spaces for dyads because privacy was guaranteed. They further explained what they usually did with their friends in their bedrooms.

When there is something that we don’t know with our homework, we come back to our rooms and then we just decide to do our homework in our rooms. When there are too many people in the kitchen and we can’t concentrate in the kitchen, we go back to our rooms, or when we just want to watch a video the two of us. (Kyoko2)

It was in my room that Alice [an American student] gave me the advice that she did. (Sayoko2)

Their accounts suggest that some kind of privacy is necessary to promote one-to-one intimate relationships. This is consistent with the findings of both intracultural and intercultural studies (Gudykunst et al., 1991; Hays, 1989). As discussed in Chapter 2, Gudykunst et al. found spending time alone with partners promotes cross-cultural relationships. As Hays discussed in his intracultural study, the personal setting of one’s home would be an appropriate setting for partners to spend time alone. Students’ accounts revealed interactions with close friends occurred more often in the personal setting of their bedroom.

In the initial few months, generally hanging around in a common area such as the dining or living areas or the courtyard and engaging in activities such as watching television or videos, listening to or playing music over a drink, were often reported by both international and Japanese participants. In the first interview, most of the Japanese participants reported that they tried to stay out in the public areas, such as the courtyard, as much as possible and go back to their bedroom only to sleep. Masahiro explained:

Researcher: HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND IN COURTYARD?
On weekdays, approximately from 4, 5 o’clock till 12 at night. Everyone studies in courtyard and stuff.

Researcher: WHAT ELSE DO YOU GUYS DO APART FROM SMOKING?
We listen to music and sing, and play guitar and stuff. (Masahiro 1)

Hiroko, another Japanese participant reported that she also spend a lot of time in the public areas of the International House even though she was busy with her part-time job.

Researcher: HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WITH THEM?
After I come home, I just go out when I have to go to part-time job but when I don’t have to, we pretty much spend together till we go to sleep.

Researcher: HOW LONG DO YOU SPEND WITH THEM FOR AFTER YOU COME BACK AT 8:30?
After we eat, then we spend time watching TV and chatting till midnight. Sometimes we can’t stop chatting.

Their personal accounts were consistent with Mary’s observation discussed in the previous section. Mary further emphasized the importance of spending time together in the initial stages of relationship development.

Yeah, I didn’t realize how important it was at the beginning to interact with people. To get out there, and to be in the same environment. To be in the same place, to get used to hanging out together. (Mary 2)

Mary’s account stresses that students who spent a lot of time together at the beginning eventually made a close friend and she regretted not having spent enough time interacting with other people earlier. Yet, as relationships developed, some Japanese participants stopped forcing themselves to stay out of their room. Kyoko, for example, said:
Yes. But after I while I stopped having to force myself, and I was able to start going out in a more relaxed way. But lately, I feel that it can’t be helped that I have to stay in my room [due to a lot of assignments]. (Kyoko 2)

Kyoko, who used to spend the whole day in the courtyard with other students, stopped forcing herself after three months. One possible reason, other than the change of weather, could be the lack of necessity. As discussed in the previous chapter, the amount of time friends spend together has a positive impact on intercultural relationship development (Gareis, 1995; Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990). Moreover, frequent interactions are more necessary in the earlier stages of friendship formation (Hay, 1988; Rose & Serafica, 1986). As Kyoko may have already developed closer relationships with a few people, she may have found it superfluous to keep using the same friendship maintenance strategies.

Socializing Outside the International House

In the second interview, participants started reporting socializing outside the International House. Jason, for example, reported that he went to karaoke after his birthday party.

So that was good, had a lot of friends and we went to karaoke which was good. I think everyone is getting sick of just hanging around here, it’s good to go out somewhere. (Jason 2)

Socializing seemed to play a big role in developing friendships at least among Australian students. Three Australian participants discussed how crucial socializing was in friendship.
I mean I guess most people could just sit and talk to each other in the TV room and things like that. But yeah, there’s a definite difference, between just talking and actually ... like associating with each other outside of the house. (Mary 4)

Just ... it says, having money to do social activities. And it also talks about drinking and karaoke. Yeah, I think social activities as a whole are very important. (John 4)

These Australian participants seemed to consider socializing outside the International House as a sign of friendship. However, Japanese students at the International House did not seem to engage in social activities as often as the Australian participants expected. David explained:

No, it’s really just we have no time I think, or rather the Japanese students don’t have time. Myself I do try to ask my Japanese friends, even if they would like to come out for the night, generally they are usually busy. So we have fun with them just at International House. We do spend a lot of time with them, but it’s not so much an outdoors thing. (David 4)

David’s account suggests that Japanese students went out socializing much less often than international students. One of the reasons is that they were actually busy with part-time jobs, class assignments, and job hunting (in the case of the fourth year students). Another possible reason could have been that they preferred engaging in activities with their close friends rather than going out with a big group of people. Their preference for watching a movie or just chatting in their own bedroom revealed their growing preference for dyad activities rather than group activities. Other typical socializing activities such as drinking and karaoke will be discussed in the following section on elements that influence the development of intercultural friendship.
Intensifying Stage

After the Christmas break, six months after their arrival, international students who initially had difficulty forming friendships, eventually managed to find someone they could get along with. Masako reported:

> Everyone gradually finds someone that they can get along with in their lives in Japan. So I think that once they find such friends, they won’t think such things. I think everyone finds friends. There may be a person who stays alone but she also has someone that she can talk to when something happens. (Masako 3)

Circles of friends shrunk even more and students started distinguishing between degrees of friendship based on how close they felt to other students. David explained:

> But also we have much closer friends now. Before everyone was our friend but not so close. We didn’t really know them. But now we have really close friends, and MA-MA (so-so) friends and then Teki (enemy). (David 3)

A Japanese participant, Masahiro, appeared hesitant to show different levels of closeness openly.

> So people that I am close with I get even closer to and people that I don’t really talk to I just never talk to at all now. There are other people too that are having that sort of thing happen. It’s just that if I am not interested in the person I don’t talk to them, but if we bump into each other we do say hello and good morning, but we never share the same space. I don’t ever feel that I want to go and talk to them, and neither do they, and so we do not talk much together. It doesn’t mean that I like or don’t like the person. (Masahiro 3)

As relationships developed, students eventually started seeing each other as unique individuals. One of the Australian participants, David commented on how Japanese students had started recognizing the diverse personalities of the Australian students. He explained.
And people are more than just recognizing us, people are recognizing our character, which is interesting. Well for instance, they all know John, an Australian, he is adventurous and he likes sports, and so does Tom. And they might recognize Mary, who’s a girl who does like to speak and talk a bit more. (David 2)

An Australian participant, Mary declared that she also had started recognizing individual differences among Japanese students.

When you see a group of people walking they all look exactly the same, but it’s been really interesting to find out, I mean everyone, all the Japanese people, no matter how similar they look on the outside they all have their own distinct personality and their own way of thinking. (Mary 4)

Mary realized that being able to see the other person as a unique individual develops gradually through increased interactions with that person. At the beginning, everybody appeared to stereotype each other on some level, but those stereotypes tended to fade as communication between the groups increased. One Japanese participant, Masako, mentioned:

I have come to understand, through talking with many people, that a person does not think a certain way due to their culture or their nationality, but because of who they are inside. Now I am able to get an impression of what other people are thinking when I am talking to them. (Masako 2)

Masako’s account supports Altman and Taylor (1973) findings. As discussed in Chapter 2, cultural stereotypes tend to disappear in the latter stages of relational development. Moreover, the more often individuals interact with members of different cultures, the more they tend to see them as unique individuals (Gudykunst et al., 1991). This stresses the value of using longitudinal designs in research on relational development, such as the one used in this study.
Being able to see the other as a unique individual reveals that one’s relationship with the partner has moved in the direction of intimacy. A major strategy for enabling relationships to advance from experimenting and intensifying, and therefore greater intimacy, is self-disclosure. As discussed in Chapter 2, developmental theorists (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knapp, 1978) noted that disclosing more personal or private information about oneself intensifies relationships. In addition to self-disclosure, giving support was also identified as an efficient way of intensifying relationships by several researchers (Hays, 1984, 1989; Oswald et al., 2004). Both of these strategies will be discussed in the next section.

**Engaging in Self-Disclosure**

In the earlier experimental stage, people tend to exchange relatively superficial and limited information through small talk. When individuals get closer, they exchange deeper and more extensive information, and this was found to be the case in this study. Australian and Japanese students seemed to notice the increased depth (the degree of revealing one’s personal self) and breadth (number of various topics discussed in a relationship) of information they shared with their friends.

As shown in Table 4.1, there was no comment about self-disclosure from either group of participants in the first interview, no Australians, but four Japanese commented in the second interview, six Australians and four Japanese commented in the third interview, and three Australians and two Japanese commented in the last interview. Sayoko elaborated on the relationship between self-disclosure and intimacy.
Of course as time passes people get closer together and the time that you spend talking to one another increases and we are now able to talk about more serious things. For example, I may not talk to everyone now, but the people that I am really close with I can have serious conversations with. (Sayoko 2)

As Sayoko’s account revealed, confiding worries was one of the easy ways to bring two people closer. Two Australian (one male and one female) and six Japanese female participants reported that they achieved closer friendships as a result of sharing problems. Mary and Sayoko shared their experiences:

* A few months ago, she helped me out with a problem I had when I needed someone to talk to. She was really, really nice about it. And ever since then, it was weird, actually. We just kind of clicked and we found out that we got along really well. Yeah, ever since then we’ve been pretty close. (Mary 4)

* The time when I was really down and I was crying in my room my good friend Alice saw me and asked me what was wrong. I said there was nothing wrong but in the end she listened to me and gave me good support. She really understood how I felt, but this time I found that people can come together in that sort of situation no matter what their nationality. (Sayoko 2)

Masako further explained why she tended to feel closer after self-disclosure.

* I haven’t made anyone who I would call a close friend, but I do have friends who I can share my opinion with and who speak to me about things that they may not talk to others about. We don’t just talk about daily things, they also share their problems with me. When that happens I feel that they really rely on me and that we are close. (Masako 2)

These accounts reported by female participants illustrate the characteristics of female same- sex friendships. As discussed in Chapter 2, females are more likely to emphasize emotional sharing, trust, and confiding in their friendships (Hays, 1988).
Unlike their female counterparts, the four Australian male students stressed the importance of talking about a wider range of topics, especially topics that may be controversial. For example, David reported:

*Before, we didn’t really talk about many subjects, maybe we were limited, maybe we didn’t want to talk about politics because it’s hard to describe, or we didn’t want to talk about rules, or maybe emotion or something difficult. But now we can talk about that, and it’s sort of made the relationships closer as well.* (David 4)

Two other Australian male participants also mentioned controversial topics, such as politics and current events. One of them reported the benefit of discussing different views as a way to expand one’s own perspective. Dislikes were also mentioned by male Australian participants as appropriate topics to discuss among good friends. Talking about conflicting views as a way of developing relationships was also reported in Yokota’s (1991a) study conducted at Japanese universities. Interestingly, none of the female participants, regardless of whether they were Australian or Japanese, reported choosing topics that could generate disagreements. This perhaps reflects different ways of developing relationships across genders.

On the issue of why self-disclosure is effective in developing relationships, two Japanese female participants pointed out the aspect of reciprocity. Kyoko, for example, discussed how it could influence her relationships with others.

*Yes. If I talk about myself, they tell me all about the troubles they have or make suggestions and that way we get closer day by day.* (Kyoko 3)

Her comment is consistent with Altman and Taylor’s (1973) and Knapp’s (1978) claim that one’s self-disclosure tends to encourage self-disclosure from others. The extent to
which reciprocity and controversy are gender related approaches to relational development may need to be explored in future research.

*Being Supportive*

As discussed in the previous section, confiding worries as a part of self-disclosure naturally leads to receiving support from friends. In turn, supportiveness is expected to lead to further friendship development. The significance of supportiveness in friendship development has been recognized by several researchers (Fehr, 1996; Hays, 1984; Oswald et al., 2004), and the present study provided further support to this phenomenon.

As Table 4.1 indicates, no participants mentioned the use of supportiveness in the first interview. This suggests that support strategies may rarely be used in the initial stages of relational development. Mary explained how knowing each other might be a prerequisite for the exchange of support.

> Well, at the dorm, I think everyone got used to things after a while and that made living with everyone a lot easier. Japanese and foreign students included. It kind of took time, but it got easier after a while for everyone to interact together basically. And now, you’ll see things like, the other day, I’m seeing one of the Australian guys cooking [JW] (tea?) for two Japanese girls. That’s something you wouldn’t have done at the start, because no one really knew each other. But it just took time to get used to things. (Mary 2)

Her account is consistent with Hay’s (1985) findings. He claims that support was more commonly offered among close friends rather than casual friends. Mary’s account suggests that this is also the case in intercultural friendships.
As discussed in Mary’s account, support used to be offered mainly from Japanese students. However, as relationships developed, support became reciprocal. Three Japanese participants reported this change in the third interview. Masako, for example, reported that she had started to receive more support from the international students.

Researcher: YOU’VE BEEN FRIENDS WITH TWO OR THREE PEOPLE FROM FRENCH SPEAKING COUNTRIES?

Yes. But at first, we always just hung out together and I never thought much about studying abroad. I just listened to their stories about Japanese. We talked more deeply after I started asking for their advice about this kind of thing.

Researcher: DID THE RELATIONSHIP CHANGE AFTER THAT?

Yes. I used to always give them advice about living in Japan but I started getting their advice and now I feel equal to them. (Masako 3)

This change from only the Japanese students providing support to reciprocal support between Japanese and international students indicates that their relationships had reached a mature level with significant benefits to both Australian and Japanese students. Through their experiences at the International House, several Japanese students were considering studying in countries where international students came from. The international students were able to assist in providing information about their home country and even fill in forms submitted to their home universities. In addition to assisting Japanese students planning to go abroad, there were also indications that international students were helping Japanese students improve their second language. This is revealed in Tom’s statement:

There’s another girl, actually one of the same girls, a Japanese girl, one that I’ve gotten closer to. She wants to learn Australian slang words, or accents or that sort of thing. So I teach her a different word that she wouldn’t learn in class. Like, Australian slang, so she does that, and she helps me with my Japanese. (Tom 2).
Reciprocity in providing support between Japanese and international students seemed to have a positive influence on friendship development. Masahiro highlighted that aspect:

I think so too. For example if Sebastian [a French student] were to again come to Japan and I were to look after him I would rely on him when I went to France. For example, at the moment he is looking at all the documents that I have to send to France for me, and he has said to me that he wants to work in Japan and asked if there are any French schools, so I am looking into that for him. It is by doing things like that that the ties between people are strengthened. In the end it is give and take. (Masahiro 3)

Masahiro’s comments appear consistent with social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) described in Chapter 2. According to Altman and Taylor, the balance between perceived rewards and costs is crucial in relational development. If costs exceed rewards, one person feels less satisfied and the relationship is likely to dissolve. This phenomenon was reflected in Sayoko’s experience. While Sayoko seemed to enjoy offering support to the international students, she also felt tired at times of their dependency and wondered if some of them may not have been taking advantage of her. Sayoko shared her feelings:

Sometimes. If I can’t speak English at all, I wonder if I could make friends with them. Everybody says that they made friends with me, because they like my personality, but I still think Alice became a friend with me because I can speak English. (Sayoko 3)

Some international students’ excessive dependency on Sayoko raises the issue of whether genuine friendship may emerge if need for support is perceived as mainly one sided. Not only Sayoko, but also an Australian participant noticed that international students were not offering as much help as they received from Japanese students. David explained:
And the Japanese students would say to me, sometimes they want a break, sometimes they want help from international students but we are not so willing to give help because we are busy too. So I think it’s important to help the Japanese people too with what experiences or information we have. Because we view ourselves as the main students here, we are always asking favours from them and we ask them what to do, or where to go or how we could have fun. Sometimes it really is up to us to help them to show them a good time. It’s like a good relationship with a girlfriend or a boyfriend, you can’t always do everything for the girl, sometimes she should do things for you, and you should do for her. (David 4)

In this comment David demonstrates his realization that benefits Japanese students received from international students were not as substantial as the ones international students received from Japanese students, and that over time, this may have a detrimental impact on their relationships. His reflection is consistent with similar issues raised in the literature. Fehr (1996), for example, claimed that maintaining the levels of reciprocal rewards is essential to maintaining a relationship. Since a spirit of equality is crucial in friendships, one tends to become uncomfortable when costs outweigh rewards.

Supportiveness describes both emotional and information support, and both types were reported by Japanese and Australian participants. So far, the use of supportiveness in the intensifying stage of relationships has been discussed. Additionally, reciprocal support was found to be necessary to maintain good relationships. Now two different types of support reported by participants will be examined. They include information support and emotional support.
Providing Information

As discussed in the methodology chapter, Japanese students staying at the International House did not have the same status as other residents. Unknown to the international students, the Japanese students had been given the special role of helping the international students adapt to their new environment as a condition of staying in the International House. This could explain why the Japanese participants reported so many instances of information support during the first interviews. Providing information about life in Japan, such as how to use facilities at the International House, how to do shopping, how to send mail overseas, were all a part of their assigned role. In addition, most Japanese students also played the role of Japanese tutor to the international students. Kyoko reported how she had to sacrifice her time to help with the homework of the international students.

There are times when we do it in the kitchen, but there are times when maybe I have a lot of books that I have to read so I really do have to stay in my room and study, so in the kitchen I end up helping others with their homework, more than doing my own. (Kyoko 2)

Even though providing support kept them very busy, some Japanese participants said they enjoyed offering a helping hand. Masahiro and Sayoko stated:

If whatever happens, we are the nearest to them and help them as advisers. In that sense, they think we are important. If they got bad relationship with us, they’d have troubles in their daily lives and feel inconvenient. In that sense, they think we are important and think of us as kind people in their mind. Perhaps, they have something that cannot be achieved without us. In that sense, I think that we are the existence in the centre. (Masahiro 1)
Yes, and I don’t like being in a position where I am always teaching them, but it is a little more comfortable that way. When we are of an equal relationship I always end up being in the inferior position. Especially when people are talking in French and English, and not in Japanese, I feel like I am below everyone else. I feel like I am a helpless child. (Sayoko 3)

Both of the participants argued that they enjoyed the privilege of supporting international students. Interestingly, they seemed to feel some kind of inferiority when interacting with English speaking students because of their limited communication skills in that language. It is possible that by adopting the role of helper, the social status of Japanese students was raised and consequently their confidence in social situations was raised, which was important to generating a sense of reciprocal exchange.

**Offering Emotional Support**

Finally, showing emotional support seems to be a way to distinguish high quality friendships from less close relationships (Argyle & Henderson, 1984). As discussed in the section on self-disclosure, several Japanese female participants reported an experience where their international friends listened to their personal problems and provided them with advice, resulting in their intercultural relationships becoming more intimate. Interestingly, only one Australian female participant, Mary, reported an experience of receiving emotional support. Overall, the issue of receiving emotional support when in need as an indicator of deeper relational development may appear to be gender related, since no Japanese or Australian male students mentioned any such experiences.
An emotional experience could, however, be shared not only when in need but also on happy occasions. Two Japanese participants mentioned the significance of sharing their emotions on happy occasions, such as birthdays, as a way of intensifying their relationships. On such happy and more public occasions, gender did not appear significant. Masahiro, for example, explained how sharing a happy occasion could be expected to intensify a personal relationship.

("But when I presented Alice a coloured paper that has got everyone’s words written on for her birthday, she was so glad. So if we celebrate any events together and think together of the solution for any troubles, we get deeper and closer friendship, I suppose. (Masahiro 1)"

Happy occasions such as birthdays seemed to provide considerable opportunities to promote more intimate relationships, at least from the perspective of the Japanese students. The impact of organizing events in culturally mixed groups will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

In summary, seven broad strategies for developing intercultural relationships were identified across the four interviews with Japanese and Australian students. These were: meeting through mutual friends, presenting oneself as a pleasant person, greetings, small talk, spending time together, big talk (self-disclosure), and supportiveness. The distribution of strategies across groups and over time was not consistent, with individual and gender differences emerging.

The initiating stage of relational development was characterized by three strategies, which played out differently across the groups. While Australian participants reported meeting others through mutual friends more often, it was surprisingly the opposite for presenting oneself as a pleasant person. As expected, given the importance of such
practices in Japanese family and school contexts, greetings were reported more frequently by Japanese students. Two strategies reported mainly during the experimenting stage were small talk and spending time together. Participants’ accounts revealed that both Australian and Japanese participants found small talk significant in initiating relationships, but the content of their small talk varied. Mainly Japanese participants reported spending time together as an efficient way of initiating relationships, but efforts to spend as much time as possible tended to decrease as dyadic friendships took on more importance.

Finally, two strategies characterized the intensifying stage. Experiences of engaging in big talk were reported as a breakthrough from casual friendships to close friendships, however mainly by female participants. Evidence of supportiveness was also characteristic of the intensifying stage but only when it moved away from unidirectional support provided by Japanese students, and reached a mature level of reciprocal support. Emotional support in instances of need appeared to play a particularly significant role for female participants at the intensifying stage.

Overall, the complex patterns of strategies displayed by individuals, male and female Japanese and Australian participants in different contexts, and at different stages of their relational development, highlight the limitations of stage theories to explain and predict intercultural relational development in real life situations and over a period of time.

In the following section, elements that were found to influence the development of intercultural friendships between the two groups of students will be discussed. Facilitating elements are reported and analyzed first, followed by inhibiting elements.
FACTORS INFLUENCING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the previous section, the strategies reported by students to develop intercultural relationships at each stage of relational development were described. This section concentrates on the factors perceived by students as facilitating or inhibiting this movement. There are two parts to this section. The first part compares students' ratings, in the fourth interview, of the major facilitating and inhibiting factors that had been reported in the first three interviews. The second part discusses the facilitating and inhibiting factors that were perceived as important by both groups, and those that were perceived as important only by one group, with quotes from all four interviews to illustrate the nature of students’ experience and their reflection on this experience.

Comparing Perceptions

As described in the Methodology chapter, a list of 18 possible facilitating factors and a list of 8 possible inhibiting factors were generated from the first three interviews. These factors had been generated spontaneously by students and were used in the last interview as stimulus material to compare students’ perceptions across groups.

After rating the extent to which each of these factors influenced intercultural interaction, all students were asked to point out (based on their personal experiences), the first and second most important factors. The mean ratings as well as ranking (extracted from the ratings) of possible facilitating factors for Australian and Japanese students are presented in Table 4.2. Since the number of students who participated in the last
interview was low (e.g., seven Australians and four Japanese), caution is suggested in relation to interpreting these findings.

As highlighted in Table 4.2, and as expected, both Australian and Japanese groups rated having an interest in other cultures and languages most highly (respectively 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1\textsuperscript{st}). Unexpectedly, and of concern, drinking was also rated as a very important facilitating factor by both groups (3\textsuperscript{rd}, 5\textsuperscript{th}). Also and as expected, both groups rated doing projects together, going to the English Lounge, and having a similar age and gender as relatively low.

In contrast, facilitating factors that Australian and Japanese students rated differently were having common interests (1\textsuperscript{st}, 9\textsuperscript{th}) having enough money to engage in social activities (4\textsuperscript{th}, 18\textsuperscript{th}), organizing events together (9\textsuperscript{th}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}), living in the International House where students can mix all the time (13\textsuperscript{th}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}), needing to improve one’s language skills (16\textsuperscript{th}, 4\textsuperscript{th}), and always greeting individuals from the International House when meeting them (14\textsuperscript{th}, 5\textsuperscript{th}). Some ratings reflected the different situations students were in; namely, being a guest or a host whereas others such as greetings may reflect perceptions that these are simply normal practices, not special to develop relationships. In contrast, the finding that Australian and Japanese students rated having common interests and living in shared accommodation very differently was somewhat unexpected.
Table 4.2  
Possible Facilitating Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Australian (n=7)</th>
<th>Japanese (n=4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having common interests</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having interest in other cultures and languages</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having enough money to engage in social activities</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing at karaoke</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping with homework</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting people who can help to find a new circle of friends</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having an outgoing personality</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing events together</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing where social activities are taking place</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always smiling when meeting someone from the Int’l House</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having good language skills</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in the Int’l House where students can mix all the time</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always greeting individuals from the Int’l House when meeting them</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having similar characteristics</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needing to improve one’s language skills</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the English Lounge</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing projects together for a mixed class</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 illustrates that as expected, both Australian and Japanese students rated dorm rules (1\textsuperscript{st}, 1\textsuperscript{st}) and language barriers (3\textsuperscript{rd}, 4\textsuperscript{th}) highly as inhibiting factors. In contrast, both groups rated showing interest in only surface aspects of culture, and being a foreigner low by comparison. Inhibiting aspects that Australian students and Japanese students rated differently were not having enough money to go out and have fun together (2\textsuperscript{nd}, 7\textsuperscript{th}) and Japanese visitors breaking dorm rules (8\textsuperscript{th}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}), which was expected, given students’ stories gathered during the first three interviews and these ratings being obtained in the fourth interview. These findings are discussed in the next section.
Accounts and Reflections

The section reports students’ accounts of facilitating and inhibiting factors across the four interviews. The facilitating factors are discussed first, then the inhibiting factors. Each sub-section is organized around the factors that were rated highly by both groups and then where the two groups differed.

Facilitating Factors

Interest in Language and Culture of the Other

Showing interest in the language and culture of the other was rated highly by both groups of students (first by the Japanese students and second by the Australian students). This result is consistent with intercultural studies (Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003), which found that host nationals’ knowledge of, and interest in sojourners’ cultures, facilitated the development of close intercultural relationships.

In terms of having an interest in other cultures and languages, a university of foreign language provides an ideal context since both Japanese and international students are highly motivated to learn each other’s language and culture. David, an Australian student, explained the advantage of developing friendships with Japanese students majoring in foreign languages such as English, French, or Chinese.

But if you ask me if I was speaking with a Japanese person who studied Science or Mathematics or not other cultures, I think there would be a culture clash. But it is because we are both here to learn other cultures and languages, we have more open minds about society and meetings. I think because this is specifically international students and Japanese students becoming international students, this
isn’t so much of a problem. (David 3)

David thought that international students who come to Japan to study language tended to become friends with language majors since they shared an interest in each other’s language and culture. Shared interests will be discussed in more detail later.

Having an interest in other cultures and languages seemed to be more significant in the initial stage of forming friendships. Asako, a female Japanese student, observed that Japanese students developed friendships with international students who spoke their majoring languages.

Yes. As can be expected, people who major in English make English speaking friends and the same with people studying French, they make friends with French speakers. (Asako 1)

Another Japanese student, Sayoko, explained how her interest in Spanish helped her to make friends with a Mexican student.

There was one girl from Mexico and we have become good friends, and our rooms are next to one another. I have been to Mexico and I am studying Spanish at the moment, so I am interested in that culture. I have Mexican friends, but they are not in Japan, so we have been able to talk to one another and become close friends. (Sayoko 1)

Even though they were not fluent in the language of the other, having an interest in other languages and cultures still facilitated friendship formation by offering a common topic to talk about. Hiroko also shared her experiences:

I am really interested in other languages and hope to be fluent in a number of other languages, so I ask other people about their language and we generally help each other out. (Hiroko 4)
Although both Australian and Japanese students recognized that having an interest in the language and culture of the other was an important facilitating aspect, the mean rating for Japanese students was 0.68 higher than for Australian students. This difference in rating suggests that this facilitating aspect plays a more important role for Japanese students. As the participants of both studies previously mentioned (Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003) were Japanese, it might imply that other nationals’ interest in Japanese language and culture is crucial in forming friendships with Japanese students. Again, since the number of participants was very limited, these results are not considered conclusive.

Group Activities

Two group activities were identified by both groups of students as a facilitating factor. They were drinking and karaoke.

Both Australian and Japanese students rated drinking highly. They appeared to think that drinking together facilitated relational development. One of the possible rationales behind this rating could be related to the perception that alcohol consumption affords behavioural changes. A popular perception is that when people drink alcohol, they become more open socially and communicate with more ease. George explained:

*That (drinking) loosens everybody up and gets them talking. (George I)*

A Japanese student also noted the same effect of drinking. Kanako commented:

*I think if we drink, we all get friendly, become easier to talk to and get a good atmosphere so it gets easier to chat with each other than being at residence.*
Researcher: IS IT EASIER FOR YOU TOO KANAKO?

Yes, it is. Lots of topics seem to come out from me. (Kanako 3)

Drinking is a social activity. This may be true, at least, in Australia. According to Farringdon, McBride, and Midford (2000), the primary reason for young Australian people to drink is to enhance socialization and to have fun with friends. The authors further explained that in many cases, although some young people drink to get drunk, getting drunk was an unplanned consequence of drinking with friends and having a good time. David noticed that Japanese students had a different purpose for drinking compared to Australian students.

Drinking, extremely [important facilitating factor]. I'll have to honest. But it’s not really so much for the Japanese students. But they do like to be with us when we are drinking, for the social company. I think Japanese people are generally casual drinkers. But the international students will drink to get drunk. I think that’s the difference. But it’s true that it is very important to at least the international students.

Researcher: WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY CASUAL DRINKERS?

Casual ... they don’t drink to become drunk, they drink just to talk with friends, and just to have something to do, like a smoker smokes a cigarette. They are not really trying to be drunk they are just having a good time. (David 4)

David’s account appears to accurately describe the drinking behaviour of the Japanese students at the International House. It also suggests that the drinking behaviour of Japanese students at the International House drink is different from the drinking behaviour of Japanese people in general. Getting drunk is inherently practised and accepted in Japanese culture (Kitano, Chi & Rhee, 1992). Japanese men, not women, also drink to get drunk. Several Japanese students also noticed some differences in
drinking habits across cultures. Asako, for example, was surprised at the amount of alcohol Australian students consumed.

One thing that really surprises me is when I get home and even though it’s only 5.00 a.m. in the morning they’re carrying beer. I think, “Where on earth did the beer come from?” They’re all pretty strong, perhaps even stronger than the Japanese students. (Asako 1)

Kanako also commented on cultural differences in drinking behaviour.

In Japan, we get quiet when we get drunk but it gets livelier in contrast. (Kanako 3)

Despite the differences in drinking habits between the two countries, Japanese students seemed to get used to the Australian way of drinking, and used it as a good opportunity to develop friendships. Asako and Masahiro commented:

I don’t really drink, but I still get in there (the circle of drinking students). (Asako 1)

When they are drinking beer and having good time, I just go to that group so that they also accept me and I can get close to them. I don’t think that I’ve done anything apart from doing things together such as drinking and singing together. (Masahiro 1)

Asako and Masahiro and several other Japanese students thought drinking together would be a good way to develop friendships, and started joining a drinking group in the early stage of their relationships with the international students. The high rating of drinking by Japanese students as a facilitating aspect might be an indication that their attempts were successful. However Natsuko, who observed a negative outcome of alcohol consumption, reflected that drinking was not her way of developing friendships with Australian students.

They change and they drink so much that it is impossible to keep up.
Researcher: THEY GET LOUD?
They get loud and scary and take things home and lose all common sense …

Researcher: AND DO YOU BECOME FRIENDS BY DOING THAT [DRINKING]?
On the surface I think, yes.

Researcher: WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ON THE SURFACE?
Because we are so drunk, we have no idea what each other is saying, so we are in a sense just enjoying that one moment of fun …

Researcher: CAN YOU COMMUNICATE ON A NORMAL LEVEL AT THOSE TIMES?
I don’t think so. In my opinion, that sort of situation is just an opportunity to have fun and relieve stress.

Researcher: A PLACE TO RELIEVE STRESS?
Yes, I think it’s just a place to have fun. It’s not that great for me. (Natsuko 2)

It appears that drinking does not represent an effective strategy for Natsuko to intensify her friendships. Mary also mentioned that dyad activity seemed to be more crucial in intimate friendships since it allows dyads to have more serious conversations.

When the alcohol consumption goes beyond a tolerable amount, it may cause problems. In particular, loss of control, such as behaving in silly ways is considered a major concern among young people in Australia (Farringdon, McBride, & Midford, 2000).

As well as drinking, karaoke was rated highly by both Australian and Japanese students. Karaoke was often reported to be another activity that promoted interactions between the two groups. Students tended to go to karaoke bars after getting drunk on happy occasions. The involvement of drinking encouraged students to feel relaxed, but in addition to that, singing the same song together in a chorus appeared to be a bonding
experience. Sayoko explained how differently a mixed group of students enjoyed karaoke from ordinary Japanese people.

They all sing English songs. We do sing Japanese songs sometimes though. But we prefer that to singing with Japanese friends. Because when we go to karaoke with Japanese people it is always one person singing at a time and everyone else just has to sit and listen. But in this case someone will put in a song and invite everyone to sing along and we sing in groups of four, so we are always using both mikes, and everyone really has a great time singing together. We go into our own little chorus world. (Sayoko 2)

Interestingly, Sayoko seemed to like the way international students enjoy karaoke and adapted herself to it. If Japanese students imposed solo singing, Japanese way of enjoying karaoke, singing at a karaoke bar may not have been rated so highly by both groups.

Thus far, facilitating aspects that were rated similarly by both groups have been discussed. Having an interest in other cultures and languages, and group activities such as drinking and karaoke were rated highly by both Australian and Japanese students. Now facilitating aspects rated differently by both groups will be examined.

Similarity in Interests and Hobbies

Australian and Japanese students rated having common interests and hobbies differently. Australian students rated this factor highest, but it was rated much lower by Japanese students. One of the Australian students, Robert, thought that having something in common was more crucial at the initial stage.

Yeah, having something in common definitely helps as well. Having something that
you can talk about especially in the beginning stages of a friendship. If you don’t have much in common then it’s very hard to continue a friendship and let it grow.

Researcher: DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH SAYOKO FOR INSTANCE?

Travelling. Sayoko’s travelled through India, through Thailand. She’s climbed part of Mount Everest. She wants to go to other places, and it’s all places I’ve either been or would like to go. We are both business majors and so there are common interests there. (Robert 3)

As Robert reported, sharing common interests offers people topics to talk about. Another advantage of sharing common interests is that people have the opportunity to engage in the same activity. Jason explained:

I think you can make friends with someone easy without interests but to be someone’s friend you need common interests to keep the friendship up, otherwise you are not going to have anything to keep the friendship going with. You are not going to have any urge to play with them if you don’t have anything, like any common interests that you want to share together.

If I’m going to do something, I want to do the same things as they would want to do, if you know what I mean. So like, if I like the same sports, we can do the same sports together and enjoy it. (Jason 4)

Involvement in common interests seemed to play a key role in friendship formation, particularly between male friends. Jason further discussed different activities he engaged in, based on the gender of his friend.

With girls, I’d go out and have a coffee or something. It’s different for some reason. Because they don’t … probably won’t like playing sport. With guys, I think it’s better to just go and do something. (Jason 4)

His statement is supported by several researchers (Hays, 1988; Johnson & Aries, 1983). According to them, talking is an essential part of women’s friendship, while men prefer to engage in activities, such as watching or playing sports.
Sharing interests and hobbies had a significant impact on Australian students’ forming friendships with Japanese students. However, surprisingly that was not the case for Japanese students. None of the Japanese students reported that they would consider similar interests or hobbies to be one of the most important significant facilitating factors. This could be due to cultural differences in forming friendships. Masahiro discussed:

\begin{quote}
If I think of my friends, there is a case that we don’t really share the same hobby but we both merely have the same class, the inevitability [not being determined by anyone but being classified by some other force. For example, university decided your class] makes a compulsory framework but we get along during the class of one and a half hour and we don’t really have things to talk about but keep a friendship. (Masahiro 1)
\end{quote}

His statement reflects different ways of forming in-groups between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. As discussed in the previous chapter, in-groups in individualistic cultures are formed based on shared interests, whereas in-groups in collectivistic cultures are ascribed (Triandis et al., 1986). The culturally different ways in forming in-groups may have led to these contrasting results.

Another reason why Japanese students did not mention shared interests as a facilitating factor might be a lack of similarities, particularly between Japanese and Australian male friends. One of the Australian students, Tom said he could not find anyone who shared his keen interest in sport.

\begin{quote}
For myself, my interests are a lot different I feel the Japanese guys my age are, or who are at university are. They are more into fashion, doing their hair, those sorts of things, whereas I’d rather be out on a bike or trying to think of something else to do, more active. That’s probably I’d say why I don’t interact as much with them as I do with Joe or other people. (Tom 3)
\end{quote}
According to Tom, the main area of interest for several Australian male students was sport, but most Japanese male students showed more interest in fashion than sport. Therefore, shared interests did not seem to play a role in forming friendships between the two male groups.

This section revealed that more Australian students reported similarities in interests and hobbies as a salient factor in developing friendships than Japanese students. Several reasons such as culturally different ways of forming in-groups, or not having many Japanese residents who shared the same interests as the male Australian students were discussed. In the next section, an aspect that Japanese students rated higher than Australian students will be discussed.

*Shared Accommodation*

One efficient way to increase the frequency of contact is residential proximity (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977). People who live closer to each other are more likely to become friends than those who do not (Hays, 1985; Griffin & Sparks, 1990). Nahemow and Lawton (1975) further claimed that proximity is especially crucial in friendship formation between dissimilar people since their paths rarely cross otherwise. If that were the case, residential proximity would benefit students from different cultural backgrounds more than students of the same cultural group. Actually, several intercultural studies (Gareis, 1995; Kudo & Simkin, 2003) suggested that residential proximity was an essential element of intercultural friendship formation. Kudo and Simkin, for example, reported that their Japanese respondents at an Australian
university made "intercultural friends" (Kudo & Simkin, 2003) at the dormitory on an Australian university campus. This finding also corresponds with the aim of the International House at the site of this research inquiry.

As shown in Table 4.2, shared accommodation was rated as the second highest facilitating factor by Japanese students, but it was rated rather lower by Australian students. Several Japanese students explained in earlier interviews that living in the shared accommodation provided a natural way of developing an intercultural friendship. Masako, for example, said:

*But moreover, this environment encourages us to understand each other naturally without thinking of intercultural exchange consciously. (Masako 2)*

An Australian student, Mary, also reflected that the International House broadened her perspective through intercultural interactions. Mary explained why she rated shared accommodation as the most crucial facilitating factor.

*Whenever I look around the house, like at any particular time, like I always see like a group of people from all different countries sitting together and talking and having fun and having a good time. I think that’s a great thing because these people have so many differences in so many ways, and there could be so many barriers, but I mean most of the time, we don’t let that get to us. We use it as an advantage instead of a disadvantage. We use it to learn more about each other and more about other parts of the world. (Mary 4)*

Her account supports the previously mentioned study by Nahemow and Lawton (1975), and provides further support for the importance of proximity for dissimilar people in friendship formation. Another popular reason reported by Japanese students was that it provided an enormous amount time for interactions. Natsuko explained the advantage Japanese residents have over other Japanese students.
There is a difference between here and outside. If you live here, sometimes you have to be with them and you share a great amount of time with them. I've found that the Japanese students living outside are not good at introducing themselves to let the international students recognize them. It’s easier to interact with them at the International House. It’s natural to do it because you live here. (Natsuko 1)

Both Australian and Japanese students mentioned the significance of spending a lot of time together. Some Japanese students emphasized the importance of hanging around together. Sayoko explained that activities revolving around the International House are a unique aspect of living together.

Yes, I think that living together and meeting each other at school are very different. When you are living together there are times when you talk about really serious things, and we cook together and go to school together, and study together, so the time that we spend together is different. (Sayoko 1)

This comment is consistent with Kudo and Simkin’s (2003) findings. Their study highlighted that campus residences where meals were served did not provide a chance for Japanese students to make sufficient contact with Australian residents. This implies that proximity at the dormitories was not simply enough for regular intercultural contact to occur. Obviously a residence that provides events for residents, a common area for “hanging around”, and a chance of sharing household activities such as housework and cooking, offers the most contact.

The amount of interaction appeared to vary depending on the type of accommodation such as off-campus accommodation or on-campus accommodation (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Mary compared the International House where she lived and a dormitory at her home institution and said that the International House offered more intercultural interactions than her Australian dormitory. Mary explained:
Mary described the International House as “a huge house” and later commented, “I mean now after looking back at the last nine months maybe. Because we are so used to it. Now, it just feels like a family I guess”. In addition to Mary, another Australian student, Tom, used the word “family” when he described the cozy environment that the International House provided.

Yeah, I think the bond of just living together in such a close environment. You always see the same people. Everyone has their ... puts their input in, these sorts of jokes, the serious people, the not so serious people, we sort of mixed in to one happy family I suppose. (Tom 3)

Even though Australian students mentioned the positive impact of shared accommodation on intercultural interactions in the first interview, they rated it much lower than Japanese students in the fourth interview. One of the possible reasons for their negative evaluation could reflect the biased ratio between Japanese students and non-Japanese students at the International House. When the first interview was conducted there were only ten Japanese students out of fifty residents, and the number of Japanese students decreased to four towards the end of their stay. Australian students could have given up on pursuing interactions with the few remaining Japanese students, and found friendships outside the International House. The excessive number of non-Japanese residents was a good environment for Japanese students to intensify intercultural interactions. Even in the first interview, Asako felt this unbalanced ratio was an advantage for Japanese students.
The ratio is about 10 Japanese students to 40 exchange students. Most of the students are exchange students, so no matter where you go, they are always around. (Asako 1)

This unbalanced ratio also could explain why Japanese students rated shared accommodation higher on than Australian students. Another possible reason might be due to different ways of forming interpersonal relationships across collectivistic cultures and individualistic cultures. As previously discussed, in-groups in collectivistic cultures are ascribed but in individualistic cultures they are achieved. For the Japanese students, all the residents in the International House are perceived to be members of the in-group. Therefore, the Japanese students made their best effort to keep their relationships stable and show high interdependence with other residents. On the contrary, Australian students might not feel a commitment to in-group members of the International House like Japanese students do. Since the Australian students’ relationships are generally developed through shared interests, these students may feel that in-group membership is less important.

Organizing Events

Organizing events was rated highly, second, by the Japanese students, but was rated much lower, ninth, by the Australian students. In the context of this study, organizing events refers to organizing parties for special occasions such as Christmas, or birthday parties for friends.
In the early interviews, many Japanese students reported their positive experience of organizing a Christmas party together with international students. Satoshi, a male Japanese student, commented:

_We had a party for the people who left in December together with a Christmas party. It wasn’t one where it was only Japanese students doing the planning, everyone got in together and helped organize it, and the exchange students thought of games that we could play, and we all baked cakes from different countries together. Everyone cleaned up together as well, which was really good. It was a really moving party._ (Satoshi 2)

Satoshi further commented about his desire to have similar opportunities in the future.

_It is always the Japanese students who decide on what day the event will be held and other things like that, there is always that kind of pattern, and it would be so much more different if people would jump in and help. I really wish that the exchange students would get involved and we could talk more._ (Satoshi 2)

Interestingly, the same event was not reported by any Australian students with the same level of enthusiasm. Organizing events together appeared to play a more important role for Japanese students compared to Australian students. One of the possible explanations relates to differences in cultural values. Masako explained:

_Yes, I think that is the biggest thing. I was always someone who liked to do things by myself. And that will never stop of course, but I have really felt the joy of getting in and doing things as a group. I have discovered that when people have a common goal, and work together towards that goal, such as when working with the students from all different countries, you have to look beyond a person’s nationality._ (Masako 2)

Masako admitted that she was individualistic, but she started appreciating collectivistic behaviour, such as working as a group toward a common goal through organizing parties with others. Even though many Australians were involved with these parties, it
was interesting that they did not mention that working together facilitated the development of intimacy with Japanese students. George actually noted that organizing an event was a facilitating factor, but not because of exactly the same reason given by Masako.

*I think organizing events together is an important factor. Like the school festival, the softball game, the school festival that was good. A good chance to meet some people. Things like, we had a class trip, a school trip to KORANKEI I’m not sure who organized it, but some Japanese students went and some foreign students went and that was a good chance to ... we had a long bus ride so we got to talk to some new students. I used them as guides ...*(George 4)

George seemed to think that organizing an event together provided a chance to meet new people, but not a chance to intensify relationships. David often reported on the importance of organizing events, but not necessarily organizing them together with other in-group members. David commented:

*No we are finding that each of us is having a turn to organize something. I don’t think anyone has organized two things yet. I think we are letting, I’m not even sure that many people are aware doing it this way, but I have a feeling we want to let everyone try to organize what they want. So we don’t feel like we have to... would all like everyone to do something important for themselves and for everyone. So we are all taking turns organizing something.* (David 2)

David’s comment might reflect the way in-groups are formed in individualistic cultures. As previously discussed, in-groups are not ascribed but achieved in individualistic cultures. What David has in his mind is not an assigned group but a voluntary group based on shared interests, where group members are free to leave when they lose interest.
These students’ comments about organizing events revealed contrasting views about in-groups. Japanese students appear to think that in-group members should work together to achieve the group goals and through co-operation with other group members, relationships will develop. Australian students also value in-groups, but their concept of in-groups seems to be looser. Since the Australian students belonged to more in-groups based on their interests, in-groups did not necessarily last for long.

Inhibiting Factors

Dorm Rules

One organizational matter was perceived by all students as having a major inhibit impact on their intercultural interactions in the International House. They were dorm rules about visitors.

Both Australian students and Japanese students rated dorm rules as the most inhibiting aspect they experienced. One of the rules they reported as an issue was visiting times. The rule is that visitors are supposed to leave the International House at 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. Jason explained why the rule had a negative impact on interactions between international and Japanese students.

Yes I think the rules as well like that because they don’t let the friends in after 6:00 p.m. so we can’t afford to go out and meet our friends and we don’t have transport, so they have to come here and because they’re at uni, they could just come here straight after uni but have to leave at 6:00 p.m. So they won’t come here because it’s not worth their time, they’ll come here for half an hour and have to leave. (Jason 2)
Another rule that was reported to be a problem by many students concerned the limited space for visitors. Visitors were only allowed in the hall or the courtyard of the International House. Kyoko discussed how the rule suppressed certain kinds of activities.

Yes, and really visitors are not allowed up on the second floor. They are supposed to stay out of the rooms and even out of the kitchen. They are not allowed into the rooms where you can use the internet, or into the garden. So they aren’t even allowed into the kitchen, so we can’t cook together. (Kyoko 2)

Even though there were rules about visitors, the Australian students learnt quickly how to get around them. The Japanese visitors, on the contrary, were reluctant to break the rules. Some Australian students perceived this reluctance as another cause for inhibiting contact.

Yeah, they won’t come in the dorm and break the rules, because they are Japanese. But we will say no, don’t worry, it’s a stupid rule, just stay. And that’s life.

Researcher: IT’S TOUGH FOR THEM TOO.

It’s tough for them as well. Like they won’t come and break a rule usually. It’s usually … if we don’t know the rule, like there are lots of rules we don’t know. We all think the rules are stupid, we will tell them don’t worry about it. Ignore it. (Jason 4)

Overall both Australian and Japanese students recognized dorm rules as a significant inhibiting factor, but Japanese students might have thought dorm rules affected Australian students more than Japanese students.

Yes (laughs). The rules of student house. There are many international students who don’t understand why the rules exist. So at first I thought that they are too strict but they are necessary to live without stresses. Some might make noise at night or some might want to sleep quietly. If they understand the rules, there is no problem in interaction but I think that some might want to have party till late at night here. (Kanako 4)
Kanako understood how frustrating dorm rules would be for the Australian students, but at the same time she thought rules are necessary for people to live comfortably. Her perception of the rules seems to reflect an allocentric view. Allocentrism is a personal orientation related to collectivism (Triandis et al., 1985). According to Triandis et al., allocentric individuals in collectivistic cultures have a tendency to accept, without questioning, in-group norms such as dorm rules.

Even though both Australian and Japanese students rated dorm rules as the most significant inhibiting factor, this result might have been influenced by the gender imbalance. The findings related to the Australian students, in particular, could have reflected a male perspective. As the Australian students’ accounts revealed, only male students found it inconvenient to be prohibited from bringing their friends to a common area after 6:00 p.m. In contrast, an Australian female student expressed a favorable opinion about dorm rules.

Yes, I mean, it works in Japan. I think it’s great, I mean I love living in the dorm. And I know a lot of people don’t really agree with them, the rules. But from my opinion, when you think about it, it makes sense, I mean, that’s how it has to be. (Mary 4)

Mary’s account is consistent with Kanako’s statements and suggests that not only cultural background but gender might have affected the results.

Language Barriers

Both Australian and Japanese students rated language barriers highly as an important inhibiting factor that influenced intercultural interactions. Generally speaking, students
were in a bilingual environment where they could communicate in the language both parties felt most comfortable with. If the English spoken by the Japanese student was much better than the Japanese spoken by the Australian student, they tended to choose English as a means of communication, and vice versa. Even though they had freedom in choosing their language, some students felt that lack of fluency in their second language inhibited intercultural interactions. At the beginning of their stay, both Australian and Japanese students expressed anxiety in speaking the language of the other. Mary said:

_The only reason I would mind would be because I would be nervous about speaking Japanese and not being able to communicate or understand what they said in reply, but other than that, that would be the only obstacle in the way I guess._ (Mary 1)

As they got used to life in Japan, the Australian students started feeling more confident in communicating in Japanese. However, they still felt handicapped in terms of having a meaningful conversation that would intensify the relationships. George illustrated:

_OF course there is a language barrier contributing as an inhibiting factor. Especially like, when you meet somebody and your language isn’t as good so you can only talk about a limited amount of things. So you might talk about where you are from, what you like to eat and stuff. And then next time you meet them again, you sort of don’t have anything new to talk about, because you’ve already done the introduction, you don’t have the vocab or the knowledge to talk about more complex things._ (George 4)

Several Japanese students, who normally had no problem in dyadic conversations, also felt the language barrier when they were with a group of English speakers. When an international student has a conversation with a Japanese student, she/he might adjust their language according to their partner’s proficiency level, but they may be less sensitive to the presence of non-native speakers in a big group. Japanese students felt
left out probably because they could not fully participate in the fast paced conversational style of native English speakers. Sayoko shared her feelings:

*Lately I do feel that the language barrier can be a problem. I tried not to think about that before, but it is a problem. For example when students are chatting in English and I’m the only one Japanese person, I feel that I don’t belong here. I know they will tell us what they are talking about if I stop them, but I don’t, because I don’t want to destroy the atmosphere.* (Sayoko 4)

Not being able to join the conversation was actually not only due to language problems. Mary explained that it might be due to differences in sense of humour.

*Actually one of the Japanese girls in the house I remember she said to me before that even though she’s really good friends with some of the girls there, she doesn’t feel that she can really know them, or really can be as close as she can with her Japanese friends because of the language difference. Because they never speak in Japanese to her, and even though she spent a year overseas, in Canada, she can’t understand everything they say to her and it’s hard for example, when we are in a big group and there’s a joke and every one laughs. Like she won’t always understand and things like that.* (Mary 1)

The Australian and Japanese students in this study tended to blame their lack of fluency when they have intercultural communication problems. In fact, idioms, slang, colloquialisms (Gareis, 2000), humour (Gareis, 2000; Koyanagi, 1999; Yokota, 1991b) and second language anxiety (Foss & Reitzel, 1988; MacIntyre & Catherine, 1996) could be more critical obstacles in the development of intercultural relationships.

*Financial Matters*

As expected, Australian students rated not having enough money to socialize highly as an inhibiting aspect, but Japanese students did not. In the Japanese context, a certain
amount of money is required to engage in social activities, such as going to the movies. The Australian students perceived the cost of living in Japan as quite high. Their perception is consistent with Matsubara and Ishikuma’s earlier study (1993) that reported international students in Japan sought assistance for financial problems more than psychological problems from counsellors.

All the international students living in the International House received a scholarship every month from their Japanese university, but several Australian students complained that the amount was not enough since the cost of living in Japan, such as food and public transportation, was so much higher than their home country.

I think, I’ve seen other people, who rarely go out because they say they have no money. I guess that could be the same anywhere not just Japan.

Researcher: IT DOESN’T COST MONEY TO SOCIALIZE IN AUSTRALIA?

Not as much money. Things like catching trains and stuff are a lot cheaper. Maybe it’s because of our location out here, going to SAKAE [downtown] costs like, eight hundred yen (twelve Australian dollars). (George 4)

Dorm rules prohibiting visitors from staying after 6:00 p.m. discouraged Australian students from inviting Japanese guests to the International House. This situation resulted in the Australians spending even more money since they had to socialize outside the campus. Jason explained:

But because we have to go somewhere else as well, we have to use money to do ... whenever we visit a friend or something ... we have to spend money, like to do something ... Yeah, transportation, and when you get somewhere, like out to lunch, or out to dinner or to a movie or whatever. It works out really expensive. (Jason 4)

Another reason for the high cost of living experienced by the Australian students was due to their lifestyle. If Australian students tried to maintain the same lifestyle they
enjoyed back home, it could well end up costing a lot of money. Robert explained:

Like in Australia with my lifestyle I always went out to a lot of clubs and everything with my friends, or to a lot of bars and there is no way I could afford to do that in Japan ... I think it’s probably the reason why I find Japan so expensive is trying to live to the standard or to Western, not standard but the same way or styles I would at home, it’s very expensive in Japan. (Robert 2)

In order to enjoy their stay with a limited amount of money, Australian students tried different strategies such as eating instant food on a regular basis, or buying beer at the convenience store instead of going out for a drink. Tom described his strategy.

I think the money was a big part, however there were ways to overcome that ... I mean the reason why I got out on my bike and made friends is because I didn’t have to spend money to do that. It was something free I enjoyed and I made friends and I got taken out to dinner and those sorts of things. (Tom 4)

The last possible reason why Australian students find financial matters an issue is that they spend a lot of money on local trips. Since their time in Japan is limited, they tend to visit as many places as possible during their stay. George explained:

I feel like I’m on exchange so I have to go out and do things. I’ve got to go to Sakae (downtown). Whereas back home, I’m like, no, I can go anytime. I live here, I don’t need to do anything special, not spend too much money. But here I have to go travelling because it’s a real opportunity so I have to spend money. (George 3)

Interestingly, none of the Japanese students mentioned financial problems as an inhibiting factor in intercultural interactions. This could have been due to the fact that it may have been much easier to manage their expenses, since Japanese students were living in their own country. Unlike international students, there were no restrictions for Japanese students in terms of working part-time, and more than half of the Japanese
students interviewed for this study worked part-time on a daily basis. They can also save travel expenses since they are not as interested in local sights.

\textit{Japanese Visitors Breaking Rules}

Japanese visitors breaking rules was rated highly only by Japanese students. This result might come from the tutor-like role assigned to Japanese students by the University. As reported in the section on dorm rules, Australian students simply ignored the rules that did not make any sense to them. This attitude towards dorm rules seemed to make some Japanese students feel very uncomfortable. Robert noticed the feelings of Japanese students.

\textit{When we first arrived, many of us sort of broke the rules to the dorm and like, we all talked about it, and we didn’t have a problem with it. The fact that, like, oh I want to be here after six o’clock, big deal. However, some Japanese students felt really uncomfortable with the fact that we were breaking the rules. (Robert 3)}

Some Australian students brought their Japanese friends to the International House outside the visiting hours and asked Japanese students to turn a blind eye. This request made some Japanese students feel puzzled. Sayoko and Kyoko shared their frustration.

\textit{… so there are people that accept the rule after understanding both views, but there are also people who do not understand. They always come to me and ask me if they can let them stay secretly, but I can’t say, “Yes”. (Sayoko, 1)}

\textit{… but in this case, from a Japanese perspective, we cannot say in front of everyone, “We’ll hide it”. After lots of international students have already seen it, and then if we Japanese concealed it, it’d mean that we had said, “That’s okay” in front of everyone. In a sense, the opinion of the Japanese students is partly that of the University, so we have a responsibility. That’s why we cannot say, “We’ll keep it
secret” as we are given that role and responsibility even though I would say, “Okay” if we were just friends. (Kyoko 4)

Kyoko’s statement, in particular, showed the Japanese notion of HONNE and TATEMAE. TATEMAE means “front” or “façade” and HONNE means “real voice” or “real intention” (Matsumoto & De Mente, 2000). TATEMAE is used to keep up appearances so that the group harmony is protected, while HONNE protects one’s own self. What Kyoko really wanted to do is protect her friend, but the situation and her position might have forced her to express her TATEMAE to maintain the order and harmony in the International House.

Communication Styles

Expressing feelings openly is another inhibiting factor that was rated differently by Australian and Japanese students. It was rated highly by Japanese students, but not by Australian students. This was expected as expressing feelings openly was a behaviour practiced mainly by Australians.

Communication style seemed to be related to other cultural dimensions, such as individualism and collectivism. Members of supposedly individualistic cultures, such as Australia, tend to use a more direct communication style. On the other hand, members of a collectivistic culture such as Japan, tend to use an indirect communication style (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Using different communication styles appeared to be a source of communication breakdown. A number of Japanese students reported that showing negative feelings openly made them feel uncomfortable.
For example, American guys express their feelings on face very clearly. This one American boy can’t hide his feelings at all. Some Japanese keep such person at arm’s length. (Masahiro 1)

Several Australian students, on the other hand, felt that their difficulty in understanding the Japanese style of communication was exacerbated if Japanese students did not express their feelings openly. Mary explained:

But we, I mean other people, especially Europeans as well they can’t really understand that if you feel something, then why can’t you just say it. How else are you going to get through to them, how on earth is anyone going to understand you, how are you going to make people understand you if you don’t say what you are thinking and be direct. But Japanese aren’t direct. So yeah, there can be problems there sometimes. (Mary 4)

Some international students negatively evaluated the indirect communication style of Japanese students, which could be an important cause for intercultural misunderstandings (Koyanagi, 1999). One of the Japanese students realized that her vague expressions seemed to confuse some international students.

One thing that I think myself and even other Japanese need to keep in mind is that we can appear very indecisive towards others. The international students often talk about it. When we say, “See you next time”, they ask, “When is next time?”. When they ask, “We’d like you to come to the bar with us tomorrow, can you come?” I end up saying, “Maybe tomorrow will be okay”. They ask, “Do you really mean maybe?”. (Kyoko 1)

Therefore, Australian students expressing feelings openly, and Japanese students not expressing feelings openly, may have caused some communication problem, but interestingly, this situation did not seem to be an issue for most Australian students.

Overall, two facilitating factors were found to be important to both Australian and Japanese students. These were having an interest in other cultures and languages, and
group activities such as drinking and karaoke. Several other facilitating factors were perceived differently across cultures. For example, the most salient factor for Australian students was sharing common interests but surprisingly, it was found to be much less salient by Japanese students. This result might reflect Japanese ways of establishing friendships based on in-group membership rather than shared interests, or it could simply suggest that the Australian and Japanese students did not have many common interests to facilitate friendship. Living in the International House where students can mix all the time and organize events together were, on the contrary, perceived to be more salient factors by Japanese students compared to Australian students. Shared accommodation naturally facilitated friendships for Japanese students since it increased the amount of interactions, but that was not the case for Australian students. There were so few Japanese students living at the International House that they sought friendships outside the International House. Working for common goals such as organizing an event helped Japanese students bond with international students due to their collectivistic cultural values.

Both Australian and Japanese students reported two inhibiting factors: dorm rules and language barriers. Two other inhibiting factors were rated differently across groups. For example, Australian students viewed financial problems as more salient than Japanese students. Japanese students, on the other hand, perceived differences in communication style to be more salient. However, the reader might need to be reminded of the small number of participants and the gender imbalance across groups. These inhibiting factors will be examined in more detail in the next chapter on social and emotional challenges in cross-cultural relational development.
CONCLUSION

This chapter suggested several variables that might influence strategies for intercultural relational development. They were students’ expectations (e.g., giving or expecting assistance with language learning), their cultural background, the context of participation (e.g., public spaces or bedrooms), time (e.g., initiating stage or intensifying stage), gender, and individual differences in a group. This finding highlights the limitation of stage models. Social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), for example, does not take any factors other than time into consideration. Cross-cultural studies based on uncertainty reduction theory (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984, 1986a; Gudykunst et al., 1992) examined cultural factors, but not other salient factors. This study implies that factors other than culture and time need to be investigated in studies on intercultural relational development.

Another major finding is that strategies for intercultural relational development overlap with strategies highlighted by uncertainty reduction theory. However, to what extent each strategy is used was found to be dependent on the factors mentioned above.

Last but not least, some strategies were found to become reciprocal rather than unidirectional. For example, support becomes reciprocal when intimacy developed. This finding suggests the significance of examining the experiences of both local and international students in studies on intercultural relational development.
CHAPTER FIVE
SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN INTERCULTURAL RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, participants’ initial expectations, the general strategies used by participants at different stages of their relational development, and elements that influenced their relational development were identified and discussed. This chapter examines the social and emotional challenges experienced by students in their intercultural relational development journey. The first part identifies and discusses the spontaneous accounts of critical incidents volunteered by students throughout the first three interviews. The second part analyses students’ elicited interpretations of two selected critical incidents.

SPONTANEOUS ACCOUNTS OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

In cross-cultural environments, people tend to face social and emotional challenges due to cultural differences between interactants. As mentioned in the methodology section, stories about how participants experienced social challenges (critical incidents) were collected throughout the interview process. Some stories emerged spontaneously during interviews as personal experiences, and others were volunteered following probes.

The number of spontaneous critical incidents reported by Australian and Japanese students in each interview is listed in Table 5.1.
As is evident in Table 5.1 Australian students reported only two critical incidents during the first interview, but the number of reported critical incidents increased during the second and third interviews. On the other hand, Japanese students reported six times more critical incidents in the first interview, and the number of reported critical incidents did not change significantly over time. The huge difference in the number of critical incidents reported in the initial interview influenced the total number of critical incidents reported. Overall, the number of critical incidents reported by Japanese students was much larger than that of the Australian students.

One possible reason fewer critical incidents were reported by Australian students might be related to the Australian students’ lack of familiarity with their new cultural environment. The first interview was conducted only a few weeks after their arrival, when Australian students were still busy settling into their new environment. On the other hand, Japanese students may have had more time to reflect on interactions with international students since they were already familiar with their environment.
Another possible reason might be related to the "U" curve of culture shock. As several researchers (Lysgaard, 1955; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) claim, students experience initial excitement about being in a new culture. This initial stage is called the “honeymoon stage” and Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi and Lassegard (2006) explain that people tend to experience positive emotions because they focus more on the visible aspects of the culture such as food, scenery, and clothing, and ignore more complex and less obvious aspects of the culture. The Australian students reported few incidents during the first interview because they might not have yet been deeply involved in the host culture.

One other possible reason could be the special environment of the International House where the students spent most of their time. Even though the International House was located in Japan, it is very different from a typical dormitory for Japanese students. Although international students were encouraged to speak Japanese, the common language among students from Western countries was English. Not only language, but also culture and communication style, such as greeting rituals, tended to be more Western since members of the International House were predominately from Western countries. This perhaps reduced the opportunity for Australian students to initially experience any cultural differences and, as Koyanagi (1999) claims, this type of accommodation, which does not elicit close interaction with Japanese people, may also discourage international students from adapting to local cultural rules.

Another difference in the critical incidents reported by Australian and Japanese students is who was involved in the stories. More than half of the critical incidents reported by Australian students involved Japanese students or local people outside the International
House, whereas incidents reported by Japanese students involved only international students at the International House. This illustrates that Australian students tried to develop relationships outside the International House as discussed in Chapter 4.

The last difference between the two cultural groups of students concerns the distribution of reported critical incidents. Three Australian students mainly reported the Australian critical incidents, whereas almost all the Japanese students generated the Japanese critical incidents equally. This result reveals that individual differences among Australian students are more salient. A possible reason why these three students experienced more conflict when they encountered the local culture might be due to dissimilarity in personal values. Their personal values might have been different from the cultural norms of the local people, and therefore they experienced more uneasiness whenever the two opposing values clashed.

Types of social and emotional challenges [critical incidents] reported by both Australian and Japanese students are listed in Table 5.2. As is evident in the table there is some overlap, but other social and emotional challenges are distinct to only one of the cultural groups.
Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Social and Emotional Challenges</th>
<th>Similar across groups</th>
<th>Distinct to groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of humour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication style</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental relationships</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Non-verbal behaviours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable behaviours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-groups and out-groups</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A = Australian students, J = Japanese students

Common Social and Emotional Challenges

Similar challenges were reported by both groups include differing sense of humour, differences in communication style, instrumental relationships, such as being used as a language teacher or interpreter, nonverbal behaviours, language, Australian students’ unacceptable behaviours, and the different treatment of in-group and out-group members. In the following section, these challenges will be discussed in detail.

Sense of Humour

The most frequently perceived type of critical incident is related to sense of humour. Two critical incidents were reported by Australian students and 15 by Japanese students.
The number of critical incidents reported by Japanese students was seven times more than that reported by Australian students. This result might have been influenced by the gender imbalance. Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, and Heerey (2001) point out that males are more likely to tease than females, and also females are more sensitive to face threatening behaviours. Face is defined as sense of favorable social self-worth and the estimated other-worth in an interpersonal context (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Australian male students, who were the majority of the Australian cohort, often teased Japanese female students. Japanese female students may have been more offended since they tend to be more concerned about their public image. The tendency of Japanese female students to have their feelings hurt might be also related to their cultural backgrounds. Since Japanese students tend to be concerned about saving face (Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Lin, and Nishida, 1991), they reported more critical incidents related to sense of humor than Australian students.

Six Japanese students contributed the fifteen incidents reported by Japanese students. One student, Asako, contributed five critical incidents on sense of humour. This might imply that not only gender but also personality has an influence on how students react to a culturally different sense of humour. Asako herself commented on her personality in the second interview, saying, “I’m a bit sensitive. So I should be a little more thick skinned”. It is important to note, that another student might not have even reported those same incidents.

The nature of these incidents revealed their unidirectionality, with Japanese female students typically having their feelings hurt by the humour used by male international students. This result could have been caused by the gender imbalance across cohorts. If
the gender ratio had been opposite, fewer joking incidents might have occurred. Or even if they had occurred, Japanese male students would not have been hurt like Japanese female students in this study. Typical incidents reported by Japanese students refer to: 1) joking about Japanese students’ second language proficiency (English or French), 2) jokes about cross-gender relationships, 3) joking about the host country, 4) joking generated from Australian students misunderstanding a Japanese phrase, and 5) joking at a party. Each of them will be examined in turn.

Four critical incidents involving international students’ joking about the English proficiency of Japanese students were reported by Japanese students. Asako described her experience of being teased about her English in the second interview.

I would always speak English with him, and he would make comments such as, “Your English is so wrong”, so he wasn’t even helping me to improve in any way. Even if he wasn’t actually making fools of us as such, it was not a positive experience, and I felt quite uncomfortable. (Asako 2)

Asako actually did not identify the behaviour of this international student as a joke. As it occurred so often, perhaps Asako felt that the international student was ridiculing her. The same incident was actually reported by Asako’s friend, Sayoko, from her perspective.

... but there is a Japanese student who gets teased because of her Japanese English. I think the person who is doing the teasing really only means it as a joke, but the Japanese student gets quite hurt by it and she cannot say anything, even uttering one word becomes difficult. But it is not all of the American students that are doing it, only him. (Sayoko 2)

Sayoko interpreted the incident as a joke. She might have heard the international student say he was just joking, but his true intention is unknown since the joker did not reveal
this incident. Not only Asako, but Masako and Sayoko, also shared their personal experiences of being teased about their English or French by American or French students. All of them took the joke seriously and as a result, they felt depressed.

*There are times when I am told by American students that my English is strange. But they are just joking and saying it as friends, and I could not really take it as a joke and I got quite depressed. They really do care about me, but is like they are cutting me down and then building me up again and again.* (Sayoko 1)

*They never say, “Wonderful”. They say, “Masako can speak it” or “This girl can speak French” to others but they never tell me. For example, although when they praise it, they say opposite things and admit it. I don’t understand it well. I really don’t. But when they see I’m very shocked hearing harsh things, they say, “No, no it was just a joke”.* (Masako 3)

As Masako explained, French students’ saying the opposite of what they really think seems to be confusing to her. Masako further revealed that she did not ever get used to the sarcasm used by French students.

*At first, I really took it seriously and felt up and down but they taught me, “No. It’s like this and in France, we say things like this”, so I don’t get hurt much but I still don’t understand if they are telling a joke or not.* (Masako 3)

It is easy to imagine how sarcasm is difficult to be recognized in cross-cultural situations. Since the real intention is hidden by subtle nonverbal behaviour, people sometimes fail to recognize humour even in an intracultural context. As second language learners find it difficult to read subtle changes in facial expressions and tone of voice, it might be almost impossible for them to identify sarcasm in a second language. Actually, as discussed in Chapter 1, several intercultural studies (Moyer, 1987; Yokota, 1991b) revealed that both Japanese and international students acknowledge a danger in the other party taking a joke seriously in cross-cultural
situations. Sarcasm will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Three incidents involving jokes about cross-gender relationships were also reported by Japanese students. All the incidents reported did not reflect their own experiences but those of other students. Two incidents revealed that comments by American male students such as, “Didn’t you stay in a man’s house?” or “Hey, I bet you get around a lot”, offended Japanese and Chinese students. Another incident regarding a similar theme seems to be even more serious.

_The first time it happened I think the guy was joking around and he was telling the girl that he loved her. Now, he was only joking, but she took him seriously, and was really hurt and cried over it. I didn't know about it at the time, but she told me about it later._ (Sayoko 3)

It was interesting that the Japanese student who was directly involved in this incident revealed none of these details. It could be imagined that this student might have had their feelings hurt so much that they could not share them with the researcher.

Two critical incidents relating to one American student’s joking about Japan or Japanese people made Japanese students wonder why he came to Japan. Asako reported that the American student made fun of English used in Japanese pop culture such as lyrics of songs or logos on t-shirts. Although Asako tried to justify Japanese use of English, the American student never acknowledged her point, so Asako concluded he just wanted to ridicule Japanese culture and Japanese people. Not only Asako, but Natsuko also thought that American students generally looked down on Japanese students by making negative comments about Japanese people, such as, “Japanese are like this or Japanese are like that”.

The fourth type of critical incident was similar to the previous one since Asako reported both of them and both ended in an argument. This incident concerns joking generated from Australian students’ misunderstanding of Japanese language. This specific incident is highlighted here since two people who witnessed the incident talked about it spontaneously and independently. It started with Asako’s complementing on George’s new hairstyle.

> When I was trying to compliment my friend in Japanese the other day, he took it the wrong way and was quite offended. When George got his haircut I said “Wow! It looks so much better!” and he said “What? You’re saying it looked bad before? That's so rude”. I wondered why he was so angry at my compliment.

To repair this misunderstanding, Asako tried to explain her real intention.

> Even though I tried hard to explain to him that in Japanese it actually has quite a positive meaning and he shouldn't take it the wrong way, he wouldn’t listen to me. He just said, “You’re just saying that because I don’t speak Japanese”. I’d had enough and felt a bit depressed.

Feeling depressed, Asako went back to her room. Worrying about what was happening, her American male friend, a Japanese male friend, and finally George himself visited her room.

> That time a Japanese guy called Masahiro and Andy and George came. First Andy (American) asked if I was crying because George was in a bad mood. He’s always teasing me. I told him he had a big mouth and to get out. Then Masahiro asked if I was okay, which really made me think how kind Japanese guys are, and I told him I was okay. Then George said he was sorry and that where he is from it’s a kind of joke and not to worry about it.

Researcher: SO WHAT GEORGE SAID WAS ACTUALLY A JOKE?

His words were, “I was just teasing you so don’t get so worked up. If you’re going to go to Australia next year you’d better get used to jokes like that” ... I started to worry if I’d be able to put up with humour like that. (Asako 2)
Asako contrasted the different ways others comforted her. She said an American student approached her in a teasing mood. The American student might have been trying to make her feel better by playing a joke on her, but it seemed to make her even more upset. Asako appeared to have liked Masahiro’s way of comforting her.

This incident was categorized as a joke since George himself said it was a joke. However, it could be interpreted differently by other witnesses as discussed below. Two other Japanese students, Masahiro and Kyoko actually reported the same incident in the third interview. The interpretation of Masahiro, who was actively involved in this incident, is examined first.

There was one time when Asako was feeling a little down, and this is related to George. He had just had a hair cut and everyone was saying how good it looked that he had cut it and changed the colour. In English, you have become handsome, means you were not good looking before but now you are, but in Japanese it means you were good looking before, but now you are even more good looking. That is the nuance that it has. So Asako said that to George and he was insulted and she tried to explain but he just went back to his room sulking saying, “... in English, in English”. I thought geez, this is Japan, you are here to learn about Japan and Japanese and here we are trying to explain it to you, so try and understand the nuances at least. Then Asako was so upset that she had to go back to her room, and her voice was very shaky. (Masahiro 3)

According to Masahiro, the incident seemed to be caused by George’s lack of Japanese proficiency. George appeared to have translated Asako’s comments into English first. Then his English translation could have made him feel upset. If he could have understood her comments in Japanese, his misinterpretation might not have occurred. Understanding the other person’s message through translation obviously is an obstacle in efficient communication since one cannot find equivalent expressions in another language most of the time.
Masahiro’s report also reveals how much Asako felt hurt. Masahiro said her voice was shaky. George seemed to be very upset as well. Masahiro reported, “He went bright red. He was so angry”. In Asako’s report, there is no explanation why George came to apologize to her. Masahiro’s report provides the answer.

He was really surprised when he heard the reason why she went back to her room. “I really made her feel like that”, is what he said. And he asked me later if what she said really did mean that. I told him that she wasn’t being sarcastic and that it really does have a good meaning in Japanese. And he is quite shy so later when we didn’t know he went to her room and said sorry, and that night they watched a video together. (Masahiro 3)

Masahiro’s report shows that George did not notice Asako’s emotional state. If Masahiro had not informed George that Asako was upset, he could have missed Asako’s nonverbal cues such as tone of her voice, and they might have stayed on bad terms. Kyoko also briefly reported the same incident.

Asako told George, “You became cool”, and he got so angry. He misunderstood that “became cool” meant “it used to be bad, but it became good” and George told her something. Then Asako got really angry and they had an argument. But one hour later they made up and were chatting together. I’ve only seen that one.

Researcher: WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

I think it’s a different interpretation of what she said.

Researcher: WHY DIDN’T GEORGE GET THE MESSAGE?

Because of George’s lack of language proficiency. (Kyoko3)

Like Masahiro, Kyoko also thought this critical incident was caused by language. Kyoko may have blamed the language because of her interest in Japanese. She is a Japanese major and interested in teaching Japanese as a second language. Her interest in analyzing Japanese language might have encouraged her to report about this incident.
Another incident relating to Japanese students having their feelings hurt by jokes was reported in the second interview by Asako. It took place when people got together at a party.

... when we had a party and we had no where near enough food for the number of people that were attending, he (Tom) said to me, “Hey Asako, why are you eating so much when you know we don’t have enough food?”, in front of everybody in a really loud voice. I was so embarrassed and said, “Then I’ll stop”. (Asako 2)

Asako further explained why she felt embarrassed about Tom’s comment.

It might be because it was said to me in English that I took it so personally. Japanese has such an indirect way of saying things. So, when things are said to me I don’t take them too personally, but if you were to translate it directly from English to Japanese I would have said something like, “Why are you saying such mean things to me?”. (Asako 2)

This critical incident was used to generate the second stimulus critical incident (see Appendix F) used with students to elicit multiple interpretations. It will be discussed further in the following section on multiple interpretations of four critical incidents.

Although Japanese students reported so many different types of critical incidents involving having their feelings hurt by international students, very few Australian students recognized the negative consequences associated with teasing Japanese students. In the last interview Australian students reported only two critical incidents. One of them criticized one particular Australian student who made people uncomfortable by making sexual and racist jokes. The other one was a critical incident that occurred in a Japanese class and was reported by George, the same student who upset Asako with his sense of humour a few months earlier.

We had to make a story from the pictures. And in my picture I had a Japanese airplane, so I said a JAL was blown up by terrorists and she said it made her feel
sick and upset. My whole story was complete fantasy ... well not fantasy but it wasn’t real. Okay, in the end, elephants take over the world, just like a total joke, and yet she got quite upset. I didn’t realize that it was going to be inappropriate. (George 3)

On this occasion, George’s Japanese teacher helped him understand how inappropriate his story was by asking him to look at the story from the Japanese students’ perspective.

She said if it was Qantas, the Australian airlines, how would I feel if someone said it was blown up. Well for the purpose of the story, I wouldn’t mind. But she said it made her feel sick. (George 3)

Since his Japanese teacher expressed her feelings openly, George finally learned there was an appropriate time and place where he should be serious. In the end he said:

Well there are appropriate times to be serious and appropriate times to understand the situation ... You are going to offend some people and you try and learn from it. (George 3)

More critical incidents reported by Australian students were reported in the third interview. This suggests that the accumulation of many intercultural interactions over time provided the Australian students’ with opportunities to reflect on their behaviours.

Communication Styles

A second common type of critical incident that both Australian and Japanese students reported involved both Japanese implicit and Australian explicit communication styles. As expected, four Australian students felt confused about Japanese implicit communication style. Jason, for example, reported that he felt puzzled when Japanese students often disappeared during a conversation at the party. He explained:
... um, like sometimes you’ll be talking to someone and they might just run off and you’re not sure whether they’ve gone to get something to show you or whether they’ve just run off.

Researcher: THE PERSON YOU WERE TALKING TO JUST RAN OFF AS YOU WERE TALKING TO THEM?

Yes, you’re talking to them and then just for a split second you go to get something in your bag or something when you look up and they’re gone. (Jason 1)

Both Australians and Japanese students reported this type of critical incident involving Japanese implicit communication style equally over a period of time. Three Japanese students, on the other hand, reported on Australian explicit communication style. Interestingly Japanese female students reported two out of three about Australian male students’ explicit communication style toward female students.

*They said that I am beautiful and some girls may be happy if a man were to say that to her, but it actually makes me think, “Is this guy okay”. Perhaps that is their way of doing things.* (Kanako 1)

Foreign males expressing their feelings openly made some of the Japanese female students feel confused or even offended at the beginning. Again these types of incidents might have been influenced by the gender imbalance. These may also represent challenges in cross-gender relationships rather than challenges related to intercultural relationships. However, these cross-gender related critical incidents were only reported in the first interview. It shows that either male students ceased approaching them aggressively or Japanese female students became accustomed to their explicit communication style.

Surprisingly, two Australian students and five Japanese students reported critical incidents based on their own communication style. For example, Mary said she felt
embarrassed about her compatriots using conflicting communication styles at the meeting.

_I remember a few weeks ago, two guys stood up (at the weekly meeting) and basically rattled off a whole list of things that they weren’t happy about with the International House. An Australian and an American guy. They said, basically we want something done about it. That, I was kind of shocked at. It made me embarrassed actually. I felt that the Japanese teachers might be … I felt embarrassed because we have so much done for us, by the teachers and the caretakers of the dormitory and they were basically standing up and saying, this isn’t good enough. We want this, this and this. (Mary 2)_

Sayoko also reported the same incident reported by Jason, where a Japanese student left their conversation partner behind during conversation.

_The exchange students have mentioned that sometimes the Japanese students disappear when they are talking to them. It seems that when the exchange students finish talking with their friends, they close the conversation saying, “I’m leaving now. Bye.” but the Japanese students suddenly disappear while the exchange students are talking with their friends. I think we leave because we get lonely being left there all alone. I think that is normal, but the exchange students think that it is strange that the Japanese students leave even though they have not finished speaking with them. So, there are misunderstandings like that. The exchange students see themselves as just saying a quick hello to their friend, and that they would go back to their Japanese friend. (Sayoko 2)_

Unlike Mary, Sayoko realized how her communication style might sometimes confuse international students, and her comment further suggests that there appeared to be discussions about cultural differences occurring at the International House. That might have helped Sayoko to be able to see the one incident from multiple perspectives.
The third challenge shared by both groups of students was instrumental relationships. As discussed in Chapter 2, instrumentality was identified as one of the contradictory forces in friendships. According to Rawlins (1992), it means caring about a friend as a means-to-an-end. Four out of five critical incidents reported by Australian students dealt with international students being treated as a person with whom Japanese interactants could practice English. Jason shared an incident where he encountered two Japanese girls on his trip.

_We met a group, these other two girls, they lived in Nagoya. So we said we’d go out with them when we came back here. We went to Karaoke with them, and when we left they said, oh can you teach us English. We were wondering if that the only reason they wanted to be our friends, to teach them English._ (Jason 3)

Sayoko, who heard about this incident from Jason and his friend, told the researcher that they did not contact that particular group of Japanese girls because they were suspicious about their real intentions. The other critical incident that Jason heard from his Canadian friend was similar to his own experience. It was about his Canadian friend being taken to school for “show and tell” by the Japanese host family. Jason further commented on this incident saying, “Sometimes people might take you somewhere as an accessory. It’s like look I’ve got a gaijin [foreigner]”.

These two incidents revealed that some international students seemed to be offended by two perceived instrumental motivations of local Japanese: practicing English and showing off their foreign friends. Robert further explained:

_Many people here were very interested to talk to me and wanted to become my friend but I think their reasons for wanting to talk to me were very superficial. They_
just wanted to learn English and I was an interesting sort of; I'm a foreigner so something different. At certain times I felt like I was just being shown off to friends, like oh this is my foreign friend. (Robert 4)

Similar incidents were reported by Gareis (2000) who conducted a study about strategies influencing friendship formation between American and international students. Similarly, her study revealed that international students expressing the instrumental nature of their pursuit of friendship was interpreted negatively by host members. In the current study, not only international students but also one Japanese student sometimes wondered about the real reason behind some of her friendships with international students. Sayoko revealed that one of her Australian friends perhaps stayed friends with her because it was convenient for him to have a fluent English speaker around. She had doubts about their friendship especially after working so hard to arrange a trip to Tokyo together. However, her Australian friend explained explicitly his affection for her, and made her feel happy again. Sayoko explained:

There was one time when Richard was telling me after coming back from Tokyo that he tended to depend on me because I spoke English, but this was not the reason why he became a friend with me. He further said that he liked me as an individual person. I was really happy when he said I am his friend like that, as there are times when I wonder if they are not just using me. (Sayoko 3)

These incidents support Rawlins’ (1992) statement, discussed in Chapter 2, which explains that a friend becomes resentful and suspicious about being exploited when practical needs dominate. These incidents further illustrate that requests for help and expressions of affection need to be balanced in intercultural contexts.
Nonverbal Behaviour

The fourth type of challenge that generated critical incidents from both groups of Australian and Japanese students was nonverbal behaviours. Australian students reported two critical incidents and Japanese students reported twice as many critical incidents regarding nonverbal behaviour. In terms of types of incidents, Westerners showing affection nonverbally through kissing and hugging was mentioned both by an Australian and a Japanese student, but interpreted differently. An Australian student found not being able to show affection to his Japanese girlfriend in public inconvenient, while a Japanese student reported how uncomfortable Asian (Chinese) female students feel when Western students hug or kiss them at the International House.

Two Japanese students reported how they felt when international students touched them in a friendly way. A Japanese female student who was often touched on her waist and back by Western students said that she first felt cautious, but now she started touching on their shoulders. A Japanese male student who was often touched on his head by a close Australian friend, by contrast, said that he felt resentful. This different type of reaction might be influenced by the gender of interactants. Different reactions toward touching were reported in other studies (Major 1981, Storrs & Kleinke 1990) and these studies suggested that women were more open to being touched than men. These two studies investigated Americans’ perceptions towards touching, but this present study suggests that friendly touch observed among females could be accepted more easily than rough play observed among male friends in the Japanese context.

The other critical incident reported by a Japanese student illustrates how an international
student could misunderstand lack of eye contact. The Japanese student said that she felt surprised that her avoiding an eye contact was interpreted negatively. All the critical incidents concerning nonverbal behaviour except for the last one was reported either in the first or second interview. This might indicate, as one of the Japanese students pointed out before, that both Australian and Japanese students adapted their nonverbal behaviours successfully.

Language

As discussed extensively in Chapter 4, lack of second language proficiency was found to be a major inhibiting factor in intercultural relational development. Unexpectedly there were very few critical incidents involving language. Three out of four critical incidents were generated by students’ lack of second language proficiency, but only one related to Japanese students being offended by Chinese students’ inappropriate use of slang.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Both two Australian and two Japanese students reported unacceptable behaviour. One Japanese female student reported both incidents about Australian students taking home a beer glass from a restaurant or a shopping basket from a supermarket. As Asako was working part-time at the restaurant, this incident could have affected her more than the other Japanese students. Since Asako was raised to believe that people should not bring
what belongs to a restaurant or supermarket home, she said she felt shocked when she saw that for the first time, but she later said that she got used to it.

One Australian student, who was involved in the incident reported by a Japanese student, reported a similar behaviour that took place when he went skiing with his Canadian friend. Jason revealed:

> One night we took a sled, it was at the hotel it was just laying down under the stairs, like no one was using it. And we went right up to the shop, the convenient, and so we grabbed the sled and we were pulling each other up and down the street with it. Samuel was really upset that we just took the sled without asking anyone. (Jason 3)

Jason seemed to be puzzled about Samuel’s reaction and said he could imagine that Japanese people might not accept taking somebody else’s property either. By being criticized by another international student, Jason could have learned to view his behaviour from Japanese students’ perspective for the first time. Since people are not usually aware of their own culture, feedback from a cultural informant such as Samuel is necessary for cultural learning to take place.

Another Australian student reported unacceptable behaviour of other foreigners in Tokyo. John saw Australian and Canadian English teachers demanding to split the bill at the bar in Tokyo. He said that he found their behaviour being disrespectful to Japanese culture and even felt embarrassed as a foreigner. It was interesting that John shared this story in the third interview. This incident again may indicate that international students finally started viewing incidents from a Japanese point of view. He might consider himself to be an in-group member and appear to view other foreigners more like outsiders as Japanese people often do.
Treating Out-Groups and In-Groups Differently

Treating out-group members differently from in-group members seemed upsetting to Australian students. Australian students reported two critical incidents and a Japanese student reported one. The first type of incident, as often heard from foreigners in Japan, involves treating international students as out-group members. These incidents often take place in public transportation. One Australian student said he felt upset because nobody wanted to sit next to him on the train. A Japanese student reported other Japanese people’s behaviour that made international students feel uncomfortable. They are Japanese people staring at foreigners and their using English all the time when they communicate with foreigners. Japanese people’s treating foreigners as outsiders is a common complaint by foreign residents in Japan. As discussed in Chapter 1, international students in several studies (Moyer, 1987; Ohashi, 1991) had similar experiences.

The other incident reported by an Australian student was about treating their Japanese friends who did not live at the International House differently from the ones who lived there. The incident happened at the Halloween party organized by the University. Since the landlady prepared food only for residents, the Japanese friends of the international students were asked to stay outside until all residents had finished eating. Robert said several other international students also felt upset about their Japanese friends being treated differently from Japanese students at the International House.
Social and Emotional Challenges Distinct to Australian Students

Distinctive topics reported in Australian students’ critical incidents include excessive care from the landlady, different cultural norms towards pregnant international students, dorm rules and Japanese uniqueness.

Excessive Care

The first distinctive challenge to Australian students was receiving excessive care from the University. In the second interview, two Australian students, Robert and Tom, shared three critical incidents regarding this matter. The first incident took place when Robert set up a food stall with his Australian friends at the school festival. Robert said that he had negative interactions with people who were in charge of the school festival because too many Japanese helpers were sent only to their stall and they were not allowed to manage earnings by themselves.

Two other incidents happened at the International House. One day Tom asked the International Office at the meeting if they could extend visiting hours to approximately 9.00 p.m. In response to his request, staff members at the International Office distributed a questionnaire, but the questionnaire had only limited choices between 6.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. Another incident took place at the International House when during the meeting the caretaker explained how to clean a toaster. In response to these incidents, both Australian students reacted negatively saying, “We feel like children”. They seemed to be upset because they had been viewed as incapable and not able to accept any responsibility.
Cultural Norms

Another incident reported by two male Australian students might have been caused by differences in cultural norms about pregnancy. The incident happened when international and Japanese students were playing a friendly match on the baseball pitch on the University campus. One female staff member said to an international student who was five months’ pregnant, “You are a bad mother for playing sports while you are pregnant, you should be resting and not doing anything”. Both of the reporters said they were shocked to hear her harsh comment. They further commented that women in Australia play sport professionally even during pregnancy. This is a good example of a cultural clash caused by differing attitudes toward pregnancy in Japan and Australia.

Dorm Rules

There was only one critical incident reported by Japanese students feeling uncomfortable about international students breaking dorm rules. This type of incident was discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter since it was found to be a salient inhibiting factor for developing intercultural relationships.

Japanese Uniqueness

Robert reported one critical incident based on Japanese ethnocentric view of Japanese culture in the second interview. He reported that older Japanese people he spent some
time with outside the campus tended to explain things as if they were unique only to Japanese culture. For example, these older people would commonly refer to “Japanese autumn” rather than autumn. Robert further reported that he was often asked if he could use chopsticks and where he learnt how to use them. Robert felt that these types of comments or questions made by Japanese people reflected their feelings of superiority and he said that it annoyed him. Japanese people asking questions similar to those mentioned by Robert, and assuming foreigners cannot integrate into Japanese culture is often heard from foreign residents in Japan. However, no other participants in the study made similar comments.

Social and Emotional Challenges Distinct to Japanese Students

Distinctive topics reported in Japanese students’ critical incidents include different degrees of self-disclosure, international students’ stereotyping other cultural groups, and Australian students’ lack of sensitivity. In the following section, these challenges will be discussed in detail.

Self-Disclosure

Seven critical incidents regarding self-disclosure were reported by Japanese students. Three Japanese female students, Asako, Kanako, and Sayoko over time, contributed these incidents. Asako and Kanako reported incidents revealing how different types of self-disclosure expected by international students made them feel uncomfortable. Asako
mainly talked about how her Japanese female friend felt uncomfortable when she was asked about her romantic relationships.

This isn’t actually something that I experienced, but one of my friends went out drinking with a group of [male] friends from the English speaking countries, and they all started talking about embarrassing relationships and made my friends talk about her relationships, which made her feel quite embarrassed and uncomfortable. (Asako 1)

Asako’s statement suggests that male Australian and American students expected her female Japanese friend to openly discuss her relationship with her boyfriend when they went for a drink, and it made Asako’s Japanese female friend uncomfortable. Asako further commented this type of self-disclosure usually would not occur in Japan.

Yes. We might say, “Yes I have a girlfriend”, but never reveal that much even among friends in Japan ... among Japanese, we don’t usually discuss personal sexual experiences. Until then things were fine but then my friend said, “They even started talking about THAT in front of everyone!” (Asako 1)

Kanako, whom Asako seemed to talk about in her previous account, commented that romantic relationships were inappropriate conversation topics.

Yes. But they are sometimes persistent with one particular topic and ask me too many questions. So in that case I’m like “When can I stop answering this?”.

Researcher: WHAT TYPE OF TOPIC IS IT?

Whatever topics but I’m confused when it comes to love issues ... Andy seems to be talkative and when I come back after a long break, he comes up to me to talk. But I try to stay away from him because I know he is very persistent and asks me too many questions (laugh). (Kanako 3)

The openness of these Western male students appeared to be a great shock to some Japanese female students. One reason might be related to the gender. If this conversation occurred among friends of the same gender, the Japanese female student
might have felt more comfortable since women are likely to talk about their close relationships with a same-sex friend (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). In Japan also, Japanese females disclose most to a same-sex friend (Barnlund, 1975), but how much they disclose about personal sexual experience is unknown. This is another example that gender ratio of this study brought unique finding.

Unlike the previous two Japanese students, Sayoko shared incidents about how her lack of self-disclosure confused international students. One of the incidents happened when she went home over the weekend without telling her close friends why she was going home.

For example, when I want to leave the House to go visit my parents or just to go somewhere, sometimes I wonder if it will be okay to leave. One time I left and didn’t say anything to anyone and it seems that everyone was really worried. I emailed them and told them that I had things to do and that I would be going home, but they didn’t understand the Japanese word for “things to do”, and they were really worried that someone had died or that someone had been hurt and when I came back they were really angry. (Sayoko 2)

Sayoko reported another incident of making her friends upset, because she tried to hide her negative feelings by saying nothing was wrong.

There are problems that I don’t want to share with other people. But it is obvious when I am down, and they ask me what is wrong, and I tell them that there is nothing wrong. There have been so many times when I have been called a liar for doing that. (Sayoko 3)

In both cases Sayoko seemed to be struggling to keep some aspects of her life private, and her close international friend expected Sayoko to be more open and honest. This seemed to be a good example of the dialectic of expressiveness and protectiveness addressed by Rawlins (1992). As discussed in Chapter 2, these two contradictory forces
need to be understood and negotiated constantly not only in intracultural relationships, but more so in intercultural relationships where communication styles differ.

**Stereotyping**

Masako reported two incidents about the harmfulness of stereotyping. The first incident concerned French students’ fixed image about Japanese people. Masako said that French students did not trust what she said since they heard that Japanese often mask their honest feelings. Another incident reported was international students’ viewing Chinese students with stereotypes. After some international students observed that Chinese students did not wipe oil splattered in the kitchen after cooking, they started making comments such as, “Chinese are like that”. Through intercultural interactions, stereotypes are supposed to be demolished, but Masako’s critical incidents illustrate the opposite results. (Allport, 1954). Further investigation of the factors that strengthen international students’ stereotypes would be helpful for promoting intercultural relationships.

**Lack of Sensitivity**

As an example of lack of sensitivity, Masako reported that Western international students’ played loud music in the courtyard at weekends. She said that Japanese students who never lived abroad or other Asian students might not accept this kind of behaviour. What made things worse, according to Masako, Asian students cannot
communicate their perceived inconvenience openly even though they are bothered by the noise. This incident reveals that both international students’ lack of sensitivity and Asian students’ implicit communication style contributed to making one incident more challenging.

Overall, both common and culturally specific social and emotional challenges were found in this study. Culturally specific challenges seemed to emerge when participants’ cultural values clashed with each other. In the case of self-disclosure, challenges seemed to emerge in cross-gender relationships. Common challenges reported by both group of students, on the other hand, seemed to be influenced not by differences in cultural values but by differences related to gender or personalities.

Secondly, it was found that social and emotional challenges might change over time. The result revealed that challenges reduced in terms of both number and emotionality toward the end of their international stay. As suggested by some students’ accounts, they had adapted to the new cultural norms by changing their behaviour. This is why some challenges became less salient over time.

Finally, several students reported social and emotional challenges not experienced personally but experienced by their counterparts. This result might indicate that students developed an empathetic skill that enabled them to identify what kinds of behaviour might bother their counterparts. Intercultural interactions at the International House could have assisted both Australian and Japanese students being able to see things from the perspective of the other.
MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

In the previous section, spontaneous critical incidents elicited from participants throughout the first three interviews were identified and discussed. Both Australian and Japanese groups shared some of the themes and the others were distinct to either the Australian or Japanese group or the gender of participants. This section presents participants’ multiple interpretations of two of four critical incidents created by the researcher on the basis of the recurrent themes and stories in the numerous interviews.

As discussed in the method chapter, four critical incidents (see Appendix F) were used as stimulus materials in the fourth interview. The purpose of using structured critical incidents as stimulus material was to elicit multiple interpretations of similar stories. Spontaneous critical incidents typically provide one sided interpretation, for example, the interpretation of the person reporting the story. In the previous section, multiple interpretations emerged on a few occasions when several students happened to comment on the same incident. Using structured critical incidents as stimulus material generated multiple interpretations of each incident, and added richness and depth to this study.

The use of critical incidents to investigate multiple perspectives of respondents has been reported in empirical research (Hammer et al., 1996; Volet & Tan-Quigley, 1999) and in the common intercultural communication training courses (Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986; Cushner & Brislin, 1996, 1997; Pedersen, 1995). As expected, all the students engaged well with the stories, which were generated from their personal experiences. Some of the students associated characters with students they know and said, “this must be X or if this is Y, he could have behaved this way”. Many were able to shift their perspective based on characters from different cultural backgrounds.
(Japanese and Australian), which generated contrasting interpretations across cultural groups and gender. The Australian students in particular became deeply involved and talked extensively. Some of these students provided multiple interpretations of each story. While Japanese students also became involved, sometimes probes were needed to assist in the elaboration of their thoughts. However, both Australian and Japanese students volunteered information and elaborated on related issues that were important to them.

As outlined in the method section, the four themes represented in these critical incidents were personal topics, joking and teasing, communication of organizational rules, and indirect communication style. As discussed in the previous section about spontaneous accounts of critical incidents, the number of reported critical incidents about joking and teasing, and about references to personal topics was quite significant, and the emotional content of these incidents was very high. In addition, since research examining these two themes is scarce in the literature, these critical incidents were chosen for in-depth analysis. The story about communicating organizational rules was not used as it only dealt with Australian students’ interaction with University staff rather than with Japanese students. Students’ multiple interpretations of the story about the use of indirect communication style was not chosen for in-depth analysis since that theme was already discussed in detail in the earlier section about inhibiting factors.
Critical Incident 1: Personal Topics

This story was created on the basis of two spontaneous critical incidents. One of them is Asako’s observation of another Japanese female student feeling embarrassed when she was asked questions about her boyfriend. The other is Sayoko’s reflection on the use of avoidance as a strategy. Both of these stories were discussed in the section on self-disclosure in this chapter. This initial critical incident comprised two subthemes: the choice of a personal topic, and handling that topic indirectly. The stimulus story based on those two subthemes follows.

*Kaori went out with a few international students. She was sitting next to Tom and they started chatting. Suddenly Tom asked her if she had a boyfriend. Kaori pretended not to have heard his question and changed the topic. Tom was surprised.*

After presenting the story, the researcher asked two main questions: Q1. Why do you think Kaori changed the topic? Q2. Why do you think Tom was surprised? Students’ multiple interpretations are analyzed first, followed by a discussion of students’ comments and reflections on the two subthemes.

*Multiple Interpretations of Behaviours and Feelings*

In response to the first question, all six male students (five Australian and one Japanese) reported that Kaori changed the topic because she interpreted Tom’s behaviour as a sign of his interest in her.

*I think Kaori felt uncomfortable and I think she thought that Tom might have had a bit of interest in her and instead of having to face an awkward situation of*
explaining that she was not interested, she completely changed the topic, again to try and save face. (Robert 4)

She might have had a boyfriend already or I don’t think she sees him as a guy that she would date ... That is why she wanted to reject his offer without hurting him or fend it off. She was thinking of him and herself at the same time. I think she was finding it hard to say no and she knew that it would be embarrassing for him if she said no. (Masahiro 4)

In contrast, all the female students (one Australian and three Japanese) reported that Kaori changed the topic because she felt embarrassed about being asked such a personal question.

Well maybe she was embarrassed about being asked such personal question and I don’t know if it’s the way in Japanese culture but maybe that’s not something you talk about with a person you’ve just met, maybe. Someone you are not that close to. (Mary 4)

She probably didn’t want to be asked about her boyfriend ... Japanese would probably be surprised if they got asked such question suddenly. (Kanako 4)

This finding shows that gender, rather than culture, appeared to play a much stronger role in interpreting Tom’s intention. Male students thought Kaori misinterpreted Tom’s intention as a sign of an interest in her and female students thought that Kaori felt embarrassed because the topic was so personal to her. Four Australian students (one female and three males) and one Japanese male student, however, came up with alternative interpretations as well. For example, Mary who first shared the same interpretation as the other Japanese female students also pointed to the issue of Tom being interested in Kaori, the major point raised by the male students.

She (Kaori) could interpret it in a lot of ways. Because maybe she thinks that if he
asks her this it automatically means that he is interested in her. (Mary 4)

Similarly, Jason also realized that Kaori might have felt embarrassed if she did have a boyfriend.

If she did have a boyfriend, she was probably a bit embarrassed ... but if she didn’t have a boyfriend, she maybe didn’t want to tell him she didn’t have a boyfriend, because she didn’t want him to think that she wanted to be his girlfriend. Yeah, if she said she didn’t have a boyfriend, maybe she might think that he thinks that she wants to be his girlfriend. (Jason 4)

Jason’s comment indicates that the personal background of Kanako needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting her reaction. Robert also emphasized the significance of nonverbal cues to understand Tom’s real intention.

You can tell by the context of the conversation or things you already know about them whether they’re already involved with someone or things, when they ask the question do you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend you can tell through tone, context of it, body language, whether they’re just purely asking out of interest, something to talk about, or whether they’re interested in perhaps maybe pursuing something else. (Robert 4)

Robert’s comment reveals contextual clues such as tone of voice, body language, and situation play a significant role in interpreting cross-gender interactions.

In response to the second question, all the students agreed that Tom’s intention was innocent. They all agreed that Tom was just asking an innocent question.

I can tell from putting myself in an Australian guy’s way of thinking that it doesn’t mean that at all. It's just making conversation. (Mary 4)

If Tom was surprised perhaps he was surprised because he really had no interest in her, he was only trying to make conversation and perhaps he thought it was obvious that he was not interested and only being friendly. (Robert 4)
Although all the students shared the interpretation for Tom’s real intention, possible reasons why Tom was surprised were split into two categories. Most of the students said that Tom was surprised because Kaori became offended by his innocent question. Only two Japanese female students paid more attention to the way Kaori dealt with Tom’s personal question. They thought Tom was surprised because Kaori suddenly changed the topic and he had no clue why.

*So maybe Tom didn’t have any experience of such sudden change on the subject. So maybe that’s why he got surprised. He probably doesn’t know why she changed the subject.* (Kanako 4)

*He had no idea that it was something she didn’t want to be asked, and she changed the subject so he thought that he was being ignored and that’s why he was surprised. He was sure that she heard what he said but she apparently ignored it so he was surprised.* (Kyoko 4)

These responses imply that these two Japanese female students understood that sudden changes in topic would lead to communication breakdown. It is speculated that they might have learnt how Australians would interpret this type of avoidance strategy from personal experience since these two students often reported that they used an indirect communication style.

So far the researcher has explored patterns of interpretations generated by this critical incident in terms of culture, gender, within groups and within individuals. Now the themes that emerged during the discussion about the critical incident will be analyzed using the same framework.
Multiple Reflections on the Subject of Personal Topics

Students discussed whether or not asking about another person’s boyfriend or girlfriend was a normal topic of conversation. Three Australian male students thought it was an acceptable topic to talk about.

*It’s usually a good topic to talk about usually, if someone has a boyfriend, talk about where they are from, what they are doing, how long they have been together. Usually helps you understand about the other person as well.* (George 4)

*If you’re talking about in the dorm it probably happened very frequently once we moved in, but as soon as people got to know people and know where they stood I think it would have decreased a lot. If you’re talking about meeting someone for the first time, I think it would be very frequent just because it seems to be a question that both Japanese and foreigners are interested in.* (Robert 4)

*But I think Tom was genuinely just asking a casual question about her life. Does she have a boyfriend, you know, is she studying, what is she studying, it’s just the same level of question ... Especially in just opening or just recent relationships, making new friends, asking them their names, their hobbies, maybe in the next meeting we would talk about these things.* (David 4)

Based on their accounts, these male Australian students did not seem to perceive romantic relationships as being a personal topic. On the contrary, these students may think that asking whether the other party has a boyfriend or girlfriend is no different from asking where she/he is from or what she/he studies. As discussed in Chapter 2, asking demographic information in the initial stage seems to be an effective way of developing relationships (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knapp, 1978). However, it is questionable as to whether or not asking about one’s romantic relationship is considered to be demographic information.
Barnlund (1975) who conducted a cross-cultural study on differences in the degree of self-disclosure depending on topics claimed that relationship with opposite sex is least revealed even among American friends. One possible reason for the inconsistency between students’ accounts and the findings of Barnlund’s study is related to the special context of their residence; namely the International House. Talking about a romantic relationship during initial encounters might not be inappropriate in Australia, and these students could think it is acceptable in the International House since Japanese students often ask questions, such as whether or not their peers have a girlfriend or boyfriend. Interestingly, five Australian students (both male and female) reported that Japanese students had frequently asked them if they had a boyfriend or girlfriend.

*It’s a funny thing, because I suppose it would be a rude question in Japan. I mean I’ve been asked this question plenty of times in Japan by Japanese people. But that’s okay, that’s from like, students here at university. Like girls and guys. I mean like, they would be in the English lounge or something, they always ask that. Have you got a boyfriend, or how old are you, or things like that. (Mary 4)*

*Perhaps the topic, however I found that Japanese girls are more likely to ask you if you have a girlfriend than foreign guys asking if they have a boyfriend. (Robert 4)*

*Tom’s probably just talking conversation, I mean one of the first questions we are always asked is do you have a girlfriend, you know, when we first come here. And so it’s like, we return it. (Tom 4)*

The responses of these Australian students suggest that Japanese students appeared to ask questions of Australian students about romantic relationships, but they would not talk about romantic relationships among themselves. Two students, (one Japanese female and one Australian male), reported romantic relationships might be considered too personal to talk about among Japanese people.
I don’t think that it is a bad topic, but I don’t think the Japanese students would talk about that sort of thing as much as the exchange students do. (Hiroko 4)

It's just a touchy subject within Japanese people, I think. (Jason 1)

Students’ accounts presented so far suggest that talking about romantic relationships among casual friends of the opposite gender might not be acceptable among Japanese people, but seemed to be tolerated, at least between Australian and Japanese students at the International House.

One Australian male student and one Japanese female student mentioned one context in which talking about romantic relationships is even more acceptable. This context involves the use of alcohol.

If they said they were having a beer. They are normal conversation questions I think. Of course it depends on the conversations before. (George 4)

Researcher: SO WHAT KIND OF SITUATION IS IT OKAY?

When we are out drinking. (Hiroko 4)

Both accounts support the possible impact of drinking on self-disclosure. Topics such as sexual behaviour or romantic relationships are normally too personal to talk about, but these topics seem to be more acceptable in drinking situations.

In addition to drinking, another context that might influence the judgment about the appropriateness of this topic was reported by an Australian male student. Jason reported:

It depends on the person. For me I think ... it can be rude I think, to ask, maybe. But not ... about half way
Researcher: SO YOU THINK TOM IS RUDE?

Yeah … it depends on the situation, it depends how well he knows her.

Researcher: WHEN IS IT OKAY?

If she asks him first if he had a girlfriend, then it would be an okay for him to ask, I think. Or if he let her know that it was an innocent question, then I think that would be okay. (Jason 4)

His account illustrated how crucial context is when interpreting a situation. According to Jason, the stage of relational development (how well one knows the other), reciprocity of self-disclosure (if she asks him first, it would be okay) and inquirer’s intention (innocent question or not) seemed to play a key role. The significance of paying attention to the context is supported by dialectics theory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1997). As discussed in Chapter 2, one also needs to observe interactions outside a specific relationship, and the larger social and cultural systems in which members reside. As such, Jason gave rich data about self-disclosure.

Multiple Suggestions on how to Handle Personal Topics

Kaori’s way of dealing with Tom’s personal question was identified as another problem that contributed to cross-cultural misunderstanding. Both Japanese and Australian females shared their experiences when they were in similar situations. Although the number of students was very few, these cases illustrated cultural differences in dealing with personal questions. Japanese students suggested they would use a similarly indirect strategy to Kaori. Kyoko reported on her experience of a communication breakdown as a result of using the same strategy as Kaori.

I, too, often feel like avoiding subjects that I’m not comfortable with but
international students aren’t surprised by it.

Researcher: DOES IT HAPPEN OFTEN?

Kyoko: Yes. If I ignore it, I would be asked again and again. (Kyoko 4)

The strategy of another Japanese female student, Hiroko, was slightly different, but still appeared to be very indirect.

I don’t think it is necessary to go as far as to pretend that she didn’t hear the question. I think she should just laugh it off.

Researcher: IS THAT WHAT YOU WOULD DO?

Hiroko: Something like that. (Hiroko 4)

Unlike Kyoko who completely ignores questions, Hiroko is still responding to the inquirer, but she is still not offering any specific information about the question. Both of the strategies illustrated by these Japanese students were very subtle and indirect. On the contrary, Mary reported a more direct way of dealing with the same problem.

Researcher: HOW WOULD YOU REACT IF YOU ARE KAORI?

I guess I would just answer, like yes or no or whatever.

Researcher: THEY DON’T SAY “NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS”? Yeah, they can say that too. They don’t have to say yes or no, but that’s the thing. If they think it’s none of his business, or if they don’t want to say, it’s okay for them to say it. If that’s a personal question, just don’t ask me that. That’s fine. But maybe in Japan, it's not acceptable to say it. I don’t know. (Mary 4)

Although the number of female participants was extremely limited, what they would do if they were Kanako, showed their cultural differences. An Australian student said that she would either say yes or no or tell the interlocutor not to ask this type of question, while Japanese students said that they would either avoid answering personal questions or just laugh and remain vague. This difference in response seems to represent the
difference between low-context and high-context communication styles addressed in Chapter 2.

Two Australian male students, John and David showed a negative response to high-context communication style. Their comments about Kanako’s behaviour follow.

*I’d be very confused if someone just ignored me completely. I’d be offended. (John 4)*

... *if they ignore the question and change the topic, that can’t help anything, because that will only cause confusion for one of the people and make them upset. So even maybe if she didn’t like the question or if she thought it was becoming something else, she should then be more considerate of him and maybe take the time to answer it. (David 4)*

David, further claimed that Kanako’s behaviour might be shared by other Japanese people and this kind of avoidance strategy could cause such a serious problem that might damage a cross-cultural friendship.

*Just avoiding the question won’t help anything. But I would have to say sometimes Japanese people do avoid things and hopes it becomes better but I don’t believe that’s the way to solve these things ... But definitely she shouldn’t just quickly ignore him like that. That won’t solve anything. So I think that is also very serious, because it can stop a friendship that is just quickly building and it can make a problem for the friendship because again, communication is very important with this problem and she is refusing to do that. So that is very serious. (David 4)*

David’s comment seems to support Sayoko’s responses discussed in the previous section on spontaneous critical incidents. It seems to confirm high-context communication strategies such as those reported by Kyoko, Hiroko, and Sayoko, not only do not work in cross-cultural contexts, but also can give negative impressions to people from low-context cultures.
Critical Incident 2: Joking and Teasing

This story was created based on Asako’s spontaneous critical incident from the second interview. The original account was presented in the previous section about joking at the party. Among several types of jokes, this story was chosen for the following reasons. One of them was the nationality of the teaser. Many spontaneous critical incidents reported by Japanese students reflect their interactions with American or French students. Since the person involved in this critical incident is an Australian, the researcher expected Australian participants to engage in the story. Another reason for choosing this incident was to investigate the type of joke employed. In this particular incident, a joke undertaken by Tom appeared to be a typical example of sarcasm. As discussed in the section on sense of humour, sarcasm seemed to be difficult for Japanese students to understand, yet sarcasm seemed to be used frequently between Japanese and international students at the International House. The researcher wanted to examine how Japanese students reacted to the use of sarcasm.

The stimulus story was based on Asako’s spontaneous critical incident was as follows:

*A party with lots of guests was organized at the international house. Masako put only a small amount of food on her plate since she was wondering whether there would be enough food for everybody. Richard said in a loud voice, “You are eating like a pig!” Masako blushed and stopped eating. Richard got puzzled.*

After introducing this story, the researcher asked two questions: Q1. Why do you think Masako blushed and stopped eating? Q2. Why do you think Richard was puzzled?

Similar to the previous section on personal topics, students’ multiple interpretations will
be analyzed first, followed by a discussion of students’ comments and reflections on the acceptability of Richard’s teasing behaviour and how to respond to it.

*Multiple Interpretations of Initial Reactions and Feelings*

Before responding to the first question asking why Masako blushed and stopped eating, Japanese students felt puzzled [as did Masako] about Richard's comment. Kanako, for example, reacted as follows:

_This means? That Japanese took very little thinking of others but international students said she ate a lot more._

_Researcher: HE/SHE SAID, “YOU ARE EATING A LOT”._

_She was eating a little but why did the person say, “You eat a lot”? (Kanako 4)_

Masahiro also felt puzzled about Richard’s behaviour, but instead of asking questions to the researcher as Kanako did, he struggled to make sense of it. Masahiro reported:

_Because she [Masako] went over there so fast and only took her share and started to eat before everyone. That’s why he said, “You are eating like a pig”. (Masahiro 4)_

Masahiro, however, was not completely satisfied with his first interpretation and read the critical incident aloud once again and this time he thought Richard may be joking.

_Hmm, that may be a joke._

_Researcher: WHAT DO YOU THINK?_

_I don’t know, why did he say that?_

_Researcher: DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS A JOKE?_

_I think basically it was because she wanted to get some before it ran out. (Masahiro 4)_
Masahiro interpreted Richard’s behaviour as joking, but he was not very confident about his second interpretation either. Interestingly, Masahiro still thought that Masako tried to get some food before it ran out. His lack of confidence about his second interpretation might be related to the fact that he also did not understand Richard’s use of sarcasm.

In contrast to the Japanese students’ confusion, all the Australian students interpreted Richard’s comment as a joke without hesitation. One of the Australian students, Jason, commented, “Because if it’s so dumb, if the joke is so obviously not ... if it’s the opposite ... you think they’d obviously know that it’s a joke.” However, the reactions of Japanese students to this incident suggest that what Jason said is not necessarily true for Japanese students. The fact that Japanese students could not identify Richard’s joke suggests that some Japanese people might not understand sarcasm. John, who likes telling a joke, reported that Japanese students did not recognize sarcastic jokes.

    Yeah, I try to be sarcastic, not serious and Japanese people take it seriously.

    Researcher: HOW HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO BE SARCASTIC?

    I can’t think of any examples, but just saying things that are the opposite of what you think in a joking way. Yeah, a lot of Japanese people just don’t get it. (John 4)

John’s comment suggested that sarcasm might cause miscommunication in a cross-cultural context. This finding is consistent with other empirical studies (Gareis, 1995; 2000b; Koyanag, 1999; Moyer, 1987; Yokota, 1991b). Empirical studies on international students at Japanese universities (Moyer, 1987; Yokota, 1991b) in particular, revealed that a different sense of humour might prevent intercultural relational development. Yokota’s (1991b) claim that “… one’s joke being taken seriously or not understanding the other person’s jokes …” might explain why both
Japanese and international students feel uncomfortable in this study.

One of the possible reasons is that sarcasm is difficult to understand even in an intracultural context since the speaker’s intention does not agree with its literal interpretation. The recipient normally expects speakers to tell the truth and be sincere. When sarcasm violates this principle, the recipient works out the speaker’s possible intention (Norrick, 2003).

In order to convey intended meaning, speakers use prosodic, non-verbal or contextual clues either consciously or unconsciously and these clues might be difficult to detect for recipients who do not share the same culture or language with speakers. Attardo, Hold, Hay, and Poggi (2003) identified the “blank face” as a visual marker of irony or sarcasm. It is assumed that the “poker face” used by speakers might prevent Japanese students recognizing the speaker’s real intention. Kanako, who was often teased by Australian or American students, seemed to agree with this assumption.

Guy says jokes very realistically. I sometimes think, “Was he serious?”. (Kanako, 4)

Kanako could have recognized jokes played by Australian male students if they were accompanied by more obvious cues such as laughter. The serious delivery of jokes might have inhibited Kanako from understanding the real intentions of teasers.

Multiple Interpretations of the Cultural and Gender-Related Nature of Teasing

Regarding the question of 'Why did they think Masako blushed and stopped eating', Japanese and Australian students showed shared interpretations. One Japanese and four
Australian students said that Masako might have felt embarrassed because she took what Richard said literally. John, for example, said, “It seems to me that Richard was being sarcastic and Masako didn’t understand that, and so she took it seriously”.

One Japanese and four Australian students thought Masako felt she “lost face” since Richard said his joke in such a loud voice that the other people at the party could hear it. Robert explained:

Because he’s embarrassed her in front of many people and he’s being completely disrespectful to her. (Robert 4)

Jokes are usually played either in dyads or a small group of friends, but in this scenario, a large number of strangers were involved. This inclusion of strangers might have increased the seriousness of this critical incident. Verbal teasing (e.g., making jokes about each other’s physical features) in public seems to be highly risky play since the target might lose face. The risk might become even higher in cultures whose members are concerned about losing face. Keltner et al. (2001) argued that members of a culture who attempt to preserve one’s face and the face of others, such as the Japanese, would tend to avoid teasing in the first place. To members of such cultures, Richard’s face threatening action might be considered insulting.

One Australian and one Japanese student said that Masako might have thought the expression “pig” which Richard used was too insulting. Jason said, “Because Richard yelled that she was a pig and she didn’t want to look like a pig”.

The last possible interpretation reported by one Japanese and two Australian students was that Richard brought up a sensitive subject for girls, such as weight or diet. Kanako reported with empathy how Masako might have felt.
If you think you took just a little and were told, “You eat a lot”, would you feel embarrassed as a girl? (Kanako 4)

Here, the comment seems to be consistent with what some empirical research concludes about the nature of teasing. There appears to be gender differences in types of jokes. According to Boxer (1997), women are more reluctant to tease about the subject of physical appearance and it will only happen in self-denigration. An Australian male student, George also agrees that gender might affect the types of jokes played. He claimed that people do not say this type of joke to men because they care less about their physical features.

Well I don’t think you’d say something like this to a guy.

Researcher: NO, WHY NOT?

Because I think girls care more about how much they are eating. And care about their weight. Whereas guys, it’s not a big deal to them. But I think it might be important to them. (George 4)

In response to the questions of 'Why was Richard puzzled', even though male students acknowledged that women tend to be more sensitive to jokes about their bodies, male international students still teased female students about their bodies. Kanako revealed, “[Male students say things] like my butt is big (laughs)”. While the original question asked why Richard got puzzled, participants offered more information about Richard’s real intentions. All seven Australian students said that Richard was tying to make a joke. Some of them further explained why he made this kind of joke. Three students noted that Richard thought Masako should eat more. Tom, for example, explained:

I’m sure Richard just said it as a joke, you know. God, eat a bit more. I mean the average Japanese girl is quite slim, they are not a very obese culture, race, sorry.
So I think he was having a dig at her, like you can eat a little bit more, you are not going to get fat overnight. (Tom 4)

Based on further interpretation of Richard’s comment, these students appeared to evaluate Richard’s behaviour positively. On the other hand, two Australian students identified Richard’s behaviour as a lack of sensitivity and criticized it. David commented:

_I think, this Richard he should have been more considerate of her feelings as a girl. Be very careful and considerate._ (David 4)

These two Australian students further explained that the type of sarcastic joke made by Richard might not be understood in Japan. David continued:

_But definitely, I think sarcasm, these types of jokes, is very hard to communicate with Japanese people._ (David 4)

Their comments support the Japanese students’ initial reaction to this story. Their accurate prediction of how sarcasm is accepted in Japanese society could be a result of frequent interactions with Japanese students.

_Multiple Perspectives on the Acceptability of Teasing_

After providing an interpretation of the behaviours of Masako and Richard, students discussed if teasing was acceptable. Three Australian students pointed out closeness is an important factor in making it acceptable in their country.

_It depends on how well Richard knows Masako, I believe that would have been an important factor._ (George 4)
When I’m friends, when I’m close to the person and I don’t know ... we might be joking around or something. That’s when I’d use sarcasm. (John 4)

Researcher: SO IT’S ACCEPTABLE IN AUSTRALIA?

Mary: I guess, yeah. I mean it depends how close you are with the person. It’s definitely more acceptable in Australia than in Japan. (Mary 4)

These comments from Australian students suggest that teasing seems acceptable among friends in Australia. Mary’s comment is consistent with the literature. Keltner et al. (2001) noted that people who are familiar with each other were more likely to tease and to tease in more hostile ways. They further explained that individuals in relationships with increased familiarity were assumed to be less concerned about possible face threatening behaviours such as teasing. Interestingly there was no comment about the relationship between teasing and relationships from Japanese students.

Two Japanese female students said joking is acceptable as long as it does not hurt the other. Kyoko and Kanako further explained that some types of jokes that might hurt people. Kyoko reported:

Everyone has subjects that they don’t wish anyone to bring up. If you bring up such subjects, then ...

Researcher: FRIENDSHIP WOULD COLLAPSE ...

Kyoko: Such thing can happen. (Kyoko 4)

Kanako reported that from her experience, this specific question might have hurt her feelings.

For example, when I stayed in a friend’s house and come home next morning, “Didn’t you stay in a man’s house?” . (Kanako 4)

Her comment reveals that, as mentioned in section about spontaneous critical incidents,
jokes on cross-gender relationships seemed inappropriate since they make Japanese students uncomfortable.

Not only the type of joke but also the way Australian students tell the joke seems to be a problem.

*S sometimes I don’t understand even if they say it in Japanese. If they tell me, “It was a joke” later, then I’ll understand but sometimes they don’t even say it and walk away so in that case I think, “What?”.* (Kanako 4)

Jokes relax people and strengthen bonds only when the humour is shared by the two parties (Mizushima, 2006). Since Kanako had difficulties in understanding jokes due to cultural and language differences, she expected the joker to tell her that they were telling a joke.

Another Japanese student, Masahiro also pointed out that if Richard, in this critical incident, explained that he was not serious, there was no problem.

*It doesn’t say here how she feels but I don’t think he is someone that she would hang around that much. If Richard was Samuel, I think it would have ended with a peck on the cheek and his saying, “It’s not true”, but I think Alan is the kind of guy that would run from that sort of situation. So I think Richard is an Alan type of guy.* (Masahiro 4)

Masahiro perceives that there are two types of international students at the International House. Some students are sensitive to the feelings of Japanese students and are skillful in solving cross-cultural misunderstandings, but other students seem to have difficulty establishing good relationships with Japanese students. It was also interesting that the imaginary character in the critical incident reminded him of an actual international student. This suggests that Masahiro might have experienced the same type of incidents numerous times.
Multiple Suggestions on how to Respond to Jokes and Teasing

As discussed in the spontaneous critical incident section, there seems to be differences, even among Japanese students, in the way they respond to jokes. Some Japanese students, such as, Kanako or Asako might feel too uneasy to do anything while others, Kyoko for example, might laugh together with the teaser. Another Japanese female student, Hiroko, put herself in Masako’s position and said she would respond to Richard’s joke differently from Masako.

*But even if someone said something like that to you, you would just think, what, and think nothing of it ... Even if someone said something like that you would just say, “Ha ha, that’s not true”. (Hiroko 4)*

Hiroko noted that when an international student teased her she would negate the teaser’s comment. This kind of response might reflect Hiroko’s personality. In the first interview, she described herself as easy going. The fact that Hiroko did not report any critical incidents is evidence of her laid back personality. Her relaxed personality might have generated a different response from other students.

Unlike Japanese students, Australian students provided very similar ways of responding to jokes. Two male and one female Australian student said that Australian women would not be bothered by the kind of jokes that Richard made. Mary commented:

*I mean I guess anyone would get embarrassed if they are being told they are eating like a pig. But I think an Australian person would have enough ... I can’t think of the word ... I mean would be able to tell this person what they think. Or just be able to joke back, like throw a joke back at them. They would know, they would understand Richard’s sense of humour and know that he was joking. They would understand so they wouldn’t be so worried by it, they wouldn’t be bothered. (Mary*
Mary further commented what she would do if she was Masako.

*Something that would be totally normal in their country like this, like if a guy made a joke like this with me at home, it wouldn’t matter, I’d just say shut up or something. It wouldn’t matter.* (Mary 4)

Mary reported that she would tell the teaser to shut up if a guy in Australia teases her. Since she has the freedom to talk back in her country, teasing would not hurt her feelings as it did to Masako.

Australian male students who usually played the role of the teaser agreed with Mary's comments about female behaviour. Robert noted:

*I know that in Australia we like to give each other a hard time and stuff and just expect to get it back. If Richard was thinking that he was only joking and it would just get a laugh and Masako would just take it as oh yeah, respond with an equally appropriate sort of response.* (Robert 4)

Robert said that the target would challenge the teaser and the teaser even expected it. Another Australian male student gave a similar but more vivid response by imagining what would happen if Masako was an Australian girl at the International House.

*She’d probably tell them to piss off. I mean if it was one of the Australian girls down at the dorm, they’d just give him the finger and tell him go away, leave me alone. Or would have something like, “Have you looked in the mirror lately”, or thrown it back at him.* (Tom 4)

Possible responses such as joking back or asking the teaser to shut up as suggested by Australian students are supported by several empirical studies (Drew, 1987; Miller, 1986; Mooney, Creezer, & Blatchford, 1991). They indicate that the most common response to teasing is some form of counter. Keltner et al. (2001) explained that how the
target responds to the teaser might be related to the possibility of losing one’s face. They said targets that feel little concern about losing face are more likely to tease in face threatening ways by counter teasing or by challenging or negating the tease.

On the other hand, targets that care about their own and others’ face, might feel more negative emotions when being teased. This might explain Masako’s and some of the Japanese female students’ responses to jokes. Since they have more concern about saving face, they might easily feel embarrassed.

Even though some Japanese students said that they still feel uncomfortable when being teased about certain types of topics, some Australian students commented that the way they respond to jokes has changed over a period of time. Tom reported:

*Like there is a big difference from when we first came here and how it is now. The Japanese students that came in when we came in, for example, I’ve said these comments to students ... of sort of thing and got the same reaction (as Masako), but now if I say it, she just tells me, oh yeah, whatever Tom, and just walks away. This is from a Japanese girl so they have gotten accustomed a lot.* (Tom 4)

Tom further revealed that Japanese students learned more about Australian culture by living together with Australian students.

*At the start, it’s part of the learning curve, it’s part of the cultural exchange. Because it is an international house and the majority of us are foreign students, the Japanese had more of a culture experience living there than what we’ve had living there. They are learning more from our culture than we are learning from theirs. It’s just because they are in the deep end of the pool, but we are the majority as such so they’ve got to adapt to us more than we’ve got to adapt to them* (Tom 4)

Tom said that Japanese students are learning more from Australian students than Australian students are learning from Japanese students. As Tom mentioned, students at the International House supported a culture closer to Australian or Western culture,
rather than Japanese culture as Japanese students were in the minority. Japanese students might have had more pressure to adapt themselves to Western culture. However Australian students also learnt about Japanese culture through communication with Japanese students. Robert gave one example of Australian students’ cultural learning.

"However if the Australian students see that they’ve got a bad reaction or didn’t get the reaction they expected then they will try to explain themselves and maybe even apologize and say well that’s not what I meant. (Robert 4)"

Robert’s observation about Australian students’ sensitivity towards Japanese students seems to be accurate. Many Australian students who were critical about Richard’s insensitive behaviour said that they would apologize and explain that he was not serious if they were Richard.

"Researcher: IF YOU WERE RICHARD, HOW WOULD YOU ACT OR REACT?  
I'd become very apologetic and try to tell her that I was joking and that I was being sarcastic. And I’d be very worried that I’d done something very wrong. (John 4)"

As discussed in the previous section, Japanese students who have difficulty in understanding jokes found it very helpful when international students told them they were playing a joke. George identified the lack of explicit explanation as a cause of miscommunication.

"I think if you explain everything, it’s okay. But maybe if you leave it, it might create problems. But as long as they know that you are joking, it’s okay. (George 4)"

George’s comment reflects exactly why Japanese students were critical about Richard’s behaviour. It suggests that George might have learned what Japanese students want through communication with international students.
The findings of this section on multiple interpretations of stimulus critical incidents revealed that interpretations of two types of social and emotional challenges were split across both cultures and genders. These results indicate that interpretations are influenced by both culture and gender. Additionally, participants who belonged to the same culture and gender provided different interpretations. This might imply that interpretations could be influenced by individual differences such as personalities or personal experiences. Furthermore, the findings show that interpretations are influenced by context, such as the place of interaction, gender and relationship of interactants, and stage of relationship development. Finally, another reason for multiple interpretations was shifting perspectives. Some participants offered multiple interpretations by shifting their cultural norms to the opposite gender or the other culture. Overall, the results revealed that culture, gender, individual differences, context, and empathetic skills generate different interpretations of social and emotional challenges.

CONCLUSION

Both spontaneous and stimulus critical incidents elicited several key findings. One of them is the significance of cultural values. Both experience and interpretations of social challenges were influenced by cultural values, as well as gender. Due to the gender imbalance across cohorts, it seems difficult to establish how cultural values and/or gender influenced some of the findings. Interpretations of social challenges, in particular, revealed the significance of subjective interpretations since participants interpreted challenges based on their personal experiences rather than cultural values or gender. This finding illustrates that individual differences such as personality or
personal experiences are also salient in generating or interpreting social and emotional challenges. Finally the students’ reporting or interpreting challenges from the perspective of the other suggests the significance of understanding alternative perspectives.

Based on the results of this study, it is important to conduct more research on a range of issues identified here, because understanding cultural values, gender differences, subjective interpretations, and reciprocal understandings are critical to successful international education.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This last chapter is comprised of three parts. The first part of this chapter summarizes and discusses the major findings of the study. It is organized around the four questions that guided this research on relational development between Australian and Japanese students. The questions examined the strategies used at different stages of intercultural relational development, the factors that facilitated or inhibited that development, the social challenges emerging during intercultural relational development, and the significance of subjective interpretations of social challenges.

The second part of this chapter reflects on key conceptual and methodological features of this study that contributed to a better understanding of intercultural relational development. The uniqueness of this research, specifically the development of participants’ relationships over time, the situated nature of the research, the focus on experience, and the premise on reciprocity of interactions, is also examined.

The third part of this chapter reflects on the limitations of the empirical study and provides suggestions for future research. Salient themes emerging from the findings; namely the controversial role of drinking, the problem of cultural groups differing in their sense of humour, the influence of power, and the significance of in-groups and out-groups are identified. The chapter concludes with recommendations for international education.
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

This first part discusses key findings of the study, including participants’ expectations about their stay at the International House, strategies used at different stages of relational development, facilitating and inhibiting factors, social challenges emerging during the process, and the significance of subjective interpretation.

Participants’ Expectations about their Stay at the International House

The first research question addressed, “What strategies for intercultural relational development between Australian and Japanese students emerge at different stages of development?” The students' expectations about their stay at the International House were examined assuming that their expectations influence the choice of strategies. Some strategies were found to be overlapping and the others were unique. An expectation unique to Japanese students was expected role of giving assistance with language learning. This unique expectation will be discussed in the following section in relation to specific strategy.

Strategies Used at Different Stages

During the four interviews, data was gathered regarding both Australian and Japanese students’ knowledge of strategies used at different stages of intercultural relational development. By using direct questioning techniques as well as stimulus materials, the researcher elicited responses from participants relating to strategies used during stages
of intercultural relational development, such as initiating conversations with strangers in the initial stages and engaging in self-disclosure in later stages. The questions and stimulus materials were informed by theories indicating that relational development reflects stages (Altman & Tailor, 1973; Baxter, 1988; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knapp, 1978). Findings indicated both commonality and distinctiveness across both groups of students in relation to strategies used at diverse stages of development.

In terms of commonality across both groups, Australian and Japanese students reported the use of the following strategies: spending time together, self-disclosure and offering information and emotional support. First, spending time together was found to be a common strategy across the Japanese and Australian groups of students. Although this strategy was often reported by both Australian and Japanese students over a period of time, their accounts revealed that the amount of time they spent together decreased as relationships developed. This surprising result contradicts the findings of other studies about intercultural relational development (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990). Sudweeks and colleagues, for example, found that close friends reported high involvement, while casual friends reported little involvement. Although other empirical studies about intracultural friendship (Hays, 1988; Rose & Serafica, 1986) found that frequent interaction is less important for participants once they have developed a special relationship. The findings of this study support these conclusions.

A second common strategy reported by both the Australian and Japanese students was self-disclosure, as discussed extensively in Knapp’s research. This finding supports Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory, which assumes that intimacy is gained through increasing breath and depth of penetration of interaction. However, the
type of strategies volunteered by Japanese and Australian students was found to differ more significantly on the basis of gender rather than culture. For example, female students became intimate with other female students through confiding personal problems. In contrast, male students intensified relationships through arguing about conflicting views on a topic. The gender differences observed across the two cohorts of students in this study are consistent with the findings of other intracultural friendship development studies (Hays, 1988, 1989; Oswald, Clark and Kelly, 2004).

In addition to spending time together and engaging in self-disclosure, a third important strategy reported across both student groups was offering information and emotional support. This finding is consistent with those of several intracultural studies (Hays, 1984; Oswald et al, 2004). Additionally the present study revealed that while mainly Japanese students used the strategy of offering information and support, this strategy became reciprocal as relationships developed further. In order to balance cost and rewards in terms of relational development, reciprocal support might be necessary.

As well as common strategies across the Australian and Japanese groups, the present study revealed strategies that were distinct to each group. In initial encounters, for example, the majority of Japanese students reported they would first greet the other person since AISATSU (greeting) is a behaviour that members of Japanese society need to acquire, and essential to building relationships in Japanese culture (Ide, 2005). The majority of Australian students, on the other hand, reported they would ask for demographic information of the other. The strategy used by Australian students to ask demographic information in the initial stages of relational development is consistent with Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) uncertainty reduction theory, and Baxter’s (1997)
relational dialectic theory. The finding that Japanese students did not identify small talk as a way of initiating conversation with international students is also supported by cross-cultural studies.

Gudykunst and Nishida (1984, 1986) reported how Japanese students at a Japanese university had lesser intent to engage in interactive strategies of interrogation and self-disclosure, than North American students at an American university. These earlier studies further revealed that Japanese students tend to engage in passive strategies of observing others to reduce uncertainty. In contrast, rather than using passive strategies, Japanese students in this research engaged in interactive strategies, such as greetings, to initiate interaction with international students. This could be due to the unique expectations to the Japanese students mentioned in the previous section. Their role of facilitator for the adaptation of international students could have encouraged them to engaged in interactive strategies more actively, than Japanese students in other contexts.

In addition to reporting on strategies used by Australian and Japanese students, the present study also revealed that certain contexts encourage students to use certain strategies for intercultural relational development. For example, Japanese female students said that they would engage in self-disclosure in their own rooms rather than in the common area. This finding indicates that contexts of participation have an impact on the way relationships develop.

Consistent with previous studies, in this study, strategies such as small talk (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Knapp, 1978), self-disclosure (Altman & Tailor, 1973), spending time together (Fehr, 1996; Kudo & Simkin, 2003), and offering information and support (Hays, 1984; Oswald et al, 2004) were found to develop intercultural relationships.
However, this study uniquely revealed that students' expectations, stage, cultural background, gender and individual differences within a group were also found to influence students' engagement in strategies for intercultural relational development. These unique findings from the present study were revealed in light of dialectic theory that focuses on contexts rather than individuals.

Factors Facilitating and Inhibiting Intercultural Relational Development

The second research question was, “What factors are perceived as facilitating or inhibiting that [intercultural relational] development?” In this section facilitating and inhibiting factors will be discussed in turn.

Facilitating Factors

Two facilitating factors were perceived similarly by both groups as playing a major facilitating role in the development of relationships: interest in other cultures and languages and drinking. The first facilitating factor, interest in other cultures and languages was reflected in accounts of both Australian and Japanese students. For example, Australian students noted that it felt easier to interact with Japanese students at the International House because the majority of Japanese students were fluent in English, and interested in Australian culture as discussed in Chapter 4. Japanese students, on the other hand, chose to spend a lot more time with students who spoke the language of their university major, and less time with students who spoke languages
they were not fluent in. This finding is consistent with other intercultural friendship studies (Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990). These studies found that Japanese sojourners tend to form closer relationships with host members who tried to understand Japanese culture. The findings also support the argument that lack of cultural interest towards sojourners inhibits intercultural relational development (Kudo & Simkin; Sudweeks et al.).

Another common major facilitating factor identified by both groups of students was drinking. One of the possible reasons why drinking facilitates intercultural relational development could be related to self-disclosure promoted by the consumption of alcohol. This finding is consistent with several intracultural studies (Lindsay, 2005; Nakagawa, 2003). This finding was somewhat disturbing as it was consistently reported by all students. Concerns about serious drinking are shared by several researchers (Lindsay, 2005; Roche & Watt, 1999; Sande, 2002) who have studied the role of drinking in youth cultures. Roche and Watt (1999) discussed how in Australia, for example, intoxication and frequent drinking led to negative consequences and even injuries among young people. Researchers dealing with young people need to consider this finding seriously and suggest ways of minimizing the harm of drunkenness. Furthermore, why drinking is perceived as removing inhibitions, and the extent to which some cultural groups drink only because they perceive the behaviour as being enjoyed by the other, needs to be examined. The dynamics that foster drinking in intercultural groups is an important area for future research.

Some factors were also found across two cohorts. Showing similarity in interest and hobbies appeared more salient to Australian students than Japanese students. The
significance of similarity in interest and hobbies in intercultural relational development has been addressed in both intracultural and intercultural friendship development studies (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990). Surprisingly, this factor was perceived to be less salient by Japanese students. A possible reason for the difference in perception might be the effect of the specific context in which this study took place. Unlike previous research that investigated any intercultural relational development between international students (Japanese or German) and local students at American or Australian universities, the present research focused on intercultural relational development among residents in the International House. Since all the international students could be considered as members of an in-group of residents at the International House, Japanese students might have felt equally close to all of them despite their differences in interests and hobbies. Some Japanese students’ spontaneous accounts, however, suggest that similarities in hobbies and interests may have facilitated initial relational development between international students and Japanese students outside the International House, but not within. Their accounts support the argument that similarity in interest and hobbies may be particularly important during initial encounters with another person as similarities reduce uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Neuliep, 2003).

Two other facilitating factors, on the other hand, were found to be unique to Japanese students. The first one was shared accommodation. This might be related to different ways of forming interpersonal relationships in collectivistic culture. According to Yoneyama (1973), Japanese friendships are structured via groups (NAKAMA). Good examples of NAKAMA are classmates or colleagues (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986b). Cargile’s (1998) study about meanings and modes of Japanese friendships defined
NAKAMA as a group of people brought together by some shared context with a sense of obligation to associate with one another (TSUKIAI). In this study, Japanese students might view international students who share the International House as NAKAMA and feel obliged to associate with them. On the other hand, Australian students participating in this study appeared to develop intercultural relations based on commonality and did not feel obliged to associate with each other, despite their proximity.

Triandis (1989, 1994) interprets NAKAMA as in-group membership and explains differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures, as discussed in Chapter 2. He claims that in-group membership in a collectivistic culture is ascribed, whereas in-group membership in an individualistic culture is achieved. In other words, people who belong to the same class or club tend to establish friendships in collectivistic cultures, while an individual chooses friends based on common interests in individualistic cultures. This may account for why the Japanese students perceived their shared accommodation as a more salient factor.

Another interesting finding regarding shared accommodation is that Australian students perceived this factor as less salient. One possible reason for the difference in perception might be related to the imbalance of Japanese and international students in the International House. As discussed in Chapter 3, when the first interview was conducted, one sixth of the residents were Japanese and the number of Japanese students kept decreasing towards the end of their stay. Previous studies (Bochner et al., 1977; Gareis, 1995; Kudo & Simkin, 2003) found that residential proximity had a positive impact on intercultural relational development in residences where the number of local and international residents was more balanced. The imbalance between Japanese and
international students, perhaps encouraged Australian students to seek interactions with
Japanese students outside the International House. This imbalanced number of residents
could have had Australian students perceived shared accommodation less salient.

Another facilitating factor found to be distinctive to Japanese students was organizing
events. The impact that organizing a Christmas party together had on intensifying
intercultural relationships was often identified by Japanese students, but not by
Australian students. This difference in responses across the two cultural groups is
consistent with an earlier study by Gudykunst and Nishida (1986). They compared
Japanese students with North American students, and found that members of a
high-context culture such as Japan gain high-context attributional confidence through
group based activities such as organizing events. Gudykunst and Nishida’s finding
suggested that group activities seem to play a crucial role in Japanese relational
development. To promote international students’ interactions with Japanese students, as
Yokota (1991a) suggested, international students could be encouraged to engage in
group activities, such as club activities at Japanese universities.

_Inhibiting Factors_

As for facilitating factors, some inhibiting factors were common across groups and
others were different. Two significant inhibiting factors in the development of
intercultural relationships, for both Japanese and Australian students, seemed to be
dorm rules and language barrier. It was evident that dorm rules were perceived as a
major inhibiting factor. This was because rules such as curfew or restricting visitors
were perceived as reducing the amount of intercultural interactions. Interestingly, this factor has hardly been mentioned as an inhibiting factor in studies conducted in other countries, which suggests that it could be unique to the Japanese context. Only a scarce number of studies (e.g. Deguchi & Yashima, 2006) pointed out that international students felt negative about dorm rules in Japan. This might be because few university residences host both Japanese and international students, therefore few studies have examined intercultural relational development (Yokota & Tanaka, 1992) at this type of residence.

Language barrier seemed to be another common inhibiting factor for both Japanese and Australian students. Australian students in particular found second language (Japanese) proficiency significant. Australian students’ accounts revealed that they tended to feel the language barrier more when they communicated with local Japanese people outside the International House. This finding is consistent with Yokota’s study (1991a) that addresses Australian students’ lack of Japanese proficiency.

Three other inhibiting factors were identified as being distinctive to either the Australian or Japanese cohort. They include financial matters, Japanese visitors breaking rules, and international students’ expressing their feelings openly. First, financial matters seemed to be salient only among Australian students. The result was supported by several studies about the life of international students (Church, 1982; Henderson, Milhouse and Cao, 1993; Kudo, 2000; Schreier & Abramovitch, 1996). International students, particularly those studying in Japan, appeared to experience financial difficulties due to the high price of commodities compared to their home country (Ohashi, 1991; Tanaka et al., 1994; Uehara, 1988, 1992; Yao & Matsubara,
The second inhibiting factor for Japanese students appeared to be Japanese visitor’s breaking dorm rules. Dorm rules that were perceived as a major common inhibiting factor seem to provide not only less opportunities for Australian students and Japanese visitors to interact but also friction between Japanese students and visitors who do not follow rules. In fact, it appeared that Japanese students believed that part of their leadership role as host students was to tell Japanese visitors to abide by these rules and this seemed to give extra stress to Japanese students. The issue of dorm rules revealed how contextual constraints, even those well intended and established for the safety and comfort of residents, could have a negative impact on intercultural relational development.

The last inhibiting factor for Japanese students seemed to be international students’ direct communication style such as expressing their feelings openly. As discussed in Chapter 2, members of high-context culture such as Japanese tend to use indirect communication style. In high-context culture, very little is provided in the verbal messages (Hall, 1976) and negative emotion, in particular, is not communicated explicitly to maintain group harmony. It is easily predicted that members of high-context cultures tend to feel intimidated by members of low-context culture who express emotion openly.

Consistent with previous findings, interest in other cultures and languages (Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990), having similarity in interest and hobbies (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990), and shared accommodation (Bochner et al., 1977; Gareis, 1995,
2000) were recognized as facilitating factors by both Japanese and Australian students. However, Japanese students in this study appeared to consider shared accommodation more important than Australian students, due to the significant role that shared contexts play in relational development. Joint activities such as organizing events and drinking were found to be important in relational development. Organizing events seemed to help Japanese students, in particular, develop relationships with Australian students as group activities promote relationships in collectivistic cultures. Drinking seemed to play an important role in relational development, and was reported to increase self-disclosure. Language barrier (Gareis, 2000; Gudykunst et al., 1991; Kudo & Simkin, 2003) and financial matters (Church, 1982; Henderson, Milhouse and Cao, 1993; Kudo, 2000; Schreier & Abramovitch, 1996) seemed to inhibit intercultural relational development as claimed by previous literature. In the context of a campus residence, particularly in Japan, dorm rules concerning visitors appeared to inhibit intercultural relational development between international students and their Japanese visitors.

Social Challenges Emerging during Intercultural Relational Development

The third research question was, “What social challenges emerge in the process over time, and how do these challenges relate to cultural values?” Data that addressed this question was derived from spontaneous critical incidents collected over the nine months of this research project. Eliciting spontaneous incidents is useful when exploring unknown fields in particular (Kain, 2003). This is due to minimizing the researcher’s influence observed in structured interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as discussed in Chapter 3. Both common and cultural specific social challenges emerged. A common
challenge for both Australian and Japanese students included communication style. Major challenges for Japanese students reported in earlier interviews included sense of humor and self-disclosure. Major challenges for Australian students included instrumental relationship.

Challenges reported mainly in the first two interviews indicated that joking was one of the major social difficulties experienced by Japanese students, especially for females. However, it was also noted by male students who were aware of incidents where Japanese female students felt hurt by jokes played by Australian or American male students. This finding also supports other research showing that females tend to be the target of teasing (Hopper, Knapp and Scott, 1981), and to experience more negative emotions in response to being teased (Hopper at al.; Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oeming, and Monarch, 1998). Even though these studies were not intracultural studies, this finding suggests that gender related jokes are a sensitive issue in intercultural relational development. There was strong support for this in students’ reactions to the critical incident related to joking and teasing.

This study also found that the number of jokes reported as critical incidents by Japanese students decreased as their intercultural relationships developed. This finding might be related to differences between Western and Eastern cultures, and their use of humour. In the interview reported by Struck (2000), Oshima (as cited in Struck, 2000) noted that people in western countries often tell jokes to “break the ice” with strangers, whereas people in Japan share a joke only after they have developed a good relationship with someone. Telling a joke confirms a friendship through laughing at the same thing. It is likely that the teasing that took place in the early stages of relational development
shocked some Japanese students, but after a good relationship was established with the Australian students, then the teasing was accepted.

Another possible reason for the decrease in jokes being reported as critical incidents is cultural learning. Cultural learning refers to “… the process of coming to terms with the demands of a new social or cultural environment, typically in a foreign country and often involving the use of a foreign language …” (Shaules, 2004, p. 10) operationalized through participation in new social environment. As some Australian students noted, Japanese students seemed to become less sensitive about being teased as a result of “getting used to it”. This might reflect that these Japanese students have reached emotional acceptance of the new rules, which Koyanagi (1999) described in her study. However, they still are not ready to put new rules into practice since there was no report that these students teased Australian students back.

Another major social challenge reported by Japanese students was the degree of self-disclosure that they were prepared to engage in with Australian students, and in particular, with students from the opposite gender. According to social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), increases in self-disclosure develop relationship intimacy. However, female Japanese students’ accounts revealed that self-disclosure sometimes inhibited intercultural relational development. Their accounts suggested that they felt uncomfortable revealing their romantic relationships to international students of the opposite gender, especially in the early stages of relational development. This finding suggested that self-disclosure could be a stumbling block in intercultural relational development, depending on the gender of interactants, the topic of disclosure, and the stage of relational development.
Interestingly both major social challenges for Japanese students (sense of humor and self-disclosure) might have reflected the gender imbalance across the two groups. Additionally if the context in which these challenges took place had not been a cross-gender situation, different types of challenges might have emerged. Since gender might influence joking and self-disclosing behaviors, gender might need to be taken into consideration when findings are interpreted.

Socially challenging incidents reported by Australian students all related to interactions with Japanese people whom they met outside the International House. As Rawlins (1992) points out, in Western cultures, one of the dialectics practiced in friendship is a dialectics of affection versus instrumentality. Therefore there was no problem as long as Japanese students approach Australian counterparts because they like them as a person. The conflict emerged when some Japanese students explicitly showed their instrumental motivation such as a desire of practicing English with them. Interestingly, instrumental relationships with Japanese students at the International House were not mentioned since Australian students are the ones who receive the benefit from Japanese students rather than being exploited. As discussed in the strategy section on supportiveness, one Japanese student, on the contrary, felt used by an Australian friend. These two findings appear to suggest that the dialectic between affection and instrumentality needs to be balanced to establish a good relationship.

Another characteristic of spontaneous incidents reported by Australian students was that several students showed self-reflections on their own behaviors toward the end of their stay. Their reports of interpreting social and emotional challenges to Japanese students from Japanese perspectives implied cultural learning took place. This finding further
indicates that their receiving negative feedback from the other facilitates them to gain cross-cultural communication competence. The positive relation between social emotional challenge and cross-cultural adaptation is supported by cross-cultural adaptation studies.

Significance of Subjective Interpretation of Social Challenges Emerging in Intercultural Development

The fourth research question was, “What is the significance of subjective interpretation of social challenges?” This question was addressed by eliciting students’ interpretations of critical incidents, created as stimulus material, and based on spontaneously reported accounts. The data highlighted the significance of subjectivity in interpretations, some the result of cultural differences but also gender differences. The interpretations of the first major challenge, discussing topics considered personal, revealed the significance of gender over cultural background. The different interpretations elicited were predominantly based on the gender of students. Most female students agreed that a topic about romantic relationships is too personal to be discussed with a peer from the opposite gender. Male students, on the other hand, found it an acceptable topic to discuss, especially when drinking was involved.

The casual attitude of Australian male students, in particular, towards talking about romantic relationships might be due to their sense of reciprocity of self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000). As Japanese students often ask international students if they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, Australian students might
have thought it was acceptable to do the same to Japanese students. What the Australian male students did not realize is that not all questions are reciprocal. Japanese people tend to ask foreign visitors if they have a boyfriend or girlfriend especially when they get drunk (Kleingartner, 1997), but this does not mean it is acceptable for foreign males to ask the same question of Japanese women, as it is a sensitive subject for women in a cross-gender context. Talking about romantic relationships in great detail might make young Japanese women feel embarrassed.

The second social challenge examined for multiple interpretations was the practice of joking and teasing. The findings revealed a clear difference between Japanese and Australian students in their interpretations of jokes with a sarcastic overtone. Some would argue that the way verbal sarcasm or irony is identified by the listener is that there is an incongruity between the intonation used and the words spoken. This may be subtle and implicit but is present. Some Japanese students’ accounts suggest that the meanings of sarcastic jokes are not well understood by Japanese students. Yokota (1991a) and Koyanagi (1999) have previously explained Japanese students’ difficulty in understanding jokes, but this research reveals that it is even more difficult when sarcasm is used. One of the reasons for the difficulty is that sarcastic jokes usually lack explicit nonverbal cues, such as a smile or a specific tone of voice. This issue is discussed by Tsuji (1997) who argued that irony must remain implicit for it to be ironic, as irony is spoiled by adding explicit markers.

Therefore humour and sarcasm in particular, can become an obstacle in relational development between Japanese and international students. However, tension could have been reduced, as noted by some Japanese students, if the Australian students had been
more culturally sensitive and made their intentions more explicit by using clear cues to accompany their jokes. On the other hand, if Japanese students had known how to counter teasing as first language speakers of English do (Mooney et al., 1991; Miller, 1986; Drew, 1987), they might not have felt hurt.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF INTERCULTURAL RELATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section of the chapter discusses the key conceptual and methodological features that contributed to a better understanding of the nature of intercultural relational development. These features are participants’ development over time, the situated nature of interactions, the focus on experience, and the premise on reciprocity. The methods employed, such as using a longitudinal design, a single research site, spontaneous critical incidents, and multiple interpretations of the same event enabled the researcher to examine the features mentioned above. The dynamic nature of intercultural relational development across methodologies is mapped in Table 6.1.
Table 6.1

<table>
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<th>Explaining Dynamic Relational Development across Methodologies</th>
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Development Over Time

Examining the development of relationships between Australian and Japanese students over time using a longitudinal design generated rich data. It revealed how intercultural relational development takes place over time, and includes changes in strategies and perceptions of social challenges, development of intercultural knowledge, and sensitivity to other ways of thinking. The longitudinal design also made it possible to adopt an evolving forum of data collection. As discussed in Chapter 3, issues emerging in the first interview were used as stimulus material for following interviews. For example, the issue of drinking was examined in several ways throughout the data collection period and thus generated rich data on that theme (Denzin, 1978). Since it emerged in the first interview, the theme of drinking was included in the list of possible
student activities, and used to elicit comments from all participants in the second interview. Since many students rated drinking as important in facilitating intercultural relationships, it was then included in the list of possible facilitating factors, and to elicit further comments about drinking from all participants in the final interview. Rich data about this disturbing theme was generated, such as when and where students drank, with whom, the impact of drinking on relational development, as well as, differences in drinking behaviours across cultures.

Examining intercultural relational development over time also facilitated the identification of changes in emerging themes. For example, frequent contact was revealed as a crucial in the initial stages, but became less salient as relationships developed. Previous cross-sectional work (Hays, 1988; Rose & Serafica, 1986) generated the same finding. However, a longitudinal design is superior to cross-sectional work (Kim, 1988; Takai, 1994; Ward & Searle, 1991) since the former examines the transformation of the same group of people over a short period of time instead of people at different stages, where they proceed from casual acquaintances, to close relationships, to best friendships.

Situated Nature

This research focused on intercultural relational development at a single site; namely the International House. This approach is not common to other studies where the location is typically not stated nor brought under scrutiny. Using a single site, as in a case study, allowed the researcher to focus on the role of multiple specific contexts within the site.
such as places (e.g., dining area, private rooms) and joint activities (e.g., drinking, listening to the music), events (Christmas, birthdays), and dorm rules in exploring how intercultural relational development takes place. All the contexts mentioned above were found to have an influence on intercultural relational development, and provided opportunities for both Japanese and international students to interact. By contrast, dorm rules constrained their interactions.

Since all participants were living in the same unique environment and engaged in a range of activities, it allowed the researcher to trace who interacted with whom. Recording this information helped the researcher to find out what types of relationships developed, and how and where they developed. For example, bedrooms were found to be a good place for close friends to intensify a relationship by disclosing personal matters, but not a place for casual friends to become acquainted because visitors were not allowed to enter private rooms. In contrast, the courtyard was found to be a place for a large number of casual friends to drink, smoke, and play music, but it stopped providing opportunities for residents to interact when the weather turned too cold to stay outside.

The single site study also enabled several participants to witness the same critical incidents. For example, a spontaneous critical incident involving a Japanese female student complimenting an Australian student about their new hairstyle was observed and reported by several students. Their different interpretations of the incident added richness to the findings.
Experience

Eliciting personal accounts and reflections on social challenges generated a number of unique themes in this research. For example, the problems created by jokes, and differing appreciation and experience of humour, emerged naturally in the process of collecting spontaneous critical incidents. If data had been collected only via semi-structured interviews, it might have been difficult for salient themes within a specific culture to emerge since questions would have been decided in advance by the researcher (Patton, 2002). Allowing participants to talk freely about their experiences provided rich descriptive data.

To fully understand personal relationships, several researchers (Bochner, 1978; Duck & Perlman, 1985; Gudykunst et al., 1991) argued that it is necessary to discover how relationships are created, both subjectively and objectively. One of the ways to explore personal relationships subjectively is through examining participants’ interpretations, perceptions, and explanations of relationships (Gudykunst et al.). Examining personal accounts is very important as they are ‘… real people’s self representations of their real relationships …” (Weber, Harvey, & Stanley, 1987, p. 114). The use of personal accounts seems to be beneficial particularly in a little explored field, such as intercultural relationships. Some intercultural relational development studies (Gudykunst et al.; Sudweeks et al., 1990) using personal accounts provided several new insights.

The final stimulus materials were based on participants’ personal accounts and were used to elicit multiple interpretations of critical incidents, as discussed in Chapter 3. This technique was first used by Flanagan (1954) to analyze jobs, but later became
popular in cross-cultural training (Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, and Yong, 1986; Cushner & Brislin, 1996, 1997; Pedersen, 1995) as explained in Chapter 3. In this study, critical incidents were used to investigate participants’ cultural understandings of the other, similar to cross-cultural training. Critical incidents based on real life situations make it easy for participants to imagine themselves in the same situation (Pedersen, 1995). This was also the case in this study, and it certainly encouraged participants to engage in each story even more enthusiastically (Wight, 1995). The rich interpretation of stimulus materials contributed to a better understanding of intercultural relational development.

Reciprocity and Subjectivity

This research was based on the premise that relational development is a reciprocal process where the two parties are interdependent. Interaction between local and international students is not commonly found in the literature on international education. Since this research was conceptualized with the view that relationships involve both parties, a deliberate effort was made during the interviews to understand both accounts of similar events. Spontaneously generated critical incidents only revealed one perspective, and therefore critical incidents were created as stimulus material to elicit multiple interpretations of an event. The search for multiple interpretations made it possible to highlight the subjectivity of interpretations. Paying equal attention to multiple voices enabled the researcher to describe the complex reality of intercultural relational development more accurately (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In an intercultural context, listening to both groups of people with different cultural
backgrounds was particularly important, because it allowed the researcher to identify how intercultural misunderstandings occur. Furthermore, eliciting interpretations of unfamiliar behaviour of the other cultural group provided valuable information on ways to avoid intercultural communication breakdown in the future. According to Pederson (1995) critical incidents used in training contexts are particularly powerful in developing intercultural problem solving skills. For example, Australian students suggested that they would have challenged a teaser if they had been Masako in the second critical incident. Their comments suggested how a Japanese student could behave in order to avoid cultural misunderstandings.

The contextualized critical incidents used as stimulus materials for reflection involved reciprocal behaviours. The use of these incidents allowed the researcher to observe respondents’ understanding of reciprocity. Participants were expected to shift their perspectives to explain these reciprocal behaviours. Their responses generated more complex, and particularly insightful and rich data, about the salient themes that emerged throughout the research.

Contrasting perspectives were observed between the two cultural groups, and between gender groups, and also between individuals. Collecting multiple perspectives of the same critical incidents helped the researcher focus on individual differences as well. Overall, multiple interpretations provided rich and in-depth information of social challenges.
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This section discusses some strengths and limitations of the methodology used in this study, more specifically the focus on a single site, the small group of participants and the reliance on self-report data.

As discussed in the previous section, the focus on a single site enabled the researcher to explore the impact of multiple specific contexts related to intercultural relational development. However, a unique site also has some limitations. Since the research was conducted in a single setting, it may be difficult to generalize the findings. Nevertheless, Maxwell (2005) claims that generalizability beyond a given setting (external generalizability) is not a crucial issue for qualitative studies as long as the purpose is to develop a theory. The rich description of the research context is expected to provide sufficient information about the research background for other researchers to conduct a similar study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Another limitation derived from the single site is the lack of flexibility regarding the choice of participants. The situated nature of the research combined with the longitudinal design and in-depth interviews led to the selection of a small sample. Small samples have the potential to place too much importance on the idiosyncrasies of some participants. This makes it difficult to generalize the findings to other settings. Small samples, on the other hand, are advantageous. As the literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) suggests, trust is crucial to the credibility of qualitative research, and as the number of students in this study was small, the researcher found it easier to build and maintain trust with each of them.
Another problem created by the small sample was the gender imbalance that became even more salient toward the end of data collection period. Even at the beginning, there was only one female out of 11 Australian students and two males out of nine Japanese students. In the last interview, the number of Australian female students had remained the same but the number of Japanese male students had reduced from two to one. This growing gender imbalance might have contributed to skewed findings, even more so at the end of the study. This imbalance, however, was an inevitable outcome of field research that tracked participants over time.

Most of the data in the present study came from self-reports. Reliance on self-report as the main data source has some limitations. It has been argued (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) that self-reports may be unreliable since participants could possibly provide distorted responses due to their emotional status, recall error, their attempt to be seen as helpful, and other self-seeking purposes. To raise the validity associated with the use of self-reports, both Lincoln and Guba, (1985), and Patton (2002) recommend using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis. According to Patton, observations have the advantage of checking what is reported in interviews. Observations of relational developments, however, are not realistic, because one cannot always be at the right place or at the right time to observe critical incidents. Therefore, researchers have to rely on self-reports as a data source.

Instead of observations, several other techniques were employed in this study to compensate for the limitation of self-reports. This was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. One technique was to collect data over an extended period of time. Collecting data at four points in time over a year enabled the researcher to test for
misinformation arising from interviewees (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Multiple interviews instead of a single interview, the evolving nature of data collection, and the use of stimulus materials based on previous interviews, provided a rich and thick description of participants’ perceptions of the activities they engaged in, highlighting facilitating and inhibiting factors, and critical incidents. The use of critical incidents added further richness to the data. Collecting data at a single site allowed spontaneous critical incidents to be reported by several observers and generated multiple interpretations of the same incidents. Overall, the benefits of these techniques compensated for the limitations of self-reports.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section discusses further aspects of intercultural relational development that need to be better understood. These issues include the role of drinking, the inhibiting effect of cultural differences in the appreciation and understanding of humour, the influence of power in an intercultural context, and the significance of in-groups and out-groups in relational development within and across cultural groups.

The Role of Drinking

One area that could be explored further is the role of drinking in intercultural relational development. Several intracultural studies (Block, 1970; Nakagawa, 2001, 2003; Rohrberg & Sousa-Poza, 1976) have suggested that drinking influences the level of
self-disclosure. However, to the researcher’s knowledge, there is no study regarding the impact of drinking on intercultural relational development. The dynamics of cross-cultural encounters that lead to extensive use of alcohol need to be better understood. For example, whether one group engages in drinking behaviours only to gain acceptance, and would not otherwise do so, or whether both groups share common “ice breaking” behaviours is not well understood. How the consumption of alcohol can increase self-disclosure in an intercultural context needs to be investigated. Secondly, several intracultural studies (Lindsay, 2005; Sande, 2002) have claimed that drinking seems to strengthen group solidarity and maintain friendships. However, to the knowledge of the researcher, there is scant research that compares drinking with other social activities such as playing sports or organizing events particularly in intercultural contexts.

Furthermore, there has been little investigation of cross-cultural drinking behaviour and its impact on intercultural relational development. Additional questions such as, “Why is drinking more effective in terms of intercultural relational development, than other activities such as playing sports or organizing events together”, or “To what extent is drinking behaviour different across cultures?”, or “How does drinking affect intercultural relational development?” need to be asked. The present study revealed a disturbing facilitating factor in relational development.

Sense of Humour

Another interesting area for future research is the role of sense of humour in
intercultural relational development. In contrast to drinking, this theme emerged as a salient inhibiting factor, as sense of humour is culturally bound and not easily understood across cultures (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Moyer, 1987; Yokota, 1991a). As discussed in the previous section, sarcastic humour in particular, appears problematic in cross-cultural contexts. Is it due to lack of explicit nonverbal cues accompanying sarcasm as some researchers have suggested (Attardo et al., 2003; Tsuji, 1997). In regard to the present study, the problem created by the jokes told by Australian students may be related to Japanese people’s unfamiliarity with this type of joke. Very little has been researched about the types of jokes Japanese people tend to play, and the types of jokes they tend to appreciate. Finding out more about what types of jokes Japanese people appreciate, why they play jokes, if they ever do, with whom they play jokes, will reveal cultural differences in sense of humour and offer suggestions as to how to facilitate relational development between Australian and Japanese students, and people more generally.

The Influence of Gender

As discussed in the previous section, cultural differences in humour appreciation and self-disclosure were found to be problematic mainly in cross-gender contexts. When Japanese female students were teased by Australian male students, their sensitivities were heightened. To examine how gender influences intercultural relational development, female-female, male-male and cross-gender relationships need to be examined systematically between different cultural groups.
The Influence of Power

As discussed in Chapter 5, Australian students in this study reported very few critical incidents. This result might have been derived from either lack of experience of intercultural interactions especially in the first interview, as discussed in Chapter 5, or power differences based on the language students spoke. According to Reid and Ng (1999), social dominance of one group tends to be accompanied by linguistic dominance. Even though the International House was located in Japan, the language of communication in the house tended to be dominated by English due to the larger number of residents from English speaking countries, as well as, their relative lack of proficiency in Japanese. In other words, English speakers represented the majority of the community and Japanese speakers were perhaps unconsciously expected to accommodate to the language most familiar to international students. This type of context might have provided fewer opportunities for Australian students to experience social challenges related to language issues. To examine social challenges experienced by Australian students, future studies may need to be conducted in settings that provide limited power based on language proficiency.

Significance of In-Groups and Out-Groups

Having similar interest was not considered to be a significant facilitating factor by Japanese students, as this research focused on intercultural relationships among in-groups residing at the International House. If this study had examined relationships between in-group members (e.g., residents at the International House) and out-group
members (e.g., Japanese students met on campus, local people), common interests and frequency of contact (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Sudweeks et al., 1990) may have been perceived as a more salient facilitating factor as other researchers have suggested.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature highlights the clear distinction between in-groups and out-groups in Japan (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986b; Gudykunst et al., 1992; Triandis, 1995). Members of collectivistic cultures such as Japan, tend to co-operate or sacrifice for in-group members, whereas they tend to compete or even show hostility towards out-group members (Triandis & Trafimow, 2001). If relationships between in-group members and out-group members were investigated not only in the International House but also in other settings such as clubs or mixed classes, it may highlight other aspects of intercultural relational development between Japanese and Australian students, and people more generally.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

The benefit of the presence of international students to enrich campuses and promote international understanding is well documented in the literature (McCollow, 1989). Yet the research (Allport, 1954) has shown that intergroup contact is not sufficient to embrace intergroup relations. Research with international students found similar results, showing that the presence of international students on campus is not sufficient to promote intercultural interactions (Smart, Volet and Ang, 2000; Ward, 2003). Based on the results of the present research, which focused on interaction between Japanese and
Australian students at a private Japanese university, the following ideas have emerged.

To increase interaction between local and international students, most of the literature (Klak & Martin, 2003; Smart, Volet, & Ang, 2000) has recommended that universities organize informal social activities, such as barbeque parties or field trips. Few authors have discussed the issue of settings where intercultural interactions take place. This study revealed the importance of joint activities such as playing music in a relaxed environment, cooking in a shared kitchen, or watching a video in shared facilities. Based on this finding, increasing and improving the number of places where students naturally congregate to do things together may be more useful than organizing one off recreational events.

This finding is supported by Todd and Nesdale’s (1997) study. These authors found that the more an intervention program overlaps or coincides with a student’s typical daily routine, the more likely it is to be successful. Placing recreational facilities such as pool tables or tennis tables in students’ residences, for example, might promote meaningful intercultural interactions. These suggestions were also reported by Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000). Reciprocally, limiting opportunities for students to spend time together by prohibiting residents from visiting each other’s room may have a negative impact on intercultural relational development.

Not only the International House in this study but many other residences at Japanese universities tend to manage diversity in accommodation facilities by having strict dorm rules (Yokota & Tanaka, 1992). As Yokota and Tanaka suggested many years ago, some rules may need to be reconsidered since they potentially minimize valuable opportunities for both Japanese and international students to interact.
Japanese students at residential halls are often expected to support international students. At some private universities in Japan, for example, a small number of Japanese graduate students are hired as leaders or tutors, or to work as mediators between the University and international students (Yokota & Shiratsuchi, 2004). While these practices may be very useful for other purposes, in light of the findings of this study, they may not be ideal in terms of promoting intercultural relational development. Smart, Volet, and Ang (2000), for example, suggested that interventions should be developed in collaboration between international and local students, with international students actively involved in the program. Perhaps senior students who have already spent time in the host country may be most suitable to assist. As discussed in Chapter 4, many Japanese students reported enjoying organizing events, because international students shared the responsibility equally with them. It might therefore be desirable to share the responsibilities between international and Japanese students on other occasions as well.

Overall, this study supported the importance of seeking multiple perspectives from both local and international students. The literature on the development of cultural awareness (e.g., Hoopes & Pusch, 1979; Pedersen, 1995) offers a number of examples of how critical incidents can be used to facilitate students’ learning, and consider situations from alternative perspectives. In the field of intercultural education, and based on this study, both local and international students should be encouraged to reflect on multiple perspectives through keeping cross-cultural journals or analytical notebooks (Wagner & Magistrale, 1997). In regard to cross-cultural journals, several cultural trainers (Hess, 1994; Kohls & Knight, 1994) suggested that international students could describe critical incidents experienced in the new environment, and try to analyze their observations from a cross-cultural perspective. Cross-cultural journal writing has been
practised in language classrooms (Kurachi, 1991), and found to facilitate self-expression and deepen cross-cultural interactions. Cross-cultural journals might be useful in a mixed class since they provide data for discussion. Analytical notebooks are used for similar reasons, for fostering reflection on cross-cultural events through the process of writing.

Finally, as several researchers (Takai, 1994; Ward, 2003) suggested, more research on local students’ development of cultural awareness should be conducted. There are a limited number of studies focusing on the impact of multicultural campuses and residence halls on local students. Hanami (2003)’s research revealed how Japanese students developed awareness of other cultures, as well as, their own through the process of intercultural interactions. But intercultural relational development is a reciprocal phenomenon and future research should keep that premise paramount. Research focusing only on international students will never capture the full process of intercultural relational development. Increasing the number of studies focusing on both local and international students is expected to provide directions for program development, as well as, the design and implementation of intercultural training for administrators and educators.
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APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Division of Social Science, Humanities and Education

Project Title: Intercultural Interactions at a Japanese University

I am an EdD student at Murdoch University in Australia investigating the intercultural interactions and experiences between international students and Japanese students.

The aim of the project is to better understand students’ experience of interacting with peers from different cultural backgrounds at the International House. Your help in this study is critical. Should you agree to participate, I would like to interview you a few times over a one year period. It is anticipated that each interview will last for no more than an hour. Interviews will be taped upon your consent. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time. All information given during the interview is confidential and no names or other information will be used in any publication arising from the research. Data will be stored in a safe place.

If you are willing to participate in this study, could you please complete the details below. If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, on 05617 4- 1111 or my supervisor at Murdoch University, Associate Professor Simone Volet, on + 61 89 360 2119 or volet@murdoch.edu.au

My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have on how this study has been conducted, or alternatively you can contact Murdoch University’s Human Research Ethics Committee on 9360 6677.

Sincerely

Eiko Ujitani
I (the participant) have read the information above. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to take part in this activity, however, I know that I may change my mind and stop at any time.

I understand that all information provided is treated as confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law.

I agree for this interview to be taped.

I agree that research data gathered for this study may be published provided my name or other information which might identify me is not used.

Name of participant: _______________________________ Date:

Signature of participant: _______________________________ Date:

Investigator: _______________________________ Date:
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for the First Interview

1. What do you hope to get out of this stay?
2. What were your first interactions with Japanese people/international students?
3. What have you done to meet Japanese people/international students (eg. clubs, field trip, class, English lounge, the student house etc.)?
4. How easy or difficult is it to establish a friendship with a Japanese person/an international student?
5. Would you be prepared to start a conversation with a Japanese student/an international student?
6. What is it like to interact with Japanese students/international students in the student house (the way the house is organized, the rooms, the lounge, etc.)?
7. How do you feel about your stay in Japan/the international house so far?
8. What do you think are the most important things to do when you are with Japanese/international students (nonverbal behavior, communication style, etiquette, etc.)?
9. Do you think there is a ‘typical Japanese/Western person’?
10. I imagine you’ve already had opportunities to interact with Japanese students/international students. Sometimes when we interact with people from a different cultural background, we don’t understand each other well or are not sure why the person behaves in a particular way. Can you think of any situation where you thought that the communication with a Japanese student(s)/international student(s) did not work very well or where you felt annoyed, angry, intimidated, embarrassed, uncomfortable or upset?
11. How old are you?
12. Where were you born?
13. Have you been to any other countries before?
14. Which Japanese class are you in? (To Australian students) / How good is your English? (To Japanese students)
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for the Second Interview

1. What kind of interactions have you had with Japanese people/international students since our last interview? (e.g. when, where, with whom, language, how often, how long, anybody she/he feels closer, things they share or discuss, etc.)

2. As you know, I have been talking to a number of Japanese/international students about their experience of interacting with Japanese/international students. These are the places where people said they were interacting with Japanese/international students (See Stimulus Materials: Setting). Which are the most important places for you?

3. Now, let’s look at the activities people do together (See Stimulus Materials: Activities). These are the activities that international/Japanese students said they were doing together with Japanese/international students. Which would be the most important ones for you?

4. Overall, based on your experience, what has really helped to make interactions with Japanese people/international students easier, and on the other hand what has made interactions difficult?

5. Remember I asked this (critical incidents) in our last interview. You talked about X. Have you had any new incidents?

6. Remember your expectations about your stay in Japan on arrival two months ago. Have things happened as expected?
Stimulus Materials for the Second Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtyard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food corner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elsewhere in the university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the way to class/ to the student house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gym</td>
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<tr>
<td>AV center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside the university</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apita (shopping center)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing/ listening music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating events/ happy occasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Going shopping</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for the Third Interview

1. Let's go back to the winter break between Christmas and early January. How did you spend your winter break?

2. Since 21st of January all the Japanese students have had a break and didn’t attend classes. As I understand, there are only 4 Japanese students in the International House at the moment. There are no club activities, no English lounge. Do you think this had an impact on your/their interactions with Japanese students? If yes, how?

3. Now, after five months in Japan, how would you go about starting a conversation with a Japanese student who just moved into the International House?

4. In general, what do you now think are the most important things to start a conversation with a Japanese student/an international student?

5. The followings are issues (See Stimulus Materials: Possible Challenges) that you may be faced with when you interact with Japanese students/international students. 1) Is it an issue for you? 2) Do you think that it could be also be challenge for the Japanese students/international students?

6. These are some factors that students mentioned in the previous interview as obstacles to interactions with Japanese people/international students. For each of these (See Stimulus Materials: Possible Obstacles) and based on your experience, please let me know what you think of these as possible obstacles.

7. These (See Stimulus Materials: Issues related to Development of Good Relationships) are some issues that students mentioned in the previous interviews as important. Could you please comment on each of these other things, based on your experience?

8. Based on your experience of 5 months here, can you think of a situation where Japanese students and international students were interacting and you noticed that the Japanese student got their feelings hurt? What about another situation where an international student got their feelings hurt?
Stimulus Materials for the Third Interview

**Possible Challenges**

- Read the other person's mind to guess what they are thinking.
- Know whether a topic may be inappropriate to discuss.
- Know whether something you say may be perceived as rude or impolite or inappropriate when it was not intended.
- Know when it is better to act like a Japanese person would or like an Australian person would.
- Know when it is better to say things directly (or indirectly) to someone

**Possible Obstacles**

- Cost of living
- Dorm rules (e.g. visitor's being not allowed to go anywhere but the hall.
- Visitors having to leave the dorm early
- Being treated as an outsider
- Language barrier
- Work load

**Issues Related to Development of Good Relationships**

- Trying to reduce the distance by, for example expressing your feelings or not, making jokes that can be understood by someone from a different background or something else.
- Using casual language
- Having a relationship as equals rather than as dependent
APPENDIX E

Interview Questions for the Fourth Interview

1. Over the last three interviews, students I spoke to mentioned a number of factors that facilitated intercultural interactions (See Stimulus Materials: Facilitating Factors). Based on your own experience, could you please rate the extent to which each of these factors facilitate intercultural interactions? Which one is the most important factor and which one is the second most important one for you? Are there any other facilitating factors that you would like to add?

2. Now, let’s look at the list of possible inhibiting factors in intercultural interactions. These were things that students I spoke to mentioned as inhibiting factors in intercultural interactions (See Stimulus Materials: Inhibiting Factors). Based on your own experience, could you please rate the extent to which each of these factors inhibit intercultural interactions? Which one is the most important factor and which one is the second most important one for you?

3. During my interviews with international and Japanese students over the last few months, a number of stories were reported to me. I would like to share some of these stories with you and ask you a few questions (See Appendix F).
Stimulus Materials for the Fourth Interview

*Facilitating Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Highly</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Organizing events together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Having enough money to engage social activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Having interest in other cultures and languages</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Knowing where social activities are taking place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Drinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Singing at Karaoke</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Helping with homework</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Living in an international house where students can mix all the time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Always greeting when meeting someone from the international house</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Always smiling when meeting someone from the international house</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Having an outgoing personality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Having good language skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Meeting people who can help to find a new circle of friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Having common interests (e.g. sport, music, occupation, fashion)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Having similar characteristics (e.g. age, gender)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Needing to improve one’s language skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Going to the English Lounge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
18. Doing projects together for a mixed class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st most important facilitating factor ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd most important facilitating factor ____</td>
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*Inhibiting Factors in Intercultural Interactions*

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
<th>Highly</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Language barrier</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Dorm rules</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Expressing feelings openly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Being a foreigner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Showing interests only on surface aspects of culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Having stereotyped views about people from the other culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Not having enough money to go out and have fun together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Japanese visitors breaking dorm rules</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st most important inhibiting factor ____</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd most important inhibiting factor ____</td>
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APPENDIX F

Critical Incidents

*Personal Topic*

Kaori went out with a few international students. She was sitting next to Tom and they started chatting. Suddenly Tom asked her if she had a boyfriend. Kaori pretended not to have heard his question and changed the topic. Tom was surprised.

1) Why do you think Kaori changed the topic?

2) Why do you think Tom was surprised?

3) Why do you think this incident was reported to me?

*Jokes*

A party with lots of guests was organized at the international house. Masako put only a small amount of food on her plate since she was wondering whether there would be enough food for everybody. Richard said in a loud voice, “You are eating like a pig!” Masako blushed and stopped eating. Richard got puzzled.

1) Why do you think Masako blushed and stopped eating?

2) Why do you think Richard was puzzled?

3) Why do you think this incident was reported to me?

*Communication of Organizational Rules*

Jo arrived in Japan last week to study Japanese. Today she attended a weekly meeting organized by the international office. At the meeting, Kaoru, a member of that office took one hour to explain how rooms have to be cleaned. Jo was upset and left the meeting before the end.

1) Why do you think Jo left the meeting before the end?

2) Why do you think the member of the international office explained to students how to clean the rooms?

3) Why do you think this incident was reported to me?
Indirect Communication Style

Jan lives next to Masa. One night, Jan brought one of his/her Japanese friend to the international house and played their favorite CDs in the dining room in front of Masa’s room. Masa had an important test on the following day, but the noise bothered him/her so much that he/she couldn’t study. At some point, Masa stepped out his /her room for a glass of water, but went back without saying anything to Jan. Jan and his/her friends kept playing CDs after midnight.

1) Why do you think Masa didn’t say anything to Jan?
2) Why do you think Jan kept playing music after midnight?
3) Why do you think this incident was reported to me?
APPENDIX G
Overview of Issues Raised in Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview 1</th>
<th>Interview 2</th>
<th>Interview 3</th>
<th>Interview 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive aspects</strong></td>
<td>Goals, expectation, feelings, culture knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies for intercultural relational development</strong></td>
<td>How to start a conversation, where, what Japanese might do</td>
<td>What helps and doesn’t help What works or doesn’t work</td>
<td>Change since beginning Most important aspects (stimulus materials: lists)</td>
<td>Ratings Facilitating/inhibiting factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual aspects</strong></td>
<td>Student house Special activities (stimulus materials) (affordance of the context)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Christmas break / few Japanese students around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Interview 3</td>
<td>Interview 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spontaneous (general) experience stories</td>
<td>Spontaneous story</td>
<td>Spontaneous story</td>
<td>Spontaneous but linked to Christmas break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probe: interact story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical incidents (CI)</td>
<td>Spontaneous CI</td>
<td>Spontaneous CI</td>
<td>Guided two (IS and JS): feeling being hurt</td>
<td>Two CI for multiple interpretation (stimulus material)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>