

"THE BUNYIP AND THE DRAGON" - THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF  
AUSTRALIAN AND SOUTH KOREAN BUSINESS ENCOUNTERS

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“The Bunyip and the Dragon” -  
The Psychodynamics of Australian and  
South Korean Business Encounters

The dreams of nations, as of individuals, are important,  
because they not only reflect, as in a distorting mirror,  
the real world, but may sometimes react upon and influence it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Russel Ward (1958) p211

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This thesis is original work and has not previously been submitted for a degree or similar award at another institution.

## ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify and explore the psychodynamics of Australian and Korean business encounters in Seoul, Republic of Korea, by describing and discussing "Australian-ness" and "Korean-ness" as representations of what I will call "National character in-the-mind". A guiding hypothesis is that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind acts as a psychological and emotional container, and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences. The data supporting the study is drawn from my interviews with 12 Australian and 6 Korean business people conducted between 3 and 14 June 1996 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The study also reflects my experience and role as *researcher in the research* as a source, creator and interpreter of data through the exploration of my own introspection. The findings demonstrate how Australian-ness and Korean-ness appear to represent projections of the human imagination, willed within the bounds of individual experience and perception. A model for evaluating *Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour* is proposed with the aim of seeking improved understanding of the Australian and Korean National character. The model applies learning from the research experience which emphasises the need for Australian and Korean business people to take a more adaptive approach to the contrary behaviours they encounter. The model also acknowledges the value of investing time to establish and maintain cross-cultural business relationships based on access, whereby Australian and Korean business people see themselves as resources of mutual gain, reducing the potential for misunderstanding, fear and mistrust and the subsequent invocation of defensive responses.

## **“The Bunyip and the Dragon” - The Psychodynamics of Australian and South Korean Business Encounters**

### ***Preface***

A 5.30am walk in the brisk Autumn air through the alleys and lanes behind the YMCA in Seoul, South Korea, reveals a different world to the hustle and bustle of the 7.30am peak. The sights and sounds of this part of the awakening capital reflect those of a different era. The delivery of bottled gas, kerosene and dusty black cylinders of coal to light stoves and warm households; of eggs in trays, two dozen deep, strapped to the pinion racks of motorcycles. The crying of an infant bound in blankets on mother’s back while she hastily sweeps the alley pavement with her lime green plastic broom; the clearing of congested throats; the washing of assorted leafy vegetables in large red tubs under the communal tap and the gurgling of wastes into communal drains; cooking smells wafting from spaces between rusty corrugated steel rooves and quickly erected shingle walls; these are the scenes of a regular day.

Business too begins early. The folding of beds on floors in small stores where in a moment’s time customers will queue for a breakfast snack; the collection of empty cardboard cartons and newsprint by old women pulling carts; the cutting of keys on a bench made from a block of wood with its vice - three strategically bent nails; the opening of a cabinet maker’s workshop, store, home 3 metres by 2 where the artisan’s well trained, gnarled, arthritic hands craft works of art from a stand of raw timber, still with its bark, guarding the narrow doorway. In the centre of his world stands a partly finished precision built cabinet: testament to the artisan’s dexterity.

As I wander I find myself reflecting on childhood experiences. The mid fifties in suburban Melbourne, Australia. The early morning, home delivery of ice, bread and milk by horse drawn carts along unmade roads; the expansive views across rural land from Box Hill to the Dandenong Ranges; the smell of Sunday lunchtime roasts; happy rows of carrots, beans and peas in the vegetable garden; my father fashioning a curtain rod from a scrap of wood using half a hacksaw blade and a piece of glass. He couldn’t

afford tools. I see the Korean artisan in his workshop, the key cutter in his, and Dad sitting on the kitchen floor, in his.

And here I am, a generation on, in Seoul. As I meander past the antique stores of Insa-dong toward Pagoda Park where, the previous night, fortune tellers told wondrous tales of future joy and sorrow, I catch myself, a voyeur on my past, absorbed in the present and musing wistfully of the future.

Why do I feel strangely comfortable here? Surely it is not the roar of diesel buses belching their stifling pollutants into the morning chill, nor taxis weaving defiantly in and out of lanes heading precariously, inevitably, toward the first morning traffic jam. Is it the exotic, the old world charm, the inexplicable, the arousal of memory; or the challenge of the emerging, developing nation; grasping for a world identity, at images of currency, modernity, McDonalds for breakfast, Chicago Pizza for lunch and prepared to pay a premium for the privilege.

I recall the old woman washing green vegetables and a dutiful child sitting next to her on an oft repaired bamboo stool, peeling onions over a chipped, blue enamel basin. A metaphor for understanding culture! The old guiding the young on how we do things here. The multi-layered onion, representing culture. As the layers are revealed we appreciate the core and receive true insight into people's reality. How desperately I wish to peel this onion. I see the outer layers all around me. The language, the food, the economic growth; slum reclamation, the high rise buildings, the Korean built cars, the contrasts - the historical, the traditional, the new, and attempts to meld them. Yet the vapours from within the unknown keep me distant.

I cross the threshold of a small book store, am offered tea by the proprietor and fumble my words for directions to the English language section. Enjoying the warm refreshment, I find a volume of Maxims and Proverbs of Old Korea and begin flicking the pages. A folk saying catches my eye...'A loach (minnow) has become a dragon'. I ponder the explanation of it's significance -

“According to legend, the dragon, like the phoenix, is an emblem of nobility and power...Superstition has it that a giant golden carp from the deep ocean became metamorphosed into a yellow dragon...and rose into the sky on his chariot of clouds behind a veil of thick fog...and gave rain to the earth. Now a loach, a small ugly member of the carp family, can only become a dragon by a miracle. So this is said of an upstart, who suddenly rises to wealth and power.”<sup>2</sup>

My mind seizes the comparison of the Korean dragon with the Australian Rainbow Serpent (also known as the Bunyip) an integral part of the spirit life of the Aboriginal Dreamtime. A mythical monster inhabiting the rushy swamps and billabongs of the Australian interior; the spirit of water, rain and flood. In different Aboriginal legends the Rainbow Serpent plays the role of protector of land, life and sacred lore.<sup>3</sup> To the white Australian invaders the Bunyip represents a manifestation of our primordial imagination and fear associated with the ghostly, the macabre and the misfortune of being lost (or dying) in an unforgiving land.

These two myths reflect a common link in Australian and Korean folklore. Both mythic characters give life through water, yet are shrouded in mystery. As metaphors, they can be interpreted as contrasting the recent history of Australia and Korea's status in the global economic community - a ghostly story and the metamorphosis of a loach.

Like an awakening dragon, Korea has enjoyed a rapid rise in the global economy. It has averaged 8.2% real GDP growth per annum since 1961. The per capita income has grown from a mere US\$79 in 1960 to over US\$10,076 in 1995 and is forecast to rise to US\$19,000 by the year 2000. Indeed, between 1960 and 1995, Korea's per capita GDP rose a staggering 13,000%. South Korea is ranked as the world's 12th largest economy and is expected to be the seventh largest by 2020.<sup>4</sup>

So, the loach has become a dragon. Miraculous? Perhaps. Clearly, such rapid growth did not happen by accident. Indeed, the growth is characterised by a wilful

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<sup>2</sup> Tae Hung Ha (1970) pp.49-50

<sup>3</sup> Reed (1982) pp.79-81

<sup>4</sup> ASIALINE, July 1996, p1



Government's economic and development agenda coupled with a finely tuned implementation strategy. Paring this strategy to a daily business level, to the people who ply the trade and negotiate the deals, how do Koreans manage their business system and what can Australian managers learn from their Korean counterparts?

My reading and discussions with Korean academics in Australia and Australian and Korean businessmen in Seoul suggest Koreans are very cautious in their dealings with foreigners, arguably a legacy of their history of invasion. I find them outwardly generous and helpful.

Australians too are reticent in their willingness to recognise the value of a Korean business relationship. Only 5% of Australian business people surveyed at the National Trade and Investment Outlook Conference in 1995 considered Korea a major market for potential exports and only 7% saw it as a major market for investment. In view of the GDP figures already cited this conclusion is astounding. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade described this and other survey findings as "...a far cry from Korea's real economic importance and potential to Australia...While knowledge and interest in Korea is growing, the business community still has some way to go."<sup>5</sup>

This reticence to participate in matters associated with Korea is reflected still further in the blanket rejection of my endeavours to arrange interviews with Australian business people in Australia at Federal and State Government agency and private enterprise levels. The primary explanation was the potential for the inadvertent release (misuse) of material perceived as commercial-in-confidence.

It would be fair to say Australian and Korean business people have different images in-the-mind<sup>6</sup> of what Australia and Korea represent in commerce and industry. These institutional images may not be shared within the respective countries nor between the business people. But these images form the basis for the business people's

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<sup>5</sup> ASIALINE, July 1996, p3

<sup>6</sup> Turquet (1960), Armstrong (1991), Shapiro & Carr (1991) and Stokes (1993) [refer Jon Stokes, "Institutional chaos and personal stress" in Obholzer & Roberts, (1994) pp.121-128] have discussed how people carry idealised mental models or images of an organisation or institution in-the-mind, together with an associated emotional response. Refer Chapter 1, Section 1.3ff for its application in this thesis.

perceptions, and influence their behaviour. As a collective, these images provide a simultaneous concrete and fluid representation of a culture, values and people which influences the outcomes of their mutual interaction.

I contend in my thesis that the inherent confusion surrounding these images for all parties represents an amalgam of confusion about self identity; anxiety about the unknown; uncertainty about one's place in institutions or organisations; about how to communicate with foreigners and understand and make sense of their portrayed images of *National character in-the-mind*.

My main interest is in trying to interpret how Australian and Korean business people recognise, acknowledge and explain the differences in their images of *National character in-the-mind*. I suggest they have little understanding of the *what* and *why* behind their conceptual framework, nor their behaviour and emotions in response to it. I am convinced that only by exploring the territory (business encounters) where these images meet in some detail, processing the potential psychodynamics within these interpretations, can one begin to understand the communion within Australian and Korean business encounters. This study will contribute an interpretation of the *what* behind respective group behaviours and hypothesise *why*. It will contribute insights not formerly available.

By describing and discussing "Australian-ness" and "Korean-ness" as a means of exploring the psychodynamics of Australian and Korean business encounters in Seoul, Republic of Korea, I hope this thesis will contribute to how nationals of both countries might better perceive and make sense of each other in business, and provide insight which may foster and enhance future business encounters.

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## INTRODUCTION

This introduction provides a perspective for the research by detailing my conceptualisation of the study; identifying the mythical imagery of Australian-ness and Korean-ness; broadly stating the theoretical concepts involved in the research; noting the progressive development of interpretation in the research and identifying my role as researcher in the research as integral to the data analysis and reporting. It concludes with an overview of each Chapter.

### ***Conceptualisation***

In February 1995, South Korea became Australia's second largest trading partner (behind Japan and ahead of the United States). Whilst not a secret, until this announcement the relationship between the two countries did not attract much media attention. On 21 November 1994 an Austrade representative in Seoul told me<sup>7</sup> less than 10 Australian business people were actively representing Australia in Seoul. "Australians," he said, "prefer to use local agents. Australians in Australia have a perceptual block when it comes to Korea. There is a cultural barrier. Korea is mysterious!"

It seemed to me sound business judgement to use local agents in a country with different customs and language to one's own. But perceptual block...cultural barrier...mysterious? The Australian Government's foreign policy emphasises cultural sensitivity in Asia, but it also vigorously promotes Australia's significant place in East Asian markets. In the age of economic globalisation, foreign trade is a challenge to all small business players. But, to me, to accept "cultural barriers" to trade as a justification for non-engagement is a self-perpetuating myth likely to inhibit success in the market place!

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<sup>7</sup> Personal communication

If it is assumed that Australian's accept the diversity of their unique multicultural society, then one would suggest a greater willingness to accept difference amongst people and move on - unless, of course, there are other variables at play.

### ***A Beginning***

Having more than a passing interest in intercultural understanding I began pondering "cultural barrier", "mysterious" and the dynamics of the Australian - Korean encounter. Specifically, what are the cultural differences between Australia and Korea? The concept of a cultural identity is particularly complex. *Australian-ness* raises abstract and real questions our society is currently unable to answer. What of Korean-ness?

Is the issue to do with differences of culture or nationalism: West versus East? From this, is Australia self evident? What is the Australian nation or the National character? Can there be a National character? Is there a commonality of National character, *Australian*, within the country's boundaries, or it's citizens? Who defines it? Why? Are like questions also true for Korea?

From this, what is "Australian-ness" and "Korean-ness" in a business context? How are both concepts perceived by Australians and Koreans? Precisely what characteristics do they perceive? What effect do these perceptions have on the way representatives of the two countries relate during business encounters? Can the portrayed image be better managed?

What is it about Australians that dissuades them from on site contact with Korean business people and what is it, perhaps, about Koreans that might reinforce this mindset?

It is the mythical imagery of Australian-ness and Korean-ness, the "complex picture" of National character in-the-mind that led me to thinking of a comparative analysis of Australian and Korean business encounters.

## ***Hidden Defences***

I contend in this thesis that there is more to the symbolism of Australian-ness and Korean-ness than is immediately apparent and that the “National character” in-the-mind may act as a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences. Further, in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, perhaps emotional “survival” becomes focussed and archetypal defence mechanisms are called into play. This study attempts to explore this shrouded territory. It will explore the influence Australian-ness and Korean-ness plays in the dynamics of Australian and Korean business encounters in Seoul, Republic of Korea seeking insight which may foster and enhance future business encounters.

The study will focus on the micro; the day to day business level. It will engage those who ply the trade; negotiate the deals...the small loach in the globalised economic pond. The study will seek to make sense of how nationals of both countries perceive and understand each other in business.

## ***Interpretations***

The study embraces several theoretical perspectives including cross-cultural psychology,<sup>8</sup> phenomenology,<sup>9</sup> heuristics<sup>10</sup> and the interpretive paradigm<sup>11</sup>. It adopts and conveys the notion of a progressive development of interpretation: both as a concept and as an integral part of the research process. Here, interpretation is used to describe “ideas that provide connections, meanings or a way of comprehending previously unrelated experiential data...a way of making sense of our reality.”<sup>12</sup> This approach is used as a way of making sense of the informant’s, and the researcher’s,

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<sup>8</sup> Triandis (1980), Segall (et al) (1990), Berry (et al) (1992)

<sup>9</sup> Schutz (1977), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Whitehead (1958), Giorgi (1971) and Zaner (1970); and links to psychotherapy (Moustakas, 1988) quoted in Patton (1990)

<sup>10</sup> Moustakas (1961, 1972, 1975), Craig (1978), Hawka (1985) and links to Humanist Psychology: Maslow (1956,1966); Rogers, (1961,1969 & 1977) and Polanyi (1962) quoted in Patton (1990).

<sup>11</sup> Chapters by Denzin, Jones, Smircich, Bougon, Turner and Cooper in Morgan (1983), Patton (1990) (1993), Mitroff & Linstone (1993)

<sup>12</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p5

reality. These matters will be described and discussed at length in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.

Working on the premise that “...involvement and self scrutiny enhance both researcher and research”<sup>13</sup> I propose to progressively integrate elements of my personal observations and experiences as *researcher in the research*. These will also be used as a means of advancing the interpretation of the Case Studies in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. I trust reporting the researcher’s role as a reflection of a “first encounter” with Australian and Korean business people will assist readers in their interpretation of the data; enable them to better appreciate the complexities and subtleties of my interpretations; and better understand and learn from the knowledge the thesis contains.

### **Synopsis**

This **Introduction** provides a perspective for the research by detailing my conceptualisation of the study; identifying the mythical imagery of Australian-ness and Korean-ness; broadly stating the major theoretical concepts involved in the research; noting the progressive development of interpretation in the research and identifying my role as researcher in the research as integral to the data analysis and reporting.

The Chapter to follow establishes a notional foundation for the research by discussing the Australian and Korean **Culture and Identity** as a prelude to the exploration of the concept of National character in-the-mind.

Chapter 2 - **Method**, will define and develop the theoretical perspective for the research intimated earlier in the Introduction. It will describe the method for collecting and analysing the data and provide a narrative and interpretation of the research process.

Chapters 3 and 4 detail and discuss the research **Findings** and consider the Australian and Korean informant’s interpretation of images of National character in-the-mind and how this is perceived and expressed during business encounters with their

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<sup>13</sup> Berg & Smith (1985) p191

respective counterparts. Where practicable, I shall use the informant's words in order to relate the characteristics identified *by* the informants, as meaningful *to* them, and then, explore the contents of their description. My experiences as researcher in the research will be an integral part of the data and the reporting process.

In the last Chapter - **Conclusion**, I will provide some final reflections on the research and then put this account into a different perspective by proposing a model for evaluating *Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour* with the aim of seeking improved understanding of the Australian and Korean National character. The model applies some of my learning from the research experience which emphasises the need for Australian and Korean business people to take a more adaptive approach to the contrary behaviours they encounter. The model also acknowledges the value of investing time to establish and maintain cross-cultural business relationships based on access, whereby Australian and Korean business people see themselves as resources of mutual gain, reducing the potential for misunderstanding, fear and mistrust and the subsequent invocation of defensive responses.

Finally, I will offer some lessons for researchers gleaned from my experience throughout this research project. I will also identify some practical business implications drawn from the findings.

## CHAPTER 1                      CULTURE AND IDENTITY

### 1.0 Introduction

A cornerstone of this research is that the dynamics of a cross-cultural business encounter cannot be interpreted without first familiarising oneself with, and appreciating, the culture and identity of the people concerned. A reading of the dynamics of Australian-Korean business encounters in this research is an interpretation of culture and National Character represented as Australian-ness and Korean-ness.

Cultural integration requires agreement on basic beliefs, goals and values.<sup>14</sup> The amount of agreement, how it is attained and maintained, is debatable. Subcultural groups within a society may not share the beliefs and values of the general culture and this may cause conflict. A minimum consensus on primary beliefs, goals and values is necessary if social disruption is to be avoided. The foundation for this accord is located in the society's dominant myth(s). I have used the term "myth" several times in this thesis and it is timely that I clarify it now, as "myth" and its derivations shall recur frequently throughout ensuing Sections of the thesis. "Myth" is often interpreted negatively, or falsely, as it tends to be associated with fables, legends, super-heroes, gods, dragons and bunyips. Here, I use the term to indicate systems of belief, goals and values that most members of society share and hold sacred. A myth combines (1) a description of the world; and the place of the society and the roles of its members in it; with (2) a system of beliefs, goals, and values anchored in that world view. It may have various manifestations. For example, it may have religious connotations or just be part of the ethos of social life.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the "Australian Lifestyle" or the "Korean Way" are not derogatory terms, but reflect vague myths held sacred by Australians and Koreans about how things are in their countries. As I shall discuss in Section 1.3, the notion of National character and National character-in-the-mind may also have mythical qualities.

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<sup>14</sup> Biesanz & Biesanz (1969) p81

<sup>15</sup> Biesanz & Biesanz (1969) p82

This Chapter establishes a notional foundation for the research. It discusses the Australian and Korean culture and identity as a prelude to the exploration of the concept of *National Character* in-the-mind. This Chapter is integrally linked to Chapter 2 - Method, and provides a precursor for ideas and discussion developed in that Chapter.

## 1.1 Culture and Identity

This Section explores culture and identity as a prelude to the development of an historical profile of the ideas of Australian-ness and Korean-ness and an attempt to define both terms. In doing so, I became aware of the diversity of the concepts and the significant differences that exist between Australian and Korean cultures and identities.

### 1.1.1 Culture

In this thesis I am adopting a universalist position on *culture*. Drawing upon Rohner's anthropological perspective,<sup>16</sup> supported by structuralists like Levi-Strauss, I "conceive of culture as shared symbolic systems that are cumulative *creations of mind*";<sup>17</sup> communal symbolic meaning systems; or constructs of integrated and complementary learning inferred from observations of individual behaviour. The complementary element suggests degrees of variability in individual learning and knowledge of the meaning system, which is in turn, maintained by individuals sharing the meaning. In these terms, culture may be perceived as having no concrete expression.

As such, **culture** may be defined as a group of people's shared way of life or the residue of a group's past endeavours to survive and grow.<sup>18</sup> Each group has its own unique history and there will be significant and trivial differences between cultures. Culture provides stability to its members by codifying behavioural conventions and expectations; recording a historical perspective to ground traditions; thereby providing a framework of standards that consciously and unconsciously constrain individual

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<sup>16</sup> Rohner in Berry (et al) (1992) p263 and p264

<sup>17</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p264

<sup>18</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p1; Jones and Gerard (1967) p176

behaviour. The well socialised group member usually unknowingly conforms to cultural forces. The individual's sense of attachment to an ethnocultural group is a key feature of identity formulation that may include personal (for example, name), social (for example, family, the company they keep) and cultural referents (like appearance, mode of speech, behaviour style).<sup>19</sup>

From the perspective of “doing” the research, I have drawn upon Eckensberger's<sup>20</sup> action theory of culture, focussing on an individual's *actions*, as distinct from the individual, or the culture, per se. Eckensberger and his colleagues highlight the connection between individuals and their environment placing action and culture as variables between the two. His “*paradigm of the reflexive human being*” emphasises an individual's ability to reflect “on their own actions, goals and intentions.”<sup>21</sup> In this context, a researcher's focus is “the unique aspects of a behavioural event.”<sup>22</sup> Understanding is dependent upon “a knowledge about the cultural and historical context of the action.”<sup>23</sup> Eckensberger suggests this paradigm encompasses an action's socio-cultural context and “the understanding of the idiosyncratic interpretation of a particular situation by a specific person.”<sup>24</sup> Whilst noting the subjective understanding prefacing his approach, Eckensberger recommends it's use for studying cultural affects on behaviour within and across societies and suggests valid research outcomes are attainable.

Following on from Eckensberger, the systemic definition of culture above, relies on my cultural understanding for it's exploration and lends itself more to descriptive analysis and the synthesis of complex relationships, than psychometric testing. I shall say more about the analysis in Chapter 2 - Method.

In order to improve my cultural understanding of Australia and Korea I embarked on an extensive literature search and reading program of Australian and

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<sup>19</sup> Aboud (1981, 1988) quoted in Berry (et al) (1992) p303; Taft, R., in Hunt (Ed) (1972) p76

<sup>20</sup> Eckensberger (1979) in Berry (et al) (1992) pp.260-3

<sup>21</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p261

<sup>22</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p262

<sup>23</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p261

<sup>24</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p262



Korean culture, economics, management, philosophy, politics and religion to ensure a substantial depth to the study. My search included several university and municipal libraries, the Australian and Korean press, the Internet, Federal Government publications including ASIALINE; data from the Korea Trade Promotion Corporation (KOTRA) and transcripts of speeches including those of the Chairman of Samsung Corporation and his Australian representative.

In addition, to establish a substantial foundation for the challenge of this research project and to gain basic familiarity with how Korean business is represented, I participated in a Study Tour of South Korea jointly sponsored by the National Korean Study Centre, Melbourne and Swinburne University of Technology in November-December 1994. This experience sensitised me to the substantial differences in language, lifestyle and world view between Australians and Koreans. I subsequently completed a single semester unit “Introduction to the Korean Language” at Swinburne University in 1995. Whilst far from enabling me to maintain a conversation in Korean, the experience exposed me to the basics of polite introduction; enabled me to manage myself around Seoul and the interview environment; and provided an elementary insight toward greater understanding of Korean culture.

### **1.1.2 Identity**

Identity is concerned with the polarisation of difference, or at least one’s discrete separation from others. The “me” from the “not-me”; with all the attendant contrasts “not-me” offers. Extrapolating to encounters between dyads and groups we have the “us” and “not-us”. At this level, we introduce a political process of psychological negotiation where parties project their images of “not-me/not-us”, simultaneously seeking to reinforce and confirm the projected image of themselves by the “not-me/not-us”.<sup>25</sup>

Within Australia, *Australian-ness* could be interpreted as a means of discerning and describing difference; to distinguish, categorise and label those Australians we call “us” from those we call “them” and the meanings and connotations attached to words

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<sup>25</sup> Miller (1993) pp.2-3

like Abo', Asian, Aussie, ethnic and migrant, used in that process.<sup>26</sup> *Korean-ness* may well have similar attributes. The process also implies establishing distance from the other. A useful example in the context of this research could be Australian informants describing Australian-ness in terms of what Koreans are like, not mentioning Australian-ness at all. Thus, "Australians are not like..." or "We do not behave in such and such a way".

We cannot easily understand another's behaviour without knowing the person's self conception, his conception of reality and the situational context for the behaviour. One element of self conception, identity, can be defined by the answer to *Who am I?* and *What am I?*; a second, a sense of self esteem, by the reply to *What am I worth?* These elements may be measured against the ideal self which is perceived through responses to *What would I like to be?* and *What would I like to be worth?*<sup>27</sup>

Social identity has been described as that part of an individual's self-concept deriving from his knowledge of, and the value and emotional meaning attached to, membership in a social group (or groups).<sup>28</sup> Ethnic identity derives logically from one's ethnocultural group. Individuals endeavour to compare, evaluate and differentiate their social identity with other groups and individuals, often attempting to view themselves in a positive light. This identity may not necessarily be publicly displayed. Individuals may see themselves as ethnic, yet deny ethnic membership depending upon the degree of emotional involvement in aspects of the identity be they personal, communal, social, religious, etcetera.<sup>29</sup> Individual identity can be seen as a synthesis of a plethora of personal and group influences.

The diversity of rapid, exponential change in contemporary life in Australia and Korea is verging on revolution. Life is becoming more complex, confusing and stressful. In this climate an individual's identity may be interpreted as subject to uncontrollable external forces. One important yet often neglected element of the

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<sup>26</sup> Hodge (1988) p2

<sup>27</sup> Biesanz and Biesanz (1969) p344

<sup>28</sup> Tajfel quoted in Berry (et al) (1992) p303

<sup>29</sup> Taft, R., in Hunt (Ed) (1972) p76

discussion of identity is context. When the context of life is ambiguous and uncertain, affirming one's identity seems perilous owing to the lack of clarity and the fear of being perceived as different. Individuals focus on "doing not being and become preoccupied with personal survival which is essentially narcissistic."<sup>30</sup> The concept of identity-in-context reflects the dynamic and mercurial qualities of identity as well as the presence and influence of conscious (and unconscious) beliefs and values. The importance of this concept to the research is described in the next Section.

### **1.1.3 Identity-in-Context**

In cross-cultural studies, identity-in-context can be interpreted in the context of communication, as distinct from its content.<sup>31</sup> Here, context includes voice level, maintenance of eye contact, personal space, body posture and orientation, touching and the body parts touched. Context cultures are found in homogenous, relatively simple societies where long-term good relationships are essential to the societies viability.

In these terms Korea is a high context culture, similar to Japan or Indonesia. Low-context cultures are less conventional; individualistic behaviour is sanctioned. People live in non-sharing communities and regard each other as strangers. There is greater attention to being explicit in interactions to ensure understanding. Typical low-context countries include those of Western Europe like Germany and Switzerland. The United States and Australia also fit this category although non-verbal cues are more often noticed.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Lawrence (1995) p1

<sup>31</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) Chapter 3; Triandis in Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994) pp.169-173

<sup>32</sup> Triandis in Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994) p170

**Table 1.1 - Social Behaviour Patterns Across Cultures**

	<b>Collectivist Cultures - Simple and Homogeneous</b>		<b>Individualistic Cultures - Complex and Heterogeneous</b>	
	<b>Community Sharing</b>	<b>Authority Ranking</b>	<b>Equality Matching</b>	<b>Market Pricing</b>
Closest Metaphor	Family life.	Relationship between a general & a soldier.	Social behaviour between totally equal friends.	The market.
Typical Behaviours	Groups are very important; People know each other well; Intimacy; Oneness; Cooperation; Self-sacrifice within the in-group.	Giving and following orders without questioning;  Obedience; Admiration.	Taking turns; dividing equally; One person, one vote.	You get what you pay for - goods, friendship...if it costs too much: farewell.
Typical Cultures	East Asia		North-Western Europe, North America, Australia	
Sense of Self	Individuals are locked into the Group		Individuals are considered autonomous	
Determinants of Collectivism vs Individualism	Clear norms, correct behaviour enforced with conviction; Concern, care for others; acknowledgment of a distinct hierarchy within group;		Affluence; High geographic and social mobility; Exposure to mass media;	
Behaviour	Reflects group norms and group expectations; Success is sourced in group role and group assistance; Failure in lack of personal endeavour		Reflects attitudes;  Success is due to personal traits - abilities, skills, IQ; Failure is externalised to task complexity, luck.	
Harmony	The group is all important; individual thoughts are subordinated to group solidarity. Virtue expressed in correct behaviour and action is paramount; Differences within the Ingroup are hidden while differences with outgroups may be hostile; These ideals may appear inconsistent & contradictory to individualists		Individualists show concern for others thoughts more than their actions; Differences with others are made clear rather than obscured by allegiances; Collectivists may feel ostracised by such behaviour.	
Attitudes	Interdependence of in-group members is emphasised. (Eg. Responsibility for elderly parents well-being falls to the first born son)		Independence from in-group (family, work group) is the norm	
Values	Duty, in-group harmony, obedience, friendships, status, security		Achievement, autonomy, freedom, pleasure, winning for self	
Calamities	Exclusion from the group		Dependence; pressure to conform	
Social Behaviour	Insular exposure to out-group members;  Favours for in-group members is the norm;  Group well-being not sacrificed for individual interests; In-group is protective of its membership and is not concerned about sacrificing self for associates		Broad relationships, intimacy confined to a few;  Nepotism to in-group members is rare - Eg. Equal opportunity;  Individual rights not sacrificed for the group  The maintenance of relationships is dependent upon relative value of others in terms of profit and loss to the individual	

Table 1.1 is based on the work of Hofstede<sup>33</sup> Fiske<sup>34</sup> and Triandis<sup>35</sup>.

Individualism/collectivism is perhaps the most significant and thoroughly investigated of the four cultural characteristics Hofstede used to account for most of the cultural differences amongst 40 nationalities.<sup>36</sup>

Fiske identified and described four distinct social behaviour patterns found across cultures<sup>37</sup> under the headings of Collectivist and Individualistic Cultures: Community sharing, Authority ranking, Equality matching and Market pricing; and identified representative metaphors to match the behaviours. He claims every culture adopts a combination of these four patterns. Triandis and Triandis (et al)<sup>38</sup> report on continuing studies of individualism/collectivism. Their findings are summarised in the Table.

The patterns in the left-hand columns of Table 1.1 reflect traditional societies, often centred on subsistence farming. These societies tend to have homogeneous cultures where behavioural norms are clear and succinct. South Korea tends to fit this mould. However, those Koreans born since the rapid industrial growth of the mid 1960's would most probably be seen as modeling the more individualist behaviours of the Western, industrial cultures reflected in the right-hand columns. Notwithstanding, there is still the expectation that young Koreans should conform with traditional values regarding family duty, group harmony and national well-being, although the younger generation seem ambivalent.<sup>39</sup> Australians, by comparison, are predominantly urban dwellers. Their traditions of individualism and autonomy are reflected in the right-hand columns of the Table.

The comparisons contained in Table 1.1 indicate the value-laden nature of culture. Culture provides a reference point for analysis, comparison, contrast and

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<sup>33</sup> Hofstede (1980)

<sup>34</sup> Fiske (1990)

<sup>35</sup> Triandis in Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994) pp.169-173

<sup>36</sup> The other 3 characteristics are - uncertainty avoidance, power distance and masculinity/femininity. Refer also Triandis, (et al) (1986) for a report on continuing studies of individualism/collectivism.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Triandis in Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994) p170

<sup>38</sup> Triandis (et al) (1986); Triandis in Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994)

<sup>39</sup> Korea to the Year 2000 - A Report by The Australian National Korean Studies Centre (1992) p12

differentiation. People's behaviour cannot be fully interpreted without an appreciation of their cultural background. Culture contains the basis for norms and adaptive processes mediating and structuring human experience according to its ethical and moral standards. Culture puts meaning into language and gestures facilitating co-operation. Notwithstanding, as Triandis indicates,<sup>40</sup> some individuals may be unable or unwilling to modify their behaviour to meet the expectations of another's culture. We can but teach and encourage people to go part way toward meeting the other's expectations.<sup>41</sup> Culture in an organisational frame provides a foundation for shared multiple realities facilitating consistency in perceptions and expectations about the organisation itself - its role and purpose; and how to behave in it. It provides context.

The concept of identity-in-context is a central theme in this research. Our conception of identity is validated through our continuing life experience. Our name, our body, the image of our ideal selves, our personal estimates of our own character, personality traits, intelligence and learning; group affiliations, role models; memories and the influence of ancestors and descendants are constantly interacting to effect the evolution of our identity. The roles we play in social institutions, like the family and work, have varying influence. Equally, the degree to which an individual's identity is malleable may vary according to their openness and valency to the influence of variables like those mentioned here. In a climate of exponential change, identity is not static. Identity is perhaps best defined in context, knowing that amorphous, external influences may cause the continuing re-evaluation of how individuals see themselves.

Recognition and acknowledgment of these issues, as they apply to the Australian and Korean culture and identity, are important for this research. My Australian identity and cultural experience are likely to influence my interpretation of the content and findings of this research. (The issue of ethnocentrism is discussed in Section 2.3.2.2.) The content and findings may also be influenced by my depth of knowledge of the respective cultures and their identity. The readers of this paper may interpret the findings based on their relative appreciation of the Australian and Korean culture and

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<sup>40</sup> Triandis in Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994) p170

<sup>41</sup> Triandis in Lonner & Malpass (Eds.) (1994) p169

identity. Ultimately, I contend the quality of Australian and Korean business outcomes depend upon a joint understanding of cultural and identity antecedents.

## 1.2 Australian and Korean Identity

The next two Sections explore a view of the Australian and Korean identities. These Sections reflect my interpretation of a sketchy and at times abstract social record. As I attempted to show in Sections 1.1.2 and 1.1.3, I see identity as a dynamic construct manifest at various levels in many different contexts. Both Australia and Korea are evolving new identities reflecting internal changes in their cultural, economic and social development and responses to external global influences outside their immediate control.

No researcher with any “sense or sensitivity,”<sup>42</sup> would presume to describe a definitive Australian or Korean identity. Australia and Australians are far too diverse to embody a singular identity. This diversity can be depicted in the experience and demeanour of “cosmopolitan” Australians on the East coast vis a vis the image of living on the Pacific Rim and its association with the Americas compared with the relative geographic isolation experienced by those on the West coast, say, in a city like Perth or a town like Broome, and the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean and its proximity to Asia. Hodge notes a useful example of this contrast where Perth school children were studying a social science resource kit entitled: *An Indian Ocean People*.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the contrasting geographic isolation and lifestyle of Australians living in the temperate zone of Tasmania compared with those living in the tropics of the Northern Territory or North Queensland should be noted. Do these Australians carry the same images, emotions and feelings of, and about Australia, and who they are as Australians? It is here that I face a dilemma. As a researcher, how do I describe and place myself in this diverse Australia and how will this be reflected in the research?

Whilst I have always been interested in Australian history, I know very little about my family’s history and for some unknown reason I have felt little need to seek it

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<sup>42</sup> Hodge (1988) p4

<sup>43</sup> Hodge (1988) p10

out. I am a fourth generation Australian of Irish and English heritage and the last of the line in my branch of the Ryan family tree. My forebears arrived and settled in Victoria in the 1850-60's. My father's family were mostly country folk whereas my mother's family were city dwellers. I have always regarded Melbourne as my home and have lived within a 10 kilometre radius of my current address all my life. Apart from war time commitments, I am the only member of my family to have travelled extensively outside Australia. Ironically, I have been more interested in exploring foreign cultures and people outside the country when, in fact, there are 170 nationalities represented within multicultural Australia. As a representative of the largest 1/170th, those of Anglo Saxon/Celtic origin, I am conscious of my potential ethnocentrism toward other Australians in representing *an* Australian identity. There are clearly many perspectives and this thesis cannot hope to represent them all.

As I related in the introduction to this Chapter, such contrasts imply the potential for mythical mental models and description. I shall explore the notion of mental models of National character and National character in-the-mind, in Section 1.3. In the next Section (1.2.1), I have approached the concept of Australian identity by considering mythical referents from the dominant cultural group. The unfortunate implication of this approach is to proffer the appearance of being "book-bound" and, at face value what appears to be a "politically correct" representation. To counter this image, I shall endeavour to project my personal life experience into the description and will challenge the veracity of the popular view. Rather than offering a definitive description of the Australian identity, I see this interpretation as a search for insight and clarity; and hopefully, a guide for others.

Korea too, whilst only a small country, is noted for its regional factionalism and rivalry in terms of cultural heritage, politics and traditions. The most notable factions are represented in the provinces of Cholla-do in the South-West and Kyungsang-do in the South-East. These were once different countries belonging to the Paekjae and Shilla Dynasties respectively.<sup>44</sup> More recently, four Korean Presidents have come from Kyungsang-do and there has been considerable debate between the residents of the two provinces about the inequitable distribution of government funds for the construction of

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<sup>44</sup> Kim (1996) pp.72-4



industrial and manufacturing plants in Kyungsang-do. Kim notes “it may not be an accident that Kwangju in Cholla province (the site of the bloody massacre in 1980) is known for its anti-government protests.”<sup>45</sup> The potential role of myth in the formation of the factionalist views is apparent.

Clearly, diversity is a variable in the construction of the Australian and Korean identities. This very diversity is also a reason for my somewhat opaque description of these identities. In Section 1.2.1, I propose a historical account of events that I regard as important mythical referents of the Australian identity. I also reflect on the Australian community’s re-evaluation of its identity. In Section 1.2.2, I note that my Australian view of the Korean identity *cannot* be a Korean view. In these circumstances, I can simply endeavour to provide a perspective that is a reflection of my personal experience and reading, and to portray my interpretation as evenly as possible.

### **1.2.1 The Australian Identity**

I wish to preface this Section with the affirmation that I am not a historian, nor do I make claims to be one. Notwithstanding, I have had an educated interest in Australian history since my childhood and perceive several historical milestones as marking images of the Australian identity. I see these images as mythical referents to a bygone era - a time that is continually referred to by the image makers as reflective of who Australians are and what they stand for. These referents are important for several reasons. First, today for many Australians (and their children), especially those who have emigrated from Europe and Asia since the second World War, these “times” are part of an unfamiliar folklore. Second, as shall be seen in Chapter 3, many Australian informants deferred to these mythical referents when struggling to articulate their Australian-ness. With this in mind, this Section offers an interpretation of selected material that provides a perspective of the Australian identity and that seems directly relevant to the research. It does not claim to be historically comprehensive, nor to describe or explain *the* Australian identity. This Section recognises the complexity of

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<sup>45</sup> Kim (1996) p73. 200 civilians were killed and 1100 injured. Refer also Bedski (1994) Chapter 5.

the concept of Australian identity and Australian's current re-evaluation of an identity in the light of multiculturalism and globalisation.

Alan Hodge<sup>46</sup> and historian Richard White<sup>47</sup> note Australian's national obsession with identity; images of Australian-ness; and the search for a distinctive national character. They suggest Australia's history provides an evolutionary tale of idealism, of characteristics and qualities influenced by environmental and social factors still perpetuated in part by today's folk heroes.<sup>48</sup> They note the dynamic process of image, and image making, is apparent throughout Australia's history. Yet, as Hodge clearly states, "...the task of tracing the ways in which our identity is formed in a culturally complex society is extraordinarily difficult, almost...impossible."<sup>49</sup> Both Hodge and White conclude that whilst the "real" Australian is a central character in the country's mythology, this "real" identity is elusive. One could say, the search for an Australian identity can be compared with the search for the Bunyip: it eternally eludes the tracker.

Australia is geologically the world's oldest continent and is located in the Southern Hemisphere, south east of Asia. Australia was originally inhabited by two races of Aborigines some 50,000 years ago. There is currently no certainty about their place of origin. Malay and Chinese fishermen were frequent visitors to the North of the continent in the fifteenth century and historical artefacts suggest Portuguese traders were at least aware of Australia at that time.<sup>50</sup> The Dutch (Dirk Hartog), in October 1616, were the first Europeans to land on the west coast of Australia. "New Holland", as it became known, offered little return in terms of trade and remained unwanted land for 150 years. The English (James Cook) were first to land on the East coast of the continent in April 1770. Cook later claimed possession of the whole east coastline for England, naming it New South Wales. On 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip, leader of the First Fleet - a flotilla of convict transports and supply ships with a total of

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<sup>46</sup> Hodge (1988)

<sup>47</sup> White (1981)

<sup>48</sup> For example Crocodile Dundee, Dame Edna Everidge; radio talkback icon John Laws.

<sup>49</sup> Hodge (1988) p3

<sup>50</sup> Rienits & Rienits (1969) p6

1044 people on board - raised the British flag in Sydney Cove and so began the first European settlement of Australia.

The convict influence on Australia's national 'mystique' is characterised by -isms - like collectivism and anti-authoritarianism.<sup>51</sup> Physical endurance and improvisation were the hallmark of convict existence and whilst stridently independent, the environment necessitated reliance on mates for survival. In turn, this led to intense loyalty and group solidarity "...and the conviction the working bushman was the 'real' Australian."<sup>52</sup>

As Australia's land was progressively tamed, another "myth", the image of the pioneer pastoralists and farmers, as settlers and national heroes came to the fore. Creative poets and writers of the 1880's and 1890's like Henry Kendall, Henry Lawson and A B Paterson have been acclaimed (and accused) as myth makers of the 'real' Australian. Conscious of the growth of nationalism and a perceived need to find new national heroes and symbols, they wrote of the pioneers' quest to tame the bush and scrub; of their resistance to the elements; and natural disasters of flood, fire and drought.

They challenged the classic European notion that conquering territory is synonymous with war or the spilling of blood - traditionally, a prerequisite for worthwhile history. As city dwellers, they were either unaware of (or chose to ignore for the sake of the story) the skirmishes with the indigenous inhabitants in the outback. The threat or perhaps fear of violence within Australia was a serious challenge to the perceived or desired mythical lifestyle of perpetual peace.

Their ballads and poems celebrate hard work and achievement. Dignity through adversity. Qualities which became a feature of unionism and rising nationalism providing support to the search of a growing native born population for a distinctively Australian ethos by celebrating personal strength, resolve in adversity and reward for toil. I recall, as a child, my parents and grandparents taking my sister and I on camping

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<sup>51</sup> Eleanor Hodges, *The Bushman Legend* (Chapter 1) in Carroll (Ed.) (1992) pp.4-5

<sup>52</sup> Eleanor Hodges in Carroll (Ed.) (1992) p7

holidays in remote bush locations where the emphasis was placed on “primitive” living off the land. At this time, my rites of passage involved my grandfather showing me how to read bush signs learned whilst “humping his swag” during the depression of the 1930’s and as an Army Commando during the second World War; and to value the environment. My father taught me to fish, shoot a rifle and prepare game for cooking: skills he had learned from his father. These activities tended to identify and bind *the men* in the family. My sister learned to cook over an open fire and to attend to camp site activities. As she grew older she too learned to fish, although this was regarded more as an “outing” than part of men’s work.

Whilst acknowledging the division of labour between the sexes, one might argue that the pioneer legend is relatively non sexist, proclaiming the universality of “...the requisite qualities of diligence, courage and perseverance...the people in the pioneer legend have always included women.”<sup>53</sup> Lawson's *The Drover's Wife* is indicative. Such writings and the discussion they stimulated bound the ethos in emotion, nostalgia and romanticism ensuring a lasting affect. In his recent chronicle of the developing Australian identity in a turbid sea of “supremacism and racial paranoia”, Peter Cochrane debunks the romanticism of the era arguing “many of the classics of our literary canon” illustrated, facilitated and perpetuated racism as “the pivot of Australian nationalism and imperial patriotism.”<sup>54</sup> Cochrane suggests the present raging debate on racism in Australia associated with Federal politician Pauline Hanson is indicative of latent unfortunate harmonies with the past “- a nostalgia for the culture of...a time that was narrow, conformist, exclusive, the heyday of the simple white folk.”<sup>55</sup>

As accounts of the time this literature makes and reflects a developing tradition. It reinforces a consciousness of difference; a recognition of geographic isolation; and a jingoistic and xenophobic disposition toward the outside. It reflects the anxieties associated with racial boundaries and a vernacular heritage. These latter factors may be important for this study as elements of a lingering unconscious.

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<sup>53</sup> J B Hirst in Carroll (Ed.) (1992) p29

<sup>54</sup> “Race Memory” by Peter Cochrane, *The Australian Review of Books*, November 1996, Volume 1, Issue 3, pp.8-9 & 30.

<sup>55</sup> Cochrane, P., *op cit* p30

The ANZAC legend, born in the Gallipoli campaign of World War 1 (WW1) surpassed the legends of the bushmen and pioneers. The ANZACs, bushmen on the world stage, established a tradition of bravery, battle toughness, hostility to convention and authority; and pride in their distinctiveness and country. War taught the ANZACs acceptance and endurance just as the land had taught their forebears. The ANZAC inspiration set standards and ideals to live by, but the memory of their triumph and tragedy reinforced the ideal, at home, that blood shall never stain the wattle. The soldier settlement program introduced after WW1 melded the myths by turning Diggers into pioneers.

The ANZAC tradition has had a meaningful place in my family's history. Stories of individual courage and wartime experiences are often recalled in family conversations, whilst photographs of loved ones lost on foreign soil were prominently displayed in the homes of my, now departed, relatives. My grandfather marched in the ANZAC Day parades into his early eighties. His war medals were his most important possessions. Nevertheless, in my family, memories of war are not "celebrated" events. They are more moments of reflection and gratitude for what we have as a result of previous sacrifices.

Historically, the individual Australian colonies separated church and State ensuring the State's neutrality on issues that might and often did divide the people. In the 19th Century concerted efforts were made to keep sectarian rivalry out of community organisations embracing difference for the collective good.<sup>56</sup> This neither ignores nor denies the conflict and violence that occurred. Rather, it indicates the community was not polarised by public differences, nor did these result in residential segregation. People were encouraged to work toward neutralising the conflict; to rebut rather than perpetuate old world discord. Community organisations had to have representation from all major denominations. They rarely did. As no one church established pre-eminence in Australia it was relatively easy to isolate the divisiveness of religion. This does not deny the extent of their influence. Rather, it defines their physical visibility. For example, the clergy (particularly the Catholics under

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<sup>56</sup> Hirst in Carroll (1992) p196

Archbishop Mannix) were active in politics, but did not become Members of Parliament.

Class differences were similarly accommodated. The intensity of the head-on clashes between employer and employee in the 1890's and the resultant social disruption led to the establishment of an arbitration court and procedures which would compulsorily settle industrial disputes institutionalising class conflict at a distance through the law. Workers and employers were treated as litigants of equal standing. Worker's wages and conditions became matters of accepted official concern. Hence, known divisive matters were kept at a distance or quarantined preserving civil society against religion and politics, maintaining private and community decencies and contributing to vacuous public discourse.<sup>57</sup>

Sustained and systematic social exclusion does not sit well with Australian society, with the exception, perhaps, of the indigenous inhabitants. The Australian ethos is to overlook, rather than obliterate difference. In the words of Henry Lawson:

"They tramp in mateship side by side  
The Protestant and the Roman  
They call no biped Lord or Sir  
And touch their hat to no man"<sup>58</sup>

This sense of egalitarianism is most notable in the Australian practice of using an individual's given name in any encounter no matter their relative social importance. Former Australian Prime Minister R.J. Hawke was renowned for his banter on the hustings - "Call me, Bob."

Put simply - one can live more comfortably with differences, be they unusual, distasteful or even threatening, when the differences don't count. As such, differences are less disruptive and demeaning. This ethos, a commitment to an open society, has enabled the relatively smooth accommodation and melding of migrants into the

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<sup>57</sup> Carroll (1992) p201

<sup>58</sup> Carroll (1992) p202

Australian lifestyle.<sup>59</sup> Almost a third of my own neighbourhood were born overseas representing: China, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Vietnam.

J B Hirst's commentary on the qualities and ironies of Australia's multiculturalism is perhaps the definitive account.<sup>60</sup> He suggests the success of Australia's migration policy rests in a society's tolerance, inviting others to share the country; and that essentially, Australian society constrains ethnic identities and subsumes them.<sup>61</sup> Hodge<sup>62</sup> is less didactic, suggesting that notwithstanding the multicultural rhetoric, the popular view is that eventually migrants will "change to become *more like the rest of us...and the differences will disappear.*"<sup>63</sup> Immigration policies provide the filter for the acceptance of newcomers and whilst the filtrate has not homogenised culturally as expected, the process has forged newcomers' identification with Australia.<sup>64</sup> Citizenship, whilst not required, binds the diversity, the affinity of Australian-ness.

As a migrant nation, the diffusion and melding of the collective consciousness (and perhaps the collective unconscious<sup>65</sup>) of peoples from European and Asian origins means Australia's manifold heritage is bound by traditions formed well beyond the 200 years since Captain Phillip's landing. This in turn has contributed to society's and the country's resilience. By the same token one needs to be cautious in attributing the role of the collective unconscious to the confines of the migrant nation. There may well be resident influencers in the land not formerly valued. I glean this from the comments of

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<sup>59</sup> See Harris (1980) for a review of relevant literature on identity formation of bicultural individuals in a pluralist society.

<sup>60</sup> Multiculturalism: Australia's Absurd History published in *Overland*, February 1990, won the George Watson Essay Prize, and was republished in *Quadrant*, March 1991, and in Carroll (Ed.) *op.cit.*, Chapter 12.

<sup>61</sup> Hirst in Carroll (1992) p195

<sup>62</sup> Hodge (1988) p16. See also Appleyard in Poole (et al) (1985)

<sup>63</sup> Hodge (1988) p16

<sup>64</sup> Smolicz in Price (Ed.) (1991) pp.46-7

<sup>65</sup> "The Collective Unconscious is a Jungian conception. Evolution has predetermined the human brain to react in terms of basic principles derived from the experience of many generations. The tendencies to react and to apprehend or experience life in a manner originating from the remote past of the human race Jung calls archetypal tendencies: archetypes are congenital conditions of intuition. Archetypes are manifested in imagery or symbols common in dream life of human beings of widely different cultural groups and of different periods of history. These emerge from the deepest levels of the unconscious mind, and are never directly accessible." Refer Thomson, R., *The Pelican History of Psychology*, Penguin Books, GB, 1968, p259.

indigenous Australian David Prosser of the Museum of Sydney contributing to an Insight Forum -

“Before the invasion occurred multiculturalism existed here there were 500 different nations of aboriginal people that lived coexisted here and there was a consensus right across the country about that very existence.”<sup>66</sup>

Mary Graham, Aboriginal spokeswoman, stated: “...our real country...our identity is made in our imagination.”<sup>67</sup>

Robert Jackson, representing the National Aboriginal and Islander Development Association added:

“Everyone seems to have their own concept of what identity is...until such time as the wider Australian community can get together over a few thousand years and start melding into some concept of self and let it evolve identity won't exist...we (indigenous Australians) don't have any problem with identity.”<sup>68</sup>

Multiculturalism has infused into the Australian community with relative ease. But how much is multiculturalism a feature of the migrant nation, how much is it indigenous? David Prosser asserts his identity is based on his spiritualism. Is this identity inherent in the land? The challenge in this debate and for an appreciation of Australian identity in this research is to be aware of the complexity of the issue and to remain open to the existence of other views. This is not an either-or argument. We need to understand multiculturalism *and* difference, if we are to come to terms with Australian identity.

Over the past 30 years, myths about the Australian character and the Australian way of life have been seriously challenged by concepts like multiculturalism. Not that multiculturalism per se has much to do with the inherent apathy of Australians toward themselves or their country. In the 1960's Donald Horne's book *The Lucky Country* warned Australians of an impending demise. The ensuing years fulfilled the prophecy.

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<sup>66</sup> Insight Forum “Is the Search for an Australian Identity Futile?” SBS News and Current Affairs, 1995, Broadcast 27 August 1995.

<sup>67</sup> Open Learning Program “Australia Since the War”, Radio National, 21 May 1996

<sup>68</sup> Insight Forum “Is the Search for an Australian Identity Futile?” SBS News and Current Affairs, 1995, Broadcast 27 August 1995.



Australia's gross national product and standard of living fell from one of the highest per capita in the world to a median position and has subsequently slipped further. In 1985, Frederick Hilmer in *When The Luck Runs Out* called for individual Australians to adopt a change of mindset towards work - to become volunteers in moving Australia forward. Ironically, he couched this call in decrying the historical "conscript" mindset<sup>69</sup> which, at the time, was perceived by many as arguably the strength of the Australian persona.

Whilst Hilmer's thesis was sound, it threatened Australian's perceptions of their identity. Rejecting one's heritage creates self-doubt and self-rejection, and impairs resilience. History illustrates this in societies forced to undergo rapid change induced by colonial states or more powerful and hostile groups. For example, Korean social scientists traced the causes of the 1988 student revolts and political unrest to previous times of self-doubt and political disruption in Korea's past: during the Japanese (1910-1945) and American occupations.<sup>70</sup> My point here is that whilst Hilmer's proposal and prophecy were accurate, the threat to Australia's ingrained persona (perhaps perceived unconsciously) was such as to deflect, ignore and ultimately reject the guidance, notwithstanding the consequences. The Australian identity was robust, but was about to be tested.

The recession of the late 1980's and early 90's, the realignment of the world political order and the refocussing of Australia's place in the Asian region, caused economic and social disturbance within Australia. In 1993, Hugh Mackay reported the Australian community was feeling anxious and insecure. There was a feeling of loss of identity, directing us beyond the Age of Definition to Reinventing Australia.<sup>71</sup> In essence, Mackay argued Australians were re-evaluating who they were, adapting and shaping perceptions in such a way that all Australians were becoming new Australians. In searching for a new identity he reported Australian society was looking beyond its fusion of inherited cultures and showing signs of outgrowing its comfortable myths and legends. The sense of loss of identity may be reflective of this new beginning.

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<sup>69</sup> This mindset implies people are forced to work by uncaring employers who are out to exploit them. Workers respond by doing only what is given to them or necessary to get by, without thinking about the quality of their contribution. The employer or manager's corresponding mindset is: workers are idle, untrustworthy and require constant supervision.

<sup>70</sup> Smolicz quoting research by Byong-Je Jon, (1988) in Price (Ed.) (1991) p49

It is perhaps the conscious and unconscious adaptation of diverse and distinctive ancestral heritage in an accepting environment which is Australian cultural pluralism, and distinctively Australian, that will provide the key to the developing Australian identity.<sup>72</sup>

This section followed the evolution of Australian identity through its characters and myths formulated from its origins in a convict settlement; the exploration of the untamed land by pioneers; the development of nationalism and the ANZAC legend. It acknowledged the view of indigenous Australians and considered the contribution of immigrants to the development of an Australian identity through ethnicity, multiculturalism and difference. It acknowledged the influence of authors, poets and writers, recording history as they saw it, moulding public perceptions via their proposals and literary contributions. It recognised the complexity and openness of the current debate about what is an Australian identity influenced by world events and a growing Republican movement. Finally, it reflected the Australian community's re-evaluation of its identity in the light of a changing, more outward-looking world perspective.

### **1.2.2 *The Korean Identity***

The preface to this paper outlined some personal reflections on my search for a Korean identity. This Section builds on that beginning. By its very nature it can only be a fuzzy view. As I shall endeavour to show, it is extremely difficult for an Australian to accurately represent the Korean identity. The perspective is not Korean. Nevertheless, I trust this offering will provide the reader with a balanced interpretation of the information I have gathered. In order to provide a context for the description, I begin this Section with reflections on my Korean experience.

In Seoul, I am a stranger and conspicuously foreign. At 189cm (6 feet 2 inches) tall, white, Australian, I am unable to blend into the crowd. I'm one of "them". Not

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<sup>71</sup> Mackay (1994) p22

<sup>72</sup> Smolicz in Price (Ed.) (1991) p45; Smolicz (1984)(1991); Hodge (1988) pp.30-33

one of “us”. My appearance conforms to the American stereotype and I am occasionally mistaken for one. Whenever this occurs I make a deliberate attempt to clarify my origins. “I am Australian”, I say - wondering at times what it means to me and what it means to the Koreans. The response is always an unassuming smile and nod. What does it mean to them? I never ask. Why not? Some older Koreans I meet on the subway train to the Olympic stadium recall Australia’s involvement in the Korean War and respond warmly. Australians were invaders with the United Nations forces. Unlike the Americans, the Australians left. I was 3 years old when the Korean War ended. I have no recollections or known intimate connections.

Visiting replicas of historical buildings, shrines and memorials omnipresent commemorative plaques and information boards refer me to mass destruction during the Japanese presence in the 16th Century and again between 1910 and 1945. Strangely, I feel a sense of loss. I am unable to reconcile my feelings with the physical representations before me. There seems to be no causal link. But there is a link to a shared experience of Japanese invasion. The Japanese attacked Australia during World War II. My father and grandfather fought the Japanese. My grandfather was treated fortnightly for war caused disabilities until his death in December 1995. The Americans also invaded Australia during World War II. In Australian wartime mythology, the battles between the parties are reputed to have depicted the bloodiest street fighting of the era. There were mortal casualties on both sides. Within the Returned Servicemen’s League the wounds remain. Through folklore and personal contact I share the memories of the Australian experience, in turn reflected in the Korean experience. Or is it vice versa?

As previously mentioned, there is a significant difference between the way I, as an Australian, can represent and document Korean identity, compared with the way a Korean National might. For a start, I am less familiar with the Korean context and reality. Here, I am relying on my limited interactive experience from a 3 week Study Tour to South Korea in 1994 and my interviews with Australian and Korean business people conducted in Seoul over 2 weeks in June 1996; brief conversations with English speaking Korean University students and business guides; discussions with Korean (national) academics and university staff in Australia and South Korea; Australian

academics and business people who have had dealings with Koreans; and the limited English language literature (written by Koreans) describing Korean culture and business systems available in Australia.

A literature search conducted in three of Melbourne's university<sup>73</sup> libraries: in-house collections, CDROM catalogues and the Internet; and personal discussion with the managers of five prominent book stores in Seoul - reflects the limitations of published research in the field. My extensive search indicates there is no extant comparison of Korea with Australia in the field of cross-cultural psychology.

One Korean academic/writer indicated to me there was little incentive for Koreans to write or publish English language material.<sup>74</sup> The dominance of the United States contribution is clear, as is the tendency to describe the Korean identity by contrasting it with the country's more visible "invaders": the Chinese, the Japanese, and the United States; either singularly or in cross-cultural groupings.<sup>75</sup>

Invariably, the emphasis is on the invader's culture. The effect of this is a focus on lopsided comparisons of Korea with foreign value systems and a failure to acknowledge the uniqueness of Korean-ness in isolation. The consistency of academic argument and the inclination of writers<sup>76</sup> to quote each other tends to reify traditional anthropological theories and limits an appreciation of Korean identity reflective of the current scene. Their view of Korean-ness is stereotypical. They appear to ignore the recent rapid changes in Korean society, including the move from agrarian to urban living, the acquisition and growth of disposable income and the associated growth in individual independence, freedom and equality. They also appear to discount the possibility of variable influences on outcomes; a place for rational choice; the necessary congruence of individual and collective interests; and alternative formulations of causality and reality.

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<sup>73</sup> Melbourne, Monash and Swinburne Universities

<sup>74</sup> Personal conversation with Professor Linsu Kim 5 July 1995.

<sup>75</sup> Chang in Kim and Kim (1989); Mahn Kee Kim in Caiden and Bun Woong Kim, (Eds.,) (1991); Chang and Chang (1994), Eun Young Kim (1996)

<sup>76</sup> Typified by the works of Chung and Lee (1989), Kim and Kim (1989), Chang and Chang (1994) and Ro (1993)

The following paragraphs attempt to provide a balanced perspective of historical and up-to-date views of Korean-ness.

Korea is situated on the edge of a continent surrounded by Russia, China and Japan. Historically, the expansionist interests of these countries have posed a threat to Korea's viability, although during the Choson Period (1388-1910) there was practically no invasion. Korea was self sufficient with "...a deeply stable, intricately differentiated social structure."<sup>77</sup> Thirty five years of ill-fated Japanese colonialism (1910-1945) and more recently, economic philosophies of internationalisation and globalisation are leading towards "over-exposure" to Western social values and lifestyles.

Colonialisation splintered the Korean sense of identity<sup>78</sup> leading to an inferiority complex reinforced by the need to conduct business in a foreign language (most recently, English). Emulating foreigners in order to succeed in the global business economy challenges Korean's self esteem and tends to place them at a psychological disadvantage especially when success relies on something unfamiliar. Koreans are proudly nationalistic. They recognise the importance of a global view and are desperate to join the world stage.<sup>79</sup> Yet, economic collaboration arouses suspicion and recollections of historical deception, reviving fears of losing one's spirit in a vast melange. Under Japanese rule Koreans were required to speak Japanese and use Japanese family names. National survival and the preservation of independence has been South Korea's utmost concern. There is concern about becoming a pseudo-Western society. Whilst Korean youth has little affection for Americans as people, the pace at which they are embracing American youth culture vis a vis fashion, fast food and music is a source of angst to middle aged Koreans. The latter's opposition and desire to maintain tradition faces stiff competition from the influences of modern media in all it's forms.

In this extremely insecure and adverse environment the South Korean identity has been under continual challenge actually and metaphorically. This obsession with

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<sup>77</sup> Korea to the Year 2000 - A Report by The Australian National Korean Studies Centre (1992) p10

<sup>78</sup> Korea to the Year 2000 - A Report by The Australian National Korean Studies Centre (1992) p11

<sup>79</sup> Three companies - Samsung, Hyundai and Daewoo - have been a particularly successful first wave.

the threat of abstraction is a psychological affliction reflected in Koreans' inclination to stick with a concept or course of action in the light of immense opposition with little regard for the consequences. In turn, this has profoundly affected Korean culture and the behavioural patterns of its people.<sup>80</sup> In adapting, the Koreans have cultivated a regulated individualism and compulsive, excessive behaviour verging on paranoia. Successive Korean Governments have been unable to provide the people with a sense of national security. In the past, the potential and actual external threat from China, Russia and Japan was ominous. Today, North Korea maintains the military tension whilst “the West” adopts more subtle means to influence outcomes.

Having lived with the constant threat of demise for generations, individuals are preoccupied with family oriented survival strategies based on their own efforts. In essence, the feeling is if Koreans do not assert their identity themselves, it will be subsumed by the invader's culture. The Japanese influence on Korea's administration, transport and general infrastructure is abundantly clear. History has shown the South Korean people that their Government's negotiations and compromise invariably results in national mourning. South Korea's ritualistic or formalistic administration and lack of pragmatism in implementation stems from this clinging to cause.

For Koreans, Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism<sup>81</sup> have been the contributing religious doctrines (although Confucianism is more a philosophy of life than a religion per se). Through Buddhism people learned their proper worldly roles and through Confucianism the proper norms of behaviour in society. Confucianism embraces and reinforces a relationship of orders from above and obedience from below upholding and protecting the authority of the ruling class. In the past, Confucianism was considered so fundamentally right that attempts to implement simple and rational change to Korean culture were resisted completely. Today, this imprint is reflected in Korea's relatively group centred, nonsecular and authoritarian society.

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<sup>80</sup> Chang and Chang (1994) p142

<sup>81</sup> I shall use the word “Confucianism” throughout this thesis to represent the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism. Refer Kalton (1991) and Deuchler (1992) for detailed descriptions of Confucian doctrine as applied in Korea.

Yet, one needs to be cautious of focussing too much on Confucian doctrine when considering contemporary life in Korea. Its tenets are unlikely to be immediately viable in today's global economy. Nakajima<sup>82</sup> and Kim<sup>83</sup> suggest the traditional Confucian culture of Korea may have already begun to die out although few are prepared to acknowledge it. Certainly, the Korean workforce that initiated 3500 strikes in the summer of 1987 was not reflecting pious adherence to Confucian law.

### 1.2.2.1 Traditional Korean Culture and Values - A Korean Perspective

As I will show later in Section 3.2, the informant's contrasting views about the role of Confucianism reflect the diversity of perceived Korean-ness. They also reflect the strong debate in the literature about the integrity of Korea's traditional culture and values, and Korean claims for a unique social structure. To address this debate, I have attempted to document a *Korean* perspective by considering several *Korean Concepts*: - Universal I-ness, We-ness and the Space of Cheong. These concepts emanate from the teachings of Confucius and Mencius and are not widely published in the English language. As part of my coming to terms with, and seeking clarity of Korean-ness and National character in-the-mind, I shall also consider concepts drawn from Western psychology including the holding environment (Section 1.2.2.3, and later discussed in Section 2.1.4.1b) and the transitional object (Section 1.2.2.6). I will introduce and apply the concept of psychic structure to the findings in Section 3.2.4.

In endeavouring to represent my interpretations of these complex Korean and Western psychological concepts, I am conscious of being unable to please everyone. These concepts are contentious in and of themselves. This is exacerbated by the strongly argued contention of some Korean psychologists<sup>84</sup> in Korea that the Western concept of individuality cannot be applied in a Korean context. They claim the "non-individualist" collectivism of the Korean society provides a unique contextual framework that renders Western collectivism logically inappropriate. They argue that the representation of who and what an *individual* is, and how the individual fits into and

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<sup>82</sup> Nakajima quoted in Chungwon Choue (Ed.) (1988) pp.63-70

<sup>83</sup> Kim (1996) p42

<sup>84</sup> Choi & Choi (1994), Chung (1994) and Yoon & Choi (1994)

relates in a group context in Korea is significantly different from the Western understanding. Whilst not disputing this assertion, two Korean-American academics<sup>85</sup> adopt a totally different view of the same material. Calling upon the work of Japanese researchers, they challenge the veracity of the Korean psychologists' claims for a uniquely Korean, "non-individualist" collectivism. They suggest Korean individualism is strident within Korean groups. They argue this accounts for Korean's volatility, poor teamwork and inability to reach amicable compromise. Chang and Chang claim the qualities represented by *universal I-ness* and *We-ness* proposed in **Korean Concept 1** are not Korean, but the essence of a *Japanese* model of individual and group behaviour. In view of Japan's complete domination of all aspects of Korean life from 1910 to 1945 this may be possible, although the Korean psychologists are apparently drawing on historical and philosophical material that goes back far beyond 1910.

In the presentation of this paper, I have made several references to the potential for ethnocentrism and my endeavours to seek a balanced view. Discussion about this Korean material with Australian and Asian academics and doctoral students indicates variable willingness to consider a contrary view to Western psychological perspectives. Most perceive the Western perspective as having "universal" application on the basis of the intrinsically *human* nature of "their" theory. I have attempted to accommodate this by examining the data from the Korean and several Western theoretical perspectives. Notwithstanding my endeavours, I feel the potential for a Western bias is unavoidable owing to my own life experience and academic background. In this regard, I shall define my intention in this thesis as endeavouring to explore several theoretical possibilities, as a means of seeking insight, rather than offering a conclusive conceptual position. Indeed, I doubt that a definitive position is possible. As such the various interpretations canvassed here should be regarded as reflecting my search for clarity; and hopefully serve as a guide for others.

Whilst I appear to be focussing attention on Confucianism per se, my purpose is more to use Confucianism as a metaphor, reflective of an *image* of tradition. This model of Korean-ness can be seen in transition from the tradition to a more globally focussed perspective. Whilst acknowledging the value of these Korean Concepts as

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<sup>85</sup> Chang and Chang (1994)



tools for a clearer interpretation of Korean-ness, I do not wish to engage the debate about the relative merit of Korean and Western psychology; nor do I wish to argue a comparative or contrasting case between Confucianism and various interpretations of Christianity. That is beyond the bounds of this paper. My concern is to seek focus and perspective.

### **1.2.2.2 Confucianism - The Five Relationships**

It is said the Confucian view of human dignity, what sets humans apart from other creatures, is imbedded in South Korea's total cultural value system. This approach sees "man alone as most noble, and what is noble in man is that he possesses the Five Relationships."<sup>86</sup> These relationships -

"that between father and son there should be affection, between ruler and minister (subject) there should be righteousness, between husband and wife there should be proper distinction, between elder and younger there should be proper order, and between friends there should be faithfulness..."

- are the cornerstones of Confucian moral and social teaching<sup>87</sup> and ipso facto South Korean culture and arguably day to day life. Extrapolating, this can be interpreted as an expression of an image of a discrete South Korean National character in-the-mind. I contend that individual Korean business people's expressed Korean-ness is based in part on this image and the associated emotions and feelings. I shall discuss the notion of National character in-the-mind at length in Section 1.3.

What is important is the level upon which the relationships are conducted; how one acts toward another according to the nature of the relationship and the respective place of the players in the hierarchy of relationships. Only the relationship between friends maintains equality of social position. Role and task are clearly circumscribed. The reason for a group's existence and its developmental purpose for its members; the

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<sup>86</sup> Kalton (1991) p3

<sup>87</sup> Kalton (1991) p4

inherent constraints on behaviours, internal boundaries and relationships (connectedness and separateness) with the external environment are all defined.

The next two sections describe Korean Concepts of Universal I-ness, We-ness and the Space of Cheong. These concepts provide a frame for a clearer interpretation of the Korean Way and, in turn, the research data.

### **KOREAN CONCEPT 1 - Universal I-ness and We-ness**

Confucian doctrine emphasises stratified social relationships. Implicit is a concern that self-centredness will undermine the fabric of South Korean society.

East Asian societies have tended to adopt living principles devoid of theism. Unlike the monotheism of Christianity embraced by many Western countries, Korean society belongs historically and geographically to the domain of a *universal I-ness*.<sup>88</sup> Briefly, this *universal I-ness* culture is ontologically void. It does not exist in reality, but assumes a dynamic, eternal and absolute “being” quality endlessly functioning and processing. *Universal I-ness* culture does not separate truth from reality. According to Yang-Eun Chung, this culture argues an individual’s realities are artefacts constructed by the human mind.<sup>89</sup> *Universal I-ness* culture assumes the “I” in every person belongs to the *universal I-ness* and is therefore a fragment of the *universal I-ness*. The individual mind therefore is an expression of the mind of the *universal I-ness*. The latter is therefore beyond the experience of the individual mind although it is considered to be in constant contact with reality and is not as transcendent as the Christian God.

In *universal I-ness* culture, individuals are not perceived as separate physical entities. Rather they exist because of the *universal I-ness* and are manifestations of the *universal I-ness*. From this, “helping others is helping oneself; understanding others is understanding oneself.”<sup>90</sup> The connections between individuals are fundamental. The nexus and network of relationships are integral to *universal I-ness*, and preexists. Thus

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<sup>88</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the concept of *universal I-ness* refer to the article by Yang-Eun Chung in Yoon & Choi (1994) pp.3-14.

<sup>89</sup> Yang-Eun Chung in Yoon & Choi (1994) pp.4-5 and p9

<sup>90</sup> Yang-Eun Chung in Yoon & Choi (1994) p10

the individual in the *universal I-ness* culture is not the central unit. The collectivity is the singular first person “I”. Concepts of family, friend, faction and clan are evident because they presuppose the existence of *universal I-ness* as the origin of all existence. Peer, cohort and society have mono-dimensional relevance in Korea in terms of age, occupation and locality respectively. Outside of this there are no words to denote the concepts.

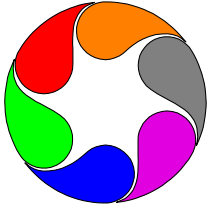
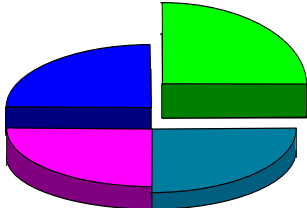
Yang-Eun Chung suggests Koreans use the concept of “We-ness” to describe or express their collectivism. Individuals are physically present, but psychosocially invisible. *We-ness* is infused with affective, emotional forces and expectations (“we-hood-ness”) that result in a cohesive relationised context. Such is the power of the WE affect in Korean society, over time, the perceptions of *we-hood-ness* by members of the collective can result in assumptions of sameness; expectations of social interdependence and emotional support; that would be completely unsubstantiated or inexplicable to the Western observer’s eye. The expression of we-hood-ness may become an unconscious response going far beyond the notions of *togetherness* evoked by emotional support groups in Western culture like Alcoholics Anonymous or Neighbourhood Watch. The We-ness concept could be compared with Turquet’s<sup>91</sup> proposal of a fourth basic assumption - *Oneness* - the energised union of individuals with an omnipotent force enabling the group members to passively surrender themselves “...in an oceanic feeling of unity.”<sup>92</sup>

Figure 1.1 depicts two separate ways of looking at the individual in groups. The left-hand column depicts the Korean concept of Universal I-ness and the pervading We-ness: individuals as one in a whole. On the right, the Western concept of Group where individualism reigns: individuals join the group but remain separate entities within the group based on the unique qualities, skills, knowledge etcetera they can offer.

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<sup>91</sup> Turquet (1974) quoted in Stacey, R.D., (1993) p199

<sup>92</sup> Stacey (1993) p199

	
<p>Korean Concept of Universal I-ness = <i>We-ness</i> pervades</p>	<p>Western Concept of Group = Individuals join but remain independent</p>

**Figure 1.1 - Korean and Western representations of the “Individual” in Groups.**

Like Confucianism, Universal I-ness and We-ness may be conceptualised as containing or holding environments, assisting South Koreans with the facilitation of empathy, containing aggression and providing a haven for regression. I shall explore this assertion in Section 1.2.2.6. Winnicott’s notion of “holding environment” is discussed in Section 2.1.4.1b.<sup>93</sup> Images of relationship, control and dependency are present, as are interdependence and social support. The Administrative Management literature places variable emphasis on the role of Confucianism in South Korean business, which does not seem to be supported by the informants in this research. It may be that lip service to Confucianism also acts as a defensive mechanism against criticism of the “Korean Way”.

At face value, the individual Korean self is apparently not separated from its external world. On the contrary, it is enmeshed with group selves. It is not clear from the Korean literature if, or how, the Korean adapts to or internalises associations with new groups. Nor is it clear how an old group self and its affiliations integrates with new group selves. I do note, however, that expatriate Koreans have great difficulty reintegrating into Korean society on their return from overseas, to the extent that the Government conducts special courses to facilitate reintegration. I can only speculate

<sup>93</sup> Winnicott (1960)

that since Koreans have a powerful drive to belong and be accepted, perhaps their psychic structures have parallel defence components that negate or defer personal expectations and anxieties, and that somehow they integrate the group's expectations and anxieties as if they were their own. Thus, sharing the group psychic structures intimately, may help bind individual and group as one.

My short experience in Korea impressed upon me the existence of very definite individual differences. Nevertheless, I have difficulty accounting for and coming to terms with individual differences in the processes of universal I-ness and We-ness. Whether there is universal self-denial, or not, remains to be seen. Perhaps future light will be shed on these mysteries (or myths) as more Korean literature in the field is translated into English. Whilst acknowledging the seeming differences, it appears that universal I-ness and We-ness serve a similar purpose to the Western notion of psychic structure. They appear to provide Koreans with a frame for individual adaptation; a frame for the internalisation of group structures; and a means of enabling individuals to make sense of their environment. The notion of Koreans having a different psychic structure to those in the West will be considered in Section 3.2.4.

At present, the tenets of universal I-ness and We-ness, etched in South Korean tradition, are under severe strain owing to the "patronage" of Western cultural and psycho-social influence and the tendency of some Koreans to buckle under the pressure to conform. The corrosive consequence has been to leave many South Koreans in a state of normlessness where individuals find themselves in an obscure environment without support.<sup>94</sup> By the same token there are those who have adapted to and integrated Western ways of thinking, accommodating the challenge of cross cultural differences.

This raises a number of questions. First, what subordinates the pressure to conform to traditional Korean values? What is it about Western values that is so attractive? Are Western values stronger? If so, why? The metaphor "to buckle under" suggests almost an onslaught of Western cultural and psycho-social influence rather than patronage. Why does this buckling occur? What form does the buckling take?

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<sup>94</sup> Yang-Eun Chung in Yoon & Choi (1994) p13

Are some South Koreans impersonating the esteemed aggressor who forges world opinion, moulds economies, influences business management and lifestyle trends and behaves like the supreme authority? Are they giving up control? How have South Koreans adapted to and integrated Western ways? What is the precise affect of the accommodating process? Clearly, clarification of these questions is beyond this paper and requires separate research.

Of course these questions assume Korean psychic dilemmas are being influenced from outside Korea. It is possible that the threat is an individual, internal manifestation of a more personal kind. A confrontation within self. In this regard, I am drawn back to my comments on Turquet's "Oneness" and the proposal put forward by Lawrence, Bain and Gould<sup>95</sup> of a fifth basic assumption: *Me-ness*. This notion emphasises separateness or, in effect, not-Oneness, the opposite of Turquet's Oneness. Applied to the Korean context of changing economic, social and political conditions depicted by rapid industrialisation, the fragmentation of essentially egalitarian communities into a broader, hierarchical social order and population movement from rural to urban environments with their isolated high-rise living, Koreans may be confronted (perhaps for the first time) with their own personal boundaries. It may be that We-ness is being challenged by Me-ness and that Koreans are being propelled by their "own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing realities..."<sup>96</sup> of their new urban milieu. Taken a step further, the very existence of the assumed perfect form of the Korean group, the arguable foundation and reality of Korean life, protected from incursion by coloniser/invaders for centuries may be being put to the ultimate test. The known and knowable Korean group could be threatened with destruction by the emergence of individual Me-ness, the invader from within.

If this is so, then Koreans appear to be, figuratively, trapped between the basic assumption phenomena of Oneness (Read: Universal I-ness and We-ness) and a shift toward Me-ness brought about by the transitional antecedents of a move from isolationism to participation in the global village. It might be argued that those who are successfully negotiating the move to Western style economy and values are

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<sup>95</sup> Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996)

<sup>96</sup> Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) p3

accommodating the Me-ness phenomenon whilst those who are not will remain challenged for some time to come. Korean society then, is potentially facing a consuming schizoid anxiety of variable and varying proportions. This could be read as a significant challenge to the consistency of the image of Korean-ness or the perceived National character in-the-mind.

## **KOREAN CONCEPT 2 - Space of *Cheong***

Another unique expression of Korean-ness is found in the Space of *Cheong*. The special *human* quality, the foundation of Confucian doctrine, is that one does not behave in a self centred or self interested way when relating to others. Self centred behaviour is seen as the primary root of evil. These values, extrapolated from Korean Concept 1, are expressed in the space of *cheong*, where “I” and “you” have resolved into a unified unit of “we” as the same reality.<sup>97</sup> This dimension has an unusual duality. In one sense it approximates “total empathy” or Wagner’s<sup>98</sup> expansion of the “tacit self” - a frame for understanding one’s entire environment - and includes “...others **within oneself** since it is the evidence of the expansion of self.”<sup>99</sup> In another sense, it can be seen as a transitional object (see Section 1.2.2.6) providing a link between the past and the present - to the essence of Korean-ness; the quintessential Korean “me”.

The application of *cheong* in its purest form occurs when individuals transcend their own self interest and priorities and think only of family, and community. Within the space of *cheong*, it is not acceptable to behave or express self interest. To do so, is to face expulsion from the community. *Cheong* is connected to the human relations teachings of highly revered traditional philosophers, Confucius and Mencius, and has its source in rural communities where mutual interdependence, kinship and neighbourhood play an integral role in human relations and in personal safety and well being. *Cheong* is considered to be “...the most precious concept in Korean human relations...the charm of our lifestyle.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For a complete explanation of this concept refer to Soo-Won Lee, “The *Cheong* Space: A Zone of Non-Exchange in Korean Human Relationships” in Yoon and Choi (1994) pp.85-99.

<sup>98</sup> Wagner (1972) quoted in Yoon and Choi (1994) p93

<sup>99</sup> Soo-Won Lee in Yoon and Choi (1994) p93 (my emphasis)

<sup>100</sup> Soo-Won Lee in Yoon and Choi (1994) p95

As individuals have varying capabilities and potential, their ability to apply this doctrine varies. Hence variable levels of dignity and respect occur. Reverence for others, social harmony and order, and reciprocal arrangements associated with service are integral to this human inter-relatedness. Individualism is therefore anathema. It implies irreverence, separateness, indulgence, false pride and arrogance. **KR1**<sup>101</sup> indicated in his comments in Section 3.2.3.5 to be ostracised would be tantamount to total isolation “...*the feeling has parallels with Aboriginal bone pointing.*”<sup>102</sup>

Lee<sup>103</sup> notes sadly, the decline of the practice of *cheong* in Korea since the surge of industrialisation and urbanisation where human contact tends to be more formal and shallow, and where enduring relationships are scarce and infrequent. This view is consistent with informant **KR2**'s remarks (in Section 3.2.1.1) where he reflected on the changing concept of Korean community. In these circumstances, Lee argues, human relations become a commodity to be traded. As such, from a Korean traditionalist's standpoint, the quality of relations and relationships degenerates to a base level, 'infecting' human lifestyles, manners and values, accordingly. Social dislocation, aberrant behaviour and anomie have been the tragic result.

### 1.2.2.3 The Confucian Paradigm

Confucianism, as an historical tool of custom and practice, rose over centuries in a culture of rigid guidance and control; in an economic and political climate of relative isolation. Confucianism once provided comfort and security; and confirmation of the Korean “me”. Like Western religious institutions, Confucianism represented dependency and provided succour and reinforcement by managing the connection between dependency and irrational behaviour.

In effect, Confucianism as the image of a traditional Korean life may be regarded as an institutionalised paradigm of social behaviour. As implied in Section

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<sup>101</sup> The key to this reference is explained in Section 2.3.7

<sup>102</sup> KR1, KRESPO L186. Refer to Section 3.2.3.5 for further discussion of Korean-Australian cultural metaphors.

<sup>103</sup> Soo-Won Lee in Yoon and Choi (1994) *op cit*



1.2.2.2, in the context of a Korean group (or society) Confucianism can be seen as separately playing a containing role or providing a “holding environment” in which the individual affirms an identity and learns to clarify and channel aggression appropriately. This is a collaborative, negotiated position within the group. The individual’s identity and connection to the group is affirmed and, in turn, the group’s characteristics, culture, role and values are affirmed. This shared environment (culture) facilitates mutual dependence and mutual self-sufficiency. If it fails, the individual may appear detached or deny dependence and portray inappropriate behaviour patterns that require sanction. Here, the individual (and the group) may regress to less rational, defensive, childlike behaviour. Communication and empathy may deteriorate to the stage where confusion and anomie prevent clarification and exploration of motives and needs. Unmanageable emotion and blurred interpersonal boundaries may rule, confounding individual responsibility leading to a break down of the group. Without a safe, secure holding environment to contain aggression, to provide a haven for safe regression and to facilitate empathy, Koreans experience a sense of chaos.

In managing social experience the Korean group provides the individual with protection, security and an identity boundary. In doing so, individuals learn to contain their own aggression and take responsibility for their feelings within the context of the group and their collective association with the outside world. In Korea this scenario is arguably, depicted in the space of Cheong.

Whilst still present, the Confucian influence appears to be waning. It seems to me that the Korean population is currently experiencing a significant, almost universal, transition phase. Over the past twenty-five years, with the rapid swing to globalisation, their apparent isolation has dissipated. Guidance and control through reverence to culture and tradition is being progressively eroded. Increased wealth is leading toward social and political revolution, where traditional control mechanisms no longer apply. In the process, the traditional Korean “me” and “not me” are becoming cloudy. I shall develop the idea of Koreans in transition in more detail in Sections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5.

#### **1.2.2.4 Korean Concepts - A Contrary View**

The last two Sections represented Korean Concepts of individual and group behaviour that reflect traditionalist interpretations of Korean-ness. These concepts were grounded in the human relations teachings of Confucius and Mencius and are reported as generally extant in Korea today. The perspective was drawn from the first book on **The Psychology of the Korean People**<sup>104</sup> compiled and published in English by Korean psychologists living in Korea. By way of contrast, I wish to briefly represent a contrary view proposed by two Korean-American scholars Chang and Chang.<sup>105</sup>

Relying heavily on research material from Japanese scholars and some inconsistent findings from Korean researchers, Chang and Chang suggest Koreans have always displayed strident individualistic behaviour.<sup>106</sup> Without referring to universal I-ness and We-ness per se, they acknowledge the coexistence of “I” and “We” feelings within a group, but argue the “I” is clearly separate, dominant and independent. They state the “We” feeling, merely acknowledges the presence of group consciousness and the recognition of group loyalty. Chang and Chang claim these two “feelings” are often in confrontational mode and this accounts for Korean’s volatility, poor teamwork and inability to seek amicable compromise. They argue only when the stakes are sufficiently high, as in war, will Koreans attempt to strike a balance between individual and collective interests. Even then, they imply individual interests will inevitably predominate.

Chang and Chang cite the research of Kumon<sup>107</sup> to suggest the ideas represented as Korean Concept 1, reflect uniquely Japanese behavioural patterns, **not a Korean model**. Kumon uses the constituents of water (oxygen and hydrogen) as a metaphor for patterns of *group behaviour*. Kumon suggests that in Japan only the water is visible. Individuals lose their identity in the group and behave as one - the “I” feeling is sublimated into the “We” feeling.<sup>108</sup> By comparison, Kumon argues in Korea the oxygen and hydrogen molecules remain independent and separate.

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<sup>104</sup> Yoon & Choi (1994)

<sup>105</sup> Chang & Chang (1994)

<sup>106</sup> Chang & Chang (1994) pp.45-46

<sup>107</sup> Kumon (1980) quoted in Chang & Chang (1994) p47

<sup>108</sup> Chang & Chang (1994) p47

### 1.2.2.5 Commentary

In the Sections on **Korean Concept 1** and **Korean Concept 2**, the Korean traditionalists argued that the positive qualities of universal I-ness and We-ness were etched in Korea's history, philosophy and culture. Chang and Chang argue from the same position that Koreans display obvious, individualistic behaviour. They claim that because the behaviour has a substantial socio-cultural and geo-political foundation, it is most unlikely Koreans will demonstrate much conciliatory behaviour when dealing with Western business people. They imply the Koreans will regard international trade as a theatre of war. They suggest Koreans will bond together to represent a united front, but will individually seek to maximise their personal gain (if necessary, at each other's expense). Chang and Chang's only reference to the tenets of Korean Confucianism is in the context of a comparative overview with Chinese and Japanese management systems. As an aside, Chang and Chang remark that age, the generation gap, may account for recent differences in attitude toward individualistic behaviour - the young being more factious. They conclude by suggesting Korean's individualistic behaviour has a degree of unpredictability that may work for or against them in a business context.

The two Korean Concepts and the Chang's proposals about relationship and the tenets of Confucianism represent opposing interpretations of historical and observable Korean individual and group behaviour. The socio-cultural and geo-political foundation for their commentary has the same source. But the interpretation is different owing in part to the selective use of the data presented and the orientation of the writing.

The Korean psychologists (living in Korea) advocating a traditional view of Korean individual and group relationships are, in my view, trying to inform an international audience about how Koreans, as a people, think and behave at a population level. Their interpretation of Korean-ness is true to their traditional beliefs. They make little reference to what might be perceived as negative or contrary data. On the other hand, Chang and Chang, as Korean-Americans living in the United States for more than 25 years, write from the United States, for a largely American business audience. Their primary attention is directed toward the Korean management system and Americans

wishing to do business with Korea. Their interpretation of Korean-ness makes little reference to Confucianism except in terms of a comparison with Japanese and Chinese management systems. As such, it lacks cultural nuances that might provide a deeper appreciation of the Koreans as people. It reflects what can only be interpreted as a Western view. Both groups of writers claim their books are the first of their type. As previously indicated the Chang's book has been widely quoted in management texts published since 1994, referring to Korea.

It is apparent that the notions of Korean National character in-the-minds of these writers is substantially different. I can only speculate on the relative accuracy of these offerings as reflective of the majority of Koreans. The diversity of these contrasting interpretations of Korean-ness and the scant writings in this field make comparison of one's own research data with the work of others, difficult. During my discussion of Korean Concept 1, I noted my dilemma in accounting for, and coming to terms with, individual differences in the processes of universal I-ness and We-ness. I speculated about the possibility of some Korean's self-denial in the presentation of the concept. In Section 1.2.2, I commented on the relative significance of Confucianism to the formation of relationships in modern Korean life. The Chang's omission of a discrete reference to *Korean* Confucianism and their note about the generation gap may be a reflection of the perceived relevance of tradition in the current business scene. My concern is that without a detailed understanding of the potential sources of Korean behaviour, the foreign business person's interpretation of the happenings within a business encounter may be awry. Alternatively, the Chang's interpretation may reflect expatriate Korean's perceptions of Korea's status as a nation in transition between their traditional, collectivist culture and a tantalising, Western alternative. Again, this could be read as a significant challenge to the consistency of the image of Korean-ness or the perceived National character in-the-mind. This field of speculation provides broad opportunities for future research.

#### **1.2.2.6 Confucianism as a Transitional Object**

Notwithstanding the aforementioned debate, as I shall show later in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 the Australian and Korean informants made explicit reference to

relationships and Confucianism as integral features of their business encounters. Having acknowledged and considered some Korean perspectives, I now wish to draw upon Western psychology on the premise that it may expose further dimensions of Korean-ness that may not have been formerly apparent; and because, as previously indicated, the mindset of some Australians may give little credence to the purely Korean account, anchored as it is in unfamiliar territory. The new dimensions recorded may contribute some clarity in the development of an overall view of Korean-ness and National character in-the-mind.

This Section begins with a digression to Winnicott's theory<sup>109</sup> regarding the notion of a transitional object; then proceeds to my hypothesis that part of the Korean informants' anxiety associated with relationship building during cross-cultural business encounters may be due to a lack of an appropriate transitional object. I should reiterate that whilst I appear to be focussing on Confucianism per se, my purpose is more to use it as a metaphor, reflective of an *image* of tradition and a basis from which to perceive change in Korea. In adopting this approach I am seeking to better interpret and articulate Korean-ness as it evolves within a climate of radical change.

#### **1.2.2.6a Winnicott's Theory of Transitional Object**

As children we often form strong attachments to special toys - stuffed animals, dolls, teddy bears etcetera. Winnicott classifies such cuddly toys as "transitional objects", suggesting they play a critical role in human development in terms of differentiating between the internal world of "me" and the external world of "not me". He suggests they provide us with comfort and security. Transitional objects are also objects that can take on the anger, abuse and erotic love of the child. As such, they provide a place where imagination can grow and help us define who we are. As we mature in years, Winnicott suggests we substitute our cuddly toys with memories of cherished experiences, momentos, values, personal attributes and the like. These "new" toys fulfil the same comforting role; and help define us and our place in the community and the world. As transitional phenomena they progressively contribute to the formation, maintenance and evolution of personal identity. Occasionally, we may

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<sup>109</sup> Winnicott (1958)

become obsessively tied to these substitute objects and our commitment to one, or some, of them may become dominating features of our behaviour and interfere with our adaptation to change.

### **1.2.2.6b Winnicott's Theory Applied**

Read in the light of the two Korean Concepts discussed previously, Confucianism may be seen and understood as a metaphor for establishing the critical distinction between the Korean “me” and “not me”. For some Koreans, it may also be seen as having transitional significance as a symbol of reassurance and, as a means of identifying their comparative place in the international scene. This would be consistent with Bridger’s extrapolations of Winnicott’s work where he suggests that institutionalised transitional phenomena, like Confucianism, can be critical in articulating identity; and, in an institutional environment, “in shaping attitudes that can block creativity, innovation and change.”<sup>110</sup> Such negative qualities were noted by Australian informants in this research. Greenberg and Mitchell, Hirschhorn, and Morgan affirm the validity of transitional phenomena in the work environment and that many associated products have the qualities, and may play the role of transitional objects.<sup>111</sup>

In developing this argument further, I am drawn to an analogy proposed by Morgan<sup>112</sup> where he talks about the trauma associated with the introduction of new computer technology at an engineering firm. Morgan relates how engineers, tied to their slide rules (transitional objects), were unable to embrace the technological changes quickly enough to save the firm from bankruptcy. Similarly, for some Korean informants, the rapid change from insular business practice, grounded in traditions like Confucianism, to the infrastructure underpinning a globalised economy, has created some disquiet. Symbolically, this new infrastructure (like the computer technology) is an object to be controlled and mastered. However, Confucianism is largely an unknown quantity in the West and thus has no relevance in the Western economic scheme of

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<sup>110</sup> Morgan (1986) p221

<sup>111</sup> Czander (1993) p71

<sup>112</sup> Morgan (1986) p222

things. Confucianism, as a transitional object (like the slide rule), therefore appears to be dysfunctional in this context. For some Koreans, the infrastructure underpinning a globalised economy is figuratively, an unknown dragon that threatens impotence and failure. It would appear Korean business people need to find a new transitional object(s) to help them face this threat.

Of course, there are Korean entrepreneurs, like **KR-6**, who have abandoned their attachment to tradition, embraced the infrastructure as a new transitional object and are working with it quite successfully. In this context, the infrastructure underpinning a globalised economy, using Czander's words: "assumes the role of an object capable of performing Bion's *containing* function and Winnicott's *holding* function."<sup>113</sup> The infrastructure is able to receive an individual's projections and functions as a container for the individual's projective identifications. These projective identifications result in an infrastructure that performs the same soothing, psychic function as a cuddly toy.<sup>114</sup>

I suggest there are times when Confucianism as an entity, may fulfil the function of a conceptual and spiritual holding environment where specific elements within it act as transitional objects or transitional space. For example, if we regard belief and acting in accordance with an essential element of Confucianism (like the Five Relationships referred to in Section 1.2.2.2) as a transitional object, not only does it provide guidance on how to behave in specific situations, as say, in a cross-cultural business encounter, but it provides a cornerstone for day to day living. What is important in the business encounter is that the transitional object, for example the Five Relationships, defines role and task. It defines the level upon which the relationships are conducted; how one acts toward the other according to the nature of the relationship and the respective place of the players in the hierarchy of relationships. The reason for the business encounter and how it develops for the participants; the inherent constraints on behaviours, internal boundaries and relationships (connectedness and separateness) with the external environment are all defined. As a transitional object this process, in action, provides predictability, and ipso facto relative comfort and security. As a holding environment, Confucianism enables the management of the emotional life of the Korean parties in the

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<sup>113</sup> Czander (1993) p72 [Reference to Bion (1970) and Winnicott (1958)]

<sup>114</sup> Czander (1993) p72

encounter, providing support, containing aggression and sustaining individual development. The discussion of this issue in the context of business relationships is developed in Section 4.1.2.1.

### 1.2.2.7 Review

From a traditional standpoint, Korean society is an organically structured interdependent whole. Here individuals are integral parts, not independent units. The society is relationship centred. To Koreans, the family system is everything and filial piety has the highest priority in society. The effort of the Koreans to maintain blood-related purity in their families must be understood in this context. They take pride in being the most homogeneous people on earth. Ties of region, clan, family and school are paramount. The networks established from these sources invariably influence lives and livelihoods in business and politics. One's penultimate value is in responses and reciprocation to the group(s). Thus pursuit of self interest is seen as distorting the proper function of society. Unlike the Western fantasy of individual equality and egalitarianism, the Korean network is a hierarchy, it's members with varying responsibility to and for each other. Relative success is achieved through sophisticated negotiation and bartering. One's identity is integrally bound to the roles played in business, family, political and social groups. Notwithstanding, many Koreans believe and have succeeded to rise above their class through the acquisition of wealth.

South Korea's rapid capitalist transformation from a rural society to an industrial giant has resulted in a social upheaval experienced by all. Traditional values and beliefs are continually challenged. "South Korea's new middle class is a new new middle class"<sup>115</sup> with a concomitant new identity. This statement is supported by personal experience. During my first visit to Seoul in 1994 a 35 year old Korean academic reminisced over lunch about her rural village life. She recalled her early teenage years when she and her family of five had little to eat, often surviving for days on what we were then eating at one sitting. The remark *farmers dressed in suits* used to

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<sup>115</sup> Janelli (1993) p3. This argument is similar to Mackay's argument that all Australians are becoming new Australians - Mackay (1994) p6



describe older business managers while at first seeming derogatory, has metaphorical relevance.

In South Korea, “public debate about...national and cultural identity is strong and often passionate as Koreans endeavour...”<sup>116</sup> to redefine who they are in the modern world.

### **1.2.3 Comments on Australian and Korean Identity**

I broach the subject of Australian and Korean identity with caution and some degree of trepidation. Clearly, the available Australian, American, and Korean literature in the English language, (cultural, political and social), does not sufficiently clarify the complexity of Australian-ness and Korean-ness to enable an adequate working definition.

Within Australia and Korea, Australian-ness and Korean-ness embrace strong nationalist tendencies, unity, homogeneity and difference from otherness. The difference is different. The cultures of the two countries differ markedly. Australia is a multicultural nation whereas Korea has maintained its individuality and independence assiduously, even during colonisation. Values and behaviours are less culturally delineated in Australia than Korea. Australia has evolved a romanticised identity where difference is set aside or over-looked on the premise *she'll be right mate*. This is compared with a reality moulded by successive South Korean governments driven by a rigorous economic and social agenda, perhaps empowered by traditional relationships, etched in time and mourning. Both countries are evolving new identities reflecting internal changes in their cultural, economic and social development and responses to external global influences outside their immediate control.

The lack of a concise definition of Australian-ness and Korean-ness is not necessarily an inhibiting factor for this research. It simply reflects the diversity of the concepts and the need for openness in mind and spirit when considering outcomes. The essential point to recognise and appreciate is that differences *do exist* between

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<sup>116</sup> Korea to the Year 2000 - A Report by The Australian National Korean Studies Centre (1992) p12

Australian and Korean cultures and identities. They are multifaceted and multilayered. Individual psychodynamics may be an integrating spiral within this labyrinth. Australian-ness and Korean-ness appear to represent projections of the human imagination, willed within the bounds of individual experience and perception. Whether this is truly the case will be explored further as part of the interpersonal component of the research.

### **1.3 National Character In-The-Mind**

Having provided a perspective of Australian-ness and Korean-ness, I now wish to explore the idea that Australians and Koreans carry an image in-their-minds of a discrete *National Character*. It is my contention that individual Australian and Korean business people's expressed Australian-ness and Korean-ness is based in part on the image, emotion and feeling they associate with this concept. I further contend that an insight into this National character will provide opportunities to better interpret behaviour manifest during Australian-Korean business encounters.

This Section begins with a discussion of mental models as a basis for establishing the notion of National character in-the-mind. I will then discuss Australian-ness and Korean-ness as expressions of the image, emotion and feeling one associates with a National character in-the-mind. I will explore the complexity of this expression, its dynamic qualities and the inherent confusion that may arise in trying to interpret behaviour in a cross-cultural setting.

#### **1.3.1 Mental Models**

The idea of mental models or mental representations of events, situations or people shaping our actions and behaviour has a long history in social thought and literature.<sup>117</sup> Here, mental models describe the simple images we construct and store in our brains to represent the world as we see it. These models, based on imprecise, flexible categories of information defined in terms of similarity and irregularity, explain our perceptions of the world, and how we act and behave in it. In new situations we use

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<sup>117</sup> Morgan, G (1983) pp.365-71; Senge (1994) p174

this stored knowledge in processes of analogous reasoning to create new models. The coping process can be seen as the interaction of feedback between models. Stacey<sup>118</sup> suggests that as we become “expert” or familiar with the content of particular fields of endeavour, we push our mental models below the level of awareness into the unconscious mind. In this way, without having to think, an individual may call upon stored models containing appropriate behaviours and reactions that seem to fit analogous current events. While what people say is not always reflected in their behaviour, their behaviour is invariably consistent with their mental models.<sup>119</sup> For example, Korean business people thinking Australians to be “country folk” will behave differently than if they see them as tricky and sophisticated. Equally, Australian business people will behave differently if they believe Koreans to be trustworthy, rather than likely to deceive them during negotiations. Our perceptions are shaped by our mental models in business, as in life. When the models exist tacitly and unconsciously, the potential for misunderstanding in communication is exacerbated.

I wish to develop this idea of mental models as a basis for establishing the concept of a *National Character in-the-mind*. I contend Australian and Korean business people representing their enterprises in International trade carry idealised mental models of their own and each other’s National character [labelled Australian-ness and Korean-ness in this research]. I believe appreciation of this notion will provide a foundation for the exploration of the dynamics occurring where these idealised images interface - at the point of engagement between Australian and Korean business people during business encounters.

### **1.3.2 Institution in-the-mind**

Turquet, Armstrong, Shapiro & Carr, and Stokes<sup>120</sup> have discussed how individuals carry idealised mental models or images of “an organisation or institution

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<sup>118</sup> Stacey (1993) p176

<sup>119</sup> Argyris, C. quoted in Senge (1994) p175

<sup>120</sup> Turquet (1960), Armstrong (1991) Shapiro & Carr (1991) and Stokes (1993) quoted in Jon Stokes, “Institutional chaos and personal stress” in Obholzer & Roberts, (1994) pp.121-128

in-the-mind.” At first reading, the terms organisation and institution imply notions of permanence, representing physical things like buildings or structures including resources, people, products and perhaps services. But, I suggest to confine one’s view to such a narrow perspective of organisation or institution per se, is to miss the nuance of the concept. As a metaphor, the experience of the *institution* (in its broadest context) is coloured by threads of its member’s feelings and meanings. These may be consistent and/or contradictory; transitory or etched in time; or simply fragmentary remnants of other vaguely memorable experiences. They may reflect stereotypical beliefs or how one wishes things to be, should be...had been. They may be reflective of “me”, “not me”, “us”, “not us”, anywhere along a continuum of relational dimensions.

Further, just as we age with time, I contend these images change in line with, or contrary to, changes in our life experience, directly or indirectly. So, for example, one may read a book; surf the Internet; eavesdrop upon a conversation; experience a family event; or become vocationally redundant, and the experiences may reset a whole range of images and feelings one is carrying in-the-mind. Interestingly, everyone else is subject to the same dynamic resetting process. Their expectations, ideas, motives, notions, meanings and understandings are continually destabilising, shifting, realigning, stabilising and resetting with positive and negative outcomes. In the process one’s notion of “me”, one’s identity, shifts. This “shifting” arouses uncertainty and anxiety. This is sustained by and through membership of institutions and organisations which provide a psychological and emotional holding environment<sup>121</sup> for the anxiety. The containment of the painful affect facilitated by the holding environment helps our interpretation of the images and feelings we are carrying in-the-mind.

### **1.3.3 *The Institution of National Character***

Stokes<sup>122</sup> explored the unconscious roles and covert functions played by various public institutions (hospitals, prisons, religions, police) outside their stated purpose and

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<sup>121</sup> Winnicott (1960). Refer to Section 2.1.4.1b for a discussion of the “holding environment”.

<sup>122</sup> Stokes (1993) in Obholzer & Roberts (1994) pp.121-128

examined the complexity of the psychological and emotional containment they provided. He concluded, if appropriately administered, the fantasy contained by these institutions can help individuals manage their personal stress. In the same way, I suggest the notion of a *National character* provides people with a sense of belonging and identity in a global context and a means of containing personal anxiety.

The *institution of National character* is not necessarily a tangible entity. It can be seen as a “coat of many colours”. National character provides the emotionally charged highlighter to the more visible, structural representations of nation like geography, economics and politics; and human features like physical appearance and language. Some commentators<sup>123</sup> see nation as an “imagined community” or a “mythical construction” on the premise that “...members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>124</sup> Hodge notes that in Australia local variations in demographics across States, cities, even suburban streets ensures “...no single Australian has a first hand encounter with the reality of the complex diversity of the whole country.”<sup>125</sup> From this, I see National character as the multi-coloured fabric of feelings and emotions binding these mental models or images. From my perspective as researcher, whilst adding a dimension of complexity, studying this fabric of the images of the institution **and** feelings, offers me the opportunity for greater insight into the individual informant’s experience, my own experience, and the research as a whole.

Armstrong<sup>126</sup> speculated on re-framing the notion of image or mental model to encompass “the feeling I am aware of in myself - a move which, as it were, creates a space in which the location of the feeling and its possible organisational meaning can be opened up for **exploration**.”<sup>127</sup> For me, it is “...the ability to find or make meaning from the means of describing human experience, be it language or pictures, that enables us to recover or restore meaning in a quantifiable form - how much or how little,

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<sup>123</sup> Anderson, B & Willis A.M. in Willis (1993)

<sup>124</sup> Anderson, B in Willis (1993) p19

<sup>125</sup> Hodge (1988) p10

<sup>126</sup> Armstrong (1996)

<sup>127</sup> Armstrong (1996) p3

someone or something means to us.”<sup>128</sup> Put another way, my ability to articulate the breadth and depth of my research experience not only in terms of physical observations, but my emotional and feeling states evoked and experienced whilst in the research will directly influence the perceived meaning of the research event. In this light, the frustrating, inexplicable, and incomprehensible elements of the research are as significant as the apparently explicit and cogent. I must provide myself the space to recover meaning. The discussion of data within the two Case Studies in Chapters 3 and 4 reflects this recovery process as part of the challenge of the research project.

### **1.3.4 National Character and the Research Context**

In establishing a framework for the discovery and description of *National character* as perceived by individual Australian and Korean business people, I propose to explore the complex, dynamic web of imagery, emotion and feeling which in varying combination enables an interpretation and expression of meaning that seems “about right”. I acknowledge the speculative nature of this approach and submit the circumstances simply cannot guarantee certainty. Rather, as indicated in Section 2.1.4.1, I can only establish a negotiated *interpretation* of each informant’s perception at the time of its expression, in the realisation that the interpretation will inevitably change as new data comes to hand through external sources (for example, the comments of other informants); or through my own internal processing of information in the form of surprises. I realise without further consultation the latter interpretation is speculative, but provides a basis for further investigation and study.

### **1.3.5 National Character in-the-mind and Australian-ness and Korean-ness**

As indicated earlier in Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, Australia and Korea can be represented at a number of levels in terms of geography, politics, place in the global

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<sup>128</sup> Taylor, D. quoted in Armstrong (1996) p3

economy, language, etc. Such representations imply an institutional context. I contend one's expressed Australian-ness or Korean-ness is based on the image, emotion and feeling one associates with a *National character* in-the-mind. Invoking Armstrong's proposal,<sup>129</sup> I suggest there may well be many spheres of Australian-ness and Korean-ness. Just as the complexity of the aforementioned institutions is revealed by introducing the diversity of individual emotions and feelings, so too are the spheres of Australian-ness and Korean-ness tied to the respective national's emotional and feeling state. But following Armstrong's suggestion,<sup>130</sup> the emotional experience is not necessarily an individual experience per se; more perhaps, an expression of *relatedness* of the individual to a group or institution (in this case, National character). In this regard, National character may well have mythical qualities.

In describing Australian-ness or Korean-ness individuals may choose to portray a particular mental model or image of their identity and consciously or unconsciously (for whatever reason) hide parts of that identity. Indeed, some of these other parts will be hidden from, or simply unknown to any of them. For each individual, Australian-ness or Korean-ness could thus be defined by "Who I say I am" or "Who I really believe I am"; or by "How I think others see me". Australians or Koreans may be quite unaware of how others see them and, unconscious of how *they* think of others.

Australians/Koreans from various parts of their countries may have contradictory images or interpretations of Australian-ness/Korean-ness:

An Australian who has lived in an inner suburb of Melbourne all his life, who rarely travels more than 15 kilometres from home; whose "world" and desires are fulfilled locally may have an entirely different perspective of Australian-ness to the Australian business person living in Seoul, Republic of Korea - contracted to an organisation for 3 years at considerable investment cost to the organisation and the business person (and family). Similarly, the Australian on his first overseas posting compared with one on his fourth or fifth.

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<sup>129</sup> Armstrong (1996)

<sup>130</sup> Armstrong (1997) p3

A Korean who grew up in a rural environment and moved to Seoul to attend university and work for an International conglomerate may have a different view of Korean-ness from her cousin who remained in the village to tend the fields and care for elderly family members.

Nevertheless these images have an enchanting, mythical effect swaying behaviour and feelings. I suggest for Australian and Korean business people there is a *National character*, an Australia and a Korea in-the-mind. It could be described in many ways, for example by the feeling experienced when returning home after an extensive period of absence. For an Australian the sight of Sydney Harbour from the air; for a Korean the sight of the Han River or the Seoul Tower. Alternatively, the feelings may not be associated with a national image but have equal significance as reflective of “home”: the gate to the house where one lives; the welcome of family and friends. Feelings partly rooted in images of the physical and partly represented by the phantasy of nationalism.

I believe clear notions of Australian-ness and Korean-ness in-the-mind could be regarded as familiar places and, as such, provide secure containers for their anxiety. It follows, for example, that Australians in Seoul would use their Australian-ness, consciously or unconsciously, as a source of collective psychic security in their isolation from home, affirming their personal experience within a familiar place. If Australian-ness and Korean-ness in-the-mind are fuzzy concepts, individuals may well feel lost. As will be shown later, Australians were less secure in their notions of National character and this may go some way in contributing to their sense of isolation and fear.

Taking this process a step further, it would be fair to say Australian and Korean business people have different images in their minds and feelings about what Australia and Korea represents in commerce and industry. These images and feelings may not be shared within the respective countries nor between the business people. But these images and feelings form the basis for the business people’s perceptions, and influence their behaviour. The scenario of Australian unwillingness to recognise the value of a Korean business relationship described in the preface to this paper, is indicative. These



images and feelings are undergoing constant change. As such, they provide a simultaneous concrete and fluid representation of a culture, values and people which influence the outcomes of business relationships.

I suggest the inherent confusion surrounding these images for all parties may well be an amalgam of confusion about self identity; anxiety about the unknown; uncertainty about one's place in institutions or organisations; about how to communicate with foreigners and understand and make sense of their portrayed images of *National character* in-their-mind.

It is my contention by exploring player's perceptions of business encounters (the territory where these images meet) in some detail, we may develop more accurate interpretations of the interaction which may assist in maturing current and future encounters. I suggest Australian and Korean business people recognise and acknowledge differences in respective behaviour but have little understanding of the *what* and *why* behind the behaviour. This study is to contribute an interpretation of that *what* and perhaps hypothesise *why*. Processing the potential dynamics within these interpretations may provide further insights not otherwise available.

## 1.4 Chapter Review

This Chapter established the foundation for the research. I examined Australian and Korean identity as a prelude to the exploration of the concept of National Character in-the-mind. I noted the complexities associated with Australian-ness and Korean-ness and acknowledged the lack of an adequate working definition of the terms.

I noted the debate between Korean and Western academics about the relative relevance of Western psychology and the Western concept of individuality in a Korean context. Without engaging the debate, I attempted to seek "clarity and perspective" by exploring the data from both Korean and Western psychological viewpoints. I documented and discussed two Korean Concepts: (i) *Universal I-ness* and *We-ness*, and (ii) *Cheong* to help provide a more substantial base for the consideration of Korean-ness and the Korean National character from a Korean perspective. These concepts, drawn

from Korean literature written by Koreans and translated into English, illustrated several historical, philosophical and psychological tenets that are claimed to be uniquely Korean. The Korean writers argue that without an understanding of these ideas Westerners cannot appreciate the Korean personality. I also introduced material from expatriate Korean and Japanese researchers reflecting a counter view. In my discussion of Confucianism, as representative of an *image* of tradition, from a Western psychological viewpoint I broached the possibility of Confucianism performing separate roles as a transitional object; and a holding environment.

I suggested Australian-ness and Korean-ness appear to represent projections of the human imagination, willed within the bounds of individual experience and perception. I proposed Australian and Korean business people carry idealised mental models of their own and each other's National character (labelled Australian-ness and Korean-ness). I suggested these models depict both structural images and feelings and beliefs. I implied these images are dynamic, changing with life experience. I suggested these changes arouse uncertainty and anxiety and that attachment to National character may provide a psychological and emotional holding environment which helps facilitate the interpretation of the images and feelings. I suggested membership may also relieve stress. I noted National character may not be a tangible entity and suggested, notwithstanding, that the images and feelings associated with National character form the basis of Australian and Korean business people's perceptions and influence their behaviour. Finally, I proposed the detailed exploration of the dynamics of business encounters may provide insights into Australian and Korean business behaviour and contribute interpretations that may enhance our comprehension of cross-cultural communication.

Consequently, the main objectives of the research can be defined as being to ascertain how Australian-ness and Korean-ness is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals; and how Australian-ness and Korean-ness influences the emerging relationship. Within this frame, I propose to consider the hypothesis that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind acts as a psychological and

emotional holding environment and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences. This will be explained more fully in Chapter 2.

The next Chapter will define a theoretical perspective for the research, describe the method for collecting and analysing the data and provide a narrative and interpretation of the research process.

## CHAPTER 2                      METHOD

### 2.0 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I established the conceptual framework for this research. I examined the Australian and Korean identity as a prelude to the exploration of the concept of National Character-in-the-mind. I proposed that the identification and exploration of the dynamics of Australian-Korean business encounters may provide insights into Australian-Korean business behaviour and contribute interpretations that may enhance our comprehension of cross-cultural communication. I defined the main objectives of the research as being to ascertain how Australian-ness and Korean-ness is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals; and how Australian-ness and Korean-ness influences the emerging relationship. Within this frame, I propose to consider the hypothesis that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind acts as a psychological and emotional holding environment and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences.

In this Chapter, I will define a theoretical perspective for the research, defining the links between descriptive cross-cultural research, phenomenology, heuristic inquiry and the interpretive paradigm and arguing that combined elements of these fields provide a sound means of interpreting individual experience in the context of the research design. The Chapter will also describe the method for collecting and analysing the data and provide a narrative and interpretation of the research process.

## 2.1 Theoretical Perspective

This research embraces several theoretical concepts derived from cultural and cross-cultural psychology,<sup>131</sup> phenomenology,<sup>132</sup> heuristics<sup>133</sup> and the interpretive paradigm.<sup>134</sup> Essentially, it is grounded in the field of cross-cultural psychology - which at an individual level is related to general psychology in studies of development, social behaviour, personality, cognition, and perception. Cross-cultural psychology uses this data to provide a context for the systematic study of behaviour and experience as it occurs in different cultures, is influenced by culture, or results in changes in existing cultures.<sup>135</sup> A broad conceptual framework of relationships among classes of variables employed in the field is described in Table 2.1. This is a dynamic framework reflecting group and individual levels of analysis.

The framework is divided into two halves. The left side contains mainly group constructs used to describe, analyse and understand elements of the general population. In cross-cultural psychology this background material forms the basis for establishing an environmental context for examining individual human behaviour and characteristics like abilities, attitudes, motives and traits, reflected in the right side. The *process variables* represent the interaction between the population and individual components.

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<sup>131</sup> Triandis (1980), Segall (et al) (1990), Berry (et al) (1992)

<sup>132</sup> Schutz (1977), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Whitehead (1958), Giorgi (1971) and Zaner (1970); and links to psychotherapy (Moustakas, 1988) quoted in Patton (1990)

<sup>133</sup> Moustakas (1961, 1972, 1975), Craig (1978), Hawka (1985) and links to Humanist Psychology: Maslow (1956,1966); Rogers, (1961,1969 & 1977) and Polanyi (1962) quoted in Patton (1990).

<sup>134</sup> Chapters by Denzin, Jones, Smircich, Bougon, Turner and Cooper in Morgan (1983), Patton (1990) (1993), Mitroff & Linstone (1993)

<sup>135</sup> Triandis (1980) p1, quoted in Berry (et al) (1992) p1

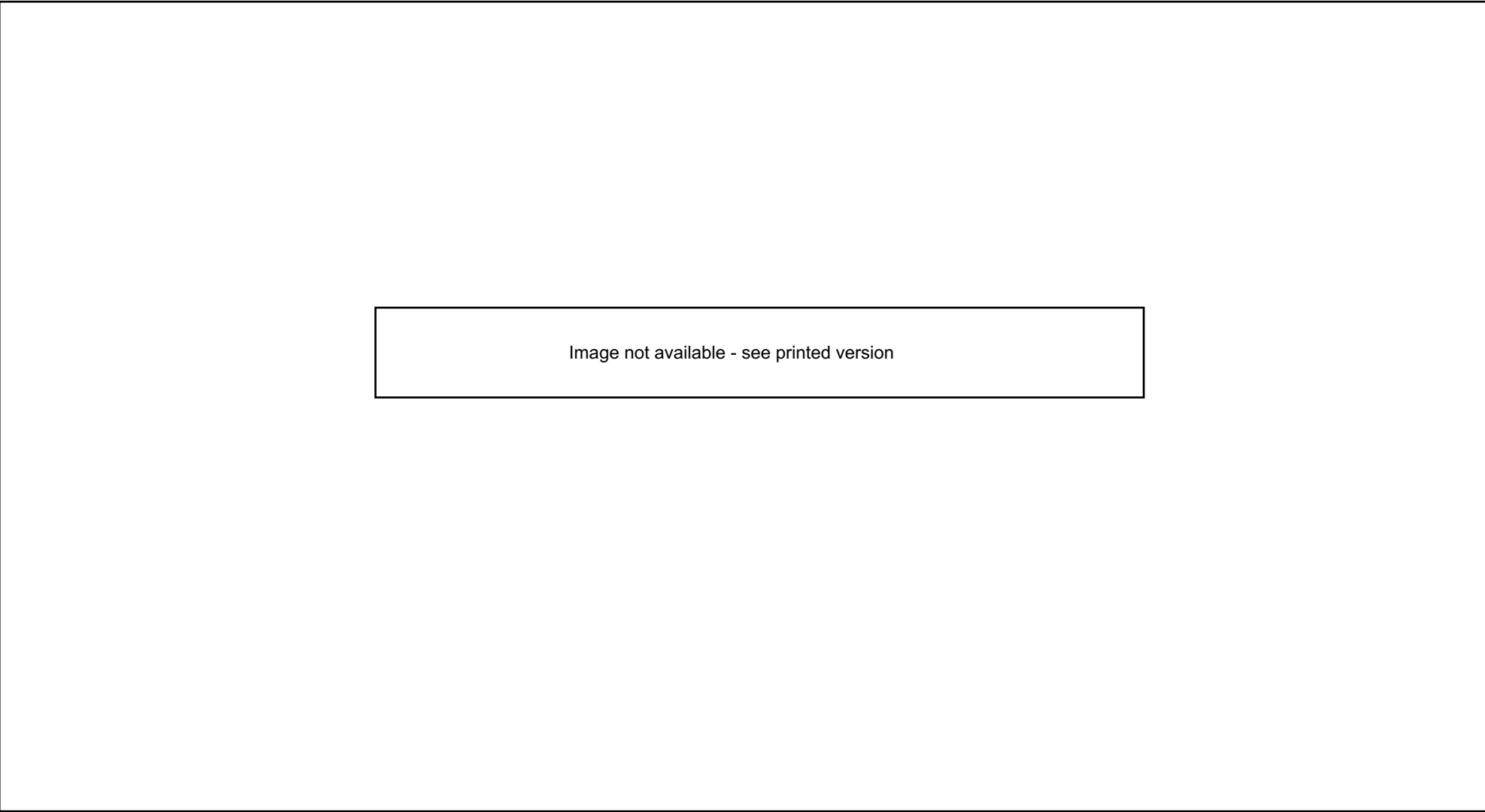


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***Table 2.1 - A broad conceptual framework of relationships among classes of variables employed in the field of cross-cultural psychology. (Berry [et al] p 12)***

In this two dimensional representation, following the directional arrows from left to right, one cannot appreciate the implicit interactive component within the framework whereby the individual interacts with various elements of the environment at various degrees of intensity. Furthermore, the feedback arrows of *individual* influence on the variables<sup>136</sup> are not readily apparent apart from the link to the ecological and socio-political contexts.

Cross-cultural psychology spans both sides of the framework drawing upon the wealth of data from population-level phenomena to better interpret and gain insight into observations of individual behaviour. The arrow between the ecological context and the socio-political context defines a set of relationships essential to a population's viability. At the core is *economic activity*: how a given population interconnects with the animal and physical resources of its habitat which, in turn, effect biological, cultural and psychological outcomes. Different cultures engage different economic activity and are therefore subject to contrasting outcomes. Acculturation, experienced through colonialism, globalisation, invasion and migration is integral to the process.<sup>137</sup>

### **2.1.1 Cross-Cultural Psychology**

As a discipline, cross-cultural psychology reflects the debate associated with psychology as science depicted by the theory driven experimental paradigm - controlled experiments, statistical analysis and replicability - and a broader, qualitative approach. The interpretive paradigm discussed in Section 2.1.4 is representative of the qualitative approach. Lee suggests that researchers engaging the interpretive paradigm “must collect facts and data describing not only the purely objective, but also the subjective meaning this behaviour has for the human subjects themselves.”<sup>138</sup> Lee goes on to suggest the two methods appear to be in conflict.<sup>139</sup> The literature reflects a continuing

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<sup>136</sup> A full discussion of the framework is contained in Berry (et al) (1992) pp.10-14

<sup>137</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p13

<sup>138</sup> Lee (1991) p 347

<sup>139</sup> Lee (1991) p350

debate over the merits of quantitative versus qualitative research methods.<sup>140</sup> Berry (et al), whilst favouring the former, concede cross-cultural research would stop if the ideal were rigorously applied.<sup>141</sup> The reality is that much “cross-cultural research is descriptive in method rather than experimental...it takes conditions as they exist and looks for relationships.”<sup>142</sup>

Descriptive cross-cultural research is founded in “...the philosophical traditions of phenomenology (*how people describe and experience things through their senses*)...with behaviour...usually described on the basis of observations in natural settings...the meaning of behaviour being relative to the cultural context.”<sup>143</sup>

### **2.1.2 Phenomenology**

Phenomenological inquiry considers the gamut of human experience: emotions, relationships, organisations and culture; and asks “*What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?*”<sup>144</sup> It describes, explains and interprets experience “...by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken individual conscious awareness” and notes the reciprocity of interpretation in the individual’s understanding of experience, and experience in the interpretation.<sup>145</sup> This concept of *interpretation* is particularly relevant to this research and will be fully discussed in Section 2.1.4.

The primary criticism of the phenomenological approach is its apparent subjectivity and lack of “scientific” rigour. As previously alluded, phenomenology is a

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<sup>140</sup> For a concise summary refer - Jeffrey Johnson (1990), pp11-12, summarises the quantitative/qualitative debate based on two articles appearing in a 1986 issue of the American Behavioural Scientist. One is titled “Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Design and Why It Doesn’t Work” (Borman, LeCompt, and Geotz, 1986); the other is “What Quantitative Research Is and Why It Doesn’t Work” (Krenz and Sax, 1986). More extensive discussion is contained in Cook & Reihardt (1979); Miles (1979); Van Maanen (1983); Glassner & Moreno (1989); Neuman (1991).

<sup>141</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p219

<sup>142</sup> Guthrie & Lonner quoted in Lonner & Berry (1986) p239

<sup>143</sup> Berry et al (1992) p235 with insertion from Patton (1990) p69

<sup>144</sup> Patton (1990) p69

<sup>145</sup> Patton (1990) p69



descriptive method - it is “empirical” rather than “scientific”.<sup>146</sup> What concerns phenomenologists is that intellectualised, abstract constructions of social events proffered by contemporary organisation theorists “...contain deductively derived truth claims about human action but ignore the understandings and meaning structures that are brought to the interaction by the actors themselves.”<sup>147</sup> Fundamentally, the focus of this research is “attention to and interpretation of emotional experience.”<sup>148</sup> I see my role as researcher as using my “alertness to the emotional experience...as the medium for seeking to understand, formulate and interpret the *relatedness* of the individual to the group or the institution. It is understanding that relatedness...which liberates the energy to discover what working and being in the group or institution can become.”<sup>149</sup> This data is not readily accessible through a questionnaire and statistically quantifiable. Perfect clarity, ultimate truth, right and wrong, are not central to phenomenology or this research. When dealing with other people’s experience of their world, the sheer diversity (refer Section 1.2), inconsistency and lack of clarity of the subject matter, pre-empts the certainty of the scientific method. For the researcher, (and ourselves in everyday life) other people’s experience is inferred indirectly. Psychiatrist R.D. Laing expresses the point clearly:

“...how can one ever study the experience *of the other*? For the experience *of the other* is not evident to me, as it is not and never can be an experience of mine.

I cannot avoid trying to understand your experience, because although I do not experience your experience, which is invisible to me (and non-tasteable, non-touchable, non-smellable, and inaudible), yet I experience you *as experiencing*.

I do not experience your experience. But I experience you as experiencing.

I experience myself as experienced by you. And I experience you as experiencing yourself as experienced by me. And so on.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Farganis (1993) p263

<sup>147</sup> Farganis (1993) p263

<sup>148</sup> Armstrong (1997) p3

<sup>149</sup> Armstrong (1997) p3

<sup>150</sup> Quoted in Mennell (1976) p47, Laing’s italics.

In essence, phenomenology challenges the very foundations of contemporary organisation theory that advocates tangibility and certainty in human discourse.<sup>151</sup> Phenomenology, therefore, rejects superficial, over simplified, over-concretised views of a very complex social world. It sees social reality as being based on tacit assumptions that guide behaviour; that make discourse and action possible; and that are shared by participants in every day life. These issues are the subject of this research and why I have chosen the method.

In terms of descriptive cross-cultural research the phenomenological *method* adopts a two fold approach. It enables access to individual experience and interpretation through say, interviews with informants, without me (as researcher) sharing the informant's experience; **and/or** it can embrace participant observation whereby I experience the research phenomenon as a means of *knowing* the participant's experience. The essential assumption is that an *essence of experience* or *core meaning* can be identified, interpreted and defined. Whether this is actually achievable remains moot. Nevertheless as an aspiration, it provides an ultimate goal for this research.

Accessing the informant's experience and interpretation through an interview AND engaging in detailed observation of every nuance of the event possible - is most apt for this research because it provides a frame for accessing and understanding each individual's interpretations and their directly lived experience. It enables the interpretation of cultural diversity and individual differences in perceptions of cross-cultural phenomena as reported and experienced, enabling *real-time* recognition and appreciation of behaviour. This approach provides a simultaneous concrete and fluid representation and experience of culture, values and people highlighting the phenomena which influence the outcomes of our mutual interaction.

### **2.1.3 Heuristic Inquiry**

In terms of my experience in this research, embracing several theoretical concepts facilitates heuristic inquiry which seeks to answer the question “*What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also*

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<sup>151</sup> Berger & Luckmann (1966), Silverman (1970), Burrell & Morgan (1979)

*experience this phenomenon.*”<sup>152</sup> It acknowledges the positive and the negative elements of experience, enabling insight into the images of confusion about self identity; anxiety about the unknown; and uncertainty about one’s place in institutions or organisations. In doing so it helps legitimate the observed phenomena associated with the experience of dealing with Australian-ness and Korean-ness in a business context vis a vis Australian researcher/ Australian business person/ Korean business-person; and the uncertainty about how to communicate with people on “first encounter” and understand and make sense of informant’s portrayed images of *National character* in-their-mind, and my own.

#### **2.1.4 The Interpretive Paradigm**

In a broad research context, the interpretive paradigm includes ethnographic, interactive, and qualitative research methods.<sup>153</sup> The paradigm is particularly relevant to this research as I am seeking explanations for social or cultural events based on the informant’s experiences and perspectives focusing on their webs of meaning and understanding. I am searching for insight into, and understanding of how things might fit together and interact. What is important is people’s perceptions of events and the way these relate to their behaviour. The interpretive approach sees men and women as goal oriented, sensitive, meaning-attributing and meaning-responding beings. The locus of people is seen in the way they relate to their world and the mechanisms they use to make that world meaningful and understandable to them. The approach also recognises the inherent irrationality of individual and organisational behaviour. Whilst an organisation may be structured rationally, “...irrational pressures contribute significantly to its existence and functioning.”<sup>154</sup> For example, MultiCorp+, the organisation depicted in the **Case Study - Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** in Chapter 3, was a highly efficient and effective Australian business in an East Asian environment. However, the interpersonal understanding between Korean and Australian staff aroused many counter productive behaviours. This points to the need for an appreciation of the concomitant social context. “Social systems themselves can function as a collective

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<sup>152</sup> Patton (1990) p71

<sup>153</sup> Denzin, N. K., in Morgan (1983) pp.129-145

<sup>154</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p113. See also the endnote to Chapter 9 of Shapiro & Carr for reference to several studies in this area.

defence against anxiety.”<sup>155</sup> This is also reflected in the above mentioned Case Study. Here, it will be argued that the female Korean staff maintained their view of MultiCorp+ as a Korean organisation that should uphold Korean rules, as a defence against the anxiety associated with the Australian management’s activities and the Koreans’ inability to have their way.

In this research, I am interested in how “interacting individuals employ a variety of practices to create and sustain their particular definitions of the world.”<sup>156</sup> I am interested in what they may unwittingly take for granted in that enactment, and the extent of the apparent behavioural collusion. I am interested in the phenomena of *reality and facts* as “...social creations, negotiated through the interaction of various competing themes and definitions of reality.”<sup>157</sup>

The interpretive researcher adopts a position that enables full engagement with informants to help clarify and define the meaning of intentions and motives in action. He seeks to empathise, and achieve the degree of insight Weber termed *verstehen*.<sup>158</sup> Such insight seeks to explain human action in the context of the actor’s thinking and social environment. In this regard, fixed or standardised response categories may be unhelpful.<sup>159</sup> Whilst these may enable coverage of a large sample and facilitate statistical analysis of the data, their rigidity confines the depth and range of possible responses. For example, during the course of discussion several informants may describe similar patterns of meaning or shared reality that may help us understand their experience. Such data may not have been contemplated during the design of a research instrument and therefore would remain hidden from us.

Interpretive research strategies are more suited to this research project because they favour smaller samples and in-depth description and analysis of context specific, as distinct from content specific, data. Such strategies can contribute to knowledge if

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<sup>155</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p113. Jacques (1955)

<sup>156</sup> Burrell & Morgan (1979) p271

<sup>157</sup> Burrell & Morgan (1979) p271. This reference provides several illustrative examples of how social reality is socially negotiated and sustained in otherwise rule-bound environments.

<sup>158</sup> Burrell & Morgan (1979) p253

<sup>159</sup> Patton (1990) p165

generic sense-making processes or patterns can be identified; primarily illustrated by exemplars or archetypes, rather than systematised data.<sup>160</sup>

As the research process developed, my engagement with the concepts of Australian-ness and Korean-ness involved a continuing state of transition moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar; from knowing to unknowing and back again within what seemed to be common territory. I wondered whether Australian and Korean business people were confronted with similar dilemmas during their encounters; feeling they understood their own national backgrounds and roots; anticipating or assuming understanding of the other's culture, values and business dargs only to be surprised by anomalous data; and, in their surprise, possibly misinterpreting the signs and behaving inappropriately. I felt the exploration of the transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar, and the associated themes, would be crucial to an appreciation of Australian-ness and Korean-ness and began searching for an appropriate mechanism for the exploration.

#### **2.1.4.1 The Interpretive Stance**

A useful tool for examining this transition process, exploring the notion of being “lost in familiar places” and developing a shared, collaborative or negotiated interpretation of human experience as a research method is provided by Shapiro and Carr.<sup>161</sup> Here, *interpretation* is a concept used to describe “ideas that provide connections, meanings or a way of comprehending previously unrelated experiential data.”<sup>162</sup> Shapiro and Carr suggest each individual has “...an *interpretive stance* - a way of making sense of our reality.”<sup>163</sup> They argue this reality is formed without referral to, or evaluation of, others' interpretations or the real or possible complementary nature of the others' interpretations. They reason familiarity with others in dyads and groups enables individuals to recognise different interpretations of similar events (including

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<sup>160</sup> Morgan (1983) p398

<sup>161</sup> Shapiro and Carr (1991)

<sup>162</sup> Shapiro and Carr (1991) p5

<sup>163</sup> Shapiro and Carr (1991) p5

emotional responses) and that “joint interpretation of shared experience, and context, involves negotiation.”<sup>164 165</sup>

To use the process of this research as an example: *An individual interpretation* of my experience in relation to *the institutional context* is established through my knowledge of myself (ability, skills, feelings and behaviours); my life experience; my role as graduate research student; and my task of contributing to a library of knowledge. As an Australian researcher, I have concerns about the Australian-Korean trade relationship. I begin consideration of a relationship between Australian and Korean business people. I wonder about perceived National character (identity); and cross-cultural and interpersonal antecedents and begin to think about unconscious processes which may influence the relationships. I seek data to clarify my questions. I conduct interviews with Australian and Korean business people in Seoul. This leads to the second element of the interpretive process, the negotiated component. It can be divided into two parts. The first, occurs during the course of the interview. For example, I took great pains to ensure that I had clearly understood each informant’s perspective and commentary during and by the end of each interview. In this regard, as far as possible, I paraphrased comments and reflected feelings back to the informants to verify what I was hearing (and feeling). During that process we negotiated a shared understanding of the informant’s views at the time. I subsequently made further personal (individual) interpretations following the interviews with other informants; conversations with business people in Seoul and Australia; reading; debates and speculative thoughts during the analysis process on return to Australia. Owing to the complexity of the data, much of this interpretation occurred well after the interview event.

To proceed toward a final, shared interpretation of this latter data, the second part of the negotiated component, would require more contact with the informants, assuming they felt sufficiently encouraged to explore their roles and were willing to develop negotiated interpretations of my research analysis. It remains a moot point whether the Korean informants would wish to engage in open dialogue about my analysis without time to establish a sufficiently trusting relationship. Unfortunately,

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<sup>164</sup> Shapiro and Carr (1991) p5

<sup>165</sup> Chapters by Denzin, Jones, Smircich, Bougon, Turner and Cooper in Morgan (1983) expand this notion.

owing to personal commitments and financial constraints, I am presently unable to engage this component of Shapiro and Carr's method in this research, although it may be the subject of future research activity.

Nevertheless, Shapiro and Carr's approach provides some inspiration for the research method, particularly in the realm of self reflection. Following their lead, in this research I shall use the term *interpretation* rather than *understanding*. Understanding implies precision and certainty. Neither can be assured. The term *interpretation* when applied to experiential data seems more relevant and appropriate as a means of linking previously unrelated material; and indicating possible meanings or ways of comprehending.<sup>166</sup> I wish to convey the notion of a progressive development of interpretation both as a concept and as an integral part of a holistic research process. Shapiro and Carr extrapolate the interpretive experience of individual and group behaviour and roles to broader life experience in larger groups and organisations. Concepts of *projective identification*<sup>167</sup> and the *holding environment*<sup>168</sup> (the management of a group's emotional life providing support, containing aggression and sustaining individual development) are integral to their approach. These concepts will be reflected in this research.

#### 2.1.4.1a Projective Identification

My interpretation of **projective identification** shall follow that expressed by Ogden<sup>169</sup>, Knapp,<sup>170</sup> and Czander.<sup>171</sup> These writers, whilst acknowledging some controversy over the interpretation of the process; issues of congruence between projector and recipient; and how congruent feelings are induced; consider projective identification to be interpersonal in nature.

Knapp's definition describes projective identification as:

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<sup>166</sup> Shapiro and Carr (1991) p5

<sup>167</sup> Ogden (1982), Knapp (1989)

<sup>168</sup> Winnicott (1960)

<sup>169</sup> Ogden (1982)

<sup>170</sup> Knapp (1989)

<sup>171</sup> Czander (1993)

“...an interactive process where the projector (and projectee) both consciously attempt to delegate or induce a particular role, or set of feelings in another for the purpose of reducing his own anxiety.”<sup>172</sup>

Ogden calls it a:

“group of fantasies and accompanying object relations having to do with ridding the self of unwanted objects (aspects of the self) and then disposing of these unwanted aspects of the self by projecting them onto another person...we put parts of ourselves into the other, and we feel close to (at one with) the object, and we then get the object to behave in accordance with our projections.”<sup>173</sup>

Ogden, Knapp and Czander, all see projective identification as a means of communication because the projector is seen as having the capacity to assess the recipient’s nature and readiness to receive; and to influence the recipient’s feelings.<sup>174</sup>

#### **2.1.4.1b The Holding Environment**

The concept of the **holding environment** stems from Donald Winnicott’s<sup>175</sup> study of the bond between mother and child and the establishment of an environment conducive to basic human development. This setting has two primary features:

- empathic interpretation: affirming the child’s positive sense of self; knowing self; being able to interact meaningfully with others; and being known to them; and
- tolerance and containment of aggression and sexuality: allowing a child to recognise that parentally sourced impulses and actions can be mobilised without being destructive to the mother-child relationship.<sup>176</sup>

Eventually, the interpersonal boundaries between the child, mother and others, become recognised, defined, and clarified by the child and can be explored without fear.

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<sup>172</sup> Quoted in Czander (1993) p54

<sup>173</sup> Quoted in Czander (1993) p55

<sup>174</sup> Czander (1993) p55

<sup>175</sup> Winnicott (1960)

<sup>176</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) pp.35-6



In this context, parents, through their communication and tolerance, act as interpreters of feelings and facilitators of the child's healthy interaction with the world. In the absence or decay of this holding environment the child experiences the world as unsafe and may manifest detachment or 'denial of dependency'. This may result in "a shared family regression, which damages...either, or both, facets of the holding environment."<sup>177</sup> Once the child realises that the mother is moved but not damaged by its impulses, it begins to recognise the existence of interpersonal boundaries. The child becomes responsible for its own feelings - becomes its own container for aggression and sexuality. This process progresses from personal to group boundaries and eventually, negotiation with others in the wider community.

In an organisational or institutional context, the holding environment is a negotiated collaboration between members. It contains impulses; acknowledges difference; and affirms individual experience whilst integrating with other's experiences. It allows for the creation of shared assumptions, attributes and values and ultimately a common or joint interpretation of what the organisation, society or National character (Australian-ness & Korean-ness) represents. This includes the reasons for the existence of the particular organisation or institution (it's task); the roles defined within it; and the boundaries within which it operates: be they domestic or global.

The roles are generally a set of specifically designed and defined functions within confined boundaries that contribute to the ultimate maintenance of the organisation and the realisation of designated outcomes. They might be defined in terms of the organisation's hierarchy like Chief Executive Officer, manager, supervisor, subordinate; or in terms of functional responsibilities like Director Human Resources, Senior Training Officer and Training Officer. Whilst these roles influence individual relationships, they do not originate with the individual. They are derived from the existence of the organisation and its task. There is also the facility for *irrational roles* within the organisation, such as the "good CEO" or the "bad supervisor", that may serve unconscious needs. These roles are not always counter productive. For example, irrational as the creation of the "good CEO" may seem, the role may conceivably be critical to the holding environment that is necessary say, during times of significant

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<sup>177</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p 36

downsizing when staff need reassurance that their personal or group irrationalities can be addressed and are not simply culpable. On a broader institutional scale, a similar scenario could be written around the role of the “good Prime Minister” as personified by Sir Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister during the Second World War. During this time, Churchill portrayed a sense of relative calm and strength in a climate of tremendous fear and destruction. His demeanour, behaviour and actions provided an idealising experience that enabled the British people to be more accepting of their terror and irrational behaviour. He gave them a sense of hope when for many there was very little.

From this, we can identify the essential elements of the holding environment as task, boundaries, and role. As Shapiro and Carr indicate:

“Within these structures, containment of impulses and interpretation take place through acknowledging individuality (curiosity), bearing painful affect (containment), and putting in perspective (empathic interpretation in context). The containment and interpreting that occurs within the holding environment provides individuals with the opportunity to become aware of their projections and internalise them...This enables them...to grow and develop.”<sup>178</sup>

#### **2.1.4.2 Researcher as a Participant-Observer**

In adopting the interpretive paradigm, I am a participant-observer of my affective experience and the informant’s experience reflected during the interview. In using and interpreting my feelings in various roles, I am attempting to reflect a correlation between an institutional process *and* an external view. I cannot separate myself from the key roles I play in my life. Instead, I utilise my experience drawn from these roles, in search of insights into my new experience. By considering data wearing my various hats, I may perhaps see different perspectives. The interpretive paradigm demands the researcher be open to the gamut of human experience: emotions, relationships, organisations and culture. This may be achieved “...by attending to

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<sup>178</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p 39

perceptions and meanings that awaken individual conscious awareness”<sup>179</sup> and by recognising and acknowledging uncertainty and the irrational side of human behaviour.

Quantitative research generally requires prior conceptualisations of what might be. The focus is primarily on the careful construction of instruments like the survey questionnaire or a battery of tests. Quantitative research most often relies upon standardised administration and prescribed procedures. There is usually little, if any, interpersonal exchange. Instruments and questionnaires generally do not indicate the participant’s affective state nor how this might effect their response. However, there are questionnaire instruments, like the MMPI,<sup>180</sup> that are designed to look at affective states and include scales for how these effect individual responses. Apart from instruments like these, the possibility of monitoring such variables is unavailable to the quantitative researcher, unless the evaluation forms part of a follow-up procedure. This is not to imply that quantitative research is inherently wrong. Quite the contrary, it emphasises there are times when a qualitative research method, like the interpretivist position, is eminently more appropriate as shall be seen in the following section.

In this research, as a participant-observer, I am the instrument. Validity depends on my competence, skill and rigour. I may be subject to fatigue and possess variable knowledge in certain facets of the research strategy, but “...this loss of rigor is more than offset by the flexibility, insight and ability to build tacit knowledge that is the peculiar province of the human instrument.”<sup>181</sup> The participant-observer’s report, if sufficiently factual and thorough, permits the reader to ‘see’ the situation being reported. In a sense, the participant-observer is the reader’s eyes and ears, providing them with an enhanced picture of the setting and events so they can make their own interpretations and judgements about what occurred.

Lofland<sup>182</sup> suggests a qualitative researcher, in this case the participant-observer, must consider four people oriented mandates:

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<sup>179</sup> Patton (1990) p69

<sup>180</sup> MMPI or Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - Hathaway & McKinley (1951)

<sup>181</sup> Guba and Lincoln (1981) quoted in Patton (1990) p14

<sup>182</sup> Lofland quoted in Patton (1990) p32

- be close enough to the informant and the setting to personally understand what is going on
- aim at what actually takes place and what people actually say - perceived facts
- include lots of pure description of people activities, interactions, and settings
- include direct quotations from people - what they say, and write.

In this thesis, I have endeavoured to address each of these points. My concern to protect the anonymity of my informants has limited my descriptions of people and settings, although the Case Studies in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 are true to type. My direct experience documented in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma** would have gone unrecorded had I have been in a quantitative mode and not so intimately involved in the activity. My feelings, impressions, reflection and introspection were vital data in my attempt to come to terms with the situation in which the informant and I found ourselves engaged. These examples reflect the value of the participant-observer role and its direct relevance to this research.

#### 2.1.4.3 **The Interpretive Paradigm and this Research**

Apart from the previously mentioned, dynamic qualities of the interpretive stance I believe the interpretive paradigm is a functional means of observing, creating, developing, analysing and processing data for this research project. The interpretive paradigm helps to make sense of reality by recognising and acknowledging uncertainty and the irrational side of human behaviour within the context of the organisation and, at a micro level, within the research environment. It provides the opportunity to speculate and move from hypothesis to hypothesis in search of links between individual informant's experience and behaviour, within contexts. Here it is important to maintain a focus on the context within which these experiences are contained by the role and tasks informants perform. Context is the hub of the Case Study - "**The Name Card Dilemma**" - to be discussed at the end of Chapter 4. In it, my immediate appreciation of the "Korean Way" was rapidly embellished and enriched during my interview with the Korean informant, however, my interpretation of what really happened only made sense over time.

In inscribing Australian and Korean culture and identity, I am conscious of creating a “reading”,<sup>183</sup> an interpretation of the respective culture and identity, and of myself. In the context of this paper - an interpretation of interpretations of interpretations. Such an interpretive approach assumes there are various ways of viewing or defining the data. It recognises the complexity of the issues and acknowledges some may be ill-defined and unbounded. Uncertainty is a fundamental element of this approach and *hope* the guarantor - “...that as the result of viewing explicitly the range of different views, the decision-maker (me, in this research) will thereby achieve a deeper understanding...”<sup>184</sup> and be able to describe his interpretation succinctly for others to comprehend and appreciate. The expectation being the others’ insight will provide them an invaluable edge when working on future issues.

Interpretation of the informant’s experience affirms their singular character. Positioning this experience in the context of their work role might provide a link to an organisation, just as putting the experience in the context of their social role might provide a link to the society. Both contexts provide a holding environment. This concept was discussed in Section 2.1.4.1b.

The interpretation of my experience as an *active participant* in the problem definition, exploration and resolution process affirms individual uniqueness. Positioning the experience in the context of my role provides a link to a holding environment of a field of research bounding both the knowledge and the interpretation. The interpretive paradigm is not isolationist by nature. It encourages the dynamic integration of various fields of research as might be represented by a mandala. It embraces internal experience as a primary source of data forged through a multiplicity of interpersonal contacts and fermenting projections. As an individual researcher in a foreign country, I am conscious my interpretation of what I hear and see happening around me is drawn from my life experience, my knowledge of myself and my perceived capabilities and skills. I am also aware of the need to be cautious about

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<sup>183</sup> Geertz (1973)

<sup>184</sup> Mitroff & Linstone (1993) p65

idiosyncratic perspectives and to be vigilant in reporting verifiable interpretations. To report what makes sense.

Within this interpretive paradigm, the examples I provide, the patterns of meaning (within the data) I ascribe and describe will reflect how *I* see it. Other researchers working from different disciplines or experience may well have other views.<sup>185</sup> As indicated in Section 2.1.4.2, the validity of my interpretation for the reader, depends on my competence, skill and rigour; and the detail and clarity with which I present, describe and analyse the data; so that the reader understands how I arrived at my interpretation, and can make their own interpretation and judgements about what occurred. How I see it may be defined by the contexts of the role(s) in which I am engaged at the time of making my interpretation (or experiencing a surprise - refer section 2.1.4.4). So, for the researcher, the interpretation of an event or behaviour might be made in his role as interviewer during the course of a face to face interview with an informant; or in his role as graduate student during discussion of some element of the research process at a University seminar. It might also be discovered during an internal role conflict where the researcher experiences a fragmentation of “I” between his researcher’s role and it’s boundary with his personal identity struggling for survival during a period of great stress as reflected in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma** at the end of Chapter 4. As Shapiro and Carr indicate “the use of different roles as contexts for interpretation allows different aspects of the individual’s experience to be creatively connected.”<sup>186</sup> As a self reflective model this approach embraces speculation, imagination and heuristics allowing “...the possibility of proceeding from one hypothesis to another hypothesis rather than from uncertainty to certainty... reflect[ing] the ambiguities and uncertainties of life.”<sup>187</sup>

An example of the progressive development of my “individual” interpretations is reflected in the Case Study “**The Name Card Dilemma**”. Briefly, this Case identifies my failure to conform to the Korean convention of presenting a business or name card on first encounter. This act and ensuing events seem unanticipated by the

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<sup>185</sup> Patton (1990) p85

<sup>186</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p79

<sup>187</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p78

players in the Case creating a climate for projection and a search for, the need for, a mutual holding environment(s) to enable the parties to negotiate an acceptable outcome. The ensuing “surprise”, my assessment of the likely determinants of the behaviour, my coping strategies and the means generated to recover the situation were integral to progressive sense making and adaptation.

#### 2.1.4.4 Surprise and Sense-Making

In Section 1.3.1 and following sections, I introduced the concept of mental models to describe the simple images we construct and store in our brains to represent the world as we see it. Recapping briefly, these models seem to be based on imprecise, flexible categories of information defined in terms of similarity and irregularity. They help to explain our perceptions of the world, and how we act and behave in it. In new situations, we use this stored knowledge in processes of analogous reasoning to create new models. The coping process can be seen as the interaction of feedback between models. Stacey<sup>188</sup> suggests that as we become “expert” or familiar with the content of particular fields of endeavour, we push our mental models below the level of awareness into the unconscious mind. In this way, without having to think, an individual may call upon stored models containing appropriate behaviours and reactions that seem to fit analogous current events.

Occasionally, we are surprised by information or data that is inconsistent with the expectations of our unconscious mental models. I use the concept of **surprise** as precipitating meaning through the **sense-making** process.<sup>189</sup> It represents the difference between one’s expectations and what actually occurs in a given situation; and, as noted by Louis, it “encompasses one’s affective reactions to any difference(s)”<sup>190</sup> to previous knowledge. It reflects revelation or insight at any time during the total research event. The term *sense-making* refers to a thinking process that produces retrospective

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<sup>188</sup> Stacey (1993) p176

<sup>189</sup> Louis, M. R., (1980a) pp.336-7, (1985) pp.80-1 Sense making is an adaptive mechanism enabling real-time revision of the means people use to interpret and describe their experience through the integration of the new, the different and the unanticipated.

<sup>190</sup> Louis (1980, b) p237

interpretations of why actual outcomes and discrepancies occur, and why predicted outcomes and discrepancies do not.<sup>191</sup>

In attributing meaning to surprise, we access various sources of experience and knowledge. We rely on our past experiences; our personal characteristics; our inclinations and tendencies to behave in particular ways; and the way we attribute causality to self and others. Our cultural assumptions or interpretive schemes are also relevant. In our analysis we may also consider other's opinions and interpretations.

In rapidly changing environments or in unfamiliar, new situations we may find the application of these stored mental models quite inappropriate. We may overlook or take for granted assumptions or over-simplifications that are vital in coming to terms with the new environment, or to the resolution of the problem. As Argyris<sup>192</sup> indicates, skilled incompetence is the likely outcome. Double-loop learning, or adjusting our actions in the light of their consequences; and, also adjusting the unconscious mental models in the light of this new experience as preparation for future events, is essential. This process reinforces the sense-making.<sup>193</sup>

Thus sense-making simultaneously sensitises individuals, aiding interpretation of immediate and subsequent events; enabling fine tuning of behavioural reactions and establishing the premises for future adaptation. Hence, for me in the research context, anticipations or expectations are not finite just before entering a new setting, but evolve and are revised over time as sense is made of surprises.

Sense-making is not confined to the immediacy of a specific research event. Data drawn from interview material, questionnaire results or an experiment may imply certain conclusions but these may be reassessed sometime later following surprise generated by a personal event; the experience of a dream; a *brain wave* during the course of meditation or a sudden inexplicable flash owing to the unconscious processing of material in the mind. This is clearly demonstrated in my commentary on the Case

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<sup>191</sup> Louis (1980, b) p240

<sup>192</sup> Argyris (1990)

<sup>193</sup> Weick (1969/79), Forrester (1958), Argyris (1990), Senge (1990) discuss various approaches to feedback systems and sense making.



Study “**Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**”. Reading a draft of the case, I was surprised by *the tone* of the writing I had used to describe events associated with particular players. The tone of the writing aroused emotions and feelings about these people I had not recognised until that reading. The more I focussed on the tone, the more I began to realise how my assessment of their behaviour had been influenced by my formerly undisclosed feelings and the projections of my own corporate experience. The surprise led me to reinterpret the old data; to create and develop new data; and to making clearer sense of the Case.

## 2.2 The Method for this Research

As a mechanism for focussing the research and interpreting my individual experience as researcher in the research, I propose to utilise elements of phenomenology, heuristics and the interpretive paradigm illustrated by components of the interpretive stance. For example: the first part of this interpretive process, the individual interpretation, is represented in the evolution of my impressions, perceptions, speculations, hypotheses and proposals in response to the task of investigative research addressing Australian-Korean business encounters. The second part, the negotiated component, is broached in terms of the interview events with Australian and Korean business people in Seoul. I develop further individual interpretations following the analysis of the data resulting from the interview events augmented by secondary data from additional reading, conversations and debate outside the research environment. I do not engage in a re-negotiation of this individual data with the informants in order to achieve the shared interpretation. Notwithstanding, as represented in the next Chapter - Findings and Discussion - the rigour associated with the development of the individual data records following the interview events produces a substantial amount of valuable data sufficient to support the paper’s hypotheses and form the basis for further research from cultural, philosophical and psychological standpoints.

Well executed, this research method: *descriptive cross-cultural research* embracing phenomenology, heuristic inquiry and the interpretive paradigm provides an effective means of describing, explaining and interpreting informant’s experience. The method enables access to each individual’s experience of an event or circumstance; provides the potential to identify, define and interpret core meaning; and accommodates

and supports my personal engagement as researcher in the research so as to better appreciate the essence and nuance of informant's sense-making; realise their logic, sense of order, structure and meaning. In doing so, I feel better positioned to report its intricacy and depth to others, that they may learn from my experience.

This research utilises this “combined” approach as the most appropriate mechanism for exploring individual experience of Australian-ness and Korean-ness within a Korean environment and within the business informant's immediate work space - where cross-cultural encounters actually occur.

## **2.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

This Section describes the method of the data collection. It explains the method and reasons for choosing the informants; issues associated with the means of data collection including how the Interview Guide was designed; how interviews were conducted and where; and how the data was recorded, coded, analysed; and why.

### ***2.3.1 Method and Reasons for Choosing Informants***

As part of my research preparation I compiled an address list (from various publications in university libraries) of Australian and Korean companies with subsidiaries in each others' countries or where some form of business affiliation (franchise, joint venture, network) had been established.

On 26 March 1996 I attended a seminar “Korea: The Road Ahead” presented by the Australian Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Mr Mack Williams, at the Hilton on Collins, in Melbourne. Representatives from a wide range of Australian enterprises - banks, Federal and State Government agencies and private companies with diverse interest in East Asian business affairs were present.

From casual conversation at this event, the seminars' registration database and my address list, I identified those Melbourne based business people having direct dealings with Korean business people and contacted more than twenty by telephone to clarify the depth of their dealings and to establish their willingness and availability to

participate in the research. As a separate action, I also approached managers and staff of three Korean chaebol franchise/licensees in Melbourne. I received 2 positive responses. The reasons for non-participation varied from a claim of total ignorance of Korean business practices (by an executive who had primary business responsibility for his company's East Asian activities) to a lack of authority to comment. The primary explanation was the potential for the inadvertent release of material (perceived as commercial-in-confidence) to client's competitors.

I found this attitude understandable yet somewhat parochial. It is consistent with the perceptions and attitude of many Australian business people toward Korea as outlined in the Preface to this paper. Indeed, when I later mentioned this situation to an Australian entrepreneur in Korea he was not surprised, commenting "They (Australians) perceive they have some unique relationship with Koreans...this is garbage!! This (relationship between Australians and Koreans) ought to be about access. They are too closed...don't network...have a very narrow view."<sup>194</sup>

Owing to my lack of local success I decided to evaluate prospects of going offshore. In April 1996, from my address list of Australian and Korean business people located in Seoul, Republic of Korea, I wrote personal letters (refer Appendix A) to twelve Chief Executives (supported by a reference from the Manager of the National Korean Studies Centre in Melbourne) canvassing their willingness and availability to be interviewed between 3rd and 14th June 1996. Within 3 weeks I had received 11 positive replies. On my arrival in Seoul, I subsequently arranged 7 additional interviews based on referrals from these executives. In all, I interviewed 12 Australians and 6 Koreans.

The informants were chosen to represent a wide cross-section of business endeavour including Education, Finance, Media, Mining, Publishing, Trade, Transport and entrepreneurial business activities. I also spoke with advisers, agents and entrepreneurs representing a wider portfolio of Australian and International business interests.

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<sup>194</sup> AR12 L9-18. The key to this reference is explained in Section 2.3.7

The Australian Informants: The eleven male informants held positions of Chief Executive or General Manager with their respective organisations, whilst the sole female held a Senior Executive position. All were of Anglo-Saxon/Celtic background. Five informants had grown up in a rural environment. Four had been living in Seoul for 1-2 years and the remainder for between two and four years. All but one had lived in Australia immediately before moving to Seoul. Ten informants were married and accompanied by their partners in Seoul. Eight of the twelve informants identified most strongly with their fathers owing primarily to their energy and strength of personality. The distribution of informants according to age and sex, is described in Table 2.2. Two-thirds of the informants were between 40 and 54 years old.

AGE GROUP	30-34	35-39	40-44	50-54	60-64
No. & SEX	1F, 1M	1M	5M	3M	1M

**Table 2.2** - Distribution of Australian Informants by Age and Sex

The Korean Informants: Three males held positions of Chief Executive or General Manager. The distribution of Korean informants by age and sex is shown in Table 2.3. Two males and one female (fitting the three youngest age categories) held Senior Executive positions. These three had lived in Australia - the two youngest informants for more than 6 years whilst they completed their secondary and tertiary education. All informants were Korean born, married and had grown up in a metropolitan environment.

The male informants identified most strongly with their “hard working” fathers; whilst the female informant identified with her mother for the same reason.

AGE GROUP	30-34	35-39	40-44	50-54	55-59
No. & SEX	1F	1M	2M	1M	1M

**Table 2.3** - Distribution of Korean Informants by Age and Sex

### **2.3.2**            *Methods of Data Collection - Considered Options*

When I first broached this research I considered the prospect of collecting data using both a questionnaire and interview. In the context of the interpretive approach outlined above, I felt uneasy about the distance a questionnaire might create between informant and researcher. My maturing appreciation of the cultural differences between Australians and Koreans: Korean wariness of Western motives; and language difficulties in terms of understanding the question and the context, implied caution. I canvassed the prospect of having questionnaire material translated from English into Korean and the responses in turn translated back. However, as there was no prospect of piloting the finished product before use and there would be significant time and cost involved in the overall process, I rejected the idea as too prohibitive. I was also conscious of the impersonal nature of the interface between researcher and subject when using a questionnaire. I thought if I was to really understand how people interpreted their National character, in a business encounter, then I should attempt to engage them in direct discussion of that experience. This raised an interesting irony. The establishment of the interpersonal relationship between myself as an Australian researcher and the Korean informant, as part of the research process, was likely to mirror the situation of establishing a relationship in the business context vis a vis the Australian business person and the Korean informant. This situation will be analysed in depth in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma** - at the end of Chapter 4. Whilst providing an element for conscious focus, I am still unsure whether the scenario that

unfolded in the Case Study was prefaced by self-fulfilling prophecy. This situation will become clearer to the reader after having read the Case.

A variety of research methods and techniques utilised by interpretive researchers are described at length in the literature<sup>195</sup> including the interview (eg. in-depth, semi-structured, special purpose formats: focussed, group, lengthy); participant observation (in their 'social' and 'working' environments); systematic observation techniques (including self observation - diaries, checklists); and unobtrusive measures (eg. archival material, confidential memos, press releases, speeches etcetera). Some of these were directly relevant whilst others, like projective techniques (eg. creativity groups, imaginary situations, role playing) were out of the question. I say out of the question because although I had every confidence in my ability to manage the techniques, I felt convinced the general reticence of Australians to participate in the research process in terms of individual interviews was such that to participate in what may well be perceived as “games” with a group of strangers would be too much to ask. Similarly, my reading had indicated the difficulty Westerners have in forming even a basic relationship with Koreans, let alone a trusting relationship. Again, I was conscious that Korean informants may be wary or reticent to engage in open dialogue with me anyway; without introducing techniques to which they may have had no previous exposure.

Initially, I favoured the idea of collecting data by exploring individual experience and perception of Australian-ness and Korean-ness through *group discussions* and individual *in-depth* interviews with Australian and Korean business people who have had direct dealings with each other. In-depth interviews enable researchers to more rigorously access individual, personal experience often opening new vistas through the freer interpersonal exchange and flow of the event. Using an interview guide rather than a fixed questionnaire, the researcher has freedom to explore each informant's experience or ideas, appraising emergent meaning and using it as the basis for further questions.

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<sup>195</sup> Patton (1982, 1987), Strauss (1987), Taylor and Bogdan (1984), Walker (1985)

However, time constraints in terms of my available time in Seoul matched with personal work commitments; availability of informants; recognition that Korean informants may be wary or reticent to engage in open dialogue without time to establish a trusting relationship; and lack of confidence in the practical application of the technique, were major limiting factors. I wanted to do the task properly. I wanted to be seen (by the informants) to be doing it properly, too. I was conscious of Devereux's statement "...I perceive that I perceive and that my subject, too perceives."<sup>196</sup>

### 2.3.2.1 The Semi-Structured Interview

An alternative was the *semi-structured* interview whereby I could provide a focus through a series of questions loosely centred around the main objectives and then, using emergent, non-directive questioning add or delete questions on an ad hoc basis subject to new evidence. This method does have pitfalls.

The interview (in this case between two people) is a social situation in which people have certain expectations. Informants may perform according to a variety of motives depending upon what they believe to be most desirable; based only upon what they are prepared to say, or upon what they want to be heard. They will want what is said to appear intelligible and legitimate in terms of their personal credibility. Further, the reported views, opinions and perspectives can be distorted by the emotional state of the informant and the interviewer when the interview is conducted. Detailed observations of the interview process **and** the participants can shed light on behavioural and content material.<sup>197</sup>

It also stands to reason the parties will bring with them certain biases and prejudices. Indeed, these form a sub-text in the research. However, rather than viewing these as barriers to the interviewer/informant relationship, they might well be seen as tools to be used imaginatively and contingently depending on the way the relationship develops, so that the interviewer may also be seen as an instrument in the process.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Devereux (1967) p28

<sup>197</sup> Patton (1990) p245

<sup>198</sup> Mirvis & Louis in Berg & Smith (1985) pp.229-246

For example, the interview described in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma**, did not go to plan and I was extremely concerned about the potential interview outcome. Whilst I had followed the procedures I'd established for myself, prior to beginning the research interviews, I could not have envisaged what was to follow. It would have been quite easy to leave the event unreported and save my embarrassment. However, to bury the experience as part of my coping with a difficult situation would be to deny an extremely important example of my subjective experience as a research instrument. For me, it represented significant data that had to be explored. I shall discuss this engagement in more detail as part of the preamble to the Case Studies later in this Chapter.

Another important feature of the interview process is the manner in which questions are framed and developed and the degree to which mutual trust and respect is established. This is paramount. The care that is taken to ensure the interviewer controls his own values and ideas, so that the understanding obtained is the informants, is equally important.

Notwithstanding, in a cross-cultural context the researcher needs to remain ever vigilant of the possibility of falling victim to his or her unconscious assumptions. With this in mind, I pondered the relevance and potential impact of ethnocentrism - differences between groups - and the tendency for one group to adopt its values as the benchmark (viz. Ours is best) when comparing itself with others.

### **2.3.2.2 Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism is a two edged sword in cross-cultural research with implications for the researched and the researcher. A value-neutral approach is essential. Researchers must avoid absolute judgements that may originate from their own culture and result in the misinterpretation of data. As I indicated in Section 1.1.1, people from different cultures have their own unique history and there will be significant and trivial differences between cultures. For example Australia is a multi-cultural society, whereas Korea is predominantly mono-cultural. There may also be differences between how people from the same culture interpret that culture owing to the nature of their life



experience. For example, a person who has spent their life on a cattle station in Central Australia, say, compared with one who has grown up in a city like Melbourne, or Sydney. Similarly, a Korean who has spent their life in Seoul or Pusan compared with one who has only experienced farm life. The people's socio-political backgrounds; their work practices and ethics; values and behaviours are codified according to different conventions and expectations; thereby providing a framework of standards that consciously or unconsciously constrain individual behaviour.

From a researcher's perspective, differences and varying phenomenon should be recognised, acknowledged, recorded and interpreted in the cultural context of their occurrence.<sup>199</sup> Such a strategy reduces the strange elements of observed behaviour and enhances the potential benefit from foreign ideas and material. In other words, consider the difference, mull it over in your mind for a while, say "Hmmm" and move on. The differences are just that, differences. One also needs to be conscious of assumptions associated with the meaning of items in designing an interview guide and conducting interviews.<sup>200</sup> For example the Korean language has no word(s) to describe the pronoun "you". Rather, Koreans have a hierarchy of some six identifiable levels of formality, directly encoded in the verb endings. Similarly, peer, cohort, and society have mono-dimensional relevance in Korea in terms of age, occupation and locality respectively. Apart from this there are no words to denote the concepts. Further issues include the implied societal relevance of research topics in cross-cultural environments. One needs to be wary of cultural bias in the application of behavioural and psychological theories of European origin. As I described earlier in **Korean Concept 1**, there appear to be notions of *We-ness* and *Universal I-ness* within Korean group relations that have no apparent Western equivalent. "Explicit recognition of the potential for ethnocentrism is a first step in its control."<sup>201</sup>

It is important informants understand the purpose behind the research and how the data will be used. They should be assured of confidentiality, and be aware their information is seen to be pertinent, valid and taken seriously. They should know they

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<sup>199</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p8

<sup>200</sup> Patton (1990) pp.337-340

<sup>201</sup> Berry (et al) (1992) p9

are being heard. Interviewers must attend to, and display, both verbal and non-verbal listening skills to ensure rapport is established and maintained, and be in a position to probe the significance of matters under discussion. They must be willing to discover what is and is not meaningful, rather than making decisions based on misleading statements, or their own unfounded assumptions. It would also be helpful if interviewers have a conscious awareness of what has happened before, during and after the interview that is likely to affect the data. I say this in the light of my personal research experience recounted in Section 2.3.6 and the Case Study “**The Name Card Dilemma**” where access to such information was integral to the outcome.

### **2.3.3 Methods of Data Collection - Chosen Option**

In line with the interpretive approach I decided to conduct *semi-structured* interviews whereby I could provide a focus through a series of questions loosely centred around the main objectives, namely:

- a) how Australian-ness and Korean-ness is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals;
- b) how Australian-ness and Korean-ness influences the emerging relationship;

and within this frame, consider the hypothesis that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind may act as a holding environment and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences.

Then, using emergent, non-directive questioning I proposed to add or delete questions on an ad hoc basis subject to new evidence. Thus data would drive the investigation. This inductive research method is similar to negative case analysis where a researcher refines preliminary or draft hypotheses while looking for data to refute the hypotheses. In effect the data generate the hypotheses.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Judd (et al) (1991) pp.310-13 - for the Negative Case Analysis developed by Cressey (1953)

In addition, I proposed (as far as possible) to observe and describe in detail every physical and behavioural nuance of, and associated with, each interview event. This process was vital for the consideration of the psychodynamic elements of the research and is described in detail in Section 2.3.6. On return to Australia, I proceeded to code and process the data in my field notes according to the coded paradigm of grounded theory proposed by Strauss.<sup>203</sup> This procedure is described in Section 2.3.7.

#### **2.3.4 Interview Guide**

Before leaving Australia I developed, trialed and refined a series of matched questions (refer Appendix B) to enable the easy comparison and contrast of responses between Australian and Korean informants. These questions were designed around the two themes previously mentioned, namely: how Australian-ness and Korean-ness is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals; and how Australian-ness and Korean-ness influences the emerging relationship.

I proposed to use these questions as a framework and focus for conversation (an interview guide)<sup>204</sup> within specified parameters. I wished to ensure the informant's unique experience and understanding could be expressed and explored yet be open to the nuance of conversation, to be able to probe or follow up on points as they arose.

Within this framework, I proposed to consider the psychodynamics - the unconscious processes occurring between interviewer and informant in the interview situation, and to identify and evaluate those reflected in the informant's reported business experience. One noticeable result of using the interpretive method was the consistency with which responses from either culture paralleled the society's recognised pattern of thought. Some responses were ideologically consistent rather than reflective of individual emotive conviction. From the research perspective, knowing this to be so was an advantage. It enabled greater attention and focus on the minutiae of the informant's offering - the precise choice of words; expression and emphasis in diction and feelings; the relative consistency of remarks throughout. I saw these as sources of

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<sup>203</sup> Strauss (1987) pp.27-8

<sup>204</sup> Patton (1982), Taylor & Bogdan (1984), Walker (1985)

insight into the informant's unconscious motivations...the substance of psychodynamic inquiry.<sup>205</sup>

### **2.3.5 Interview Environment**

The interviews were conducted in the informant's place of business - either in their office or an adjoining meeting room - between 3 and 14 June 1996. Interviews varied in length from 40 minutes to 3 hours depending on the informant's time schedule and willingness to talk. In the latter case the discussion ranged well beyond the bounds of the research interview. Most of the interviews maintained an air of formality. There was a sense of cautious tension present in most, although for Australian informants this tended to dissipate after 15-20 minutes. One interview with a Korean was particularly tense and I shall report on this as a focussed case study (The Name Card Dilemma).

I began each interview by outlining my research aims and method. Having done so, I then sought permission to proceed, so as to ensure there were no outstanding unresolved matters of concern.

### **2.3.6 Data Recording**

I had carefully thought about the prospect of tape recording the interviews. Three issues influenced me not to progress the idea. First, the reticence of Australians in Australia to participate at all. Second, I was aware the Australian business community in Seoul was quite small. If the tapes were heard by others the potential for identification was possible. Finally, I was aware Koreans are extremely cautious about initial encounters with foreigners and that a prior proposal to tape a discussion may well obviate the event before it began. I felt sure, notwithstanding my assurances of confidentiality, informants would be reluctant to participate if they were to be recorded. As it turned out, my intuition was accurate. The Koreans were wary and the matter of confidentiality was important to all informants. Whilst acknowledging full

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<sup>205</sup> Fromm and Maccoby (1970) p29

transcriptions were most desirable,<sup>206</sup> I decided to rely on my hand written records of verbatim statements.

Following Marshall,<sup>207</sup> from the beginning of each encounter I documented my impressions of the interview environment - location, furnishings, ambience, scenic view etcetera. I created a pen picture of each informant - appearance, clothes, jewellery, mannerisms, posture, comfort etcetera. In this way I would have a record of the atmosphere or context and could recall the informant's features. I was particularly conscious of behavioural matters: consistencies and inconsistencies. For example, if something was said in a particular way but was contrary to expression or posture I noted this as additional data to consider during the analysis stage. I also noted my own reactions and feelings about what was being said as it happened. It was extremely difficult to pay due attention to the informant and his or her response and monitor and note what was happening within me at the same time. A number of times immediately after an interview I stood in the lift lobby completing my notes hoping my memory would not fail me. Nevertheless, the rigour associated with this aspect of my self management in the research was imperative for the analysis of the dynamic elements of the program. These are covered in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4 - **Findings and Discussion**.

I placed the *character* notes with the demographic material at the beginning of each transcript in order to quickly refresh my memory of each person's characteristics. The *behavioural* notes followed the described event, comment or quote in the transcript.

In addition, I noted any specific circumstance, experience or incident before, during or after the interview event that I thought was significant or that may have influenced the quality of the interview. The following experience drawn from my field notes illustrates the point as well as reflecting part of my *modus operandi* in terms of research in a foreign environment. This might provide a bookmark for future researchers in Seoul.

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<sup>206</sup> Patton (1982) p248

<sup>207</sup> Marshall (1981)

Whilst in Seoul I stayed in an hotel on the edge of the Central Business District and within easy walking distance of the subway. Most informants were located within three kilometres of the hotel. The traffic in Seoul was so heavy during peak periods using taxis was prohibitive. The subway was a cheap, convenient and efficient alternative. As there are few identifiable street signs in Seoul and building names and numbers are a rarity, I endeavoured to reconnoitre the routes and the buildings a few days before each interview to ensure I would not be late for my appointments.

On this occasion, the interview was arranged at short notice and my directions contained only the name of a subway station and the title of a building. My destination was a 35 minute train ride to a new highrise business center covering some three square kilometres. It had been rice paddies 10 years earlier. I allowed myself 90 minutes all up to commute and find the informant's office. Prior experience told me this was about right. It was a hot, very humid Friday afternoon. Unfortunately, when I arrived at the destination subway station, I became disoriented in the labyrinth of tunnels and took an exit leading South, instead of East. My street map lacked detail and whilst train commuters, local shop keepers and passing office workers valiantly endeavoured to assist, our collective inability to cross the language barrier meant I failed to locate the address. After some 40 minutes I returned to the subway station somewhat dishevelled and rang the informant to seek an escort/guide. As it turned out there were 8 exits to the subway and my guide visited 3 before he found me. Whilst I had searched in vain in the wrong direction, the actual office building was not visibly named and was located behind the main streetscape, obscured completely from the six lane road. I very much doubt I would have found it unescorted.

While I was waiting, I pondered my personal disarray. Owing to the oppressive atmosphere I was perspiring profusely, but being conscious of Korean formality I felt reluctant to loosen my tie or remove my suit coat. I was concerned about the poor impression I may have created with my informant. During our telephone conversation he had emphasised how busy he was and I

had indicated the interview would last an hour. It was likely the allocated time would be much less by the time I actually arrived. Needless to say, I was ill at ease. My physical discomfort combined with my embarrassment at getting “lost”; the challenge to my self-image associated with my feelings of being out of control; calling my escort away from his tasks at the end of a busy week; my self imposed anxiety about the time and the perceived threat to the interview event left me feeling less than mentally sharp for the interview and it took me some time before I regained my composure.

On my arrival, my informant was gracious, unconcerned, ordered tea, indicated he was free for the whole afternoon. He encouraged me to remove my coat and tie and to take my time with the questions I wished to ask. The interview and subsequent discussion filled 3 hours and was probably the most insightful and significant exchange of the research project.

Whilst my premonitions of “disaster” were unfounded, my unfulfilled expectations, my feelings and reactions as recorded in my field notes (more detailed than appear here) and my photos of the location were important data enabling me to better interpret the experience of the event.

My field notes also contained my personal feelings and impressions of the research project as it evolved. For example there were times in the evening when I was sightseeing in Seoul that a thought about something an informant had said during the day would come to mind that conjured a different way of looking at an issue. Or, whilst reading a book on Confucianism on a train I discovered an insight into Korean behaviour I had not previously considered. These were noted in my field diary as they occurred.

My field notes were typed within 1 to 5 hours of each interview depending on my interview schedule and the locale. I maintained 3 copies of the finished files - one on my laptop computers’ hard drive, the others on floppy disks: one in my luggage the other in my pocket. When I arrived home I maintained a master copy separate from my work station in case of accidents.

### 2.3.7 Data Coding and Analysis

As part of my preparation I created computer file templates of the interview guide for each informant to ensure conformity of style and to streamline the transcription process. Concerned about safeguarding anonymity, I established codes to identify each informant. For example: [**AR1** or **KR1**] - The “A” or “K” refers to an Australian or Korean informant. The “**R(Number)**” identifies that person by number. So that **AR1** indicates Australian informant No.1 and **KR1** indicates Korean informant No.1.

On return to Australia, I clarified and consolidated my field notes first ensuring all the notes for each informant were on file. I then reformatted the notes to a template for analysis before coding the material according to the coded paradigm of grounded theory proposed by Strauss<sup>208</sup> namely: conditions, interaction among actors, strategies and tactics, and consequences. These in turn were divided into sub categories best reflecting the data. Analysis proceeded on a line by line dissection of each informant’s transcript and again, separately, question by question in line with the interview guide to open up the records to see what they contained, as distinct from attempting to firm up hypotheses. I was conscious of what Marshall describes as getting “chunks of meaning which come out of the data itself...and putting...things together that go together.”<sup>209</sup> As part of this process, I developed a list of “key-words” from each individual transcript in two categories. First, those words most often used by each informant to describe themselves or their experience. Second, words that described or reflected a behaviour. For example, some detail in the transcripts simply classified itself under headings like nationalism, Confucian doctrine, survival mentality, racism, control, and transference. At times, the classification process was straightforward, at others it was a grind.

To simplify the classification and manipulation of this data, and the nomenclature for reporting, two response documents (**ARESPO** and **KRESPO**) were created containing the collective Australian and Korean data respectively. Each line within the documents was numbered. Quotations from individual informants could

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<sup>208</sup> Strauss (1987) pp.27-8

<sup>209</sup> Marshall in Reason & Rowan (1981) p397



therefore be distinguished by their unique personal identification code (Eg. AR1 or KR1), followed by a document identifier (ARESPO or KRESPO) and a line number [L100] - in this example - line 100, on a referenced page.

From the final analysis I created summary lists of key material for each individual and for each question. I then proceeded with a secondary contrast and comparison with the whole interview population to get a feel for the data from various perspectives. Emergent theory was validated against and through the data and, where possible, compared and contrasted against the literature. The role of the researcher in the data was integral. The details of this data are reported in Chapters 3 and 4 - Findings and Discussion.

My next step was to consider how to best present the material. Some of the “key-words” describing particular features of Australian-ness and Korean-ness represented large bodies of data and were obvious Section headings. Whilst this was OK, I was concerned about the depth of analysis. I began to look at the data from different perspectives, to fracture it, to see if there was a possibility of creating new data, to perhaps discover new or different interpretations within the material.

### **2.3.8 Developing the Case Studies**

This Section describes the Case Study method. The Section reviews the literature about case study method and describes how and why I developed the Case Studies presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Briefly, each case was written to serve a different purpose. **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** was designed to accommodate and illuminate a lack of clarity about Australian-ness caused largely by the evasiveness of the Australian informants about their Australian-ness. By contrast, **The Name Card Dilemma** is more an action research case where learning is achieved through the melding of programmed knowledge and questioning insight.<sup>210</sup> It reflects my experience of the irony of parallel process in this research where an Australian researcher’s first contact with a Korean informant appeared to mirror the situation of

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<sup>210</sup> Revans (1983)

establishing a relationship in a business context vis a vis an Australian business person and the Korean informant.

### 2.3.8.1 Case Study Method

The Case Study method has been used to analyse, explore, describe, illustrate and present data in a variety of forms and media. It has been employed in theory construction and testing. Gable notes “the criteria for conducting high-quality case studies are similar regardless of the primary objective of the case studies (eg. exploration versus explanation) and irrespective of whether the case studies are being conducted in combination with some other research method.”<sup>211</sup> Yin<sup>212</sup> contends the method is useful for exploring previously unresearched subjects or fields and when the control of behavioural events or variables is unnecessary. It allows research inquiry to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events - such as organizational and managerial processes, and international relations.<sup>213</sup> Parkhe<sup>214</sup> maintains that well-planned and executed case studies can “...contribute significantly to rigorous...theory development.”

The case study method emphasises qualitative analysis and seeks to interpret an individual or groups meaning of an event or situation. As discussed in Section 2.1.4.1, *interpretation* is a concept used to describe “ideas that provide connections, meanings or a way of comprehending previously unrelated experiential data.”<sup>215</sup> The method enables the researcher to tap into the intensity of individual and group behaviour, although any conclusions that may be drawn from the process may have narrow applicability outside the specific area of study. Yin’s<sup>216</sup> research indicates that some of the finest and most celebrated case studies have been descriptive and explanatory. Included in these are the work of Lawrence and Lorsch,<sup>217</sup> and Cyert and March.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Gable (1994) p112. For a description of the criteria refer Yin (1984)

<sup>212</sup> Yin (1984) quoted in Gable (1994) p113

<sup>213</sup> Yin (1989) p14

<sup>214</sup> Parkhe (1993) p259

<sup>215</sup> Shapiro & Carr (1991) p5

<sup>216</sup> Yin (1989)

<sup>217</sup> Lawrence and Lorsch (1967)

Ken Smith's Ashgrove and Montville<sup>219</sup> and Whyte's Cornerville<sup>220</sup> are regarded as classic accounts of observed interpersonal events - observing people *in action*. Parkhe applauds the case studies of Dutton & Dukerich, and Eisenhardt & Bourgeois commenting that the results are "equal in credibility, rigour and persuasive power to any other research method, and are often theoretically more exciting."<sup>221</sup>

Notwithstanding their heuristic value, case studies have been subject to the same sceptical scrutiny as qualitative research method generally.<sup>222</sup> The essence of the criticism is directed primarily at an apparent lack of rigour and the perceived poor foundation for scientific inference, validation and generalisation. Within this framework are questions associated with the capacity to control independent variable(s); the potential for inappropriate interpretation; and the extent to which findings can be universally applied.<sup>223</sup> The potential to propose several alternative interpretations implies "threats to internal validity."<sup>224</sup> Whilst Lee supports the case study method, he notes apparent weaknesses associated with control, deduction, replication and the capacity to generalise from the findings.<sup>225</sup>

By contrast, Parkhe notes sloppy logic, imperfect documentation, difficulty in replication and researcher bias are criticisms that can be equally directed toward poorly executed quantitative research.<sup>226</sup> Patton uses contrasting case studies to "illustrate the value of detailed, descriptive data in deepening our understanding of individual variation."<sup>227</sup> He acknowledges the increasing trend to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods to gather comprehensive information, but concludes "Statistical data provide a succinct and parsimonious summary of major patterns, while select case

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<sup>218</sup> Cyert and March (1963)

<sup>219</sup> Smith (1982) *Groups in Conflict - Prisons in Disguise*

<sup>220</sup> Whyte (1943) *Street Corner Society*

<sup>221</sup> Parkhe (1993) p259

<sup>222</sup> Reference to this debate referred to in Section 2.1.1. The Jeffrey Johnson (1990) article effectively summarises the quantitative versus qualitative research controversy.

<sup>223</sup> Kerlinger (1986) p348

<sup>224</sup> Kazdin (1992) p476, quoting Campbell & Stanley (1963)

<sup>225</sup> Lee (1989)

<sup>226</sup> Parkhe (1993) p258

<sup>227</sup> Patton (1990) p17

studies provide depth, detail, and individual meaning.”<sup>228</sup> Van Maanen encapsulates the argument when he states:

“...no matter what the topic of study, qualitative researchers, in contrast to their quantitative colleagues, claim forcefully to know relatively little about what a given piece of observed behavior means until they have developed a description of the context in which the behavior takes place and have attempted to see the behavior from the position of its originator. That such contextual understanding and empathetic objectives are unlikely to be achieved without direct, firsthand, more or less intimate knowledge of a research setting, is a most practical assumption that underlies and guides most qualitative research.”<sup>229</sup>

In international management, case studies are perceived as problematic owing to the requirement for “...preliminary study of history, culture and language of the people whom one is investigating;”<sup>230</sup> and the logistics associated with the geographical distances involved. I have addressed my approach to these issues and my preparation for this research in Section 1.1.1. Yin cautions that the reporting of interviews may be subject to bias, poor recall and imprecise recording.<sup>231</sup> The interview data with specific informants must therefore be cross-referenced with several data sources which could include the subject’s own account; the accounts of other informants; the researcher’s personal observations; archival material - data bases, media clippings and reports; company documents and reports.<sup>232</sup> Good and Watts<sup>233</sup>, and Tsoukas<sup>234</sup> argue if this is done rigorously and the factual claims of the case are validated by more than one source, the aggregated data is epistemologically valid.

### **2.3.8.2 Case Study Method - Applied**

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<sup>228</sup> Patton (1990) p17. See also pp384-90 for a detailed discussion of Case analysis.

<sup>229</sup> Van Maanen (1983) p10

<sup>230</sup> Wright, Lane & Beamish (1988)

<sup>231</sup> Yin (1989)

<sup>232</sup> Parkhe (1993) p249; Good & Watts in Parry & Watts (1996) p269

<sup>233</sup> Good & Watts in Parry & Watts (1996) p269

<sup>234</sup> Tsoukas (1989) in Parkhe (1993) p249

In terms of the *constructed* Case Study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**, in Section 3.1.4, I was able to confirm the integrity of the events with a most reputable, independent source before leaving Seoul.<sup>235</sup> In terms of the action research Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma**, in Section 4.2, which reports my personal experience of an interview event, I have noted the potentially speculative nature of some elements of the argument. Nevertheless, I contend that the content of this simulated “business encounter”, reflected through my feelings, was indicative of my *reality* at the time. In this regard, the case “offers a surrogate experience and invites the reader to underwrite the account, by appealing to his (or her) tacit knowledge of human situations.”<sup>236</sup> The veracity of the reported event is “explicit” in the “surprise of recognition” embedded within the subtlety and complexity of the case. In this case study, my generalisations are *about* the event rather than the *class* or *category* from which the event could be drawn. That is, I am generalising *about* the case, rather than *from* it.<sup>237</sup> Kazdin<sup>238</sup> notes case reports often include detailed descriptions which rely heavily on anecdotal accounts to draw inferences about an individual’s situation - in the absence of experimental controls - which may lead to useful, unambiguous conclusions. The conclusions proposed in the case studies in this thesis are directed toward insight and steps toward further action, rather than constituting absolute truth. I have endeavoured to ensure as far as possible the material presented in the case studies meets the above criteria.

The case studies presented in this thesis combine extant literature and theory with fundamental behavioural variables. In analysis, the cases demonstrate iterative movement between the two. In the process, I have attempted to establish a foundation for the “...creation of truly original, groundbreaking new concepts/relationships/

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<sup>235</sup> Conversation with **AR9**

<sup>236</sup> Case Study: an overview (1983) p4. Good & Watts in Parry & Watts (1996) p271, argue that conclusions drawn from Case Studies must be ones that a reasonable and fairminded group of people would accept if the evidence for them was set out.

<sup>237</sup> Case Study: an overview (1983) p2

<sup>238</sup> Kazdin (1993) pp.477-8

theories...”<sup>239</sup> The cases comply with Yin’s<sup>240</sup> three conditions for a research strategy namely: the research question; the researcher’s control over behavioural events; and the concentration on contemporary rather than historical events. In doing so, the cases provide responses to *How* and *Why* questions, seeking causal explanations or interpretations of events.

The case studies in this thesis represent action as it occurred. The exploratory nature of this approach enabled me to examine Australian-ness and Korean-ness in a “real life” context and develop indicative propositions in a flexible way. The cases are based on interviews with senior Australian and Korean executives. Consistent with the approach advocated by Yin<sup>241</sup>, and Eisenhardt<sup>242</sup>, these managers were asked about the facts of their cross-cultural relationships and to amplify their beliefs and perceptions. Their words recorded by me during the interviews form the basic content of each case. Analysed in the case study context, these words reflect “behavioural repertoires”<sup>243</sup> and reveal “processes of power”<sup>244</sup> that were not readily apparent in the interview notes. The case study method enabled the creation of valuable data that would not otherwise have been apparent. The content of the case studies in this thesis resonate: a private or public situation; they arouse “special modes of deference, demeanour and decorum”; they depict an emergent event reflecting “personal and situational contingencies” joining people in collective action; they “draw on local knowledge structures for their organisation and validation”; and, directly and indirectly reflect micro power relations which alter and structure the knowledge base of localised personal practice.”<sup>245</sup> In the process, they enable the opportunity for clearer interpretations of the interaction and structure of National character represented as Australian-ness and Korean-ness.

### 2.3.8.3 Reasons for Compiling Each Case Study

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<sup>239</sup> Parkhe (1993) p253

<sup>240</sup> Yin (1989)

<sup>241</sup> Yin (1989)

<sup>242</sup> Eisenhardt (1989)

<sup>243</sup> Denzin in Morgan (1983) p142

<sup>244</sup> Denzin in Morgan (1983) p140

The next two sub-sections discuss how and why I compiled each Case Study.

**A. Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+.** One of my concerns about the Australian informant's reports was their evasiveness. Whilst claiming the most prominent feature of their Australian-ness was their openness, Australian informants were far from open when talking about themselves. As I shall discuss in Section 3.1.3.3, Australians' professed openness could be seen as a defensive response, designed to disguise their uncertainty or fear of exploitation by their Korean employees or Korean business contacts. It may also have reflected their uncertainty about my motives and concerns about how I might use the data. Notwithstanding, Australian informant's accounts of their actions and reactions to the *actual experience* of business life in Seoul seemed more reflective of their Australian-ness than their personal references to themselves. I shall discuss this in more detail in Section 3.1. My concern was how to best represent this material. Two, clearly separate, industrial situations provided the most illuminating insight into the Australian informant's Australian-ness. Both industrial situations had occurred at about the same time, a few months before my arrival in Seoul. The first event centred on an Australian manager's reactions to an ambit claim proposed by a group of Korean staff. The second event concerned the promotion of a young, Korean female employee; the negative reaction of a more "senior" Korean female employee; and the manner in which the Australian management resolved the impasse.

The data I had compiled during the course of interviews with four Australian informants gave an insight into the character of the people involved and their "institutional" behaviour. As previously indicated, I was able to confirm the integrity of the events with a most reputable, independent source before leaving Seoul.<sup>245</sup> The data provided a valuable insight into the Australian's Australian-ness and, at the same time, the Korean's Korean-ness. It also highlighted some of the difficulties associated with working in a cross-cultural business environment. The events reflected situations, problems and decisions that, I speculated, could be commonly faced by Australian

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<sup>245</sup> Denzin in Morgan (1983) p142

<sup>246</sup> Conversation with **AR9**

managers in Seoul “today” and, in my fantasy, be faced in the future. The events dealt with real people in actual situations - the substance of this thesis.

My primary concern in relating these events was how to simultaneously recount the nuance of each situation; describe each player’s role and behaviour; yet maintain their confidentiality. I decided to record the data as a *constructed* Case Study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**. To this end, I resolved to represent the separate events, as concurrent events in the one organisation. In doing so, I was conscious of taking extreme care to portray the events themselves and the informant’s personal characteristics as they were reported to me and as I perceived them during our interviews. I was concerned to use the informant’s actual words to reflect, as far as possible, *their meaning* of the events. Their names have been changed for obvious reasons. In addition, I decided to overlay the analysis and commentary with my own evolving, interpretation of the informant’s report and my experience of it as an instrument in the research. In this way, I hoped to convey a progressive unfolding of the complexities of what I had discovered within the data.

**B. The Name Card Dilemma.** Before embarking on my visit to Seoul in June 1996, I was aware of the emphasis Koreans placed on the presentation of business or name cards. Whilst using a business card on a regular basis as part of my full-time employment, I wanted to make a clear distinction between my work role and my graduate student and researcher role. I therefore made a conscious decision not to take my business cards to Seoul.

Notwithstanding personal references from prominent Australian business people known to my South Korean informants, at the moment of first contact I was unable to play my part in the ritual of “name card” exchange. I was an oddity. I could not be categorised by name, company title or educational qualifications. My apparent discourtesy seemed to place my hosts in an embarrassing position (I knew them, but they did not know me. The convention of determining relative status that occurs during the exchange of cards, was broken) and demonstrated my lack of understanding of the “Korean Way”. As indicated in Section 2.3.2.1, the interview described in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma**, did not go to plan and I was extremely concerned



about the potential interview outcome. Whilst I had followed the procedures I had established for myself, prior to beginning the research interviews, I could not have envisaged what was to follow.

I found the event extremely anxiety provoking and several times thought about saving my embarrassment and burying it as part of my coping with a difficult situation. However, I also felt not to fully explore the event, would be to deny an extremely important example of my subjective experience as a research instrument.

In effect, I wrote this as an action research case study as a means of clarifying in my own mind what may have been happening during my interview with that Korean informant. In a way, it is an exercise in deep introspection. For me, the process of this interview demonstrated the nexus between surprise and sense-making in the research context. Here the surprise of my unfulfilled expectations and the apparent arousal of a host of seemingly inexplicable concerns and anxieties enabled me to experience the complexity of an Australian-Korean interaction from a perspective I would not have otherwise realised. Subsequent attempts to interpret and reinterpret the event, including writing the Case, have enhanced my insight and heightened my awareness for future encounters. The processing of my perceived fantasies and symptoms of denial has refined this sense-making activity. Without it, I would not have recognised how issues of National character [the focus of the research interview; represented by the name card; and latent in both players relative acceptance of each other] were so quickly put aside and replaced by defence mechanisms to ward off anxiety, only to re-assume prominence once the anxiety had subsided. Even after long and careful consideration, the observations expressed in the Case can only be an interpretation of the events, as distinct from a knowing end result. Notwithstanding, I am drawn to David Berg's comments about anxiety in research relationships:

“...the emotional dynamics in research relationships are...the context in which research happens, influencing both the process and the outcome...Only by reporting these relationship variables can we begin to develop theories about the effects of certain kinds of research relationships on the research process...To

know more about these relationships we must make a commitment to examine, describe, and report them in our work.”<sup>247</sup>

I trust this Case Study, and this thesis, is reflective of my commitment to that outcome.

The process of thinking about and writing these Cases led me to several surprises. For example, I found myself recognising and acknowledging latent emotional states within me about my relationship as researcher with the informants. This experience and its discovery as new data is described in the commentaries within the Cases. These discoveries led to new interpretations of the data and strengthen the hypothesis that studying the psychodynamics of an event (and the thinking associated with the event) provides for clearer interpretations of the event.

## 2.4 Chapter Review

This Chapter examined and described the research method associated with exploring the influence Australian-ness and Korean-ness plays in the dynamics of Australian and South Korean business encounters in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

It considered the application of a “best fit” research method based in descriptive cross-cultural psychology and embracing phenomenology, heuristic inquiry and the interpretive paradigm. In the context of this research, the chosen method provides an effective means of describing, explaining and interpreting informant’s experience . The method enables the full engagement of both informants and researcher. It enables access to the essence of each individual’s experience of an event or circumstance; provides the potential to identify, define and interpret core meaning; and accommodates and supports my personal engagement as researcher in the research. Thus, I am better able to appreciate the essence and nuance of informant’s sense-making; realise their logic, sense of order, structure and meaning.

This method is the most appropriate mechanism for the collection, creation and analysis of context specific data and better positions the researcher to report its intricacy

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<sup>247</sup> Berg quoted in Berg & Smith (1985) p226 & p228

and depth to others, that they may learn from my experience. It is the most appropriate mechanism for exploring individual experience of Australian-ness and Korean-ness within a Korean environment and within the business informant's immediate work space - where cross-cultural encounters actually occur.

The next Chapter introduces and discusses the research Findings.

## CHAPTER 3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: AUSTRALIAN-NESS AND KOREAN-NESS

### 3.0 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I proposed Australian and Korean business people carry idealised images of their own and each other's *National character in-the-mind* reflecting the diversity of the concepts of Australian-ness and Korean-ness. I indicated differences exist between Australian and Korean cultures and suggested these differences are multifaceted and multi-layered. I suggested individual psychodynamics may be an integrating spiral within this labyrinth.

I defined the main objectives of the research as being to ascertain how Australian-ness and Korean-ness is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals; and how Australian-ness and Korean-ness influences the emerging relationship. Within this frame, I proposed consideration of the hypothesis that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind acts as a holding environment and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences.

In Chapter 2, I defined a theoretical perspective for the research method; described the method for collecting and analysing the data and provided a narrative and interpretation of the research process.

This Chapter details and discusses the research findings and considers the Australian and Korean informant's interpretation of images of National character in-the-mind and how this is perceived and expressed during business encounters with their respective counterparts. In presenting the findings I shall, where practicable, use the informant's words. I wish to relate the characteristics identified *by* the informants, as meaningful *to* them, and then explore the contents of their description. My experiences as researcher in the research will be an integral part of the reporting process.

The findings demonstrate how Australian-ness and Korean-ness appear to represent projections of the human imagination, willed within the bounds of individual experience and perception.

**Section 3.1** reports the primary Australian data reflecting a series of contradictions. This Section will highlight and anticipate some of the main findings. Australian informant's saw themselves as coming from an open and tolerant society. They claimed the most prominent feature of their Australian-ness was their openness. Notwithstanding, they were concerned about being identified first as participants in the research and then as having a personal view. Their reports of their views of Australian-ness and National character were evasive. They described Australian-ness in mythical terms (stereotypes of a sporting life); in terms of what Koreans were like; or in terms of how Australians didn't behave; generally not mentioning Australia or Australian-ness at all.

Australians as a group tended to confuse their willingness to be open as individuals in the Korean environment with the concept of "openness" as a characteristic of relationship. The effect of this was to arouse doubt, fear and uncertainty in terms of their interpretation of both their own and the Korean National character. The data indicates that on several occasions Australians' apparent confusion about openness also seemed to interfere with their self management in their roles as managers of organisations. The data highlighted a contrast between Australians' espoused notions of openness and their actual ability or willingness to be open, or to maintain their professed openness in the Korean environment. Koreans did not perceive Australian's professed openness as a recognisable characteristic in their relationships with them.

It was apparent that Australians were unwilling to share thoughts that might imply weakness or discuss cross-cultural differences with Koreans. Australians did not appear to trust Koreans. They seemed uncertain in their understanding and ability to cope with the Korean culture and values; and about how to manage themselves in the Korean environment. Their behaviour seemed defensive. Australian informants seemed to be locked in a transition phase between what they knew to be familiar and

secure in terms of social and corporate values, and their current volatile business environment. Australians appeared to fear exploitation and were concerned about their survival prospects.

Australian informant's accounts of their actions and reactions to the *actual experience* of business life in Seoul seemed more reflective (and instructive) of their Australian-ness than their personal references to themselves. In order to accommodate this for reporting purposes, I have designed a Case Study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** - a composite of two industrial relations situations said to have occurred in Australian businesses in Seoul. This Case demonstrates the value of the interpretive paradigm as a research method. The Case reflects the progressive development of a series of interpretations, each providing an increasingly detailed and broader appreciation of the preceding interpretation and enabling the reader to make greater sense of the Case. Using metaphors of coloniser/invader and National character in-the-mind the data reveal a valuable insight into Australian-ness and Korean-ness. The Case also notes the presence of some important psychodynamics in the Industrial Relations context.

**Section 3.2** reports the Korean data. Again, major findings will be noted in anticipation of a full description later. Korean informants were reticent, yet clear and consistent in their expression of a Korean National character. The uniformity and focus of the data enables more conventional reporting of these findings: analysing and contrasting each informant's contribution in some detail. Reported features of Korean National character centred on issues of Nationalism and Relationships, expressed within a context of rapid change and Korean concern for its effect on traditional values.

Nationalism was notable for its metaphors of militarism, coloniser/invader and survival and fear. Relationship was associated with themes of control and dependency with historical, philosophical, political and psychological sub-texts. It became apparent that Korean informants were experiencing a state of transition between traditional values and patterns of management and adapting to the new values of the global marketplace. Loss and shame associated with the history of invasion; and fear and

shame associated with the possibility of exclusion or non-acceptance internationally were also apparent.

The next Section (3.1) considers interpretations from Australian and Korean informants about their respective images of Australian and Australian-ness.

### 3.1 Australian-ness

In Section 2.3.1, I noted how Melbourne based business people having direct dealings with Koreans were reluctant to participate in this study. The primary explanation for this was the potential for the inadvertent release (misuse) of material perceived as commercial-in-confidence. There was a distinct air of suspicion; almost intrigue in the way some represented their views. At the time I thought it was an understandable, yet somewhat parochial approach. Their unwillingness to participate was the reason for my evaluating prospects in Seoul and, in effect, the design of the research.

I wrote personal letters to the Chief Executives of several Australian businesses in Seoul representing a wide cross-section of endeavour including Education, Finance, Media, Mining, Trade and Transportation. All the Australian informants (save two) confirmed their participation by telephone or Fax prior to my leaving Australia. Two interviews were arranged on arrival. Some timetable rescheduling was necessary owing to the informant's shifting priorities, but nothing arose that could not be accommodated.

The interviews were conducted between 3 and 14 June 1996 and varied in length from 40 to 90 minutes. The eleven male informants held positions of Chief Executive or General Manager with their respective organisations, whilst the sole female held a Senior Executive position.<sup>248</sup>

Two of the twelve Australian informants had previously participated in research studies about their overseas activities. For these two, the contacts had been about their areas of professional specialisation, not what *they perceived* as “cultural”, and/or “personal” matters. Whilst I endeavoured to make the aim of my research clear to all, this interpretation of the content as “personal” was reflected back to me by several other informants and seemed to arouse some anxiety. As an aside, I found it fascinating that the Australian informants should view their Australian-Korean association (business encounters) as “personal” when Koreans perceived Australian engagement in *business*

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<sup>248</sup> The distribution of Australian Informants by Age and Sex is located in Table 2.2 in Section 2.3.1



*relationships*, as impersonal and distant. I shall explore this situation in more detail in Section 4.1.

Notwithstanding their written or verbal agreement to participate in the research, most Australian informants were concerned about being identified - first as a participant in the research and then, as having a personal view. At the beginning of most interviews, there was a dynamic tension. Several conversations began with “Why did you choose me?” In most cases the tension diminished following my explanation, or as the interviews proceeded, but in others I had the distinct impression I was viewed with caution, perhaps mistrust; that the informants were on their guard; and were not as open as they claimed to be when talking about themselves. This was reflected in responses about Australian-ness that were couched in terms mirroring the “not me/not us” perspective described in Section 1.1.2 where individuals project their images of “not me/not us”, simultaneously seeking to reinforce and confirm the projected image of themselves by the “not me/not us”. In this way Australian informants described Australian-ness in terms of what Koreans are like, or provided personal responses “we don’t behave in such and such a way”, not mentioning Australian-ness at all.

Interestingly, Australian informant’s accounts of their actions and reactions to the *actual experience* of business life in Seoul seemed more reflective and instructive of their National character in-the-mind and their Australian-ness, than their personal references to themselves. This revelation will be described in detail in the constructed case study: **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** at the end of Section 3.1 and, as discussed in the Case commentary, highlights the value of the interpretive stance as a research method.

### **3.1.1 Contrasting Societies**

Before proceeding, I think it is appropriate to document a common interpretation of how Australians saw themselves vis a vis Australia and Korea. This is fundamental to the interpretation of what follows concerning the Australian-Korean relationship. In this context, I am interpreting *relationship* as being dependent upon a mutually shared interpretation of the other’s views and a tolerance of difference. Australian informants

saw themselves as coming from and representing *an open and tolerant society*. By contrast, in Seoul, Australian informants saw themselves as a minority group with little or no power to influence *a distinctive and rigidly stratified society*. For some, this aroused doubt, fear and uncertainty.

Australian informants were conscious of the cross-cultural contrasts of their multicultural background with their current environment and the relative sensitivities of difference.

**AR1** noted in Seoul: “*Cross cultural sensitivity is different outside Australia...culturally adjusting takes a long time.*”<sup>249</sup>

**AR2** noted: “*We are struck by and stuck with our whiteness.*”<sup>250</sup>

**AR4** felt Australians racial tolerance was relative and felt in Korea, one’s tolerance wears thin notwithstanding overseas experience: “*Those with more than one international posting under their belt are more sceptical and can’t take things at face value...an anti-Korean feeling develops the longer they are in Korea.*”<sup>251</sup>

**AR7** was concerned that Korean perceptions of Australians were based on dated information that did not reflect Australia’s multiculturalism: “*The White Australia policy is still in texts (in Korea) although we are endeavouring to fix it.*”<sup>252</sup>

**AR8** seemed more distant making his comments as if he were in Australia: “*Australia is multicultural...Anglo Saxons get hung up about their whiteness...most others don't worry.*”<sup>253</sup>

**AR11** was happy Australia was a multicultural country and people worked to help each other out. He was “*less happy about discrete cultural communities or ghettos,*”<sup>254</sup> ironically this was a situation in Seoul (the Australian expatriate community) to which he had recently contracted himself for 3 years.

With this scenario in mind, the following Sections and the Case Study document reported *Australian-ness* and my observations of the accounts. They discuss recurrent

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<sup>249</sup> AR1, ARESPO L6

<sup>250</sup> AR2, ARESPO L25

<sup>251</sup> AR4, ARESPO L42-4

<sup>252</sup> AR7, ARESPO L104-5

<sup>253</sup> AR8, ARESPO L116-8

<sup>254</sup> AR11, ARESPO L347-9

themes that may provide insight into some of the dynamics manifest in Australian and Korean business encounters. The primary data reflect indifference to Australia and Australian-ness. The data reflect an apparent contradiction between Australian's professed "openness" and their actual willingness and/or ability to be open. In times of duress arising from cross-cultural misunderstanding it was apparent that Australian informant's behaviour represented defensive routines.<sup>255</sup> From this, I contend that cultural misunderstanding may arouse fear or threaten closely held beliefs associated with National character and personal identity. In the conclusion to this paper, I will propose a model for interpreting *Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour* in the context of the Australian-Korean business environment drawn from my research experience. The model may have more universal application.

Section 3.1 ends with the constructed case study: **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** which reflects the distinctive expression of Australian and Korean National character in-the-mind and strengthens the hypothesis that studying the dynamics of an event provides for clearer interpretations.

### **3.1.2 Indifference**

Australian informants had difficulty articulating what they thought was identifiably *Australian*. Several did not mention Australia in their responses. Instead, they described what Australian and Australian-ness **was not** and outlined how they **didn't** behave by focussing on what Koreans were like. In the process, they reported on issues of gender, finance and contracts, culture, education, industrial relations, lifestyle, religion and trade. Some of these issues are processed in other Sections of this paper.

In discussing *Australian and Australian-ness*, there was clearly a generation gap. The two eldest Australian informants valued their country, it's lifestyle and reputation: "*In Australia we are blessed with everything we could conceivably need...Australians are*

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<sup>255</sup> Argyris (1990)

*perceived as fortunate.*<sup>256</sup> *“Whenever you say you’re Australian there is a smile and occasionally a comment you are very lucky Australia is a paradise.”*<sup>257</sup>

By contrast, the youngest male informants indicated they had *“Never really contemplated it”*<sup>258</sup> or that since *“Most Australian companies have Korean representatives (in Seoul) Australian-ness doesn't really matter.”*<sup>259</sup> **AR11**’s response to the meaning of Australian and Australian-ness was the terms meant *“NOTHING!”* He later referred to the traditional stereotypes: *“...the Australian drawl the urban myth of sporting life of toughness... stubbornness...can't separate the myth from life.”*<sup>260</sup> He was supported by **AR10** who stated:

*“It's about "mateship"...I think this is very important...fairness egalitarian supporting the underdog no matter what his origins - African Asian - that's what Australians are a fair go for all...individually we like to buck the system buck authority...not blatant but we don't like to be pushed around.”*<sup>261</sup>

**AR2** summed up the general approach of Australian informant’s reported attitudes to just about everything associated with national identity: *“Apathy...apathetic about the flag the national anthem the national day...”*<sup>262</sup>

There are many possible explanations for Australian indifference and the unconscious motivation to espouse the stereotypical myth of Australian-ness, especially in the Korean environment. These could include **(a)** a socially constructed defence in the guise of tolerance, a form of denial; **(b)** to repress the “darkness” associated with geographical isolation from Australia, (as distinct from the traditional position of Australians being isolated from Europe). If the informants were in Australia one could argue adherence to the myth as a way of accommodating the fear of Asian invasion and

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<sup>256</sup> AR7, ARESPO L100-2

<sup>257</sup> AR4, ARESPO L59-60

<sup>258</sup> AR8, ARESPO L108

<sup>259</sup> AR3, ARESPO L31-2

<sup>260</sup> AR11, ARESPO L177-9

<sup>261</sup> AR10, ARESPO L167-170

<sup>262</sup> AR2, ARESPO L17-19

anarchy. In Seoul, however, the threat or fear could be more immediate **(c)** to preserve one's self esteem under the duress of uncertainty - attempting to fulfil one's business and/or career aspirations in a strange and stressful working environment (parallel to the figurative and real threat of death allied to the *harshness of the land* depicted in Australian history and mythology). The rhetorical statement *If blood should stain the wattle*<sup>263</sup> is indicative of this fear, where here, 'the wattle' is the Australian business community in Seoul. It might also reinforce **(d)** the unconscious denial of the horror of confronting one's own death in a foreign country where many Australians had died in the past. Both **AR7** and **AR11** noted the atmosphere of pure fear present in Korea. Whilst they made these comments talking about Koreans, it may well have been an unconscious reflection or projection of their own fear. Indeed, only days before my arrival a North Korean fighter plane was intercepted in Seoul air space and several "intruders" had been shot on the border between North and South Korea. The threat of invasion was omnipresent. The Australians may be **(e)** reflecting the epitome of self preservation - a survival mentality.

Within this scenario of duress, the management of aggression and the maintenance of self esteem create a 'cocktail of contradiction'. Kets deVries<sup>264</sup> considers the awkward balance of inward and outward-directed aggression with self preservation, and makes a connection to narcissistic identification and narcissistic needs which he describes as "...an archaic love of self, being the basis of self preservation and experienced gradually during the course of human development as a sense of self esteem."<sup>265</sup> In doing so, Kets deVries argues we see others as reflectors of the self, incorporating their pleasing elements and expelling the unpleasant. The experience of the latter is often associated with a challenge to our self esteem in the form of our own self doubt, or aggravated by embarrassment or insults. Rochlin<sup>266</sup> contends a narcissistic injury will always prompt an aggressive reaction. Consequently, Australians may project their aggression toward themselves, or upon others inducing internal and/or social disharmony. It is the ability to adequately reconcile inward and

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<sup>263</sup> From Henry Lawson's poem Freedom on the Wallaby

<sup>264</sup> Kets deVries (1995)

<sup>265</sup> Kets deVries (1995) pp.10-11

<sup>266</sup> Rochlin (1973) quoted in Kets de Vries (1995) p11

outwardly-directed aggression that enables an individual to obviate thoughts and feelings of embarrassment and remorse, and to adapt and survive the rigours of corporate life in a foreign environment.

In the context of this study, it may be that in trying to survive the rigours of business in Seoul - the different culture, language, social and business values systems etcetera; and the additional challenges and threats associated with an Australian company's significant financial and logistic investment in setting up an office in Seoul (an extremely difficult marketplace) - the lone expatriate executive feels the ominous threat of failure and perhaps humiliation. Efforts to relieve the pressure, may result in self induced censure, perhaps leading to 'workaholism'. For example, a number of Australian informants indicated they worked inordinately long hours, including Sundays...a form of inward-directed aggression. The potential for flagging self esteem is clear. If this is then added to the apparent difficulty the informants have in coming to terms with their ill-defined concept of themselves as Australians, it is reasonable to suggest Australian informants may channel some of their inward-directed aggression by projecting it on to Koreans. Hence the description of *Australian-ness* in terms of what Australians are not.

### 3.1.3 Openness

When dealing with Koreans, Australian informants felt the most prominent feature of their Australian-ness was "openness". It was valued by some as a positive trait: **AR5** suggested "*Australians are fairly relaxed open people...*";<sup>267</sup> and **AR6**: "*We do treat people equally and fairly generally don't have a barrow to push...we are a race interested in others inquisitive outward going inherently honest attitude to the financial side of life...no white envelopes (a euphemism for bribes)...relatively easy going...don't get too emotionally involved.*"<sup>268</sup>

For **AR9**, his Australian-ness was reflected in "*my immediate friendliness and lay back style...*"<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> AR5, ARESPO L72

<sup>268</sup> AR6, ARESPO L93-8

Some Australian informants expressed a degree of self consciousness about their openness in the Korean environment tending to devalue it as a trait of their Australian-ness owing either to their personal uncertainty about how to behave or from fear of exploitation, or from having been exploited by Koreans.

**AR1** reported openness as tinged with regret: *“initially it was my openness...I thought you could operate pretty much like home...I soon found out you can't.”*<sup>270</sup>

**AR2** stated: *“Australians think openly...openness is not always well received or reciprocated...Koreans see this openness.”*<sup>271</sup> **AR8** was quite cynical in this regard: *“They see Australians as suckers come to set up joint ventures and concede too much discount too much and compromise their standards.”*<sup>272</sup>

### 3.1.3.1 Openness and Relationship

To me, as an observer, this professed “openness” seemed a contradiction. Openness is a “...characteristic of relationships, not of individuals.”<sup>273</sup> The question I asked myself was “open” with whom, about what? Most Australian informants were clear about their business objectives and the outcomes they wished to achieve but they were less confident, or certain, about the process of actually achieving these objectives and outcomes in terms of their understanding of the Korean culture; their interpretation of the Korean business environment and/or their relationships with their Korean employees. It seemed to me that if the parties were not perceiving the relationship in the same light, then openness could only flicker. As shall be seen shortly, Australian and Korean views of relationship were not shared. Thus professed Australian “openness” may be more a fantasy of how things should be, as distinct from how they are.

Considering openness within the Australian employer/Korean employee relationship, there is an immediate, ideological contradiction between the way Australians and Koreans perceive the working environment. Australian's saw their

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<sup>269</sup> AR9, ARESPO L324

<sup>270</sup> AR1, ARESPO L268-9

<sup>271</sup> AR2, ARESPO L284-8

<sup>272</sup> AR8, ARESPO L225-6

<sup>273</sup> Senge (1992) p284

business organisations as Australian, but located in Seoul. As such, they favoured and advocated “idealistic” notions of applied contemporary management practices - industrial democracy; worker participation; promotion on merit. Notwithstanding the Australian informants’ image of an *Australian institution or organisation* in-the-mind and the best of intentions, their concerted efforts to press the introduction of contemporary management practices were invariably thwarted. In these terms, proposed means of openness in practice were more a wish than a reality.

Korean workers tended to view Australian companies as Korean, believing Korean administrative rules should/did apply. Their expectations of the working environment were entirely different and centred around Korean administrative traditions - authoritarian, hierarchical structure; one-way, top-down communication; promotion based on seniority alone. Under these conditions Korean workers chose not (they may argue there was no choice involved) to engage in open, two-way dialogue about work matters; they did not see it as their place to do so. They did not offer suggestions, did not provide advice; did not ask direct questions; nor challenge or seek clarification of matters - on the premise the Australian boss would lose face if it was perceived his/her instructions were ‘unclear’; or the worker would lose face for not understanding a ‘clear’ (or ambiguous) direction. If uncertain, the Korean workers would apparently huddle and hope they could best guess what was required. This was arguably reflective of the strength of the *Korean institution or organisation* in-the-mind. In this light Australian informants saw individual Koreans as unable to reflect and incapable of abstract thinking. Ironically, Australian thinking went unchallenged with the result that progress within the business was invariably slow.

Notwithstanding Australian willingness to be open, openness as a characteristic of relationship was not extant in this business environment. Both Australians and Koreans seemed certain about the validity of their respective institutions or organisations in-their-minds, reflecting distinct elements of their National character. They seemed unwilling to bend or to share their thoughts in a way that would reflect weakness. They seemed unwilling to seek “...access to depths of understanding not accessible otherwise...”<sup>274</sup> Australian informant’s felt uncomfortable about the idea of

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<sup>274</sup> David Bohm quoted in Senge (1992) p284



discussing interpersonal cross-cultural differences with Koreans. Indeed, it was undiscussable and this undiscussability was also undiscussable. The ambiguity and uncertainty of the Australian-Korean relationship appears to feature many of the elements of each other's "unknown" values and processes. They cannot be discussed because they are unknown. Thus the fear associated with attempting to raise the issue of interpersonal cross-cultural differences resulted in the arousal of self reinforcing and self proliferating defensive responses. The potential for further misunderstanding is limitless. My experience as researcher in the research is indicative and is documented in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma** at the end of Chapter 4.

### 3.1.3.2 Trust

For these issues to become discussable and hence managed, requires trust. Trust in this context is both a condition and an outcome: trust in oneself leading to a level of mutual trust between the parties. For the Australian informant the uncertainty about managing self in the Korean environment and, for the Korean worker, the uncertainty about managing self in an Australian organisation within a Korean environment pushes the boundaries of trust at a personal, and group level. The differing and confusing expectations, grounded as they were in negativity - historical and anecdotal - not knowing who this foreign person really is, tends to negate trust. Combine this with possible unregistered unconscious processes; the fear of losing control or the fear of failure and the prospect of arousing defensive responses is reinforced.

The collective suspicion surrounding these reported relationships seemed to create an environment of mistrust which was counter productive to establishing openness. Unfortunately, the friction resulting from their general inability to accommodate or reach an equitable compromise about their differences created significant ire. The constructed case study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** at the end of this Section, graphically encapsulates some of these differences, and the consequences.

As I suggested at the beginning of this Section, openness in this light seems a contradiction. Without a relationship built on shared values, Australian or Korean "self

interest” appeared to reign and the potential for a mutually supportive interpretation of each other’s views seemed remote. Paradoxically, self interest is apparent in many Australian businesses in the form of organisational politics, a feature much maligned by Koreans who claim that in a purely Korean working environment self interest does not exist owing to the unique construction of a Korean group. This was discussed earlier in Section 1.2.2 where I described various aspects of the Korean identity based on the traditional Korean view, especially Korean Concepts 1 and 2. I shall discuss it further in the constructed case study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**; in Section 3.2.2 about relationships and references to Confucianism; and in Section 4.1.3 which discusses Business Ethics and Korean Concept 3 - *Pujo* or Reciprocal Help.

### 3.1.3.3 Openness as a Defence

From a different viewpoint, Australians’ professed openness could be seen as a defensive response in it’s own right. It may be a mask<sup>275</sup> designed to disguise their uncertainty or fear of exploitation by their Korean employees or Korean business contacts. Australian informants, seemingly confused behind their masks, were also conscious of the facade or mask which Koreans allegedly hide behind in order to seek business advantage. This is not to say that the road to “access” a satisfying Australian-Korean relationship was expected to be easy, nor does it imply that Korean business and society is inaccessible. Quite the contrary, it is the exhausting experience of the journey to accessibility that Australian informants found confronting. They had difficulty accommodating what they perceived to be key elements of the Korean National character in the marketplace: the delicacies of nuance, the constant sense of feigned propriety and sincerity; a moral tone which focuses on a speck of dust more than the clean sheet surrounding it; the continuing need to choose appropriate words that can not be misinterpreted - almost a separate vocabulary; the respect for the natural order when the natural order seems antithetical. In this climate, “...defensive routines are ‘self sealing’ - they obscure their own existence...we have society wide norms that say we should be open and that defensiveness is bad. This makes it difficult to acknowledge defensive routines, even if we know we are being defensive.”<sup>276</sup> The constructed case

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<sup>275</sup> The mask has relevance as a metaphor in the Korean folk environment where the traditional mask-dance drama satirises human frailty.

<sup>276</sup> Senge (1992) p254

study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**, based on Australian informants' experience in Seoul, explores and supports the essential elements proposed here.

### **3.1.4 Preface to the Case Study: Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**

This Section reviews and summarises some of the material about Australian-ness covered so far and provides an overview and introduction to the constructed Case Study to follow. It reiterates some of the difficulties I had in interpreting and reporting the data.

Whilst claiming the most prominent feature of their Australian-ness was their openness, Australian informants were far from open when talking about themselves. In fact, they seemed evasive. As discussed in Section 3.1.3.3, Australians' professed openness, could be seen as defensive. This response may have been designed to disguise their uncertainty or fear of exploitation by their Korean employees or Korean business contacts. As I intimated in Section 3.1, Australian informant's accounts of their actions and reactions to the *actual experience* of business life in Seoul seemed more reflective of their Australian-ness than their personal references to themselves.

In Section 2.3.8, I mentioned my concerns about how to best represent this material. I indicated that four Australian informants had referred to two, clearly separate, industrial relations situations. Both situations had occurred at about the same time, a few months before my arrival in Seoul. The first event centred on an Australian manager's reactions to an ambit claim proposed by a group of Korean staff. The second event concerned the promotion of a young, Korean female employee; the negative reaction of a more "senior" Korean female employee; and the manner in which the Australian management resolved the impasse. The informant's vivid descriptions of these industrial situations - the words chosen; the emotions that were aroused and expressed in the telling - gave an insight into the character of the people involved and their "institutional" behaviour. They provided a functional sense of the Australian's Australian-ness and, at the same time, the Korean's Korean-ness. The events also highlighted some of the difficulties associated with working in a cross-cultural business environment. They reflected situations, problems and decisions that, I speculated, could

be commonly faced by Australian managers in Seoul “today” and, in my fantasy, be faced in the future. The events dealt with real people in actual situations - the substance of this thesis.

I am conscious that some readers may interpret this Case as a contrivance. In a way they are correct, but, I have not designed the Case with deception in mind. On the contrary, I have taken great pains to maintain the integrity of the data and to present it in an illustrative and instructional way. Indeed, prior to leaving Seoul I was able to verify and confirm the legitimacy of the reported industrial events with a most reputable, independent source.<sup>277</sup> In Section 2.3.8, I noted my concern about how to simultaneously recount the nuance of each industrial situation; describe each player’s role and behaviour; and yet maintain the informant’s confidentiality. I felt the data and the potential lessons to be gleaned from it, were too valuable to neglect. Consequently, I resolved to represent the two separate industrial relations events, as concurrent events in the one organisation. In doing so, I was conscious of taking extreme care to portray both the events and the informant’s personal characteristics as they were reported to me and as I perceived them during our interviews. I was concerned to use the informant’s *actual* words to reflect, as far as possible, *their meaning* of the events. Their names have been changed for obvious reasons. In addition, I decided to overlay the analysis and commentary with my own evolving, interpretation of the informant’s report and my experience of it as an instrument in the research. In this way, I hoped to convey a progressive unfolding of the complexities of what I had discovered within the data. By developing a multi-level set of interpretations through the analysis: using metaphors of coloniser/ invader and National character in-the-mind, and a detailed commentary, I have attempted to progressively reveal the nuance of Australian (and Korean) character, as reported to me. The psychodynamics of the Industrial Relations context also become apparent. Each layer provides a new level of insight. My role as researcher in the research is integral to this process, providing a further dimension to the developing store of data. Accordingly, the value of applying the interpretive approach to research is reinforced.

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<sup>277</sup> Conversation with **AR9**

Read in the context of the foregoing Section on *Australian-ness*, this constructed Case reinforces the idea of Australians and Koreans carrying *National character* in-the-mind. The Case indicates that National character may be expressed in various forms, and strengthens the hypothesis that studying the dynamics of an event provides for clearer interpretations.

The picture of Australian-ness will be further developed in **Section 4.1** after I have considered Korean-ness in **Section 3.2**.

## CASE STUDY 1 - Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+

In Section 1.3, I proposed individuals carry idealised images of a *National character* in-the-mind and that Australian and South Korean business people carry idealised images of Australian-ness and Korean-ness as reflective of those National characters. I also argued that examining the dynamics occurring where these images interface during business encounters may enable us to develop more accurate interpretations of the interaction, providing greater insight into the cross-cultural relationship.

In this Case, I wish to examine one of these interfaces: an Australian-South Korean industrial relations incident. As indicated in Section 3.1.4, the Case is a compilation of two industrial relations situations<sup>278</sup> reported as having occurred in Australian businesses in Seoul. The first event centres on an Australian manager's reactions to an ambit claim proposed by a group of Korean staff. The second event concerns the promotion of a young, Korean female employee; the negative reaction of a more "senior" Korean female employee; and the manner in which the Australian management resolved the impasse. The events have been meshed and the names changed to mask identification. Wherever possible the interviewee's actual words have been used to ensure the report is true to theirs. The Case reinforces the idea of Australians and Koreans carrying *National character* in-the-mind; notes that the National character may be expressed in various forms, and strengthens the hypothesis that studying the dynamics of an event provides for clearer interpretations.

The Case is also relevant from the perspective of the role of researcher in the research, but I shall explain this element in more detail in the commentary section at the end.

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<sup>278</sup> This is a compilation of two industrial situations and approaches reported by **AR1**, **AR4**, **AR8** and **AR10**

## **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**

This Case Study begins with a brief description of background material followed by an examination of the players in the industrial scene. It concludes by processing some of the psychodynamics involved.

**BACKGROUND:** MultiCorp+ is an Australian owned business with interests throughout Asia and the Pacific. It provides agency representation and commercial advice and support to prospective Australian business people interested in trading with the countries in which it operates. MultiCorp+ has been operating in South Korea for many years and has established a reputable standing amongst its competitors.

**THE PLAYERS:** Carl Bragg is the Australian Manager of MultiCorp+ in Seoul. He is supported by two Australians. Julie Leicester supervises the Australian connection and Corporate Finance Section consisting of 7 Korean women. Toby Shields supervises the Business Development and Marketing section of 2 Korean men and 6 women. Kim Ying Chi is the oldest, female Korean employed with MultiCorp+.

**THE AMBIT CLAIM:** This is **Carl Bragg's** first assignment for MultiCorp+. Indeed, it's his first overseas assignment. He has been contracted for 3 years and is out to establish a reputation for achievement. He sees his future as a major player in the International business scene. A feisty individual, Carl's assertiveness verges on aggression. MultiCorp+ has a volume target they want Bragg to achieve and he intends to get it.

In the past Carl had always operated as a free agent. He had rarely supervised staff and to be responsible for an office of 2 Australians and 15 Koreans was an added attraction to his new job. He saw himself as a leader and motivator although his ideas came more from books, than experience and his leadership style was patently authoritarian.

After the first month of his posting Carl and his wife decided to discontinue the Korean culture and language lessons provided by the company. Whilst he knew enough

to order drinks and get directions Carl didn't think the effort was worthwhile. "The longer I'm here the less I know about them...Koreans assume if you speak Korean you know all about their history and everything else. If you don't, you don't "like" Koreans. I just won't ever understand them", he said.

Carl was less than complimentary about his Korean staff. "They work long and hard but not smart. They are not good problem solvers. They learn rote and implement rote. The rule book is gospel. Ask them to reconsider a proposal and offer suggestions, they get into a huddle and try to think what the boss is thinking. Nothing ever comes of it. No one ever asks a question. I could run the office with far less staff...replace them all with a few *thinking* Australians."

Some months ago Carl had some significant industrial relations problems based on (in his view) "totally unreasonable, unrealistic demands and expectations contained in an ambit claim of the Korean staff. As a group, they occupied the office for weeks. They didn't, wouldn't go home. Individuals lost their perspective in the group (union) activities. Finally, we threw our might against theirs...and won. We are governed by Korean law and our MultiCorp+ business rules...staff must accept Australianisation or get a job elsewhere. We are not a Korean business. We won't offer the same conditions. They are greedy and self centred, the rudest people I have ever met. They behave like peasants. They are not a generation out of the rice fields. They think the money we throw at them makes them sophisticated. This is still a hermit kingdom."

The ambit claim was not the only item on the industrial agenda.

**THE KIM YING CHI INCIDENT:** **Julie Leicester** has worked in Korea for 2 years. It was her first overseas posting. She found the cultural adjustment of working in a foreign country and with only female subordinates a little daunting. "I have learnt through the experience of doing, often in adversity, that life in Korea is much different to home. Management in Korea is a man's world. A female manager gets respect over time, but you're almost like a third sex. Confucianism doesn't cope with women managers. I think my staff saw me as Carl Bragg's puppet. Apart from this I had a real



problem understanding how these Korean women related to each other. It's been tough.”

A few months ago MultiCorp+ decided to expand its Seoul activities. “I had a lot more work to do so I decided to devolve some of the less onerous tasks to two of the Koreans. There was some resistance at first, but with a lot of encouragement they took it on and we were progressing pretty well. They were hard workers and since MultiCorp+ had a performance pay system I decided to give them both a raise. I called it a promotion. The younger of the two was most reluctant to accept the raise. She kept saying no, no. She didn't think she could relate to her potential contacts favourably. But I insisted she was the best one for the job and deserved the extra money.

When I made the promotion announcement to the rest of the staff one of the older women, **Kim Ying Chi**, became very upset. She refused to do her own work and was more than a disruptive influence on the other women. On one occasion, I saw her hitting one of the young women I had promoted. I tried to counsel these two and spoke to the others to find out what was going on, but Kim Ying Chi refused to explain her behaviour. The others weren't much help. From then on things just went from bad to worse. Kim Ying Chi began arriving late for work and when she did arrive sat at her desk staring blankly at the wall. Carl moved her to a vacant desk outside his office, gave her specific tasks and scrutinised her work. The union got involved and everyone threatened to stop work. Finally, Carl took legal advice before assisting Kim Ying Chi to leave.”

“I didn't realise until she left there was an unspoken hierarchy in the office. Kim Ying Chi was the oldest woman employed by MultiCorp+. She was forty three. She had also been working here longer than anyone else, although she only performed routine tasks and was less efficient than most. Nevertheless, she was regarded by the other women as *the senior* and everyone deferred to her. As senior no one could call her by her first name. To do so would be disrespectful. Even her best friend, a student from the same school who graduated a year after, did not refer to her using her first name. As a Junior she could not see herself on equal footing. Kim Ying Chi was on top and it turned out that as senior she felt (as did most of the other women) she should

have received the promotion on the basis of years of service. She had been slighted. Concepts of merit, efficiency and doing more responsible work didn't matter."

"I soon realised it's very hard to promote Koreans on merit, rather than seniority. Koreans expect to get their promotions over time. Even the words in their title are important. It defines their status. You have to understand the "way" things are done here. Loss of face is everything. You can't afford to back people into a corner. Even after she left the other's resentment lasted. We Australians can be very casual, but here in Seoul, we can't get away with it. I think Koreans really fear...distrust foreigners. They don't show a weakness and they'll take advantage of yours. They can be militant and aggressive (no compromise) especially at union level. You have to hit them back with a bigger stick to keep them in their place otherwise they will take advantage of you."

**Toby Shields** supervised the Business Development and Marketing section. He'd been in Seoul for 9 years and had worked in a number of other Asian countries. He explained the situation as follows:

"You have to be careful the way you play the industrial game here in Seoul. Carl's a nice enough bloke but he just doesn't listen...to me, or to anyone. The staff were up to here with his self-important antics. You can't come to Korea and just assume you can do things. You must ease your way in, investigate first. If you don't, you can develop an anti-Korean feeling that will overwhelm you! It'll get worse the longer you're here. The sheer frustration in communication; the differences in understanding; let alone the inability to speak the language. Everything seems illogical. Meaning is a problem. But, it probably cuts both ways."

"I'd been working in South Korea for a few years before joining MultiCorp+. I started here three or four years before Julie and Carl and tried to open the door and get away from bowing, freed up the formality and the atmosphere. Staff as individuals are nice and polite. How you treat and don't treat your staff is important to enable them to lead a life without imposing or boss dominating. Most married blokes give their wives their pay cheque and live off their overtime. So I make sure there is always a reason for them to work back. They appreciate that. There's not a lot of loyalty to foreign

companies. An individual will bring you down if there is money (a white envelope) in it. But if you make the effort, you reduce the hassle.”

Things changed a lot when Carl arrived. Formality returned almost over night. I guess “that’s due to the boss is the boss syndrome”. Of course, if you cross one Korean they’ll all join together like chain mail and it’ll take a lot of negotiating to clear the air. That’s what happened here a few months back. It doesn’t matter who was right. Carl will tell you “Koreans just want to talk things to death. They don't want to resolve things immediately they have to go through the process of meetings. Play the game.” He’ll tell you “you can't afford to do that if you want to get business done.” In my view, “it is the only way you’ll get things done in Korea.”

**ANALYSIS:** In the Preface to this paper, I indicated how Australian business people tend to shy away from South Korea. The reasons are not entirely clear. For both nations the history of their land is one of colonisation. Australia’s indigenous inhabitants are reported to have traversed the land bridge between Asia and Australia moving progressively South over 50,000 years ago. The Korean Peninsular was colonised by European tribes moving from as far west as Finland, through Russia and Mongolia, over 5000 years ago.

In more recent times, say the last two to four hundred years, Australia and South Korea share the invidious experience of being attractive to coloniser/invasers. Australia by the British in search of a prison as far away from home as possible, and South Korea by coloniser/invasers in the form of Chinese, Japanese and arguably American armies.

Australians and South Koreans, influenced by their history, developed distinctive behavioural patterns. Whereas multicultural Australia, as we know it today, developed from small penal colonies through successive waves of immigrants from Europe and Asia; South Korea has maintained it’s mono-cultural base and it’s antipathy to outsiders. This reflects a contrasting mindset vis a vis: coloniser and the colonised.

I have previously discussed an Australian attitude to work reflecting a “conscript” mindset: a legacy of a convict past. This mindset implies people are forced to work by uncaring employers who are out to exploit them. Workers respond by doing only what is given to them or necessary to get by, without thinking about the quality of their contribution. The employer or manager’s corresponding mindset is: workers are idle, untrustworthy and require constant supervision. These values have been perpetuated in Australia’s Industrial Law. South Korean workers too, have been accused of reflecting a no care no responsibility approach to work largely attributed to Japan’s rigid and ruthless administration of the country from 1910 to 1945.

Neither Australia nor South Korea has a recent history of colonising or invading other countries. (With the exception - both supported the United States in Vietnam.) On the other hand, as players in the global economy, Australian and Korean business representatives attempting to establish a commercial foothold in the other’s country could be perceived as colonisers or invaders. At present, the nett impact on the respective nations appears to be relatively small, yet growing.

In analysing this case, I wish to use the metaphors of *coloniser/invader* and the concept of *National character-in-the-mind* represented by MultiCorp+, as vehicles for describing the psychodynamics that tend to arise in an industrial relations context, particularly when that context is a foreign environment.

**Carl Bragg and the Ambit Claim:** Carl Bragg tends to typify the persona of the classic coloniser/invader. For overseas Australians the climate is ripe for idealising the excitement of mission; the challenge to succeed, to win against the odds in an exotic location as a denial of the dilemmas of expatriate life - poor accommodation and infrastructure, monotonous food, unsafe water, and ironically (for Australians) the tyranny of distance from home - feelings of helplessness and separation.

Carl’s manner and behaviour imply a *saviour* mentality. Father knows best. Here the unconscious-Australian-company (MultiCorp+)-in-the-mind is depicted by authority and control. As the manager and wielder of that authority and control Carl will tell - others will respond and (hopefully) follow. In South Korea, the strategy of

*the loudest voice wins* is an oft used ploy to intimidate the opposition, no matter who it is. Attack is the best form of defence. The authority and control model is consistent with this ethos. Management's implicit expectation is workers will be compliant and dependent simply because they are paid well and provided "quality" hygiene factors<sup>279</sup> in terms of working conditions. Carl has introjected management's right to rule: "...staff must accept Australianisation or get a job elsewhere". This reflects the manager's parallel to the conscript mindset. Authority and status come with position. Dependency, compliance and conformity are the standard response expectations of such an ideology.

For Carl, his unspoken fear is that the masses will not feel dependent, will not be compliant and will not conform. Hence the coloniser/invader of the past was supported by a militia to enforce law and order. Today, the coloniser/invader is able to call upon the company rules and ultimately the laws of the land to support and legitimate his actions. Carl is in fact dependent upon them. But, the company rules have another purpose. Carl seems to have an uncertain sense of self esteem and uses the rule book as a form of security, as a defence against his lack of people management skills and experience. His comment "I could run the office with far less staff...replace them all with a few *thinking* Australians" is almost delusional in its context as these Australians are quite obviously unavailable. Unfortunately for Carl, rules can also be perceived as impediments to justice and as open to challenge by the colonised.

The greatest threat to management is organised insubordination. This is most often a direct challenge to the manager's competency, which traditionally is attached to position along with authority and status. Today, competency has an ethereal quality. This insubordination is harnessed and legitimated by the worker's representative body - the Union. The union has the power of numbers and often a legal status of its own. Invariably, it is a force to be reckoned with even in symbolic terms. The union acts as a container for the worker's projections of anger, disappointment, unrest and channels these in a more "palatable" way to the target: management. The union also provides management with a container to project its hostility toward the staff. It is often easier to blame lack of production on the activities of the unions than to confront individuals.

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<sup>279</sup> Herzberg (1966)

Management may also use the union, through splitting and projection, to locate representations of their own inadequacies. In this way, it is the Korean workers who “lost their perspective in the group (Union) activity” whilst, arguably, the Australian management was “in control”, rational, ethical...and right!

Essentially, the union threatens management’s power to decide. This incites anxiety in both parties. At a personal level, managers may be physically threatened: a frightening experience, especially if the challenge is presented with vehemence - often the case in South Korea. More intimately, in the face of physical challenge the manager’s concept of self identity may be exposed as weak or incapable. A union dispute can raise questions about one’s ability to manage. Home office back in Australia may question the manager’s coping skills, ability *to do* and whether the effect of such a situation may damage the company’s overall business outcomes or reputation within the foreign country, at home, and/or internationally. In light of Carl’s lack of people management experience he is vulnerable. The anxiety invoked by this process may be considerable.

At the beginning of a confrontation neither management nor the union really “knows” how far they can legitimately push the other side. Again, it may turn out to be the *loudest voice wins*. Notwithstanding, to ease the way, management and the union as entities have developed rituals and a “collusive lattice in which each...accepts a tacitly agreed unconscious role”<sup>280</sup> to enable and facilitate the expression of destructive ideas that could otherwise threaten management’s hierarchical position if expressed elsewhere. Generally, there is a schizoid defence mechanism which protects both management and the union through passive, compliant conformity, subject to the prevailing politics of the negotiation phase. In this process South Koreans will argue they seek mutual benefit. Australian managers would unanimously express a contrary view.

Once industrial action is initiated the possibility of failure threatens the manager’s identity and sense of effectiveness, competence and expertise. The same is true for the union side. In South Korea the stakes are always high. Loss of face can be

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<sup>280</sup> Obholzer & Roberts (1994) p134

a wounding experience for all and have lasting import. As one Korean informant summed it up: “The way to survive is to portray goodness but to win at all costs. It is rude to say openly what you want but Koreans do it anyway. It is a matter of image versus success. Maintain both. Koreans are good at it. They won't argue openly with you but they have long memories. Forgive, but not forget.”<sup>281</sup>

In Carl's case, he sought security in establishing an idealised image of MultiCorp+. He had not “heard” Toby Shields advice, so his idealised image was untempered by the realities of local, historical experience. His handling of the industrial dispute is indicative:- a political analysis of office processes; a matched reading with the company rule book; an appeal to Korean law; denying the origins of the dispute by couching it in terms of “cultural difference”; a clear choice not to engage in dialogue at a level that might defuse the tension. Finally, the application of the “might is right” principle. And whilst might may well be right, the affect is low morale, alienation and distrust on behalf of all parties rather than getting on with business.

As a first time coloniser/invasor Carl's difficulty is his distance from the security of home office in Australia. Notwithstanding modern technological aids like the telephone and the fax, those back home can rarely really *understand* what's going on. He finds himself confronting the authority figure at home from a distance unable to fully explain and unable to obtain the support he really needs. He is struck by a dilemma of conflicting emotions. “The avoidance of punishment (such as rejection or ridicule by the others and fears of separation) and the obtaining of rewards (such as gratification of dependency needs)”<sup>282</sup> appear to be Carl's motives in behaviour. One expects the authority figure wants results within time frames without excuses. MultiCorp+ has invested heavily in Carl's appointment and his prompt resolution of the problem is essential. (It costs about \$300,000 per annum to maintain an Australian office and one operative in Seoul.) It would seem, even unconsciously, Carl's future depends upon it. This pressure carries the attendant threat of rejection leading to feelings of persecution. The feelings of persecution are also apparent in the workplace by the staff “lock in”. Such stress can lead to harsh, inappropriate behaviour in

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<sup>281</sup> KR4, KRESPO L106-110.

<sup>282</sup> Kets de Vries (1995) p91

response which may not occur if the image of MultiCorp+, the Australian company-in-the-mind, and its accoutrements was less idealised.

As this is Carl's first overseas posting his insecurity is double edged. He sees the posting as an entree to an International career. In this posting he has given up what he knows to be predictable, reliable and true for uncertainty and doubt. Certainly his professional expertise will hold him in stead but the playing field has a different surface and the game has different rules. He has chosen not to learn the language, a bold step in a country where his South Korean counterparts appreciate foreigners at least attempting to learn more about their country. In an unfamiliar environment Carl's wife will expect to be attended to appropriately. She will be at a significant disadvantage if she is unable to converse with her home help or make her way in the market place. This has the effect of self imposed isolation. Again, Carl's identity is on the line. If he fails at work, his temporary home and his potential career may be less than satisfactory.

The question of who really has power in these circumstances - management, workers, Australians, Koreans - is debatable. As is so often the case in the industrial relations carousel, power shifts with time. In trying to assert their prerogative in an alien environment, managers in coloniser/invader role can easily be deflected from their organisational task by being sucked into petty power squabbles "over irreconcilable ideologies".<sup>283</sup> These are invariably battles that cannot be won.

In the situation described in the Case Study it serves the workers well to rebel against the coloniser/invader. It invokes the military metaphor that permeates South Korea and helps maintain the people's resolve. If the workers lose, their fears are confirmed. They can say we were right - Australians are coloniser/invaders; we are being persecuted and we will live to fight on. If the workers win, their fears are again confirmed but this time they receive respite in the form of compensation or reparation. They maintain their resolve and live to fight on.

Asking the question "who has power" may also be counter-productive. It reflects a defensive shift away from the real powerlessness management and the union

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<sup>283</sup> Stokes, J., in Obholzer & Roberts (1994) p122



both feel in their relative inability to control their own future; being at the mercy of demagogues. This is reflected in the “lock in” where workers occupied the offices for some weeks bringing the business to a standstill. The choice to be faced by management and the unions was whether to restrain the worker’s liberty or collude with insanity. Focussing on action and decision making was a defence against the helplessness evoked by this scenario.

**Julie Leicester and the Kim Ying Chi Incident:** Julie Leicester was a less experienced, less sophisticated coloniser/invader than Carl Bragg. She shared Carl’s idealised Australian company-in-the-mind but appeared to be more open to the environment, perhaps because she was closer to the coal face and was prepared to learn from hard knocks.

The incident with Kim Ying Chi gives us an opportunity to view the industrial scene from the perspective of the colonised. Kim Ying Chi’s behaviour was more than an annoyance to the management of MultiCorp+ and its staff. Her non-acceptance of the promotion decision was inconsistent with the management’s image of an Australian company-in-the-mind. There was more than one collective *National character-in-the-mind* present in MultiCorp+. An Australian one shared by Julie and Carl and a different one shared by Toby and the South Koreans.

Kim Ying Chi’s inability to accept management’s (Julie’s) decision to promote two Junior staff ahead of her and her “aberrant” behaviour gave Kim Ying Chi renegade status. One could argue Kim Ying Chi became a scapegoat for management’s inability to understand the “Korean Way” associated with promotion on seniority. The Case does not indicate what action (if any) was taken to placate Kim Ying Chi’s demand for promotion. Julie appeared helpless to resolve the matter. Once her competence was called into question the quality of trust versus mistrust vis a vis her staff and her credibility as a caring, responsible supervisor became questionable. Kim Ying Chi became the container for management’s frustration, helplessness and ineptitude. Once the union became involved Julie deferred to Carl.

Carl's image of MultiCorp+-in-the-mind is clear from the previous section. It was an Australian company with Australian rules. When confronted with the Kim Ying Chi incident he applied a traditional, hard nosed management tactic known in Japan as *giving the employee a window seat*. This strategy works within the rules, neither conforming with, nor breaching them. It seeks to shame the employee into submission. Eventually, the employee's concept of self identity is sufficiently challenged through embarrassment, isolation from colleagues, perceived persecution, resentment and sheer boredom that they choose to leave. Carl's resolution strategy was to remove the problem. It was achieved. Appealing to the rules to legitimate a dubious defensive tactic and achieve an outcome without apparently addressing the base premise is only to perpetuate anger and frustration in all parties. Treating Kim Ying Chi's misbehaviour in isolation, also enabled the other Korean employees to go on disowning and projecting unfavoured aspects of themselves into Kim Ying Chi, continuing the process to the cost of Kim Ying Chi and MultiCorp+.

From Kim Ying Chi's perspective, as the most senior Korean member of staff, her expectation of promotion was understandable. Her image of MultiCorp+-in-the-mind was of an organisation working under Korean law. In this regard, she could well expect Carl Bragg's understanding of her situation and to enforce her entitlement to the promotion and correct the apparent wrong committed by his female supervisor (Julie). All the Korean staff knew the Korean conventions relating to promotion and seniority and the consequences of breaching those conventions. A Junior had received a promotion she clearly indicated she did not want. Unfortunately, for Julie (and her staff) they were unable to articulate the conventions in a way she, and later Carl, could appreciate. It is debatable whether the Korean women's relationship with Julie was a traditional Korean worker-management relationship where workers defer as a sign of respect, and communication is one way: from the top down; or whether the women saw Julie as an Australian coloniser/invader and declined to communicate their real thoughts and feelings about their work. Notwithstanding, Kim Ying Chi became a martyr. Her behaviour a response to betrayal by Julie and Carl.

The Junior who declined promotion also had an image of MultiCorp+-in-the-mind consistent with the "Korean Way". Her declining the promotion was an

expression of her personal anxiety as well as the group's anxiety regarding the breach of the "Korean Way". As one Australian informant told me "Here if you don't fit in with your work mates, you don't exist."<sup>284</sup> Many Korean work (and social) dargs are sacrosanct. In Julie's Australian eyes, the fact the Junior couldn't see herself relating favourably to her potential contacts was a denial of what she was already doing. Julie did not see the Junior's dilemma associated with acceptance in the group: a far more problematic situation. From a business perspective, the Junior's fears were probably accurate. Koreans have a different conceptual frame when it comes to matching competence with age.<sup>285</sup> The Junior can be seen as carrying the anxieties of the other Korean women not wanting to be in her position. These anxieties were eventually split-off, projected, and ultimately dissolved with Kim Ying Chi's departure.

**Toby Shields** Toby Shields is almost a consultant-observer in this case. He is a boundary rider capable of standing back and evaluating his surroundings; to learn from experience and apply it. He is intuitive and mindful. He has made a conscious effort to adapt his management approach to meet the vagaries of the local environment. He has recognised the changes in MultiCorp+ and the way over recent years it has attracted staff with similar valencies. There is no indication that he has been seduced into acting out other's projections. On the contrary, he seems to be managing them.

Unlike Carl, Toby has highly refined interpersonal skills. He put people before the work, knowing the work would get done more efficiently and effectively as a consequence. Whilst acknowledging the conflict and frustrations of his cross-cultural experiences, Toby enjoys life in Seoul, displays a genuine warmth toward the Korean people and seems to have a real interest in the activities of the region. Rather than being a coloniser/invader, Toby is more in the mould of Marco Polo, a trader, and whilst his comments were touched with wry, cynical wit, he seems to accept the realities of the Australian experience of doing business in Korea.

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<sup>284</sup> AR1, ARESPO L274

<sup>285</sup> As AR11 indicates "There is a belief that until you are 30 you can't do, or be, or learn anything. For example, I wanted to promote a young chap here, but he rejected it owing to the age hierarchy in the business world." ARESPO L676-8

**COMMENTARY** This Case Study highlighted the power of the unconscious *National character-in-the-mind* in the form of an Australian company: MultiCorp+. It also demonstrated how in adopting a particular mindset - coloniser/invader - Australian managers in a representative role in South Korea can prejudice or negatively influence the success of their organisation, it's staff and themselves.

Carl's coloniser/invader role demonstrated the need for Australian managers in Korea to be aware of group processes and the way to manage them effectively. It identified the need to exercise an open minded approach to management recognising preconceived ideas can have negative consequences. In idealising the Australian company-in-the-mind managers need to be sure not to be drawn into unwinnable petty power squabbles "over irreconcilable ideologies" and to empathise rather than criticise. The juxtaposition of Carl and Toby's roles highlighted the need for managers to manage (as far as possible) the projections of others rather than being seduced to act them out.

The Kim Ying Chi incident emphasises the need for sensitivity to cultural differences and the realisation that one's *National character-in-the-mind* (no matter the configuration or form that "*National character*" might take) is not necessarily shared by others. Indeed, in South Korea it is most unlikely to align. To be dismissive of the other's image of the *National character* can be counter productive to all. In addition, the Kim Ying Chi incident indicated that what may appear to be an annoying individual event may have institutional consequences and may be better processed at an institutional level.<sup>286</sup> This in turn is more likely to force individuals to own their projections and unsavoury personal fantasies rather than projecting them on to others. The outcome of this is to better enable the institution to fulfil its primary charter and for the staff to share the joy.

Researcher in the Research I remarked in the introduction to this Case about the relevance of the role of researcher in the research. I have deliberately left my comments about this until now because I did not wish to pre-empt the reader's interpretation of the story line. One of the features of my processing the Australian players in this Case was my internalisation of their perspective. I noted during and after the interviews my

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<sup>286</sup> Obholzer & Roberts (1994) p137.

personal identification with elements of their character, behaviour and experience. Some of these elements I perceived as offensive, some enlightening and others confusing. All contributed to clearer interpretation and greater understanding of the data, and my place in it. An interesting example of the subtlety of this process occurred when I noted on reading an early draft of the Case how my feelings about the characters, particularly Carl, were reflected in the tone of the writing. At first I dismissed this as an aberration, but the more I thought about “the tone”, the more I began to realise my formerly unknown feelings. The more I thought about these feelings, the more I began to appreciate the fine line between whimsy and valuable data. The following section reports more of my role as researcher in the research both as an aid for interpreting the Case and as a series of learning points for future researchers.

My initial reaction to Carl Bragg was disapproval. To me his abrasive, narrow-mindedness characterised many of the managers with whom I have dealt over recent years; personal behaviours that have led to organisational decline. As our discussion proceeded and Carl revealed more of his personal and specialised employment background, his *living* experience of the Case scenario slowly unveiled another facet of his persona. I began to realise how Carl was professionally unprepared for what had happened. Certainly, he had contributed to this himself by declining to follow through on the training his company had offered, but his curriculum vitae made little reference to the vagaries of managing people. His behaviour began to make sense. Whilst not feeling sorry for him, I found myself becoming more understanding of his dilemma and less inclined to judge him. My interpretation of his experience was changing. It became more refined as I spoke with the other players involved in the Case and later, on reflection, as I was writing it. Toward the end of the interview Carl began talking about his family background and childhood experiences. What became somewhat disturbing for me was that elements of these experiences were closely aligned with my own. I found myself projecting the anger of my corporate experience at Carl at one level and identifying with him at a personal level. I caught myself thinking “I am not like Carl...Carl is not like me?!”

My interview encounter with Julie was a stark contrast. Whereas the Australian males I had interviewed were most wary, Julie treated me as if she had known me for

some time. I was a little surprised at her frank comments, as if my presence was providing an opportunity for her to unburden herself of pent up tension - like a younger sister telling her big brother what had happened to her over recent times. The interview was certainly a free flowing exchange and definitely a “woman’s view”. By this I mean, Julie tended to emphasise examples exclusively reflecting a woman’s place in the Korean business scene.

Julie’s comments focussed upon her difficulty in coming to terms with her integration into a foreign culture and the conflict with her expectations. She spoke of the inadequacy of the training she’d received before leaving Australia, focussing on topics of concern to Australia, rather than the types of problems she was likely to confront in her work...practical day to day issues of potential cross-cultural conflict and how to deal with them. “It (the training) should be directed at the foreign culture and how ours (the Australian) might be misunderstood.”

As Julie was talking I found myself identifying with her dilemma, comparing and contrasting my own management experience of resistance to change in a rigid, hierarchical environment; the expectations of staff about promotion based on years of service rather than merit; the attainment of training competencies. I pondered whether my work experience was being reflected in my body language and “encouragers to talk”. In a sense, I was anxious about colluding with the development of the conversation because I was interested in how people are “prepared” for employment overseas from a training perspective. Paradoxically, at this time, I was anxious about my competence as a researcher and my own training for this, my first research experience in a foreign country.

My interview with Toby was a further contrast to the other two encounters. Apart from the character differences intimated in the Case and described earlier in this commentary, the interview was informative at the level of personal insight. After it, my private experience of Korean behaviour and Seoul generally - in various banks, bookshops, Buddhist temples, markets and restaurants; as a commuter in lifts, buses, taxis, and trains; and general street life - began to take on a new light. I began to “see” things differently. I began consciously noticing myself reshaping my interpretations of

my Korean experience. It was as if Toby had given me a frame for seeing and interpreting new vistas; and difference.

I feel my varying experiences of Carl, Julie and Toby (a series of first encounters) was reflective of what happens to many of us when we first meet. From my pre-reading and discussions with numerous Australians who had worked and were working in Korea, I had developed preconceived ideas and expectations about the management skills, abilities and knowledge of an Australian business person in the Korean environment. I had a mental image of what the business person would be like: an *Australian business person-in-the-mind*. No doubt I formed this opinion based upon my personal speculations about an idealised Australian *National character*. In my meeting with Carl these expectations weren't met. As a result, I formed an unfavourable opinion of Carl, but being conscious of the focus of my research I allowed sufficient time to seek out contrary evidence before closing my mind to his offering. As it turned out, it was worth the wait. My interviews with Julie and Toby aroused different feelings. I seemed to empathise with Julie's experience in the light of my own. We were both searching, striving to be competent in a foreign environment. In a way, Toby portrayed that image of competence. In sum, my interpretation of the Australian business person in-my-mind was greatly enhanced as a consequence. The insight into myself personally and as researcher was equally valuable. I became more conscious of my own Australian-ness in the research context and how my appearance, experience and feeling different from/to my informants might inhibit my perceptions of the content and process of the interview material. It consolidated the need for me to listen beyond the informant's words, so to speak: to listen more closely to, and register, my own dialogue at the same time. I also needed to be less judgemental and accepting of things at face value. For example, before my interview with Toby, when Australian and Korean informants had told me of the place bribery played in the business scene as a matter of fact, I noted my dismay. Their reports reinforced my prior reading and I had formed the opinion bribery was reflective of Korean greed and corruption. However, in a later interview (after my discussion with Toby) a Korean informant<sup>287</sup> raised the subject of bribery with a sense of reverence. As I anxiously progressed the conversation, the informant recounted a childhood experience where the "redistribution

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<sup>287</sup> **KRI**. Refer Section 4.1.3

of tribute” during the Korean War had saved the lives of his family. I was surprised by this revelation on two counts. First, by the graphic nature of his account and then by the realisation that this historical context might provide the basis for a totally different interpretation of Korean behaviour that neither I, nor apparently the Australian informants, had contemplated, or at least, expressed. Ultimately, this led to my researching notions of reciprocal help or *pujo*, discussed later in Section 4.1.3 as **Korean Concept 3**, placing a new complexion on bribery, and resulting in a less judgemental report on my part. The same approach applies to my discussion in Section 1.2.2 of **Korean Concept 1** - “Universal I-ness and We-ness”, where Korean psychologists<sup>288</sup> argue the Western concept of individuality cannot be applied in a Korean context. I doubt I would have been as motivated to seek out these alternative views without having had access to Toby’s insight. I believe this insight had a profound effect on the formulation and content of this paper. It certainly reinforced Parkhe’s assertion that “interviewees can provide crucial insights, suggest sources of corroboratory evidence, and initiate access to such sources.”<sup>289</sup>

The Case Study: **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** reveals the development of progressive interpretations of the events. The Case by itself tells a story of an industrial situation in an Australian company in Seoul. The reader can interpret the situation at face value - as they “see” it. The analysis adds a further dimension by processing the event and guiding the reader by the use of the metaphors of *coloniser/invader* and *National character-in-the-mind* as a means of describing the psychodynamics that tend to arise in an industrial relations context, particularly in foreign environments. The additional data provided in the commentary enables a multi-tiered view: an interpretation, of an interpretation of an interpretation - assimilating one’s mental image of the scenario described in the Case, the insights gleaned from its discussion, combined with my interpretation of events as researcher. Consistent with the interpretive stance it allows readers to form their own view, then entertain another’s (my) interpretation, to share my experience and context, my emotional reactions and

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<sup>288</sup> Choi & Choi (1994), Chung (1994) and Yoon and Choi (1994)

<sup>289</sup> Parkhe (1993) p249



provide space to precipitate alternative meaning.<sup>290</sup> Whilst this paper provides a limiting frame, I continue to ponder the relativities of cultural determinants as a *primary* explanation for Australian's and Korean's inability to consolidate business relationships. Readers may discern different, implicit conceptions and ponder alternative outcomes. There may be still further interpretations?

The Case Study, **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**, was a compilation of two industrial relations situations experienced in Australian businesses in Seoul. It reflected the idea of Australians and Koreans carrying an image of their *National character* in-the-mind; considered the attendant psychodynamics; provided an insight into the role of researcher in the research and promoted the view that we can only interpret an understanding of a scenario based upon the information we have at the time.

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<sup>290</sup> As indicated elsewhere in this paper, only after discussion could the negotiated component of the interpretive stance be legitimated.

### 3.2 Korean-ness

This Section documents reported *Korean-ness* in a business context and my observations of the accounts. It discusses recurrent themes that may provide insight into some of the psychodynamics manifest in Australian-Korean business encounters.

Six South Korean informants were interviewed in Seoul, Republic of Korea, between 4 and 14 June 1996. The informants were chosen to represent a wide cross-section of business endeavour in Seoul including Education, Finance, Mining, Trade and entrepreneurial business activities. The three senior males held positions of Chief Executive or General Manager within their organisations. Two males and one female (fitting the three youngest age categories) held Senior Executive positions. Interviews varied in length from 1 to 3 hours. The latter interview covered a broader range of topics than the interview schedule required owing to the informant's availability and willingness to talk.

Most Korean informants were reticent or oblique in enunciating a personal theory as to their own Korean-ness. Nevertheless, their conveyed images were clear and consistent. The reported Korean *National character* in-the-mind was dominated by two primary features: Nationalism and Relationships - expressed within a context of rapid change and Korean concern for its effect on traditional values.

Nationalism is notable for three prominent descriptors: *militarism, coloniser/invader & survival and fear*. These descriptors seem to intertwine the informants reported images of *Korean-ness*. Militarism is seen as part of the Korean heritage. Today, it is reflected in the military training of Korean males during compulsory conscription where, it is argued, Confucianism is knocked out of them and they are prepared for business careers.<sup>291</sup> The secrecy associated with military life, national security and therefore national survival vis a vis external threats (economic, political and social) is replicated in maintaining the secrets of business strategy. It is

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<sup>291</sup> A view reinforced by a Korean Phd student respondent to a bulletin note I placed on the Internet. Conscription strongly inculcates a militarist mindset which transfers to civilian life.

part of the Korean nationalist persona. Relationship is associated with recurrent themes of control and dependency with historical, philosophical, political and psychological sub-texts.

As I processed the Korean data, I became increasingly challenged by my lack of understanding of the “Korean Way”. This Section attempts to describe the clarification of this dilemma by exploring the aforementioned sub-texts. I shall begin with a discussion of Nationalism and the previously identified descriptors. I will then explore the notion of Relationship, and references to Confucianism.

What becomes progressively clear as my analysis of Korean-ness unfolds is that Korean business people appear to be in a transition between their traditional culture represented by say, Confucianism, and a developing, internationalised setting represented by economic globalisation and the notion of the global village. It is apparent that the Korean informants were variously situated at points between the poles of traditional and global being. Further their relative position appears to change depending upon their emotional state at any given time. In this context, I see Confucianism per se, as a metaphor, reflective of an *image* of the tradition. I am suggesting here that the *idea* of “traditional” Koreans as a people, generally adhering to the concepts of a collectivist culture like those articulated in Table 1.1, and the notion of Confucianism as an *image* of the tradition, provides a basis from which to perceive change within Korea. It also provides a frame for the articulation of Korean-ness as it evolves within the change process.

As indicated in Section 1.2.2, social commentators place varying emphasis on the significance of Confucianism to modern Korean life. Some see the role of Confucianism as fundamental, whilst others see it as irrelevant to a modernising Korea. The debate is reflected, at an individual level, by the Australian and Korean informant’s references to Confucianism; in their interpretations of Korean-ness; and in the justification of the Korean informant’s thinking and behaviour. These views are noted in Section 3.2.2.

In trying to interpret National character in-the-mind, (here Korean-ness) I feel challenged by the implicit contradictions. Kim<sup>292</sup> and Chu<sup>293</sup> suggest Koreans are so conditioned by the intensity of their traditional value systems and their history of oppression that they tend to act on their feelings, before thinking of the consequences. In the process of researching the literature, I have occasionally pondered whether this extends to Korean psychologist's heart-felt accounts of their national psychology. My personal experience and observation of Koreans in Korea and my reading suggest their inner dispositions play a strong role in shaping and framing the interpretation of a situation. Whilst the Korean informants were generally good natured, it was apparent that several were more disposed to temperamental emotionalism than behaving according to the tenets of an interview situation. At least, that is, in terms of my expectations; and how *I perceived* an interview situation "should be". Here in lies the dilemma of expectations, interpretation and the paradox of cross-cultural understanding. I shall discuss these features further in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma** - at the end of Chapter 4. This contrast between the predominance of behaviour as a function of the situation, versus inner dispositions, is consistent with the Australian informant's tendency to explain their behaviour by what *situations* called for and attribute behaviour to Koreans *because that's the way they are*. My final point on this issue is that we should acknowledge the existence and legitimacy of these different views, and be willing to give them credence, in context, without being judgemental.

As my research analysis developed, I came to think of the Australian and Korean informant's references to Confucianism as more than just an evocation of traditional culture and values. To me, the informants (and the social commentators) seemed to be using Confucianism as a means of rationalising the role of *authority* in Korean life (at individual, business and society levels), in the past and the present, without addressing the unconscious processes underpinning the rationalisation. For many, addressing the unconscious processes may be just as confronting as challenging the authority may be. I shall explore these issues in Section 3.2.3.5 in my discussion of a concept I call *Keystone of Control* - systematised, controlled behaviour in response to

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<sup>292</sup> Kim (1996) pp.43-4

<sup>293</sup> Chin Ning Chu (The Asian Mind Game ) quoted in Kim (1996) pp.43-4

authority. I shall develop this further in Sections and 3.2.4.1 to 3.2.4.6 where I explore psychic structure as a means of clarifying avenues to better interpret Korean-ness.

My analysis of the concept of Korean-ness will begin now with discussion of the informant's references to Korean Nationalism and notions of militarism, coloniser/invader & survival and fear.

### **3.2.1 Nationalism**

This Section considers informant's reports of Korean Nationalism and notions of militarism, coloniser/invader & survival and fear.

Several informants began their reports with a reference to Korea's 5000 year history and their unreserved national pride. Everyone shared in being "mono-culturally" Korean. They were all proud to be seen to "*deliver service to their country*",<sup>294</sup> family and children. Emphasis was placed on working hard to improve their lot in life. As **KR1** remarked: "*Koreans think country, province, town, family, then humble me.*"<sup>295</sup>

Some Korean informants interpreted nationalism in terms of the militarist metaphor describing their business colleagues as soldiers in international trade. For example **KR1** felt "*Compulsory conscription has meant most businessmen have developed a very militaristic mindset...they apply this in business...internationally they are soldiers or warriors - business mercenaries...they see themselves as super capable.*"<sup>296</sup> Their companies or industries were seen as commercial armies. Korean informants were very positive and action oriented. They recognised "*globalisation is inevitable we must embrace western culture if we are going to be accepted in the world community*"<sup>297</sup> and acknowledged Australia's supportive role in facilitating that process. Both **KR1** and **KR2** felt Koreans believe they can do anything. "Can Do Spirit" and "We Can Do It" were their slogans.

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<sup>294</sup> KR2, KRESPO L49-50

<sup>295</sup> KR2, KRESPO L45-46

<sup>296</sup> KR1, KRESPO L9-10 & L36-7

<sup>297</sup> KR3, KRESPO L87-89

**AR4** saw the pattern of Korean nationalism as multifaceted. He saw it ranging from isolationist paranoia that he attributed to “*a background of exploitation by the gentry and the country’s occupiers: the Chinese, the Japanese, the Americans,*”<sup>298</sup> to openly embracing foreign engagement. This conjured the idea of *coloniser/invader* as a metaphor for relationship building by outsiders with Korea and by Koreans in the International scene.

**AR10** saw Koreans as “*xenophobic and excessively proud nationalists.*”<sup>299</sup>

**AR2** noted “*Koreans are defensive of their own culture and aggressive against others starting up or establishing what could eventuate to claims for space (within Korea). For example to renew an English language teaching licence you have to first leave the country.*”<sup>300</sup>

**KR2**’s rebuttal to Australians wanting greater access to Korea was to challenge Australia’s reputation as being closed to Asians. “*Koreans have long memories of White Australia...(countering)...Koreans need time to accommodate the opening of their country to foreign countries...they (Koreans) tend to adopt a wait and see approach.*”<sup>301</sup> Koreans favoured foreign engagement, as distinct from foreign presence - but only on their terms.

**AR4** noted: “*Koreans have Korea for the Koreans. They simply don’t cater for foreigners.*”<sup>302</sup> When I referred him to the lead article in the *Korea Times* of 9 June, 1996, that reported the Korean Government’s endorsement of “a plan to create an international city where apartment complexes, schools, sports facilities and hospitals will be built exclusively for foreign investors...”<sup>303</sup> he replied: “*It may well segregate the foreigners which will not be good for Korea.*”<sup>304</sup>

In this guise, it is conceivable Korean business people may carry their society’s fight/flight dynamic. If it is argued Koreans perceive the West as “coloniser/invader”, then their vigorous International competition off shore, (*Fight mode*), can be seen as

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<sup>298</sup> AR4, ARESPO L66-7

<sup>299</sup> AR10, ARESPO L560-1

<sup>300</sup> AR2, ARESPO L461-3

<sup>301</sup> KR2, KRESPO L270-1

<sup>302</sup> AR4, ARESPO L51-2

<sup>303</sup> *The Korea Times*, City Edition, No. 14192, Seoul, Sunday, June 9, 1996

<sup>304</sup> AR4, ARESPO L54-5

keeping Western business invaders away from their home markets. Metaphorically, preventing the dilution of the blood. At the same time, their caution (*Flight mode*) is expressed in the fear of real or imagined exploitation should Western enterprise be permitted to establish businesses within Korean boundaries. The proposal to build a satellite city to accommodate Westerners (only) reinforces the fight/flight scenario.

### 3.2.1.1 Survival & Fear

Survival and fear of losing are implicit to the militarist descriptor. Survival is about staying alive. It relates to one's personal survival under duress and the welfare of one's family, community and country - the significant others one is trying to protect. It also relates to the maintenance of the principles and values one lives by, that may be at risk. It has implications for the future well-being and welfare of all those involved.

On the other hand, the fear of losing has many guises. It is apparent domestically in the image of the "suffering of the masses" awakening the fears of bygone days. In business, the fear of losing is associated with losing the sense of surprise in outwitting competitors in the negotiation of deals. Internationally, the fear of losing is associated with the prospect of Korea failing to gain a foothold in the global economy or at least being recognised as a viable trading entity in its own right. This, in turn, reflects the image of "suffering of the masses". It is associated with the fear of exclusion, being left out of the International scene - denial of identity and being. Shame is endemic in this circle. "Other's" views of "me" are more important than my own.

I gained the distinct impression Korean informants were threatened by the outside world. The intensity shifted between an economic context and the more ominous militarist one. Several Australian informants were conscious of a threatening environment with an underlying "...scenario of pure fear...Koreans are and have been under constant threat...they maintain a...survival mentality."<sup>305</sup> Koreans were considered to be "anxious about the amalgamation of the North and South...they still mourn their lost families (from the Korean War) who have just disappeared...they realise the merge is inevitable."<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> AR11, ARESPO L586-8

<sup>306</sup> AR7, ARESPO L535-7

Koreans' clinging adherence to collectivism, reinforced by Confucianism, implies "survival of the masses".<sup>307</sup> It has been a strategy that has held Koreans in good stead for centuries. The alternative, individualism, is impending disaster.<sup>308</sup> Of greatest concern to the older Korean informants however, was being able to manage the exposure to the diversity of cultures and lifestyles the world has to offer. Older Korean informants, reflecting on their more recent history, feared being overwhelmed by outsiders both figuratively and metaphorically. They noted the indirect influence of advertising, fast food and fashion on youth behaviour. They worried about how many of their traditions and values need to be sacrificed to enable Korea's acceptance into the world community and whether, in the end, it is worth it. This concern is typified in remarks about the forced exodus of farm workers to industrial city centres. Informant **KR2** indicated city life, particularly apartment living, as one of the primary dilemmas in the changing concept of *Korean community*. He noted the isolation; how friends were scattered outside the apartment environment and that neighbours on floors above and below, remained unknown. Open communication, once common in a rural environment, was now practically difficult:

*"There is high competition and major transport difficulties...people moved to realise a greater self fulfilment and offer something more tangible to the next generation."* He noted the *"personal character of the people is changing although there are some who wish to return to the land because they find city life too stressful...the Government is proposing incentives to those who wish to return by offering them cheap loans to buy land."*<sup>309</sup>

Yet, Korean collectivism seems all pervasive. I found it difficult to comprehend the strength of obligation to others simply in terms of the traditional explanations.

In Korea there is an ironic countervailing force to collectivism and the "survival of the masses". The drive of successive South Korean governments to join the global

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<sup>307</sup> I shall discuss Confucianism in depth in Section 3.2.2.

<sup>308</sup> Refer Section 1.1.3 for a discussion of Collectivism and Individualism.

<sup>309</sup> KR2, KRESPO L52-65



economic community (*“The globalisation process is inevitable...(We) must embrace Western culture if we are going to be accepted in the world community.”*<sup>310</sup>) implies aggression and a focus on “survival of the fittest” typified by pressure on the chaebols to perform, or lose government concessions. This in turn is anti-collectivist. The “survival of the masses” appears to be sacrificed, although the rhetoric argues the ultimate good of society as the driving force of the policy. This shift in ideology, of meaning, reflects Koreans’ sense of anarchy.

It could be argued Korea’s identification with the international community may defend against memories of economic and political isolation and threat, and the potential inability to feed the family. *“If an International contract is on offer the Korean will be there to get it...the Japanese will be discerning and pass it by if there is insufficient return...the Korean will grab it even if there is not the return.”*<sup>311</sup> This strong emphasis on achievement makes Koreans formidable competitors. As **KR4** said *“...the way to survive is to portray goodness but to win at all costs.”*<sup>312</sup> Notwithstanding the bravado, some Korean informants queried the expedience of their countrymen: *“Koreans are not so strategic in their planning and design.”*<sup>313</sup> *“Their thinking is so tight.”*<sup>314</sup> The cold reality of this is reinforced by the poor political relationship between South and North Korea and the North’s tragic economic plight. Ravaged by 3 consecutive years of devastating floods combined with the severing of food shipments from the Soviet Union, North Korea experienced massive famine in summer 1997 - early estimates suggested hundreds of thousands, perhaps half a million would die of starvation.<sup>315</sup> Adhering tenaciously to idiosyncratic political and economic doctrines, and notwithstanding professed concerns for their relatives in the North, the South Korean government declines to provide unconditional assistance. In the light of their history, and the immediacy of the present, for South Koreans, defensive mechanisms to ensure their own survival and ward off fear may be all too real.

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<sup>310</sup> KR3, KRESPO L 87-89

<sup>311</sup> KR1, KRESPO L13-15

<sup>312</sup> KR4, KRESPO L105-106

<sup>313</sup> KR5, KRESPO L127-8

<sup>314</sup> KR4, KRESPO L110

<sup>315</sup> The Age, Thursday, 6 March 1997, p A12

### 3.2.1.2 The Researcher's Experience

My general conversations with Australian business people in Seoul (apart from the research study) emphasised the community's collective fear of invasion from North Korea. This was perhaps reinforced by the interception of a North Korean fighter aircraft in Seoul airspace only days before my arrival. From my experience in Seoul, I found the prevalence of heavily armed police and soldiers in the streets disconcerting. I felt less threatened by their presence than by the images in my mind of why they were there. This was reinforced while walking alone in the main street of downtown Seoul on Friday 14 June 1996, when an air raid siren sounded. My *images* were of newsreels of the London blitz - images of chaos and anarchy. My reaction was "the city is under attack, what do I do?" In my individuality: "I was under attack". I felt isolated, tense and helpless - my own scenario of pure fear. The people in the street moved casually toward buildings and the subway - centres of collectivity. My haste to follow into the "security" of the subway seemed to counterpoint their comparative indifference. At the time, I did not know it was only the monthly drill!

This Section reviewed informant's reports of Korean Nationalism and notions of militarism, coloniser/invader & survival and fear. The next major Section considers the notion of Relationship and references to Confucianism.

### 3.2.2 Relationship & References to Confucianism

The following Sections will explore several perspectives on Relationship and references to Confucianism as a means of trying to acquire more clarity of Korean National character in-the-mind.

All the Korean informants referred to their Confucian origins to describe "Korean". Typical of these - **KR3**: "*Koreans are largely influenced by Confucian doctrine*"<sup>316</sup> and **KR6**: "*Psyche is based in Confucian principles...this dictates thinking*

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<sup>316</sup> KR3, KRESPO L69

*behaviour and relationships with others...our language has formal and informal components.”*<sup>317</sup>

**KR4** offered a less traditional view suggesting many South Koreans dissociate themselves from Confucian doctrine, whilst others are unaware of the derivation of their fundamental beliefs and values.<sup>318</sup> Informant **KR4** had spent a third of her life in Australia and saw her country and its people differently when she returned.

*“They (Koreans) are double layered: they carry Confucian values and tough business acumen.” “On the surface they reflect the good things of Confucianism - duty to family, loyalty, sincerity, courtesy, inside Koreans are egocentric...they pretend to be working as one in groups but all have their own interests and hope to succeed through using the group to that end...the rat race is influencing people in a negative way so that they are changing in an unfavourable direction...Koreans are caught between the old and the new...making a living has changed to a grind.”*<sup>319</sup>

These contrasting views reflect the diversity of perceived Korean-ness (or National character in-the-mind) amongst the informants. They also reflect the strong debate in the literature about the integrity of Korea’s traditional culture and values, and Korean claims for a unique social structure. As indicated in Section 1.2.2, Korean psychologists<sup>320</sup> argue strongly that the Western concept of individuality cannot be applied in a Korean context. They claim the “non-individualist” collectivism of the Korean society provides a unique contextual framework that renders Western collectivism logically inappropriate. They believe the representation of who and what an *individual* is; how the individual fits into and relates in a group context, is significantly different from the Western understanding.

### **3.2.3 Relationship and Foreign Cultural Influence**

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<sup>317</sup> KR6, KRESPO L165-7

<sup>318</sup> Kalton (1991) p2

<sup>319</sup> KR4, KRESPO L97-116

<sup>320</sup> Choi & Choi (1994), Chung (1994), and Yoon & Choi (1994)

I wish to use elements of the Western psychological perspective just presented as a tool for further investigating the theme of Korean tradition and notions of relationship. The influence of foreign culture will be a common thread in this discussion. In the process, I will highlight contrasting interpretations of National character (Korean-ness) in-the-mind.

The next two sections will present separate views. The first considers the perspective of **KR3**, a Korean businessman in his fifties who had spent his life in Korea. This view is marked by traditionalist sentiments and observations of the effect of a Western counter culture. The second view is that of returned expatriate, **KR4**, a Korean business-woman in her thirties, struggling with similar sentiments but having been challenged by exposure to life in Australia for several years. The collective dissonance reflects conflict and notes a sense of Koreans in transition. My observations and analysis of this data led me to consider the idea of a concept I have labelled the **Keystone of Control** - systematised, controlled behaviour in response to authority - or what appears to be a Korean social defence. I shall discuss this concept in Section 3.2.3.5

### 3.2.3.1 An Insular View

**KR3** was a man in his mid fifties. Although he had had diverse business experience, he had never been outside Korea. He was twenty years older than **KR4**. **KR3's** perspective of the changes in South Korea's social life and the pressures on the value system may well have been more dramatic. He had childhood memories of the Korean War and the struggle for survival before, during and after. He had played his part in the development of the economic miracle South Korea was now experiencing and could relate to the substantial social discord within the cities through his philanthropic activities. He had personal and anecdotal evidence of the consequences of change to the country's value system depicted in relationships and the changes from traditional life to a more frenetic one. For example:

**KR3** noted "*Confucianism is the prominent way of life.*" He stated "*grown ups thought of sacrificing themselves for their offspring and the future...worked up to 15 hours a day to accumulate wealth for education with great zeal - connected to the zeal*

*for a better future...pressure is on parents to ensure children have a better chance than they did.” He was also alarmed about “the changes from old traditional ways to new culture,” and related the following example associated with the importation of foreign cultural values:*

*“...students returning from US study during a vacation are bringing low grade Negro culture with them.” Asked to explain he said “bad moral values” - looked to female colleague for assistance (clearly embarrassed) then - “a college associate professor returned home and killed his father because of money...this materialism is no good...we want progressive development for external culture to be integrated...if it is accepted OK...but bad influences will cause severe problems...understanding is the key.”<sup>321</sup>*

It could be argued **KR3** was personally threatened by the challenges of menacing strangers from outside the country. By projecting internal discord on to foreign invaders (sometimes in the guise of Koreans returning home) he seemed able to accommodate some of the self imposed dilemmas the country had generated. Attacks on traditional Korean values in the form of *low grade Negro culture* and *bad moral values* provide useful containers for projection. The reference to the perceived unsavoury qualities of the black race has vicarious appeal in South Korea where consciousness of the purity of the blood is high. This hypothesis is supported by **KR2** who reported:

*“during the Korean War there were representatives of 16 nations in Korea...many mixed blood births...had a dramatic effect on Korean society...since the War most have moved out to USA Europe - couldn't live in Korea because of their differences - not accepted by the pure bloods!!!”<sup>322</sup>*

In this illustration, race is a representation of all that is evil and repulsive. Combined with bad moral values, we have the antithesis of Korean-ness. This image when linked to the destruction of Korea through war and the dislocation of it's people

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<sup>321</sup> KR3, KRESPO L69-85

<sup>322</sup> KR2, KRESPO L279-281

between North and South has powerful symbolism. Reality testing is unnecessary when such a robust defence mechanism enables the control of the high moral ground. On the surface, denial of the country's internal dilemmas, the cause of such a projection, preserves communal unity and maintains homeostasis. But the behaviours do not go unnoticed at an International level and can severely inhibit acceptance in the International community. Ironically, the very thing the South Korean government is desperate to achieve.

In my white-ness, it is easy to accept the possibility my interpretation of **KR3's** embarrassed reference to *low grade Negro culture* was actually referring to "black-ness". The logical alternative may well be "caution" backfiring. One would assume it would be difficult for a Korean talking with a white Australian on first encounter to refer to the latter's culture as "the poor white trash of Asia"<sup>323</sup> without the anticipation of aggravating some ire.<sup>324</sup> This especially, when my "whiteness" figuratively, and perhaps really, represents the coloniser/invader.

The paradox arising from this scenario is one of a people with a siege mentality trying to simultaneously embrace and reject the coloniser/invader. **KR2** suggested "*Australians and New Zealanders need to be better defined, recognised, understood, better known before they are accommodated.*"<sup>325</sup> It is difficult to conceive how this is to be achieved in the light of the apparent South Korean resistance to consider and accept foreign differences.

Notwithstanding, **KR3** was successfully representing, and negotiating significant trade deals with these coloniser/invaders. In this regard, there appeared to be a clear distinction between business culture and the culture of South Korea. The entrepreneurial business relationships he had created with Australian companies could work beneficially for all parties provided, it would seem, the Australians did not attempt to take up residence or at least assume a physical presence that could imply long term occupation of the country **or** mistrust of **KR3's** representation. Perhaps this goes some

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<sup>323</sup> Words used by former Singaporean President Lee Kuan Yew to describe Australians.

<sup>324</sup> I am grateful to Gouranga Chattopadhyay for our discussion of these ideas.

<sup>325</sup> KR2, KRESPO L277-8

way to support Australian's apparent reluctance to deal with Koreans or establish a presence in Korea as outlined in the Preface to this paper.

This Section considered the effect of foreign culture on Korean notions of relationship from the perspective of the second oldest Korean informant who had spent his life in Korea. The next section reflects the contrasting view of a returned expatriate, 20 years his junior.

### 3.2.3.2 A Returned Expatriate's View

**KR4's** exposure to life in Australia enabled her to recognise and appreciate a difference - the perceived deleterious effect of individualist ideals on traditional South Korean culture. Her anger at this, and the double standards she believed were being maintained was indicative of the anxiety being experienced by many South Koreans caught in an evolutionary process with little control over the outcomes. Korea's modernisation has embraced the dynamics of *um* (Chinese yin) and *yang*. The um of continuity of tradition with the yang of change and innovation.

On reflection, there seemed to be more in **KR4's** comments on her life in Australia and the dissonance she experienced on her return than I initially recognised. Asked how she adapted to living in and being educated in Australia she responded:

*"...in my own quiet way...I was naive...I took the mainstream accepted the Australian way did what was expected of me but did not fight the Korean way either...at University I didn't follow the crowd who went to the beach and partied...I stayed with a group who focused on getting good grades...sometimes felt like joining the noisy group but didn't."*<sup>326</sup>

A sound education is highly valued in Korea as an entree to future success. This value is steeped in historical imagery but as with many things Korean it is usually couched in male terms. Above all, Koreans believe learning is the only way to become completely human. As the eminent Yi dynasty philosopher, Yulgok, explained in the

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<sup>326</sup> KR4, KPERS L158-162

Introduction to the *Kyongmong yogyol* (Essential Key to Discipline for Youth) "...if one does not study, his mind will be choked with weeds and his vision declouded; therefore it is absolutely necessary to read books and exhaustively investigate principle, so that the path one should follow will become clear."<sup>327</sup> For a (first born) woman in today's South Korea, education is also a door to a career and potential independence if the unforgivable should happen - failure to marry, or divorce.

**KR4** was "married to a traditional Korean". The *traditional Korean* reflects the Third Relationship - proper distinction between husband and wife - where the male is dominant, initiates action, socialises with his male friends; and the female is quiet and conforming. **KR4** explained somewhat deliberately and defensively "*I felt if I married an Australian as we got older we would grow apart owing to a yearning to draw closer to our origins.*" She stated her parents had said "*if she didn't marry a Korean she wouldn't be married.*"<sup>328</sup> Her whole manner at this time - the quality and tone of her voice and her body language indicated the presence of anxiety. She had embraced the *um*, the quiet, conforming, nurturing, traditional role of the Korean woman. Nevertheless, the decision appeared to have created a pressing tension.

**KR4** felt caught between cultures. At first I thought she was disassociating herself from her Korean origins. Later, I concluded she was reflecting elements of Australian-ness she had introjected during her stay.

*"I feel I half belong and the other half is an outsider...I'm so different in thinking...many Koreans are not accepting of me because of my manner of challenging the accepted norm."*<sup>329</sup> *"I'm blamed by other Koreans for being too individualistic... that is not my view of myself I'm just being honest...the group sees me as one out and believe I should conform to the majority feelings of the group and value what group wants...not supposed to stand out...this is like psychological counselling."*<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Kalton (1991) p16

<sup>328</sup> KR4, KPERS L154-6

<sup>329</sup> KR4, KPERS L165-8

<sup>330</sup> KR4, KRESPO L200--3



The second part of the above extract from my interview notes was in response to the question “How has your *Korean-ness* influenced your adaptation to the Australian (business) environment?” The answer was more a response to how **KR4**'s introjected *Australian-ness* had influenced her reintegration into Korean society. The tension was obvious. She was in one breath defensive of her difference and in the next acquiescent to the expectations of her traditional role as a woman in Korean society. She was critical of other Koreans but blaming of her Australian experience for encouraging her to think differently...to think for herself. She was locked betwixt and between. I would suggest here, her life experience in Australia had provided an environment where she was enabled to experiment and challenge authority. She was able to authorise herself to think differently.

On her return to South Korea the apparent omnipotence of the traditional authority structure was again confronting, but held less fear. It would appear **KR4** felt authorised to be more self expressive, to be forthright in her response to “accepted Korean norms” - unlike her compliant peers and friends who had remained at home. I suggest this tendency to self authorisation can be attributed to **KR4** acquiring or introjecting traits of *Australian-ness*. The power of authority within her peer group relationships however, was less than that in her family. This would account for her bowing to her parents decree over marriage arrangements. In this regard, the intensity of the potential consequences that non compliance may have caused for all parties would be unbearable to contemplate. Family identity may be called into question. For example, were **KR4** to have married an Australian her family may have been subject to confusion, embarrassment and ridicule. Disowning their daughter may have been their only way to save face. To avoid this it would appear they imposed their will and she capitulated. This sentiment is reinforced by **KR2** who said that he could decide to allow his daughter to marry “a white person” but she would have to leave Korea because her life would be “*too difficult here.*”<sup>331</sup> It may well be **KR2**'s life would be too difficult. The fantasised family romance would be obliterated. Only removal of the contaminated object (his daughter) could relieve the anxiety.

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<sup>331</sup> KR2, KRESPO L282-3

Looking at **KR4**'s experience of family authority from a slightly different angle, it could be argued Koreans seek pleasure in their dependency and subordination of the individual to the group (in this case the family). Control is externalised. The superego is externalised. The family, or the authority it represents, may perform a psychic function. Identification with the family, and perhaps the business organisation (by extension) provides a defence against the anxiety of individualism and isolation. When **KR4** expresses her individuality within her peer group she is punished as a non-conformist. When she accedes to family pressure she is accepted and loved. Alternatively, this obedience may function as a defence mechanism against the dire affects of retribution or punishment. Acceptance keeps the defence mobilised. Given the circumstances, this is probably a necessary and healthy defence reaction.

**KR4**'s reference to psychological counselling was indicative of her behaviour. As the interview proceeded her manner moved from reserved to easy going. She seemed to be progressively "letting go". It was as if the interview provided a container for her to release emotional tension. I am unsure what role I played as an Australian male in this situation. Whether I was perceived as receptive or understanding, whether the gender issues present had a demonstrable effect, is debatable. Although I consciously endeavoured not to indicate an emotional response, I noted at the time, I felt empathic to her report. My independence and personal freedom is extremely important to me. I felt the tension of the apparent restraint and pressure to conform **KR4** was experiencing and reporting. It was uncomfortable. To me, it reflected and contrasted the apparent opportunities provided to the people of the respective Australian and South Korean cultures.

Expatriate South Koreans often experience feelings of isolation on their return to Korea owing to the withdrawal of mirroring by those Koreans who see themselves as untainted by the outside world. The assumed caretaking, empathic environment is replaced by anxiety leading to, and reinforcing fragmentation of the self system.<sup>332</sup> The resultant confusion can be seen in either denial of dependency or regression to child-like metaphors of fantasy. Alternatively, dependency may become overwhelming. An expatriate may become obsessed with the need to be received back into the fold. In

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<sup>332</sup> Czander (1993) pp.249-254

turn, it may become impossible for the individual to discern between interpersonal and role boundaries and “whose impulses are being experienced; the distinction between *the container and the contained* is lost.”<sup>333</sup>

### 3.2.3.3 Reflections on Relationship and Foreign Cultural Influence

These two contrasting views of Korean notions of relationship and foreign culture highlight varying interpretations of Korean-ness in-the-mind. The first was marked and maintained by traditionalist sentiments and observations of a Western counter culture. It also reflected **KR3**'s implied preference for relatedness as distinct from relationship with Western business people as a means of adapting to difference. The second view depicted a struggle with similar sentiments, but was challenged by the experience of having lived in a Western culture. The collective dissonance reflects conflict and notes the sense of Koreans in transition.

### 3.2.3.4 The Researcher's Experience

It is hard to describe or explain my thoughts about the contradictory perspectives I received during my interviews with the South Korean business people. At various times I had a sense of confusion about what I was hearing and writing about Confucianism and relationships. My mindset and theirs' seemed awry. I could not explain precisely why at the time. I was not confident enough to...it did not seem appropriate or timely to...our relationship did not seem close enough to face the informants with the thread of my inexplicable muddle. Like the Australian informants in Section 3.1.3.1, I felt uncomfortable about the idea of discussing my interpersonal cross-cultural differences with the Korean business people. At the time, these differences seemed undiscussable.

Ironically, when searching for answers to my questions about Confucianism at the Royal Asiatic Society bookshop in Seoul, I had little difficulty describing my apparent dilemma to the Korean manager. How I was able to do this I am not sure. Perhaps I may have perceived her as being more “like me” because she spoke English

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<sup>333</sup> Bion (1961) in Shapiro & Carr (1991) p37

so well. She referred me to two books: *Korean Ideas and Values* and *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*.<sup>334</sup> These books provided some of the insight I had been seeking and provide a useful contribution to this thesis.

To me, Korean informant references to their traditions (characterised by Confucianism) appeared to provide a regulated holding environment enabling South Korean business people to deal with their dependency and irrational behaviours as a whole of life experience. I thought perhaps Confucianism may be one of several holding environments assisting the facilitation of empathy, containing aggression and providing a haven for regression. I thought also that apart from the visible social institutions there may also be more esoteric mechanisms at hand. My observations suggested Korean business people were in a state of cross-cultural transition, simultaneously adapting to new values and Western perspectives and maintaining Confucian traits, or at least paying lip service to tradition.

### 3.2.3.5 Keystone of Control

As my analysis unfolded, I began to think of these references to the past as more than just an evocation of traditional culture and values. As I indicated in Section 3.2.2, a prominent element of reported *Korean-ness* was the strong emphasis on relationship. Within this relationship environment was a recurrent theme of “*control*” and “*dependency*”, a subordination of self. This phenomenon was not always explicit. It manifested itself at two levels. First, when informants referred to Korean society in its institutional or structured forms (business organisation, government, nationalism, militarism, etcetera) there was an expression or intonation of “understanding of place”. That is, one’s place in the relationship. This *understanding* can be interpreted as control in that the less powerful has to understand the more powerful and accept their power as flowing from “legitimate authority”. In accepting the power as legitimate they acknowledge their dependency on the holder of the power as the provider of rewards. Similarly, informants’ references to defined social groups like family or work groups, indicated a sense of obligation; they knew their “duty”; understood their role in the hierarchy of the social group and reportedly behaved accordingly. They recognised and

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<sup>334</sup> Kalton (1991) and Deuchler (1992)

accepted the legitimate authority of the group to control individual behaviour - their behaviour. Within the relationship was a “comfort of fit” so to speak. This is not to say the comfort was necessarily a positive experience. The sense of obligation seemed to understate the commitment.

**KR1** commented “*The Korean family can be a bother to personal privacy and a bonus to everyday living. Koreans can’t give it up...they may complain but they are not evasive...they are absolutely committed can’t avoid it...would be totally isolated...the feeling has parallels with Aboriginal bone pointing.*”<sup>335</sup>

**KR1** had spent several years working in Australia and I felt the significance of the reference to Australian Aboriginal culture. It typified the intensity of cultural beliefs present in the two countries and provided a conduit between them. The strength of relationships between individuals in Australian Aboriginal communities is fundamental. In Aboriginal lore if a Kadaitja man (shaman) points a ceremonial bone at an individual, that person becomes physically and psychologically removed, loses the will to live and invariably dies an emotionally painful, lonely death. **KR1**’s comparison of the Korean commitment to the family relationship with the Aboriginal one is a powerful cultural metaphor reflecting the intensity and significance of group affiliations.

Initially, I attributed the sense of obligation to the socialisation process within the Korean family relationship, to adherence to the Confucian concept of filial piety. I was not convinced that this alone was the explanation. Today, Western influence epitomised by *kaeinjuui* (individualism) - in the guise of independent thought, personal creativity, self reliance, self centredness, self serving self interest - is having a marked affect on traditional South Korean value systems. While informants saw themselves as experiencing “changes in old traditional ways to new culture” and having “developed strong individualism” since World War 2, they were adamant they would maintain their heritage. As **KR2** stated “*Notwithstanding this focus on individualism we still maintain the core Korean values and culture.*”<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> KR1, KRESPO L183-6

<sup>336</sup> KR2, KRESPO L60-61

The more I discussed these issues with the Korean informants; the more I read; the more I became convinced the Korean informants were using references to tradition as a means of rationalising the role of *authority* in Korean life (at individual, business and society levels) without addressing the unconscious processes underpinning the rationalisation. I began to see the recurring references to the tenets of Confucianism, as a *social defence*. I use the term social defence to describe an unconscious, collectively agreed course of action prefaced by the communal experience of anxiety.<sup>337</sup>

To describe what I mean by social defence in context, I refer back to my comments in Section 1.2.2 where I described the apparent communal experience of anxiety that seems (to me) to be reflected in the Korean National Character. Briefly recapping, I indicated that Koreans are proudly xenophobic, but are desperate to join the world stage.<sup>338</sup> I stated that for Koreans, economic collaboration arouses suspicion and recollections of historical deception, reviving fears of losing one's spirit in a vast melange. National survival and the preservation of independence has been Korea's utmost concern. I suggested that emulating foreigners in order to succeed in the global business economy challenges Korean's self esteem and tends to place them at a psychological disadvantage especially when success relies on something unfamiliar. There is concern about becoming a pseudo-Western society. I indicated that in this extremely insecure and adverse environment the Korean identity has been under continual challenge actually and metaphorically. Their obsession with the threat of abstraction is a psychological affliction reflected in Koreans' inclination to stick with a concept or course of action in the light of immense opposition with little regard for the consequences. In turn, this has profoundly affected Korean culture and the behavioural patterns of its people.<sup>339</sup> Finally, I stated in adapting, the Koreans appear to have cultivated a regulated individualism and compulsive, excessive behaviour and that the resultant anxiety appears to be reflected in the National character.

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<sup>337</sup> Czander (1993) pp.109-110

<sup>338</sup> Three companies - Samsung, Hyundai and Daewoo - have been a particularly successful first wave.

<sup>339</sup> Chang and Chang (1994) p142

Recurring references to the relative strength of Korean tradition and Confucianism strike me as the articulation of a means of reducing that anxiety in behavioural terms. Koreans at a national and individual level strongly identify with the robust images portrayed by Korean tradition and Confucianism and seem to unconsciously internalise these images. At a national level, these images can be seen in the defence and justification of radical political and economic decisions by successive Korean governments in their attempts to transform their country into an entity that can successfully trade with, and be recognised by, Western countries in the global village.

Several Western and some Korean commentators<sup>340</sup> suggest this is achieved at the expense of exploiting the Korean workforce and irreparably damaging Korea's natural environment; that Korean people are told their sacrifices are necessary for their country's success and that to resist or rebel is un-Korean; and that the culture of shame is used as a tool to evoke compliance. Notwithstanding, my point is that Koreans "generally" accept their government's policies and practices as good for Korea. In doing so, they reduce the anxiety associated with conditions that would otherwise imply demise.

Korea's recent exposure to the global village has been confronting in terms of Korea's prior isolationist position. Confucianism, as a reflection of tradition and strength, has been the one, uniting image to which all Koreans can relate. Unfortunately, Confucianism has little relevance in the context of individualist, Western cultures. Consequently, Korean's recurrent reference to Confucianism, as an articulated social defence against anxiety, has little effect on reducing anxiety in international circles. Indeed, references to Confucianism may well be confusing to Western business people. As mentioned earlier, this was the experience of the Australian informants. Korean business people are therefore struck with the dilemma of finding a conscious alternative. This state of psychic transition, where Koreans are figuratively caught between their collective experience of anxiety; the apparent inadequacy of traditional social defence mechanisms to cope with the anxiety; and the search for alternatives in a climate of change that is beyond their prior experience, is simultaneously confronting

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<sup>340</sup> Bello & Rosenfeld (1992) pp.95-112

and confusing. This research indicates Korean informant's responses to the dilemma are variable.

In observing Koreans in Korean culture, and thinking and reading about this situation, I began to consider how much individual Korean behaviour seems to be subject to institutionalised, external control. I also began to ponder how control within the Korean culture becomes internalised, self control. The recognition of the theme of controlled behaviour and/or a self imposed subordination of self to authority, within the data obtained from South Korean informants (and my reading) was in part obvious and in part intuitive. Here, authority was integral to relationship. In Confucian terms this authority could be seen as recognition of the first three "Relationships" described in Section 1.2.2.2. Systematised, controlled behaviour appeared to be a primary feature of most elements of the Korean culture. Here, I borrow Stacey's<sup>341</sup> definition of controlled behaviour as consisting of:

"...sequences of words and deeds over time that have some kind of pattern; that is, words and deeds that are not haphazard. The patterns in controlled behaviour do not have to be regular; they may be irregular but, nevertheless, recognisable as patterns and so still constitute controlled behaviour. Control may take different forms..."<sup>342</sup> but generally there is some constraint by "...organisational intention; that is, the standards those in the organisation agree or are compelled to operate to, the future states they agree to strive for, the actions they agree to undertake to achieve those future states...the result is a regular predictable pattern in the behaviour of people and in their relationships to the systems that are their environment."<sup>343</sup>

I came to see this controlled behaviour as a fundamental building block, a keystone, much like the "wedge-shaped stone at the summit of an arch, regarded as holding the other pieces in place."<sup>344</sup> I saw this *Keystone of Control* as representing a

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<sup>341</sup> Stacey (1993)

<sup>342</sup> Stacey (1993) p276

<sup>343</sup> Stacey (1993) p276. I take the word *organisation* to also represent institution and system.

<sup>344</sup> The Macquarie Dictionary (1992) p338



national social defence. This social defence was apparent in the anxieties attendant to the reported national xenophobia and the fear of invasion; in the notion of purity of the blood; in the denial of individual identity and the behaviours demanded by the concepts of universal I-ness and We-ness; in the fear of losing a foothold in the global economy; in the fear of exclusion from the global village - and the associated culture of shame. The more I reflected on my total research experience, the more it became apparent to me that for the Korean informants, *control* seemed internalised as an individual psychic structure learned in the Korean culture. It also appeared that as a psychic structure, control acted as an internal regulator of external behaviour. Here I am applying Czander's description of psychic structure as providing "...the person with the conscious and unconscious ability to sort out and separate the self from the external world."<sup>345</sup> In addition, (as discussed in Section 3.2.4.1) psychic structure provides individuals with a frame for personal adaptation; a frame for the internalisation of group structures; and a means of enabling individuals to make sense of their environment. I will apply this way of thinking in the next few Sections.

I suggest this keystone of control may have psychological referents that are similar to the formative components of psychic structure. Whilst recognising the possibility of tenuous association, as far as Korean psychologists arguing the non-applicability of Western psychological principles to their context, I feel exploration of these may provide insight into South Korean behaviour which may in turn assist in making sense of the relationship issue. In South Korea, the implicit (and explicit) keystone of control has a significant impact on the business population and is evident at a number of institutionalised levels.

Whilst South Korea is a Constitutional democracy headed by a President, it's recent political history reflects a National character in-the-mind with a coercive, militaristic underpinning. Since the 1960's successive South Korean Government's have applied strict, *forced-march* guidance of the economy and industrialisation. They have promoted, directed and practiced aggressive domestic and global business strategies based on export-oriented growth, and demanded, with varying levels of

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<sup>345</sup> Czander (1993) p104

acrimony, "...global, suprafactory coordination and repression of the labor force."<sup>346</sup>

The present Governments unilateral changes to Korea's Labour Laws in December 1996 in an early morning sitting of parliament, in the absence of the opposition parties, is testament to their single-minded approach. This type of control is perhaps best described as "constraint by organisational intention."<sup>347</sup>

At a population level, the innate obligations and propriety of Confucian doctrine has been manipulated by South Korean governments and chaebols (like Samsung), to consciously portray an "enterprise-family" ideology in order to intentionally restrain or subvert the power of the workforce.<sup>348</sup> At a business level, the keystone of control maintains uniformity by defining the rules and the means of work, typical of Taylorism.<sup>349</sup> The premise here is that good Confucian workers will accept first class working conditions (in terms of the Korean experience) and bow to the superior wisdom and demands of the owner (father). However, as South Korean workers have become more aware of institutionalised exploitation in terms of the nexus between wages and company turnover and profits, the traditional image has reversed. Labour argues, if the family metaphor applied "...workers were treated more like family servants rather than sons and daughters."<sup>350</sup> Again, I should emphasise one needs to be cautious not to be misled by constant references to the virility of the Confucian stereotype. Reference to, and calls to comply with, Confucian values (in authority terms) may perhaps be more intense in South Korea than in any other Asian country where Confucianism is followed, but actual compliance is something else. For South Koreans to openly acknowledge and discuss non-compliance would be to *lose face*. Choi Jang Jip (a Korean labour expert) notes the influence of *moral shame* on the presence of incipient delinquency and how ideological conformity and compliance is evoked by linking the enterprise-family with the obligations of national security.<sup>351</sup> In this form, the pressure to comply is compelling and is noticeable at two levels - the national and the personal. The *national*, centres upon the perceived extremes of the threatening global

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<sup>346</sup> Bello & Rosenfeld (1992) p30

<sup>347</sup> Stacey (1993) p276

<sup>348</sup> Bello & Rosenfeld (1992) p32

<sup>349</sup> F.W. Taylor (1939) Scientific Management

<sup>350</sup> Bello & Rosenfeld (1992) pp.31-2

<sup>351</sup> Choi Jang Jip, quoted in Bello & Rosenfeld (1992) pp.31-2

environment. The *personal*, on the intense emotional pressure to work hard, educate the children and survive at all costs in a climate of unprecedented change and social upheaval. This duality energises individual and collective unconscious reactions.

These protocols serve to protect and defend against uncivilised invasion - physically from the immediate North; and culturally, economically, emotionally and politically from the West. They overlook or deny internal threats under the guise of protection from the trauma of anarchy, and protection against primitive anxiety.

### **3.2.4 Relationship & Psychic Structure**

In this Section (3.2.4) I wish to consider elements of psychic structure. As previously indicated I shall follow Czander's description of psychic structure as providing "...the person with the conscious and unconscious ability to sort out and separate the self from the external world."<sup>352</sup> Further, as I will discuss in Section 3.2.4.1, psychic structure provides individuals with a frame for personal adaptation; a frame for the internalisation of group structures; and a means of enabling individuals to make sense of their environment.

Owing to the sparsity of Korean literature in the English language regarding the application of Western notions of psychology, I propose to discuss psychic structure from a purely Western perspective. I will then illustrate psychic structure by discussing the *Keystone of Control* phenomenon I referred to earlier in Section 3.2.3.5. This phenomenon reflects universally controlled behaviour that appears to bind South Korean society.

Sections 3.2.4.3 and 3.2.4.4 will integrate the discussion of this keystone with a brief discussion of two theoretical views of psychic structure. This will form the foundation for the consideration (in Section 3.2.4.5) of what appears to be the rapid evolution of the Korean National Character in-the-mind. I will illustrate my view by drawing upon examples of recent events in South Korea. Whilst this discussion may appear a little long-winded, I feel it is important to establish a clear context for the

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<sup>352</sup> Czander (1993) p104

recently perceived changes in the Korean National character. Without this context, I believe interpretations of Korean-ness would be sadly astray. Furthermore, by using recent events as illustrations of the South Korean condition, I hope readers will better appreciate the currency and relevance of the *control* phenomenon as a means of making sense of influences upon the formation of Korean psychic structure and its potential importance for cross-cultural business encounters.

I will conclude Section 3.2.4 with an hypothesis that in their striving for international acceptance Koreans may be subordinating their traditional Korean-ness.

#### **3.2.4.1 Psychic Structure - The Western Perspective**

The hypothesis I have been exploring so far has been that rather than being context specific, Korean tradition depicted by Confucianism, appears to provide a regulated holding environment enabling South Korean business people to deal with their dependency and irrational behaviours as a whole of life experience. The hypothesis receives some support from Kim<sup>353</sup> where he considers Korean business people's adaptation to new values and Western perspectives. I shall discuss this in Section 4.1.5.

Earlier, in Table 2.1, I identified a broad conceptual framework of relationships among classes of variables employed in the field of cross-cultural psychology. The Table indicated people from different cultures adhere to different fundamental beliefs, ideas and value systems. Their behaviour is accordingly, different. For some reason I could not stop thinking about *ways of thinking* and how these *ways* invariably change over time. South Korea is currently experiencing a tidal wave of significant, culturally threatening alternative views. Australia too, is rethinking its position in the East Asian region and confronting issues of race.

With these images in mind I pondered the role, indeed the practical relevance, of different psychic structures in cross-cultural situations. Given the clear differences in assumptions about human relationships already discussed, could it be possible that

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<sup>353</sup> Dong-Ki Kim (1985)

Australian and Korean psychic structures are different? If this is so, what are the implications for interpreting Australian-ness and Korean-ness, and for mutual understanding in a business context?

Czander reports nine explications of psychic structure in Western psychoanalytic literature.<sup>354</sup> Encapsulating these accounts, psychic structure “provides the person with the conscious and unconscious ability to sort out and separate the self from the external world.”<sup>355</sup> Intrapsychic structure is a dynamic construct changing over time. Arguably, the malleability of the structure diminishes as we age and so tends to shift from flexible and adaptable to less tractable. Consequently, in a (Western) group or organisational context, the individual’s goals are to adapt to the entity as soon as possible. In doing so, individuals internalise the entity’s structure and then use the psychic structure as a binding mechanism. Alternatively, the psychic structure is used to defend against perceived negative, harmful or impinging group or organisational characteristics or primitive anxieties. From this, it could be argued individuals seek to change their role relationship within the group or change the group itself to fit their personality, to be consistent with their psychic structure. This would be compatible with the notion that as entities themselves, individuals are “self-contained, self causing, autonomous, and potentially individuating...”<sup>356</sup>

This description seems reasonable from a Western perspective, but as shown in **Korean Concept 1**, the separation of a Korean self from the “group” may be a contrary proposal. I find it difficult to come to terms with, or explain, the Korean perspective of this we-ness, in the context of psychic structure, beyond what I have already presented on the Korean Concepts earlier in Chapter 1. I resolved to search for indicators that would support or refute these notions. In doing so, I again found myself viewing Korean informants as in a state of transition. My research observations suggest to me that the veracity of the Korean Concepts may be fragile when placed in the context of Korea’s regime of massive change.

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<sup>354</sup> Czander (1993) p104

<sup>355</sup> Czander (1993) p104

<sup>356</sup> Choi & Choi in Yoon & Choi p62

### 3.2.4.2            **Psychic Structure - Discussion**

Before proceeding with the discussion of psychic structure, I wish to refer back to Section 3.2.3.5 where I discussed the *Keystone of Control* - systematised, controlled behaviour in response to authority. Reiterating, I came to see this controlled behaviour as representing a national social defence. This social defence was apparent in the anxieties attendant to the reported national xenophobia and the fear of invasion; in the notion of purity of the blood; in the denial of individual identity and the behaviours demanded by the concepts of universal I-ness and We-ness; in the fear of losing a foothold in the global economy; in the fear of exclusion from the global village - and the associated culture of shame. The more I reflected on my total research experience, the more it became apparent to me that for the Korean informants, *control* seemed internalised as an individual psychic structure learned in the Korean culture. It also appeared that as a psychic structure, control acted as an internal regulator of external behaviour.

Now, returning to the notion of psychic structures that I began in Section 3.2.4.1, the concomitant behavioural manifestations, can be seen as “...a function of unconscious defences against libidinal and aggressive wishes and the anxiety associated with these wishes.”<sup>357</sup> Defence mechanisms of denial, projection, projective identification and splitting are common in attempting to placate this anxiety.

In historical and psychological terms, one could argue, the *keystone of control*, was integral to traditional Korean customs and values, perhaps best represented by Confucianism. I suggest this arrangement may have been created and enforced by the power elite, first as a defence against uncivilised, libidinous attacks; or aggressive acts associated with life in a harsh physical environment and the threat of external invasion; then as a means of the elite maintaining their control over the masses. Further, this keystone of control also acted as a defence “against the greatest dread - conditions of anarchy and the absence of structure.”<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Czander (1993) p106

<sup>358</sup> Czander (1993) p106

As time transpired, successive conquering invaders, Korean dictatorships and “democratic” governments saw the maintenance of the *keystone of control* as essential to their success. As already implied, the *keystone of control* may now be interpreted as a means of repression.<sup>359</sup> This is typically represented by the Korean government’s “constraint by organisational intention” described in Section 3.2.3.5. It has enabled the present government to control the avaricious activities of the chaebols. Kim relates several significant government sponsored measures to harness the diversity of the chaebols; to streamline their activities and maximise their international competitiveness for the nett benefit of South Korea in the first instance.<sup>360</sup> The government’s ultimate terror is the threatened turmoil associated with the absence of the *keystone of control* and the grave contemplation of Korea’s failure in the global market place.

### 3.2.4.3 A Freudian View

In Freudian terms, successive South Korean Governments (dating from the 10th Century), both indigenous and conquering, have functioned as the country’s ego, controlling it’s internal life, taking on qualities of the id, a dark domain, focussed toward the acquisition of unfettered pleasure. The Government’s purpose in establishing and facilitating the *keystone of control* is to restrain the emergence of the “dark side”.<sup>361</sup> The “superego” is depicted in the country’s heightened quasi state of military readiness; the imagery, reverence and rhetoric associated with Confucianism; and the purported economic and psychological consequences of South Korea’s non-acceptance in the international community. All of these act as introjects in the guise of objects of external reality, of community and global values and as images of the punitive consequences for violating the “rules”. There is also the anxiety associated with South Korea’s actual “*acceptance*” by the international community and how the country could maintain it’s momentum once accepted. The *keystone of control* imposes authority over business people. I suggest this authority has been introjected by the

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<sup>359</sup> Czander (1993) p106

<sup>360</sup> Kim, E.Y., pp.13-17

<sup>361</sup> Czander (1993) p107

Government, mediated by its administration and internalised by the business population.<sup>362</sup>

#### **3.2.4.4 An Object Relations View**

Object relations theorists may see the psychic creation of the *keystone of control* (as an organisational structure) as a means of satisfying relational needs rather than simply its potential defensive qualities. They would see the keystone of control as satisfying the inner Korean self; inspiring feelings of collective and individual freedom and liberation; engendering empathy for, and with, others - fostering a sustaining environment.<sup>363</sup> This ideal concept in the context of Australian and South Korean business encounters however, denies the dominance of hierarchy and status; and the intense competition for limited resources. It fails to recognise the disproportionate opportunity to achieve gratification of relational needs. The inherent “authority” factor precipitates conflict. Unlike Australia where individual employees are relatively free to express personal views, South Koreans inhibit such expression by force of social convention adding to the intensity of individual stress and making them more susceptible to psychic injury. The business environment in both countries (perhaps more so in South Korea) therefore, reinforces the likelihood of rejection rather than offering succour and care.

#### **3.2.4.5 Changes to the National Character in-the-mind**

One might suggest the mass demonstrations in Seoul and Ulsan and the closing of Korean heavy industry in the second week of January 1997 in response to the Korean Government's changes to the Labour Laws is indicative of a change to the Korean mindset toward the *keystone of control*. The counter is relatively simple. Mass protests in Korea are accepted rituals. Whilst a minority will arouse group emotions, engage the police and attract a Western media response, the majority will unite in their refuge of bitter resignation so as not to risk the sanctions of the power structure. Ironically, one of the reasons given by some workers for the need to return to work during the January

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<sup>362</sup> Czander (1993) p107

<sup>363</sup> (Winnicott (1965), Ashbach and Schermer (1987) quoted in Czander (1993) p109)



1997 demonstrations was because they were afraid of being sacked and losing their current benefits: amounting to complete - whole of life - dependence upon the companies they worked for...the very things that were under threat by the Government's new policy!! Ultimately, the protests were impotent owing to a lack of real solidarity. The Government's rhetoric chastised the workers for their un-Korean behaviour. It proposed to reassess its own behaviour; and unions challenged them to do so in a specified timeframe. But, there was no agreed timetable. In the meantime, workers returned to work, albeit under duress and in a climate of festering resentment. Notwithstanding, the facade was reinstated. People ultimately behaved within the bounds of the keystone of control - a traditional psychic structure acting as an internal regulator of behaviour.

The Governments unconscious motivation for maintaining their myth of Korean-ness could be to repress the "darkness" associated with its history of vulnerability in terms of Korea's geographical location (vicinity to invaders like China, Japan and Russia); and the ominous threat of death and anarchy (figurative and real) allied to the fear of North Korean invasion; or the inevitability of the future merging of the North with the South. It might also reinforce the denial of the horror of the past (the Japanese occupation until 1945; the Korean War; and the stark realities of destruction from within, so aptly and graphically represented by the Kwangju massacre); and more recently, the anxiety associated with the exodus from the fields of agriculture to industrial, city life; the challenge to traditional agrarian beliefs and values and the anonymity of high rise living.

Nevertheless, in terms of their attempts to control the unions and workers by "organisational intention", it is apparent that some of the politicians are living in the past. The immense changes occurring in Korean industry and the embracing of globalisation mean workers are becoming less susceptible to the influence of such strategies when interpreting their environments. This is perhaps better reflected in the attitudes of university students in their calls for the resignation of the President and the whole Cabinet (maintenance of a traditional convention) following revelations of scandal and corruption associated with the Hanbo Bank; the mishandling of US\$8 Billion in loans; and the ultimate collapse of Hanbo Steel - the country's 12th largest

company. Significantly, these events were occurring at the same time as the announcement of the new Labour Laws. In terms of the contrasting intensity of reactions between the students and the industrial workers, it could be argued the students' psychic structures are still at the formative stage and adaptable, whereas the older, heavy industry workers are perhaps staid in their perspective. In addition, whilst less educated and perhaps less knowing about alternative opportunities, most of these workers also have far greater family and financial commitments - more to lose from "rebellion". In the present climate, they could also argue they simply cannot afford such "idealism".

The Government's call for calm and emphasis on un-Korean behaviour appeal to the legitimacy of their power base; notions of national stability; and attempts to reinforce the keystone of control. It also reflects adherence to "old fashioned" thinking; arguably a conflicting perspective of *National character* in-the-mind.

#### 3.2.4.6 Summary of Relationship and Psychic Structure

In this Section (3.2.4) on *Relationship and Psychic Structure*, I have attempted to explore a phenomenon I noted during discussion with Korean informants. I termed this phenomenon: **Keystone of Control**. I saw this phenomenon as significant because it seemed to reflect universally controlled behaviour in an authoritarian, South Korean society. It appeared the Keystone of Control represented a national social defence. It became apparent to me that control per se, was internalised as a psychic structure learned in the Korean culture and that as such, control acted as an internal regulator of external behaviour. My reading supported and embellished this hypothesis.

Exploring this hypothesis through the data and my reading, I noted that the rapid evolutionary change of the past 25 years, and more recent events, indicates that individual Koreans are being introduced to new meaning. This new meaning has no apparent foundation or connective relevance to their prior experience. There appears to be few, if any, connections between their traditions and the Western ways. Korean psychic structures appear to be inadequate in helping them to cope with the new

experiences offered by the move towards joining the global village. Put simply, South Koreans do not *think* Western.

The Korean government's response to the challenge of accommodating the demands of economic globalisation has been to reinforce its rigorous maintenance of authority in the apparent expectation that the essential elements of the keystone of control, acting as internal regulators of behaviour, will cause the people to regulate themselves and genuflect. It would appear exposure to, or desire for, alternative values and lifestyles may be encouraging some Koreans to challenge the government's position and, in the process, challenge the very foundation of their traditional thinking.

### **3.2.4.7 Subordinating Korean-ness**

The question arises is this striving for international acceptance leading to the subordination of traditional Korean-ness: eroding hierarchical and group processes in order to be accepted internationally? "Old world" Koreans see their government's role and responsibility as providing leadership and conferring favours. Over the past twenty years, successive governments, have embraced a different view, away from domestic issues to a grander plan. They have been pre-occupied with providing and administering a "value creating" cultural system that meets the country's economic, political and social needs in an international environment. As mentioned in the previous Section they have opted for an aggressive, 'survival of the fittest' approach to their globalisation strategy. In doing so, the government and its administration have had to create disorder and confusion in order to replace the old system with the new one. In effect they have appeared to be less interested in the Korean people and more concerned with image making. Whilst this may ultimately lead to the mythical freedom of a democratic Korean society, survival of the fittest does not necessarily mean survival of the majority.<sup>364</sup>

The process of moving from old to new ways of thinking and living, introduces or reinforces a demarcation between the "haves" and the "have-nots". For the "haves", this may lead to anxiety about protecting and defending new found wealth against the

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<sup>364</sup> Miller (1993) p259

“have-nots”. For the “have-nots”, it may lead to anxiety about the apparent loss of values associated with life’s meaning. It intensifies demands for government control by both “haves” and “have-nots” to avoid anarchy.

In making the connection between this material and the reports of the Korean informants, I am drawn to Miller’s summary and discussion of the findings of a longitudinal study by OPUS (Organisation for Promoting Understanding in Society) begun in 1980.<sup>365</sup> OPUS members represent a microcosm of British society. They propose that individuals with a clear understanding of their society’s processes will better manage themselves within the roles they occupy in that society. Whilst the findings refer to Britain in the early 1980’s, there are stark parallels to the Korean experience of the mid 1990’s.

During 1980-81, OPUS members met for a day on a quarterly basis “to distil from their experiences in their various roles and institutional settings, current themes and preoccupations in society.”<sup>366</sup> Miller relates that Britons were concerned about their country (figuratively) falling apart. These concerns appear to be linked to the perceived threat of nuclear war and impending helplessness and impotence. Miller hypothesises that anxiety about destruction is a defence against a more intense fear of anarchy: a consequence of individual greed and irresponsibility. Whilst the latter is controllable, the thought is an unpleasant one for those “doing well”.

Today, some South Korean informants are experiencing similar feelings at two levels: the internal one already intimated where traditional Koreans see the new guard as greedy and irresponsible; and an external one (in two parts) allied to the country’s relationship with North Korea and the international community. South Koreans perceive the North as constantly threatening invasion and holocaust. North Korea also personifies the “have-nots” as the country is economically bankrupt. As previously indicated, within South Korea the nexus between the “haves” and “have-nots” is widening. The same is true between North and South. Following Miller’s argument, the “have-nots” represent an anarchic threat and contamination to the “haves” - those

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<sup>365</sup> Miller (1993) pp.257-267

<sup>366</sup> Miller (1993) p257

wishing to explore a more individualistic lifestyle and embrace globalisation. According to Miller, the penalty in seeking to avoid the “have-nots” is isolation and a lack of useful dialogue. Ironically, this places South Koreans in a bind. First, the survival of the fittest strategy means that dealing with the indigenous “have-nots” is likely to exacerbate the perceived cultural differences and heighten social disruption. Second, in the context of North-South relations, South Koreans have close filial connections to the people of the North. There is great political pressure not to abandon relatives who may be victims of the current threat of famine and yet the political climate is not conducive to rapprochement. Should South Korea ultimately take on responsibility for the North (following the model of West and East Germany), then there is a likelihood the South’s economy could be crippled. Extended a step farther, South Korea cannot afford an isolationist approach to international trade. It has gone past the point of no return and its economy would collapse. All three scenarios foreshadow anarchy.

There is little doubt the South Korean government’s extraordinary haste to promote rapid development is challenging formerly revered traditional ideologies. These notions of Korean-ness are being overwhelmed.<sup>367</sup> From a slightly different perspective the loss of traditional ideologies may make “...freedom frightening, because we cannot imagine what to do with it.”<sup>368</sup> The loss may be likened to loss of meaning and exacerbate feelings of confusion. Another view could be that “tradition may be a defence against finding alternative modes of being, relating and organising oneself to lead through the future.”<sup>369</sup>

Further, it could also be argued individualism implies failed dependency. Like Miller’s report of the British experience, traditional Koreans feel their government is failing to fulfil their expectations. Just as freedom may be frightening, the sudden return of one’s projected dependency (once soundly invested in the government) may be equally as confronting. Individual identity is under threat by the erosion of the social fabric produced by radical changes. Traditional institutional containers for people’s

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<sup>367</sup> Wanki Paik (1990) pp.169-74

<sup>368</sup> Miller (1993) p259

<sup>369</sup> Miller (1993) p260

projections seem now unable to cope with the strength of negativity. This arouses fear of chaos; and anarchy. The transition can be extremely painful for some; whilst for others, like the international entrepreneurs, it can be personally satisfying and rewarding. The notion of a continuing contradiction, seems apt.

Just how much the Korean informant's reports reflect the whole of Korean society on these issues is a matter of conjecture. Miller suggests that small groups "may express phenomena that do not belong to the small group in itself but are manifestations of the large group, or even of society."<sup>370</sup> He suggests that within broad limits, society may be equated with 'country'; although, it is perhaps more formless than 'nation' or 'state'. Miller speculates on evidence in therapy groups that supports the notion that an individual in isolation from a designated group may relate or behave as if the absent group is influencing the "unconscious dynamics that are mobilised" in the 'group of one' and the therapist. From this, and the evidence from the OPUS meetings, he deduces that the absent group-in-the-mind has a deep effect on the transaction between the individual and the therapist and ultimately, the society.

### **3.2.5 Concluding Comment on Relationship**

It is important to note South Koreans and Australians perceive and experience individual and group relationship activities in distinctly different ways. Compared with Australians, some South Koreans apparently do not recognise an individual's separateness and independence. Instead, it is suggested they embrace "We-ness" in individual and group situations. It is important to appreciate and acknowledge this difference when ascribing motives for behaviour. It is possible psychological frameworks attributed to the West, may not apply to this environment. Clearly there is unresolved debate about this proposal that goes far beyond the parameters of this study. Only time will shed further light on the complex issues associated with these seeming differences. Nevertheless, knowing of the existence of these contrary perceptions can only enrich our interpretation of behaviours and contribute to sounder communication during our business encounters.

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<sup>370</sup> Miller (1993) p255

### 3.2.6 Summary

This Section (3.2) explored and evaluated *Korean-ness*. For Koreans, the reported *National character* (Korean-ness) in-the-mind seemed to reflect their unique customs and values: - traditions based in a long history; Confucianism and it's antecedents; nationalism; hard work and an emphasis on Korean difference from others. To Australians, the reported Korean-ness in-the-mind was *a continuing contradiction*. It acknowledged difference. It reflected mono-culturalism; Confucianism; nationalism; an aggressive, emotional, impatient, enigmatic approach to business life. *Militarism, coloniser/invader* and *survival & fear* descriptors are extant - Koreans wishing for the best of both worlds: selectively embracing the Western lifestyle, yet fearing the threat of foreign encroachment. Koreans seemed willing to initiate relationships, but only on their terms. The Korean informants appeared to be simultaneously accommodating and rejecting foreign relationships as if in a state of transition where trusting is difficult - implying bargaining and depression.<sup>371</sup> Within this notion are reflections of loss and shame associated with a history of invasion. And, in the present, is the fear and shame associated with exclusion or non-acceptance internationally; where, despite their desperate striving to achieve, they fear never being quite good enough.

South Korean business people are now operating in a global milieu that exposes them to contradictory, foreign values and ethics. The challenge to traditions, faithfully practiced for centuries, is substantial. Their professed adherence to and reverence for their traditions (characterised by Confucianism) in such circumstances could be interpreted as a socially constructed defence to the anxiety associated with conforming to authority and control. Here, socially constructed defence refers to "...a collectively agreed upon process similar to shared beliefs and values."<sup>372</sup> A social defence is said to be formed when the behaviours depicting the defence are interpreted and accepted by others as providing the desired relief from the commonly experienced anxiety. That is, members of a group collude consciously and unconsciously in the wish underlying the behaviour, and internalise and project it in common.<sup>373</sup> Confucianism in this guise

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<sup>371</sup> Kubler-Ross (1977) pp.72-98

<sup>372</sup> Czander (1993) p110

<sup>373</sup> Czander (1993) p110

appears to fulfil the role of a holding environment enabling Korean business people to deal with their dependency and irrational behaviours as a whole of life experience.

The role played by the Korean Concepts of Universal I-ness, We-ness and Cheong in this process is arguable. Explained in terms of Turquet's "Oneness" the notions appear to have equivalence in the Western experience. Korean-American and Japanese researchers would challenge the validity of these Korean Concepts in practice. Certainly growing Korean anxiety associated with changing economic, social and political conditions depicted by rapid industrialisation and population movement from rural to urban environments is significant. I have suggested that there may well be a link between these changes and a developing "Me-ness" in Korean society. This notion emphasises a growing separateness from traditions with the fragmentation of essentially egalitarian communities into a broader, hierarchical social order and a confrontation (perhaps for the first time) of personal psychic boundaries. It may be that We-ness is being challenged by Me-ness and that Koreans are being propelled by their "own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing realities..."<sup>374</sup> of their new urban milieu. The known and knowable Korean group could be threatened with destruction by the *actual* recognition of the emergence of individual Me-ness, the invader from within.

If this is so, then Korean society is potentially facing a consuming schizoid anxiety of variable and varying proportions. This could be read as a significant challenge to the consistency of the image of Korean-ness, or the perceived National character in-the-mind.

The next Chapter considers how *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* was reflected in differing Australian and Korean views of business relationships, and business ethics.

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<sup>374</sup> Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) p3



## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

### 4.0 Introduction

This Chapter relates how *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* was reflected in differing Australian and Korean views of business relationships, and business ethics.

The Chapter considers the frustration and misunderstanding experienced by Australians and Koreans in coming to terms with differences between their espoused and actual behaviour. It examines historical and philosophical material as a means of finding new interpretations of Korean-ness. As part of this process it revisits the notions of *universal I-ness* and *we-ness* discussed in Korean Concept 1 and reflects on the practice of *cheong*, or “total empathy” described in Korean Concept 2. It discusses these in the context of what is seen by some Korean informants as the current antithetical commercialisation of self interest. The Chapter also considers business ethics and refers to a third Korean Concept: *pujo*, a conceptualised form of gift giving, in seeking to clarify and provide a perspective for the traditional practice of reciprocal help and its arguable degeneration, or reinterpretation, as the practice of bribery in current business enterprise. The Chapter engages in a speculative discussion about Koreans in a state of transition in terms of their traditional values and patterns of management. The notion of transition is developed to include **all** informants in the study as a means of reinterpreting the image of an Australian and Korean National character in-the-mind.

The matter of unconscious anxiety and defence mechanisms is illustrated in a second Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma** - at the end of this Chapter. This Case reflects my experience of the irony of parallel process in this research where my first contact with one Korean informant appeared to mirror the situation of establishing a business relationship vis a vis an Australian business person and the Korean informant. In this Case Study, I will emphasise the situational determinants of behaviour as well as demonstrating how the notion of National character may mask unconscious anxieties. As a result of my experience, I suggest that during the emotional turmoil of a cross-

cultural encounter these anxieties come to the fore and are acted out in various ways whilst matters of National character recede. As the emotional tension dissipates, the anxiety subsides and matters of National character return to prominence. The process demonstrates the nexus between surprise and sense making in the research context (as outlined in Section 2.1.4.4) and explores Armstrong's proposal (discussed in Section 1.3.3) of reframing the image of the mental model to encompass "the feeling I am aware of in myself"<sup>375</sup> as a source of recovering the meaning of an event. The Case highlights the potential for a multiplicity of interpretations. The potential for misunderstanding or misinterpretation of communication cues is clearly apparent. The Case indicates potential ramifications for future business encounters.

The Case also demonstrates how the dynamics associated with the conceptual framework of National character in-the-mind may have a significant effect on Australian-Korean business encounters and strengthens the hypothesis that studying the psychodynamics of an event provides for clearer interpretations of the event.

#### 4.1 Sharing a Business Relationship

In considering the prospect of sharing a business relationship the data show Australian informants tend to concentrate on *the business*, whereas Korean informants emphasised their preference for establishing *a relationship*<sup>376</sup> before engaging in business activity. Following the interviews, I was left with little doubt that Australians and Koreans have differing expectations in terms of their cross-cultural exchange, especially in terms of social relations in a business context. I was also struck by the apparent inconsistencies in their interpretation of a business encounter in terms of relationships. For example, as related in Section 3.1.3.1 whilst Australian informants felt the most prominent feature of their Australian-ness was openness, they applied this to themselves as individuals. They did not see openness as a characteristic of relationships, particularly in a business context. Notwithstanding, in concentrating on *the business*, I was given to believe they considered the actual encounter as "personal",

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<sup>375</sup> Armstrong (1996) p3

<sup>376</sup> The Korean concept of *relationship* was discussed at length in Section 3.2.2

as if they had and were engaged in an exclusive and intimate relationship<sup>377</sup> with their Korean counterpart. By contrast, the Korean informants perceived Australian business people as insensitive to feelings, pushy, impersonal and distant.

The following discussion explores some of these apparent differences in expectations and actual behaviour as reflections of separate and shared images of National character in-the-mind.

#### **4.1.1 Australian-ness in a Business Context - A Korean View**

In commenting on *Australian-ness* in a business context, some Korean informants were cautious not to offend - “Usually Korean companies are impressed by Australian personality: very gentle courteous very open take advice responsible.”<sup>378</sup> “Korea has not been a popular market (for Australia) in the past...not many ockers - those who have come become part of our folklore.”<sup>379</sup> Others were less circumspect - “Australians are a rural type - frank friendly farmer type mentality...some are slower in their reactions to change.”<sup>380</sup> This Korean informant had earlier used the term *rural people* to condescendingly describe many Koreans unquestioning acceptance and adherence to Confucianism and Shamanism.

Some Korean informants emphasised history and geography to provide a context for Australian-ness - “Koreans are conscious that Australians may have a bias in the direction of Europe or America because of history Australia is seen to be on the edge of Asia not in or out.”<sup>381</sup> Some framed their responses by comparing Australians with business people from other countries, although it was clear Koreans did not consider Australians worldly wise in comparison to Americans or Europeans. **KR2** saw Australians as “happy people...more innocent...not bright smart tricky like Londoners or New Yorkers you (Koreans) don't have to be so wary.”<sup>382</sup> **KR5** felt compared with business people from the

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<sup>377</sup> as distinct from “personal” meaning “in Confidence”

<sup>378</sup> KR6, KRESPO L374-5

<sup>379</sup> KR6, KRESPO L411-3

<sup>380</sup> KR5, KRESPO L359-60

<sup>381</sup> KR2, KRESPO L391-3

<sup>382</sup> KR2, KRESPO L347-50

US and Europe, Australians are “...less sophisticated owing to being so isolated...unlike the Europeans who live in each other’s close proximity and have regular and frequent dealings...”<sup>383</sup>

In terms of business acumen, Korean informants thought Australian business people demonstrated an ignorant and simplistic approach to business and trade. **KR4** considered Australians “short track minded.”<sup>384</sup> This was supported by **KR1**:

“They want everything to be done quickly...they are worried about being cheated.”<sup>385</sup>

“Australians query loyalty and don't trust nominated agents...they have to be prepared to take a risk versus wasting time and money.”<sup>386</sup>

**KR6** reinforced the view with his comments about initial encounters:

“First timers give us most problems those new to international business...not knowing how to present themselves market their product...they are quite tunnel visioned in how they perceive Korea where we are in relation to Australia...NOT in South East Asia!!...they think all Koreans should know English and make sacrifices for them.”<sup>387</sup>

Two Australians, **AR8** and **AR9**'s remarks reinforced the Korean view:

“Australians share a ‘Casino’ mentality on investment...their time horizons are far shorter...we want fast dollar returns for small investment...just like roulette...we are more focussed on the deal and getting the deal done...”<sup>388</sup> “Australian business people are preoccupied with contracts...the legalities of an operational document...Koreans see contracts as a confirmation document...these differences in themselves make relationship building difficult.”<sup>389</sup>

Other Australians supported the Korean approach of developing relationships, first. **AR6** offered this advice on how to maximise business contacts:

“...don't pay lip service to the process of negotiation and relationship building...get to know each other...be conscious of the Korean process of appraisal and use it...don't

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<sup>383</sup> KR5, KRESPO L356-8

<sup>384</sup> KR4, KRESPO L354

<sup>385</sup> KR1, KRESPO L343-4

<sup>386</sup> KR1, KRESPO L380-1

<sup>387</sup> KR6, KRESPO L442-50

<sup>388</sup> ARESPO L394-397 & L400

<sup>389</sup> ARESPO L159-161

*expect to make an offer and leave...keep contact...networking is the only way to succeed...you need a Korean agent.*<sup>390</sup>

**AR11** continued in the same vein: “*Find yourself a good agent who is prepared to look after your interests...it's going to cost...you find this agent through networking...introductions are important and who you know...build relationships.*”<sup>391</sup>

Without questioning the bona fides of these Australians’ advice or the spirit in which it was given, there appeared to be a direct conflict with Korean interpretations of actual Australian behaviour in the business arena.

#### **4.1.1.1 Espoused Models And Models-In-Use**

This reminded me of the differences between espoused models and models-in-use described by Argyris and Schon<sup>392</sup> where, it is said, we articulate models to explain how we behave, but these may not align with, or may be entirely different to, the models that drive our actual behaviour. As our models-in-use are used unconsciously, our actions may appear hypocritical or insincere without us necessarily recognising the difference with our espoused model(s).

This also appeared relevant to the maintenance of *actual* relationships. Several Australian informants acknowledged they paid ‘lip service’ to the notion of relationship building. They also noted Korean attempts to seek the higher moral ground on the issue, arguing Korean business practices actually inhibit the development of relationships. Australians’ comments tended to focus defensively on what were regarded as negative Korean qualities, questioning their sincerity and, through their projections, reinforcing the notion “they are not like us”. A vicious circle in motion. This contribution from **AR8** is illustrative:

*“We talk about developing and cultivating relationships...each year or so the chaebols move their managers (job rotation)...new relationships need to be built...so the so-*

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<sup>390</sup> AR6, ARESPO L752-755

<sup>391</sup> ARESPO L886-888

<sup>392</sup> Argyris and Schon (1978)

*called continuity is not established by 'them' why should we be so concerned.*"<sup>393</sup>

*"Face and relationship building is a crock of shit...everything is fine when it is going their way and they are successfully pushing their view...if they lose track or can't justify their point of view they call time out or say what is happening is not the Korean way; cry foul or call you a racist as a tactic to cover their ineptitude not save face."*<sup>394</sup>

The proposal about the presence and reciprocal effect of the espoused models versus models-in-use for both Australians and Koreans seems justified in this context.

#### **4.1.2 Korean-ness in a Business Context - An Australian View**

Generally, the Australians interviewed tended to find Koreans "...a continuing contradiction."<sup>395</sup> Australians had difficulty explaining their observations and seemed bound to stereotypes. Some attributed behaviour to *-isms* like Nationalism and Confucianism as general labels, but could not extrapolate from there. For example, they were conscious of isolated behaviours being *that way* because "Confucianism is apparent." I was left with the impression that for some, Confucianism per se was being used as a description of because, rather than an explanation of why, or a *reasoned* statement of attribution.

To Australians, *Korean-ness* was depicted in the Korean business person's dogged determination and persistence particularly as tough negotiators; their penchant for hard work; and their striving to carve an existence. **AR8** admired Korean persistence, using militarist metaphors to reinforce his view: "*They have the strength to see things through...they will not go under around over...the metaphor of the Kamikaze pilot is apt...it helps understand the mindset.*"<sup>396</sup> **AR5** described Korean-ness "in action" as "*Ten hours of negotiation at a hit hard drinking...only legitimate excuse for non-drinking is "doctor forbids it."* The Korean response to a non-drinking Australian: "*some people are just not suited to working in Korea...selling a product means entertaining!!*"<sup>397</sup> This entertaining has

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<sup>393</sup> AR8, ARESPO L397-399

<sup>394</sup> AR8, ARESPO L400-404

<sup>395</sup> AR8, ARESPO L659

<sup>396</sup> AR8, ARESPO L658-60

<sup>397</sup> AR5, ARESPO L633-5

an express purpose. Koreans need to be certain they can trust, and continue to trust, their potential partner before they commit themselves. Entertaining gives them the opportunity to see people in a less inhibited environment and frame of mind. **AR5** offered a short vignette to illustrate the point:

*“An Australian arrived in Korea to talk business...got to Kimpo (Airport) and instead of getting into a car and talking straight away the Korean host said we have booked a domestic flight to Chejudo Island (a Holiday Resort) for 3 days rest and recreation... no business until the end of the 3 days...if it works it works...if it doesn't we haven't all wasted our time.”<sup>398</sup>*

**AR7** reinforced the view “Australians have to realise it's going to take time to form relationships...make 3-4 trips before they really start the business...get to know develop trust...don't barge in...Koreans are very wary...an evening in the Karaoke bar is worth the investment.”<sup>399</sup>

#### 4.1.2.1 Adherence to Traditional Values

When discussing *Korean-ness* in terms of how the informants did business, emotions occasionally ran hot. At times there seemed little tolerance for respective differences. For example, **AR8** noted the apparent Korean confusion in trying to embrace Western values and maintain their traditions where, he felt, contrary to traditional Confucian practice of the poor looking after the rich, the chaebols were “carrying” the country’s social welfare system through a process of over employment:

*“Koreans...have a myopic view of Confucianism and development...they want the best of both worlds...chaebols are archaic in the financial market section...their forecasts projections tax minimisation fat middle management massive over employment etc...don't have sound share holder values...the government won't deregulate the financial system...foreign banks are a conduit to the outside world and also more importantly the technology transfer...the so-called benefits of Confucian society gives them a reason to be and companies carry the cost of unemployment and social security by over-employment.”<sup>400</sup>*

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<sup>398</sup> ARESPO L828-832

<sup>399</sup> ARESPO L846-849

<sup>400</sup> AR8, ARESPO L145-53

**KR1**'s retort was perhaps, less charitable: "*Some people (Australians) think they're experts in Korea after 15 visits...Bullshit!!!...they are the impediments to progress.*"<sup>401</sup>

**AR6** noted the Korean's pragmatism when it came to adherence to traditional values and related the following folktale as an analogy to support his view:

*"Confucianism is about the weak having to look after the strong compared with the opposing Christian ethic...one morning some peasants found a whale on a beach...first they thought they would cut it up for meat then use some oil for lighting lamps the bones for needles and craft to sell etc...then a wise person in the group said the Prince would take 90%...this would mean of the 6 weeks they would take to carve up the whale about 5 and a half would be for the Prince and mean no return to them...they buried the whale."*<sup>402</sup>

I believe, as a metaphor the finale to this folktale: "...they buried the whale", has direct relevance for analysing and interpreting the apparent confusion expressed by the Australian and Korean informants concerning Australians' *business* focus and the Koreans focus on *relationships*. In this regard, I am drawn back to Korean Concepts 1 and 2 and the notions of *universal I-ness*, *We-ness* and the space of *Cheong*. In the space of *Cheong*, where "*I*" and "*you*" have resolved into a unified unit of "*we*" as the same reality, individuals transcend their own self interest and priorities and think only of family, and community. Within the space of *Cheong*, it is not acceptable to behave or express self interest. To do so, is to face expulsion from the community.

Applying this to the research context, those Koreans with a Western orientation, have metaphorically "buried the whale" (their past traditions) adopting attitudes and values similar to the Australian approach to social exchange - assimilating, maintaining and promoting individuality. In this mode, "*I*" and "*you*" are separate units, and arguably self interest comes to the fore. I contend that for those Koreans maintaining a traditional view, or somewhere in transition between the traditional and the "urbane", the issue is anxiety provoking at two levels. First, in trying to reconcile the differences and changes within their own experience - the redefinition or substitution of what were

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<sup>401</sup> KR1, KRESPO L417-18



regarded as pure National characteristics; second, in accommodating the immediacy of frustration dealing with Australian business people who seemingly don't understand the Korean's dis-ease. Australian's apparent denial of this element of Korean-ness equates to a denial of difference, but as a defence mechanism protects Australians from their inability to define their own Australian-ness. There are no Australian traditions, like the space of *cheong*, upon which to call. My point here is there appears to be a collective or mutual dis-ease about this experience, the effect of which is the increased capacity for collective misunderstanding, suspicion and poor relationships. Hence Australian comments like: "*We have little in common with them and vice versa.*"<sup>403</sup> "*Australians just don't understand Koreans*"<sup>404</sup> and the Korean response: "*They (Australians) know too little about Korea so their expectations are poorly based.*"<sup>405</sup>

This dilemma can be represented graphically. For example, let's consider the matrix illustrated below in **Figure 4.1** and assume that each spoke of the wheel reflects a different "value" within the Korean business value system. Acceptance of each value, in turn, may range from zero percent at the centre of the matrix, to 100% at the outer limits. The outer (lighter) shaded area represents the degree to which a Korean business person shares the values. Note, it may be that some values are not fully embraced or practiced by the Korean (for whatever reason). The inner (darker) shaded area represents the degree to which an Australian business person may tolerate, accept or assimilate the Korean business values.

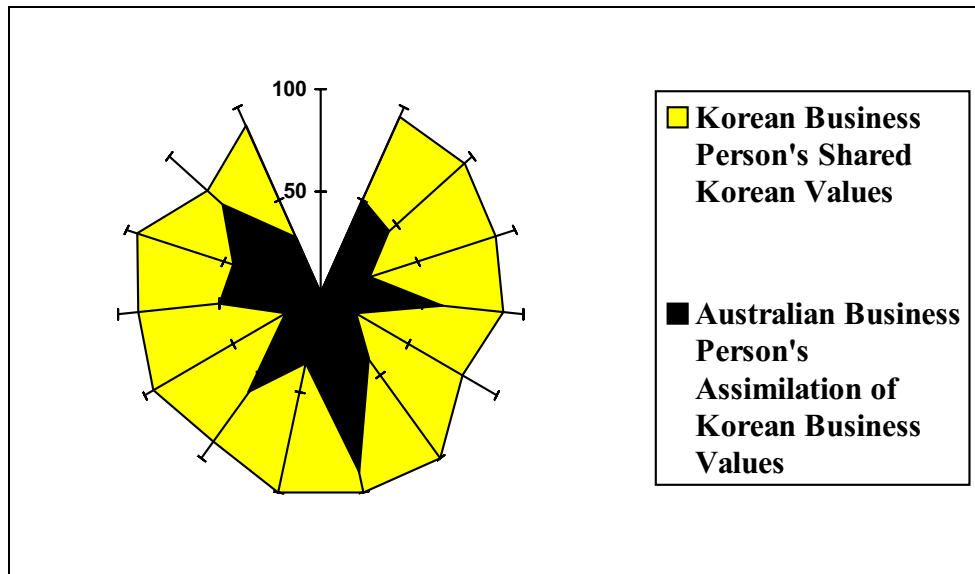
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<sup>402</sup> AR6, ARESPO L507-13

<sup>403</sup> ARESPO L394-404

<sup>404</sup> AR11, ARESPO L436-7

<sup>405</sup> KR4, KRESPO L437-8



**Figure 4.1 - Transition Matrix of Shared Korean Business Values**

As illustrated, there appears to be some marked differences of degree between the Australian's tolerance, acceptance or assimilation of several of the values compared with the Korean business person and the system limits: the tips of the dark shaded areas versus the outer lighter shaded area and the tips of the spokes. The Australian's behaviour in a cross-cultural exchange may vary according to how this gap between the Australian's tolerance, acceptance or assimilation level and the Korean value structure is perceived by the Korean business counterpart. The interview data suggest Koreans have difficulty interpreting such gaps. The greater the distance, the more the Australian is likely to be seen by the Korean as being "less like me" or "not like me". On the other hand, if the Australian business person had more completely assimilated this representation of the Korean business value system (ie. the shaded areas were more closely aligned) one might suggest a Korean business person would perceive the Australian as being more "like me".

By the same token, the Australian experience and interpretation of *Korean-ness*, as a measure of a Korean's reaction and the Korean's relative sensitivity to the Australian's, perhaps unconscious, dilemma could result in the Australian seeing the Korean as "like" or "not like" the Australian "me". The potential for ensuing misunderstanding is clear; a potential minefield for projective and defensive mechanisms with little hope of clarity in the short term. Some of these issues will be explored in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma** at the end of this Chapter.

#### 4.1.2.2 Korean Thinking

Acknowledging the literary limitations regarding the application of Korean notions of psychology to the Korean environment, the Korean material I have accessed is sufficient to suggest that Australians and Koreans may well think differently, especially in their notions of individual; group; and role relationships within and between groups. This proposal was explored and illustrated in a sub-section labelled **Korean Concept 1**, referred to earlier in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2. In it, I considered the arguably unique notions of *universal I-ness* and *We-ness* to describe the distinctive Korean view of individual and group behaviour. These notions contrast with the ideas expressed in Western psychology, (save perhaps, comparison with Turquet's *oneness*) reflecting the possibility of a *Korean psychic structure*.

Whilst acknowledging the debate about the real origins of the notions of *universal I-ness* and *We-ness* aroused by the Korean-American and Japanese researchers, mentioned in Section 1.2.2.4, my point is that there are Koreans who believe the notions of universal I-ness and We-ness to be true for them. As such, the notions are part of their reality. They represent concepts of Korean-ness or National character in-the-mind that make sense to them. In this regard, the distinctive Korean view appears to fulfil the same basic functions as that described previously in that it provides Koreans with a frame for individual adaptation; a frame for the internalisation of group structures; and a means of enabling individuals to make sense of their environment. Notably, the Koreans define, perceive, interpret, and make sense of these functions differently to Westerners. Knowing this to be so, one needs to accommodate the perspective as it may influence the quality of communication during the first (and subsequent) encounter(s). It also provides more data from which to process a finer interpretation of Korean-ness.

A number of informants made references to the concept of "Korean thinking". Initially, it struck me as odd when **KR1** said the most prominent feature of his Korean-ness is "...the fact that I think like a Korean."<sup>406</sup> Some days later **KR5** emphasised a difference between Australians and South Koreans was "a totally different way of thinking

*and doing business.*”<sup>407</sup> My immediate response was how *does* a Korean *think* like a Korean? Later, referring to my interview notes, I noticed **AR2** had indicated “*I can’t think like a Korean...they’re fairly introverted.*”<sup>408</sup> As I read it, I heard a note of incredulity and disdain in my inner voice and asked myself whether I was thinking like an ethnocentric Australian! How *does* an Australian *think* like an Australian? I couldn’t answer the question. Korean business people may well have the same problem.

#### 4.1.2.3 A Pathway to “Access”

In puzzling about ways of thinking and the formation of relationships I once again began reflecting on the notion of “access” to means of thinking and the defensive structures in place to inhibit or protect against access. Whilst some informants implied the existence of a difference in ways of thinking, no one could, would, expand upon it. Just finding the right words was a riddle. A useful example can be drawn from **KR6’s** earlier remark: “*our language has formal and informal components.*”<sup>409</sup> There are in fact six identifiable levels of formality in the Korean language,<sup>410</sup> directly encoded in the verb endings. By way of contrast, an Australian’s penchant for informality in distinguishing underlying social relationships means that the differential use of pronouns (as in the French *Tu* and *Vous* representing the informal and formal pronouns for “you”, and reflecting social distance) is practically non-existent. In Australia, the first given name or nickname represents the informal and the use of titles like Mr, Mrs, Ms, and Dr., are the formal. The Korean language has no pronominal equivalents to the *Tu/Vous* forms.<sup>411</sup>

Further, whereas English sentences form a pattern according to “Subject-Verb-Object”, the Korean pattern is “Subject-Object-Verb” with particles to identify the subject or object of a sentence. For example:<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> KR1, KRESPO L217; my emphasis

<sup>407</sup> KR5, KRESPO L306

<sup>408</sup> AR2, ARESPO L467

<sup>409</sup> KR6, KRESPO L165-7

<sup>410</sup> Martin quoted in Brislin (1990) p149

<sup>411</sup> Kim quoted in Brislin (1990) p149

<sup>412</sup> Adrian Buzo & Gi-Hyun Shin (1994) p1.16

English word order:	“I	like	Korea”
Direct and incorrect translation:	“Na	cho-a-ha	han-guk”
Korean word order:	“I	Korea	like”
Correct Translation with particles:	“Na-nŭn	han-gug-ül	cho-a-ham-ni-da”

The difficulty for Australians in Korean conversation (with Koreans) is finding appropriate words to express these differences and then for Koreans to recognise the meaning. From personal experience, similar difficulties apply for Koreans in English conversation (with Australians). To quote Confucius: *If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant. If what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone.* I speculated on whether similar conventions also applied to thinking.

The only reference in the (available) literature to the Australian-Korean relationship and *access* focussed on access to each other’s markets and the inequity of trade deficits.<sup>413</sup> The behavioural issue seemed to be within the bounds of the undiscussable.

Part of the apparent Australian-Korean *relationship* dilemma appears to be finding a pathway to *access* each other’s means of thinking; ways of formulating thought and ideas. Perhaps even wanting to is a first step? How can Australians and Koreans acquire or achieve, sufficient *access* to each other, to enable more accurate interpretation of each other’s thoughts and behaviour? In essence acquiring *access*, is a prelude to empathy; and ultimately to productive business relationships. Figuratively speaking, this requires getting into the other’s mind to see the world as the other does, before being able to *feel it* the way the other does. The implicit dilemma in this question is the issue of defensiveness. It seems the fundamental barrier to acquiring access to the other’s mind is that in the process *we have to let them into our own.* It

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<sup>413</sup> Korea Herald, Business News, 13 February 1997

would appear that it is ‘too difficult’<sup>414</sup> to establish a climate where one is comfortable “feeling one’s way” to share information; a climate that does not challenge the instinct of self preservation, or stimulate hair triggers to conscious and unconscious defence mechanisms. A situation requiring both risk and trust.

Given the clear differences in assumptions about human relationships between Australian and Korean business people, I again pondered the role of different psychic structures in cross-cultural business encounters (discussed in Section 3.2.4). I wondered whether their psychic structures were different and if so, what were the implications for interpreting Australian-ness and Korean-ness; and for mutual understanding in a business context?

#### **4.1.3 Business Ethics**

A further area for confusion and misinterpretation, with an historical sub-text, centred around the notion of business ethics. Most notably this appeared in the form of ‘white-envelopes’ - a euphemism for bribes - a subject mentioned by both Korean and Australian informants in their descriptions of *Korean-ness* and Korean business practices. The process was not comparable to, and went far beyond, the Western tradition of “tips” for service. At no time did Australian informants offer an explanation of, or for, the “white envelope” process, only that it was commonplace, to be frowned upon, and provided yet another source for projection of the “they are not like us” reflection of Australians’ reported *Australian-ness*.

Australians noted this feature of *Korean-ness* in the surreptitious expectation of white envelopes during business encounters. **AR1** indicated there was “*Lots of pressure within (her vocation) to take white envelopes for service rendered...had to indicate code of ethics and conflict of interests...Korean to Korean this is extremely difficult...giving gifts is an*

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<sup>414</sup> I have deliberately used this phrase “too difficult” to apply equally to the Australian and Korean approach to this communication problem. Koreans are reluctant to say “No!” emphatically, in face to face situations and use phrases like “it could be difficult”, “it will be difficult”, or “it is too difficult” as alternatives.

*acceptable way of doing business.*<sup>415</sup> **AR7** endorsed her view with this remark about the potential rewards: *“The white envelope system often exceeds their pay.”*<sup>416</sup>

**KR1** provided his perspective of bribery in Korean business as follows. After the Korean War: *“...Koreans had a common goal to make the country wealthy...bribes were helpful for regional autonomous governments and the business community to develop a consensus on how to move ahead for the collective good although a few were bound to profit at the expense of the less well off...with government support business could make money government could feed the people...mutual gain.”*<sup>417</sup> *“Koreans are less guilty about the use of bribes than most.”*<sup>418</sup>

**KR1** went on to recount a childhood experience (just after the Korean War) where his family’s ‘welfare’ (survival) was maintained by the ‘redistribution of tribute’. The manner in which **KR1** reported this view was as if to accept and revere the process. I continued to reflect on the notion of community help and wondered whether it had a traditional foundation.

### **KOREAN CONCEPT 3 - *Pujo* - Reciprocal Help**

Placed in an historical context, Korean villages or small communities traditionally relied upon reciprocal help (*pujo*) a conceptualised form of gift giving in an essentially egalitarian society. This process has been turned into something quite different. Absorption into a nationwide political and economic system has drawn such communities into a new, broader hierarchical social order. “The notion of inherent reciprocity moderates gifts in the egalitarian context and generates bribery (or pay-off) as a form of gift in the hierarchical context.”<sup>419</sup> Today, South Korean President Kim Young-sam has actively worked against the perception and practice of bribery within the government, bureaucracy and business to the extent that he declines to play golf - the golf course being the venue where many ‘corrupt practices’ are allegedly perpetrated.

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<sup>415</sup> AR1, ARESPO L594-7

<sup>416</sup> AR7, ARESPO L652-3

<sup>417</sup> KR1, KRESPO L20-26

<sup>418</sup> KR1, KRESPO L36

<sup>419</sup> Kyung-soo Chun (1992) p189

#### 4.1.3.1 Reflecting on *Cheong* and *Pujo*

I later pondered whether the Australian informants were aware of the historical and emotional importance and relevance of *cheong* and *pujo* or whether their interpretation of Korean social relations and the white envelope system was based only on the immediacy of their experience. An interpretation of survival; a lack of ethics; or denial, transference and projective identification associated with their own, Australian-ness?

#### 4.1.4 Koreans in Transition

In the light of the preceding Sections and the experiences of **KR3** and **KR4** related in Section 3.2.3 on *Relationship and Foreign Cultural Influence*, Korean informants seem to be in a “state of transition” in terms of their traditional values and the way they were now operating in the global marketplace. The notion of Koreans in transition (and Australians’ variable receptivity to the Korean expression of the transition) could help to explain, in part, the apparent confusion in the Australian experience and interpretation of *Korean-ness*. It may also account for some Korean informant’s inability to relate to the Australians’ *Australian-ness*, on the basis of a lack of familiarity with their culture and values.

#### 4.1.5 In Search of a Theory

In trying to clarify this speculation of Koreans in transition, I was drawn to Kim’s extensive review of Korean business practice in 593 Korean companies.<sup>420</sup> Kim concluded Koreans were in the process of transition in adapting to new values and a Western perspective.<sup>421</sup> As part of the study he proposed a *convergence theory* where a traditional agrarian society under great pressure to industrialise and urbanise modifies its behaviour and values to fit. He argued many Korean business people had adapted their behaviour, thinking and management practice to fit those modelled by American and European societies and enterprise. By contrast, he suggested there was a minority

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<sup>420</sup> Kim (1985)

<sup>421</sup> Dong-Ki Kim (1985) in Kim & Kim (1989) pp.133-160



who adhered to the notion that Korean society, its values and traditions, were resilient and would not be destroyed by the drive to industrialisation and urbanisation no matter the pressure to adapt to change (*divergence theory*). Indeed, in a twist of logic, people in divergence mode argue change is adapted to harmonise with existing values.<sup>422</sup> Kim's view was later supported by Bello & Rosenfeld<sup>423</sup> and Janelli.<sup>424</sup>

#### 4.1.5.1 Applying Kim's Theory

Reviewing my interview data in the light of Kim's theory, I began to realise its potential applicability for all the informant's in this research. I recognised within the Korean informants the diversity of Kim's hypothesis - inclined toward convergence whilst simultaneously maintaining some of their Confucian traits (divergence). For example, referring back to Section 3.2.2 about Korean "Relationships", **KR1** expressed the most conservative, idiosyncratic perspective typical of the divergence theory. He firmly believed in the application of Confucian principles and traditional lore. **KR2** and **KR6** were less forward in their views but were clearly advocates of the divergence position in terms of ethics. Their personal business experience recognised merit in working-with the Western approach to management. **KR4** was in midstream, pulled between the two. Her friends saw her as an individualist, but personally she felt torn between traditional Korean values and a desire for a different (Australian) lifestyle. **KR3** seemed threatened by the notion of convergence and wanted to invest time to test and accommodate the better elements of what foreigners had to offer. By contrast, **KR5**, the most worldly and entrepreneurial of all Korean informants, had embraced the convergence position.

From an Australian perspective, comparative links could be made (perhaps tenuously) about the "traditional" agrarian background of Australia's successful trading position in the 1950's and 1960's and the great pressure to industrialise and globalise. Interestingly, the Australians most critical of the Korean Way were those who had grown up in rural areas and moved to the city to work. Australian rural areas have a

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<sup>422</sup> Dong-Ki Kim (1985) in Kim & Kim (1989) pp.133-4

<sup>423</sup> Bello & Rosenfeld (1992)

<sup>424</sup> Janelli (1993)

strong community ethic not necessarily shared or practiced in the cities. I pondered whether perhaps these formerly rural Australians experienced a similar “transition” from old to new ways of thinking about social relations and whether they had recognised (and projected) subtle elements of their own character perhaps seen in the Koreans’ behaviour?

Australians working in Seoul could be regarded as their country’s East Asian vanguard. These Australians were experiencing a new environment, culture, social order, and value system. They were arguably in a state of transition, trying to equate and assimilate their Australian business and cultural values to the new, Korean environment. Within that experience, their accepted values were sorely challenged. The interview data suggest a dissonance existed between what they knew and trusted and their experience of the Korean environment. A few had successfully embraced the differences (convergence) although their business life was still difficult. A few espoused the policies and strategies necessary to “fit in”, but their actual behaviour suggested they had not truly assimilated their interpretations of what was required. Some of the Australians were reluctant to accept the need to change from their “traditional” ways. These were the adherents to the divergence theory.

#### **4.1.6 Summary**

This Section (4.1) considered how *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* was reflected in differing Australian and Korean views of business relationships and business ethics. It considered the misunderstandings experienced by Australians and Koreans in coming to terms with differences between their espoused and actual models of behaviour.

It examined historical and philosophical material as a means of finding new interpretations of Korean-ness. In the process it revisited the notions of *universal I-ness* and *we-ness* discussed in Korean Concept 1 and the practice of *Cheong* from Korean Concept 2 to help explain how and why Koreans value and place such emphasis on the development of human relations as a way of life. It then applied this view to the present

international business scene where in Korean eyes, the current antithetical commercialisation of self interest is threatening their traditional values.

The Section also considered business ethics. Referring to *pujo*, a conceptualised form of gift giving, it sought to clarify and provide a perspective for the traditional practice of reciprocal help and its arguable degeneration, or reinterpretation, as the practice of bribery in current Korean business enterprise.

The Section concluded with a speculative discussion about Koreans in a state of transition in terms of their traditional values and patterns of management. The notion of transition was extrapolated to include all informants in the study as a means of further developing the interpretation of Australian and Korean National character in-the-mind.

## **4.2 Preface to the Case Study: “The Name Card Dilemma”**

As indicated in the introduction to this Chapter, the following Case Study describes and analyses the dynamics of an Australian-South Korean business encounter using my role as researcher in the research during an interview with a South Korean informant as an action research case directed at a business relationship. It reflects the nexus between surprise and sense-making in the research context (as outlined in Section 2.1.4.4) and explores Armstrong’s proposal (discussed in Section 1.3.3) of reframing the image of the mental model to encompass “the feeling I am aware of in myself”<sup>425</sup> as a source of recovering the meaning of an event. The Case indicates potential ramifications for future business encounters.

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

Business people world wide use the business or *name card* as a means of introducing themselves to clients, customers or strangers as part of the process of the first encounter. In global terms, the name card (and its ceremonial rituals) define how I

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<sup>425</sup> Armstrong (1996) p3

see “myself” and how others see “me”. It contains the means to enable one to compare and judge “self” with “other” in terms of defined parameters - name, organisation, title or rank, location and perhaps educational achievement and relative status.

Within South Korea (and other countries) the name card is the recognised, accepted and trusted descriptive tool of identity. As one South Korean informant indicated:

*“In Korea name cards have great symbolic value...don't ever write on a Korean's card...he will become most upset...if you use a red pen...you're finished...don't deal your business cards as game cards!! Koreans take time to peruse the card: the family name the position in the organisation...if the person is senior the junior will take longer.”<sup>426</sup>*

I suggest the name card is a cryptograph for National character-in-the-mind. It consolidates a whole range of disparate factual and imagined data and presents it in a standardised format - a 9x5.5 centimetre card: identity within a frame.

When a business person is in foreign territory - another organisation’s precincts (building, factory etc) at home, interstate or overseas, the name card is the link to the known. It provides an element of reassurance, of “certainty” at times, and in environments of great uncertainty. This reinforcement acts like a security blanket, a defence against anxiety. The absence of a name card, the symbolic representation of who I am and how I define myself for this given context, is the absence of a link to the “security” provided by that certainty. In a cross-cultural environment where expectations may be heightened and the emotional complexity more intense, symbolic references to matters of National character and identity have great significance.

I contend in cross-cultural encounters the name card takes on an additional characteristic. By identifying the holder as an individual from another country the name card symbolises a representation of National character (*Australian-ness* or *Korean-ness*) and, ipso facto, difference from “us”. For business in Korea, the practice of having details printed in English on one side of the name card and in Korean on the reverse,

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<sup>426</sup> KPERS p32-6

reinforces this notion. I suggest there is more to this symbolism than is immediately apparent and that National character figures as a protective screen to hide more complex unconscious institutional anxieties and defences. I contend in heightened emotional situations notions of *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* whilst playing their role become lost in the sequence of events. Emotional survival becomes aroused (and focussed) and takes over. Thus the sensitivity of the parties to emotional states and the quality of their communication skills ultimately determines the outcome of the encounter. If there is no agreement and this is interpreted as offensive, then a slight to National character or ethnicity may be used as a psychic defence. If National character has been latent during the encounter and there is agreement, then National character reappears as rhetoric: a supporting device in progressing the agreement.

This Case Study is an attempt to explore these hypotheses by consideration of a singular issue of National character in-the-mind, at a micro level. I have chosen to use my personal experience of a research interview event as a vehicle for this exploration on the basis that as researcher in the research I am well positioned to give a first hand account of what is happening to me, within me, before, during and after the event, as distinct from reporting (second-hand) the experience of others. I have chosen to analyse the Case from a psychodynamic perspective because it provides the most appropriate means of examining data at a personal level. In this way I hope to engage the reader in the event as it unfolds, giving them the opportunity of entertaining a personal perspective and hence to relate more closely in their interpretation of the Case.

As this research proceeded I became increasingly of the opinion that notions of *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* are expressions of fantasy associated with what many individuals perceive, consciously or unconsciously, as their obligation to be “attached to” the country which provides them with a sense of identity; a sense of belonging. I suggest these fantasies may be attached to expressions of institutional anxieties and defences. I believe it is necessary to look behind the rind of overt behaviour and that close study of these fantasies from a psychodynamic perspective will provide clearer interpretation of cross-cultural business encounters and ultimately insight into the National character in-the-mind.

## CASE STUDY 2 - The *Name Card* Dilemma

In Chapter 2, I discussed the irony of parallel process in this research where an Australian researcher's first contact with a Korean informant was likely to mirror the situation of establishing a relationship in a business context vis a vis an Australian business person and the Korean informant.

This Case Study provides an insight into such an experience. Here, I wish to discuss the dynamics of an Australian-South Korean business encounter using my role as researcher in the research and an interview with a South Korean informant, Mr Jong (not his real name), as an action research case. It reflects the nexus between surprise and sense-making in the research context and explores Armstrong's proposal of reframing the image of the mental model to encompass "the feeling I am aware of in myself"<sup>427</sup> as a source of recovering the meaning of an event. The Case examines National character from several angles and identifies some issues that may assist the development of a cross-cultural communication strategy - before engaging in the initial Australian-Korean business encounter.

I propose to use the business or *name card* as a metaphor for National character (or at least a representation of identity) to show how easily a lack of attention to a customary event may lead to the exposure of more poignant emotional issues underpinning the potential for gross misunderstanding and breakdowns in cross-cultural communication. In doing so, I wish to emphasise the situational determinants of behaviour as well as demonstrating how the notion of National character may mask unconscious anxieties. I suggest that during the emotional turmoil of the cross-cultural encounter these anxieties come to the fore and are acted out in various ways, whilst matters of National character recede. As the emotional tension dissipates, the anxiety subsides and matters of National character return to prominence - in this Case, as implied reinforcement of future contact.

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<sup>427</sup> Armstrong (1996) p3

### The Name Card Dilemma

This Case Study begins with a general description of background material, followed by a description of the encounter - the *name card* dilemma. I will then process what I perceive to be some of the psychodynamics involved.

**BACKGROUND:** Before embarking on my visit to Seoul in June 1996, I was aware of the emphasis Koreans placed on the presentation of business or name cards. Whilst using a business card on a regular basis as part of my full-time employment, I wanted to make a clear distinction between my work role and my graduate student/researcher role. I was not visiting Seoul as a representative of my employer and I did not wish to indulge the confusion or potential conflict that might arise from the disparity between my work and graduate student/researcher roles. I therefore made a conscious decision not to take my business cards to Seoul.

For the purposes of the research project, I decided the letters of introduction and references I had sent to my intended informants prior to leaving Australia would be sufficient. I felt I could attend to the needs of further Australian or South Korean informants in the same way on my arrival. As a “lapse” in protocol, my inability to present a business card when introduced did not go unnoticed. Whilst the Australian business people shrugged it off as not important, some of the South Korean business people were less forgiving.

Notwithstanding personal references from prominent Australian business people known to my South Korean informants, at the moment of first contact I was unable to play my part in the ritual of “name card” exchange. I was an oddity. I could not be categorised by name, company title or educational qualifications. My apparent discourtesy seemed to place my hosts in an embarrassing position (I knew them, but they didn’t know me. The convention of determining relative status which occurs during the exchange of cards, was broken) and demonstrated my lack of understanding of the “Korean Way”. The effect was telling.

**THE ENCOUNTER:** I was referred to Mr Jong by an Australian informant after arriving in Seoul. My first contact with Mr Jong was by phone. I introduced myself, explained my reason for being in Seoul and identified my referee clarifying his recommendation. This was accepted with little comment. I then described my research project:

“My research project aims to explore how Australians and Koreans experience and perceive each other in a business context; how they recognise, describe and understand “Australian-ness” and “Korean-ness” and what effect this *understanding* has on their mutual relationships. I am studying this through individual interviews with Australian and Korean business people.”

I asked Mr Jong if he would be prepared to participate. He agreed (or that was what I heard or wanted to hear at the time) and we set an appointment for an interview 3 days hence.

I met Mr Jong in his high-rise office a 10 minute walk from the subway station. It was mid afternoon. Mr Jong was athletic, middle aged. His appearance and office reflected the trappings of his position and role - affluence, materialism, and the split in his cross-cultural corporate identity. The office furnishings consisted of a very large, hand carved wooden desk behind which hung an equally large oil painting of a rural landscape. The desk was clear. In front of it was a leather couch and 2 oversized arm chairs encircling two glass topped coffee tables strewn with foreign language (American, Japanese) newspapers. Several sporting trophies attesting to Mr Jong’s prowess were placed prominently around the room so a visitor couldn’t look in any direction without seeing one, or the others. A big map of Australia rested on the floor to conceal a blank wall. At the time the map appeared out of place, a temporary fixture, as if to impress the Aussie visitor; but I may have been peeved at the time of my observation (as shall be realised shortly).

Mr Jong was the sole representative of a large Australian firm in South Korea. His preliminary remarks referred proudly to his relationship with the firm claiming he was a highly competent and highly regarded operative within Australian and Korean



business circles. He told me his presence as a Korean in charge of an Australian firm epitomised the effectiveness of the firm. Australians getting “close to” South Koreans, using a Korean national as a trusted representative, was the very model of an efficient set up. He was proud to be associated with an internationalised company practising modern management not just paying lip service to the concepts. Mr Jong saw himself as a very loyal company man. He was conscious of providing a balanced neutrality to Australian-Korean business - accommodating differences, compromising, ensuring a Win-Win. The prominence of his role defined who he was in both Australian and Korean business circles. His manner could be described conservatively as self-satisfied. Yet, there was an air of cautious apprehension in his formality.

Mr Jong’s initial greeting was warm and gracious. He acknowledged my referee’s credentials and the reference but when it came to exchanging name cards the climate became decidedly cool. I had no name card. Mr Jong could not, would not, focus on anything else. His manner shifted from agreeable to displeasure. He seemed offended. I tried to explain my apparent indiscretion but he would not listen. Mr Jong insisted I write my personal particulars on the piece of A5 paper he pushed in front of me before he would speak with me further. He excused himself and left the room.

From a researcher’s perspective and a personal one too, the 7 minutes when Mr Jong was out of the room were far from empty. My mind was racing. I expected civility and harmony; then the sudden change of manner; the intensity; anger, frustration? Leaving the room. I was confused. I pondered the process I was asked to complete. I was being pressured to conform. I felt as if I was being hyper-sensitive. I felt guilty, as if I had been negligent and was being punished. Father had left while I thought about and repaired the mess. I felt as if my credibility and my identity had been challenged and it could only be repaired by doing as father had asked. I simultaneously chastised myself for not bringing my name cards and acknowledged the sound reasons for not doing so. I’d made a choice...but I also wanted this interview. There were no guarantees I would get one anyway, but my chances were better if I conformed to Mr Jong’s request. I felt incensed by the game. I felt incensed about getting caught out. How could a piece of card be so important? How could one describe one’s identity on a

piece of A5 paper? Is this condensed version of me sufficient? Will it be acceptable? How trivial. How powerful.

I pondered the struggle I was having in quantifying *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness*; the difficulty my informants seemed to be having in articulating it, too. I mused over this present demand for me to condense my identity, my *Australian-ness* to a piece of A5 paper. I then saw beyond the convention - identity within a frame. Was this also reflective of what I was asking of my informants? To conceptualise and describe their *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* in a given context; in 60 minutes...plus or minus?! “No less difficult a task,” I mused.

What else was going on here? How to separate my research self from my personal self in this situation to ensure I focussed on the task at hand? Was this possible in my current state? What was being projected? How was I going to react when Mr Jong returned?

On his return Mr Jong spent some time perusing the information on the paper. We then engaged in 20 minutes of small talk directed primarily at assessing my bona fides. My education, marital status, family, employment history were all canvassed. My academic history was impressive. It was sad I was not married. It was sad I had no children. My job must be demanding and stressful. I should play more sport. I should go out more. During this clarifying exchange Mr Jong commented that he felt poorly prepared to answer questions without notice. He would have preferred time to think. I had spoken to him on the telephone 3 days previously and felt then I had explained all I could about the research and its purpose. I did not appreciate that this telephone call had been regarded as an introductory exchange and more information was necessary (a faxed list of questions as a minimum) before a *proper* meeting could ensue. Mr Jong had not said this on the phone. I had not conformed with his expectations on several counts. It was tense going. A number of times I felt unsure whether progress was being made but I treated the event as a negotiation and pressed on. During this “getting to know you” period I indicated my endeavours to learn about his country’s history and its language and was able to discuss recent current affairs with some authority. I acknowledged my need to learn more about the formalities of the Korean Way. I

indicated it was not my intention to inconvenience him and paid tribute to his position, timeframe and kindness in making the time to speak at such short notice.

Finally, (it was now about 30 minutes since I'd arrived) he seemed satisfied. He shifted closer in his chair. "Well, what do you want to ask me? Would you like tea?" The barrier was lifted and we proceeded with an "amenable", quasi-formal discussion of the issues associated with the research.

**ANALYSIS:** Reflecting on my engagement in this Case, I seem to be caught up in the confusion of the interview event. I appear to be flitting between the known and the unknown of apparent misunderstanding and assumptions about my, and Mr Jong's, behaviour. At times I see myself in control; and then out of, or outside of, control. In a way, I appear to be both the subject and the object in the event. Mr Jong's comments and reactions give the impression the interview event did not meet his expectations. He felt "unprepared". Together, we seemed to be *lost in unfamiliar places*.<sup>428</sup>

In presenting this analysis I shall consider 3 themes. The first will be a brief description of the emotional context, followed by a reflection on the sources of the misunderstanding. I will then consider a number of possible interpretations of the event. For the purposes of this process Mr Jong and I will separately assume the "high moral ground" using the other as a container for projected negative images and emotions. Prior to a final commentary, I will describe some additional assumptions and areas of perceived denial "...pushing certain thoughts, feelings and experiences out of conscious awareness because they have become too anxiety provoking."<sup>429</sup>

One of the difficulties I had in preparing for and writing this Case was finding the appropriate words to describe my thoughts and feelings about what I perceived had happened around, within and to me. It struck me that words representing affective states like anxiety, embarrassment, fear, jealousy, and shame tend to be banal descriptors, without quantifying the intensity, or the true meaning, of the emotional

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<sup>428</sup> With deference to Shapiro & Carr (1991)

<sup>429</sup> Halton, W., in Obholzer & Roberts (1994) p12

experience to others. In the context of the interview, these emotions seemed to personify a focus on self. Amedeo suggests “...what is important in understanding a specific emotion is the nature of the mental state associated with it, the stimulus or external conditions activating the emotion, and how the individual perceives and evaluates those conditions...cognitions of situations determine *what* is felt in them.”<sup>430</sup> Cognitions help individuals make sense of their experience and they may well contain a subjective element(s) relative to the self in the event and thus be affective in nature. Cognitions therefore engage perception, memory and past experience.

So, this appraisal of environments, people and events during an emotional episode in Seoul, enables connections to be made with memories of similar, past situations; evaluations of potential levels of threat and estimations of the best (and worst) response. In terms of my place in this interview event (and the other interviews I conducted throughout my visit to Seoul), I was intensely focussed on appraising it’s every nuance. The degree of concentration and nervous energy involved may well have caused me to be over sensitised, exposing myself to unconscious responses for which I was not totally prepared.

In analysing this Case I can only speculate about the source of the misunderstanding occurring in the interview encounter. Certainly, reflecting after the event, I was conscious of the emotional intensity and having ignored or denied the existence of significant information available to me during the event. I was also conscious of making inappropriate assumptions about my informant’s Korean-ness.

Notwithstanding, apart from all the theory about researchers maintaining an emotional distance from their subjects, I could not help feeling my ambivalence toward Mr Jong. In writing this now with a view to progressing the analysis, I am conscious of expressing an ethnocentric view. The encounter was such that it was impossible to ask Mr Jong what was happening from his perspective. Nevertheless, the following hypotheses may provide some insight into what may have been happening for Mr Jong, and for me in my Australian-ness.

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<sup>430</sup> Amedeo, D in Garling & Golledge (Eds) (1993) p89

If we regard *me* as the source of the misunderstanding then in Mr Jong's eyes I may have represented difference from Korean "we-ness". Apparently not knowing the "Korean Way" I may have been perceived as reflecting the qualities of the Western stereotype: the invader; non-conformity, arrogance, ignorance, a lack of care and appreciation. As such there was potential to fantasise a child to be punished. In terms of the research, my presence and demands on Mr Jong's time frame may have been perceived as an imposition. The interview request may have been too demanding; the area of investigation may have been unfamiliar, incomprehensible; I may have been perceived as self-centred, insensitive to feelings.

At a different level, my *Australian-ness* may have represented a connection to Mr Jong's personal security: the Australian firm to which he had appended his personal identity, typified by the references to his role and position defined in Australian **and** Korean business contexts. As a vessel for projection "the visitor" or perhaps, *the invader*, without a name card may have aroused suspicion about motives, a potential threat to personal security vis a vis the Australian firm (a spy). I may have appeared to represent the insecurity facilitated by distance, the same tyranny experienced by expatriate Australians. The "visitor" may also arouse uncertainty. Seniority and status are fundamental components of the "hierarchy" of Korean culture and tradition. It exists in family life, the presentation of food and the distribution of commodities. Elders are privileged without reference to ability, knowledge, skill or sense of equality. Such seniority resides in business tied to the authority of office represented in decision making, obedience to position and in promotion (as described in the constructed case study: Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+). A Korean's manners vary according to the status of those present. This attitude is apparent "...in their intimate and lavish hospitality to acquaintances in contrast to their hostile and blunt response to other people whom they do not know."<sup>431</sup> For a visitor to seek an audience without conforming to protocol is to sorely challenge this tradition. In this encounter, my relative *seniority* or status could not be assessed. In these circumstances emotions associated with disapproval may be easily aroused leading to a whole range of emotions from uncertainty about how to behave, depression, competition, to hatred for my arrogance (and ignorance) to be different.

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<sup>431</sup> Kim Dong-Ki, in Kim & Kim (1989) p137

If Mr Jong were the source of the misunderstanding then, to me, Mr Jong could represent difference from *Australian-ness*. In demanding I write my personal details on the paper and leaving the room Mr Jong may be perceived as petty, uncooperative and unreasonable. To me, this expression of pettiness, the black and white mindset, was inhibiting progress on a worthwhile project. This idea in itself was a reflection of *my* black and white mindset. Pettiness feeding on pettiness. Mr Jong's manner matched the Korean stereotype of arrogance, egocentricity, pretension and self satisfying. Having felt rejected I may have fantasised and projected images of a child: being dominated, and punished as a child. In these circumstances, Mr Jong may have figuratively represented expressions of my dependence upon him for an interview; and of my anxiety in fear of failure. Mr Jong may have also become the object of my fear of embarrassment (as I was trying to be on my best behaviour); and my fear of an unknown future as far as the research process was concerned. There certainly was a time early in the interview when I thought it would be terminated. Mr Jong and his behaviour represented a reflection of the limits on what could conceivably be achieved within the research. If informants chose not to participate, the research effort would dissolve. My success depended upon his (and others) participation. Mr Jong became representative of power and independence - the qualities and control I envied and wished for myself.

These images conjured further avenues of assumption and denial reflected below. I offer this list as an indication of the complexity and range of possibilities some or all of which could influence the interpretation(s) of the event.

### ASSUMPTIONS

- Mr Jong was blocking me and I had not blocked my self.
- I should be punished for making a deliberate choice not to take name cards to Seoul; equally, rationalisation: I had done the right thing in terms of separating my work and researcher roles = I should not be punished for making a deliberate choice not to bring name cards to Seoul.
- of immobilisation: feeling frozen by my negative expectations; feeling I was powerless or helpless to influence the outcome of the interview in any way.
- (a Korean) speaking good English implies equally good comprehension and thinking *in English*, as distinct from thinking in Korean and engaging in a phased translation-interpretation-retranslation process.
- working for an Australian company means a Korean informant is/will be cooperative and forthcoming in satisfying *my* selfish Australian needs.

### DENIAL

- of my knowledge of the business protocols of first contact and failure to act upon them - printed alternative name cards.
- of my envy of Mr Jong's challenging role; and of my anger at how I was being treated.
- of the duress I may be applying to Mr Jong and other informants in and through this interview process.
- of my foreign-ness and Mr Jong's *Korean-ness* (because of his Australian business affiliation) will somehow ease the preconceived difficulty of communication in the interview situation and enable it to happen. In Korea, "foreigners must never forget that they are foreigners."<sup>432</sup>

In a broader research context other assumptions could include:

- all informants are interested in my research and are genuinely able and willing to participate.

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<sup>432</sup> Hinkelman (undated) p140

- all informants are capable of comprehending and conceptualising *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* and making judgements about them with limited prior thought or contemplation.
- all informants are equally able to self reflect and are willing to articulate or disclose this information to a foreign researcher.
- the reported information is accurate for cross-cultural interactions with other Australians and other Koreans.
- I was afraid to freely relate to my informants without inhibition.
- As a researcher I am able to be dispassionately objective in a timely and appropriate manner. This notion verges on hyperbole.<sup>433</sup>

The legitimacy of each of these points as an explanation of my feelings and behaviour remains moot. In hindsight, I am conscious of seeking to rationalise a seemingly irrational event. Whilst it provides some comfort to be able to provide an explanation for what is now a distant incident, I ponder the issue of the researcher deceiving himself, and potentially his readers, by oversimplifying an extremely complex state of affairs. At the time, reflecting upon what was happening, searching for clues to the sources of our respective projections and trying to come to terms with my own reactions seemed to enable some containment of my anxiety. I recognise my engagement of various strategies to support this contention. Treating the whole issue as *a negotiation*, searching for what Mr Jong reported as his focus in Australian-Korean business - a win-win - enabled me to de-personalise my immediate “reading” of the situation. Adding this distance helped to desensitise my anxiety and emotion. This apparent stabilising of my buffeted self esteem created an opportunity to once again listen as a boundary rider to the inner and outer worlds of conscious and unconscious meaning within the interview event. Doing so facilitated a further opportunity for me to empathise and see the situation from both sides. This in turn enabled the interview to continue, facilitating the more equitable exchange of information. Basically, by isolating my feelings from the experience (either consciously or unconsciously) and accepting the ambiguities extant, I seemed to be able to make space for the presence of multiple realities, thus facilitating and enabling cooperation.

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<sup>433</sup> See discussion by C.W. Churchman in *Challenge to Reason*, McGraw-Hill New York, 1968 and Mitroff and Linstone (1993) pp.88-90



Obviously if this analysis, this interpretation, of my thoughts and feelings associated with the interview has credence, it did not occur without the direct involvement of Mr Jong. Unfortunately, a description of Mr Jong's interpretation of this situation is out of reach. I felt totally unable to talk with Mr Jong about the events as they were happening and in retrospect, even with the best of interpreters, I doubt I would be able to explain my thoughts and hypotheses in terms he would comprehend. I have since mused whether this might also be the case for many of the Australian informants, too.

The implications for the achievement of trust between the parties in such situations is open to conjecture. Any wonder Koreans prefer to invest great amounts of time in formulating and developing relationships before contemplating business associations.

In the context of this Case an Australian visitor in Seoul is an outsider. An outsider without a name card is a totally unknown quantity and threatens the security of the familiar. The piece of A5 paper on which I was asked to document my credentials can be seen as both a symbol and a tool: a symbol of conformity, for reinstating certainty and reassuring security; a tool to facilitate the discovery of more information about this strange visitor; to enable further exchange and to enable the association to continue within the bounds of safety.

**Final Commentary:** I wrote this Case Study in an attempt to clarify in my own mind what may have been happening in Mr Jong's office on that day in June 1996. At the same time, I hoped to provide the reader with some insight into the possible machinations of a first encounter in a Korean environment. For me, the process demonstrates the nexus between surprise and sense-making in the research context and the potential fragility of communication in cross-cultural business environments. The surprise of my unfulfilled expectations and the apparent arousal of a host of seemingly inexplicable concerns and anxieties enabled me to experience the complexity of an Australian-Korean interaction from a perspective I would not otherwise have realised.

Subsequent attempts to interpret and reinterpret the event, including writing this Case, have enhanced my insight and heightened my awareness for future encounters. The processing of my perceived fantasies and symptoms of denial has refined this sense-making activity. Without it, I would not have recognised how issues of National character [the focus of the research interview; represented by the name card; and latent in both players relative acceptance of each other] were so quickly put aside and replaced by defence mechanisms to ward off anxiety, only to assume prominence once the anxiety had subsided. In fact, at the end of the interview, one icon of National character, the name card, was supplanted by another and probably more significant and threatening one (for me) as a reinforcement of future contact - Mr Jong proposed I learn more of the *Korean language* and use it on my next visit to Korea. Notably, with the use of both icons (the name card and the language) he expected me to accommodate the “Korean Way”.

The question arises: was Mr Jong’s proposal made in anticipation of future contact? Was it a suggestion to enable and enhance future collaboration and co-operation or, knowing how difficult such a proposal is for many Westerners to fulfil, was it Mr Jong’s conscious or unconscious psychic defence against future contact? Afterall, Mr Jong had remarked that he saw *English* as a language and cultural barrier to business between the two countries. Notwithstanding, even after long and careful consideration, these observations can only be an interpretation of the events.

On reflection, I don’t *know* how I was being perceived by Mr Jong, I *felt* it. I don’t *know* what happened outside of the room in those 7 minutes Mr Jong was gone. He may not have been trying to punish me. That may have been a reflection of a childhood fantasy. I was unaware of his timetable or pending commitments. Mr Jong may not have departed to avoid tension. He may have been attending to other pressing matters. He may have been allowing me time to *save face*. My attention was directed towards survival. I felt if I was going to succeed in progressing our relationship I would have to *negotiate* a solution. To that end my focus was the diversity of the multiple realities, not our identity or National character per se.

Towards the end of the interview I was struck by the contrast between Mr Jong's earlier reserve, the protective screen of repeated comments of how well he was representing the company, and what appeared to be a lapse in formality - his openness about his inability to comprehend English during classes in Australia. For example:

*“cricket and horse racing, kookaburra, wombat are outside my experience... conversation or jokes about such things are "foreign" and unfamiliar...it is difficult to follow the speed with which things are said...you see the content is totally different therefore the comprehension is more difficult.”*<sup>434</sup>

Is the same also true when an Australian researcher asks a Korean to reflect, conceptualise and quantify his views on previously unconsidered notions of *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* in a 60 minute interview? The interview situation, content and experience may well be totally different and the space for comprehension too demanding!! Mr Jong's earlier comments about feeling unprepared and preferring time to think, have relevance in this light. Perhaps a fax of the questions was in order.

This Case Study could well reflect the fear anticipated by Australians and South Koreans as they enter their first (preliminary) business encounter. The parties come together with expectations. When some appear not to be met emotions are mobilised, responses, reactions ensue. My non-conformity with the Korean Way is probably not far from the norm for inexperienced business people. Whilst consciously choosing not to conform, I was not prepared for the angst I experienced in this incident. My survival skills were put to the test. Nevertheless, my error in diplomacy became a tool for insight. As I have come to learn, ignorance can provide sound lessons if one is open to them and circumstances allow a second chance. My situation as researcher vis a vis long term relationship with Mr Jong was perhaps less significant than what it may have been for an Australian business person.

This Case explored some of the dynamics present in an Australian-Korean encounter experienced by me when meeting and interviewing a Korean informant. The event was seen as a simulation of a business encounter. One would assume that no self respecting Australian business person would attempt personal contact with a Korean

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<sup>434</sup> K-KRESPO L429-33

counterpart without a name card. That is not the point of this Case Study. At issue is the arousal of emotions and the psychodynamics engaged as part of the individual's appraisal of a preliminary business encounter. From this, the potential for misinterpretation of communication cues and the fact that it is relatively easy to take business associates and business encounters too much at face value...take them for granted, is clearly apparent. To assume cross cultural expectations are similar and shared; that inter-cultural communication is straight forward; and that mutual understanding is assured is to engage in folly. The environment and the dynamics are far more complex.

Whilst some elements of this analysis reflect a degree of speculation, I feel it is legitimate to hypothesise that whilst acknowledging the presence of difference, attempts to defer judgement about one's own or the other's National character in-the-mind may enable countertransference responses to occur which reduce stress and conflict rather than exacerbate them.

## CHAPTER REVIEW: Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 detailed and discussed the research findings. They considered the Australian and Korean informant's interpretation of images of National character in-the-mind and how this was perceived and expressed during business encounters with their respective counterparts. In presenting the findings I endeavoured, where practicable, to use the informant's words in order to relate the characteristics identified *by* the informants, as meaningful *to* them. My experiences as researcher in the research were an integral part of the reporting process and were specifically apparent in the two case studies.

The main objectives of the research as stated in Chapter 1 were to ascertain how Australian-ness and Korean-ness is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals; and how Australian-ness and Korean-ness influences the emerging relationship. Within this frame, I proposed consideration of the hypothesis that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind acts as a holding environment and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences.

### 1. *Australian-ness*

In Chapter 3, the primary Australian data reflect a series of contradictions. Australian informant's pictured themselves as coming from an open and tolerant society. They claimed the most prominent feature of their Australian-ness was their openness. Yet, they were far from open when talking about themselves. I interpreted their reports of their views of Australian-ness and National character as evasive, or defensive. They can also be seen as reflective of their attempts to adapt to a difficult environment. The Australian informant's were concerned about being identified first as participants in the research and then as having a personal view.<sup>435</sup> This response may have been designed to disguise their uncertainty or fear of exploitation by their Korean

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<sup>435</sup> Refer Section 2.3.1. This attitude was reflected in the response of many representatives of Australian companies doing business with South Korea that I contacted in Melbourne in March and April 1996 and which led to my

employees or Korean business contacts. It might also have been to disguise their views from Australian competitors, or their superiors, at home. They may also have been sceptical about my motives and how I might use the data. There may be other interpretations. The informants described Australian-ness in mythical terms (stereotypes of a sporting life); in terms of what Koreans were like; or in terms of how Australians didn't behave; generally not mentioning Australia or Australian-ness at all.

Australian informants as a group tended to confuse their willingness to be open as individuals in the Korean environment with the concept of "openness" as a characteristic of relationship. The effect of this was to arouse doubt, fear and uncertainty in terms of their interpretation of both their own and the Korean National character. The data indicates that on several occasions Australians' apparent confusion about openness also seemed to interfere with their self management in their roles as managers of organisations. Australian informant's accounts of their actions and reactions to the *actual experience* of business life in Seoul seemed more reflective (and instructive) of their Australian-ness than their personal references to themselves. These factors were described, in part, in the constructed case study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**. The data highlighted a contrast between Australian's espoused notions of openness and their actual ability or willingness to be open, or to maintain their professed openness in the Korean environment. Korean informants did not perceive Australian's professed openness as a recognisable characteristic in their relationships with them.

It was apparent that Australian informants were unwilling to share thoughts that might imply weakness; or discuss cross-cultural differences with Koreans. Australians did not appear to trust Koreans. They seemed uncertain in their understanding and ability to cope with the Korean culture and values; and about how to manage themselves in the Korean environment. Their behaviour seemed both defensive and an attempt to adapt in a situation of uncertainty. Australian informants seemed to be locked in a transition phase between what they knew to be familiar and secure in terms of Australian social and corporate values, and their current volatile business

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decision to conduct this research in Seoul. The only difference was that the Australian informants in Seoul had indicated a willingness to talk and had agreed to be interviewed.

environment in Seoul. Australians appeared to fear exploitation and were concerned about their survival prospects - both personal and corporate.

The constructed case study - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** - highlighted the power of the unconscious *National character in-the-mind* in the form of an Australian company: MultiCorp+. The case was a composite of two industrial relations situations, reported to me as having occurred in Australian businesses in Seoul shortly before my arrival. It reflected the idea of Australians and Koreans carrying an image of their *National character in-the-mind*. The case also demonstrated how, in adopting a particular coloniser/invader mindset, Australian managers in a representative role in South Korea can prejudice or negatively influence the success of their organisation, its staff, and themselves.

The case emphasised the need to be aware of, and manage, group processes in cross-cultural environments. It noted the need for sensitivity to cultural differences and that one's *National character in-the-mind*, no matter the configuration or form that *National character* might take, is not necessarily an interpretation shared by others. Whilst promoting the view that we can only interpret an understanding of a business scenario based upon the information we have at the time, the case study also indicated that astute business people can actively accumulate a great deal of information to assist and facilitate their interpretation(s).

In terms of method, the case commentary demonstrated a multi-tiered view: an interpretation, of an interpretation of an interpretation - assimilating one's mental image of the scenario described in the Case; the insights gleaned from its discussion; combined with my interpretation of events as researcher. Consistent with the interpretive stance it permitted readers to form their own view, then entertain another's (my) interpretation, to share my experience and context, my emotional reactions and provide space to precipitate alternative meaning.<sup>436</sup> Readers may therefore discern different, implicit conceptions and ponder alternative outcomes. There may be still further interpretations.

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<sup>436</sup> As indicated in Section 2.1.4.1, only after discussion could the negotiated component of the interpretive stance be legitimated.

## 2. *Korean-ness*

The Korean informants were reticent, yet clear and consistent in their expression of a Korean National character. The uniformity and focus of the data enabled more conventional reporting of these findings: analysing and contrasting each informant's contribution in some detail. For the Koreans, their reported *National character* (Korean-ness) in-the-mind seemed to reflect their unique customs and values: - traditions based in a long history; Confucianism and its antecedents; nationalism; hard work and an emphasis on Korean difference from others. To Australians, the reported Korean-ness in-the-mind was *a continuing contradiction*. It acknowledged difference. It reflected mono-culturalism; Confucianism; nationalism; an aggressive, emotional, impatient, enigmatic approach to business life. *Militarism, coloniser/invader* and *survival & fear* descriptors were extant - Koreans wishing for the best of both worlds: selectively embracing the Western lifestyle, yet fearing the threat of foreign encroachment. Koreans seemed willing to initiate relationships, but only on their terms. The Korean informants appeared to be simultaneously accommodating and rejecting foreign relationships as if in a state of transition where trusting is difficult - implying bargaining and depression.<sup>437</sup>

Relationship was associated with themes of control and dependency with historical, philosophical, political and psychological sub-texts. It became apparent that Korean informants were experiencing a state of transition between traditional values and patterns of management and adapting to the new values of the global marketplace. Loss and shame associated with their recent history of invasion; and fear and shame associated with the possibility of exclusion or non-acceptance internationally were also apparent where, despite their desperate striving to achieve, they fear never being quite good enough.

Relationship and references to Confucianism were emphasised by both Australian and Korean informants when discussing Korean-ness. I noted the variable relevance of Confucianism in current Korean society and indicated that whilst focussing attention on Confucianism per se, my purpose was to use Confucianism as a metaphor,



reflective of an *image* of tradition. In so doing, I proposed a model of Korean-ness in transition from traditional metaphysics and values to a more globally focussed perspective.

I noted the debate between Korean and Western academics about the relative relevance of Western psychology and the Western concept of individuality in a Korean context. Without engaging the debate, I attempted to seek “clarity and perspective” by exploring the data from both Korean and Western psychological viewpoints. I further explored the two Korean Concepts documented in Section 1.2.2: (i) Universal I-ness and We-ness, and (ii) *Cheong* to help provide a more substantial base for the consideration of Korean-ness and the Korean National character from a Korean perspective. These concepts, drawn from Korean literature written by Koreans and translated into English, illustrated several historical, philosophical and psychological tenets that are claimed to be uniquely Korean. The Korean writers argue that without an understanding of these ideas Westerners cannot appreciate the Korean personality.

In my discussion of Confucianism, as representative of an *image* of tradition, from a Western psychological viewpoint I broached the possibility of Confucianism performing separate roles as a transitional object; and a holding environment. I discussed the evolution of my interpretation of Korean-ness as reflecting themes of control and dependency: a subordination of the Korean self; and the recurring references to the relative strength of Korean tradition and the tenets of Confucianism, as a socially constructed defence to the anxiety associated with conforming to authority and control. Here, socially constructed defence refers to “...a collectively agreed upon process similar to shared beliefs and values.”<sup>437</sup> I labelled this social defence the Keystone of Control. I then discussed how this “control” appeared to be internalised as a psychic structure learned in the Korean culture and that as such, the Keystone of Control may act as an internal regulator of external behaviour.

I noted the significance of growing Korean anxiety associated with changing economic, social and political conditions depicted by rapid industrialisation and

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<sup>437</sup> Kubler-Ross (1977) pp.72-98

<sup>438</sup> Czander (1993) p110

population movement from rural to urban environments. I suggested that there may well be a link between these changes and a developing “Me-ness” in Korean society. This notion emphasised a growing separateness from traditions with the fragmentation of essentially egalitarian communities into a broader, hierarchical social order and a confrontation (perhaps for the first time) of personal psychic boundaries. I speculated that perhaps We-ness was being challenged by Me-ness and that Koreans were being propelled by their “own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing realities...”<sup>439</sup> of their new urban milieu. The known and knowable Korean group could be threatened with destruction by the *actual* recognition of the emergence of individual Me-ness, the invader from within. This proposal could be read as a significant challenge to the consistency of the image of Korean-ness, or the perceived National character in-the-mind.

### **3. Business Relationships**

In Chapter 4, I considered how Australian-ness and Korean-ness were reflected in differing Australian and Korean views of business relationships and business ethics. I considered the misunderstandings experienced by Australians and Koreans in coming to terms with differences between their espoused and actual models of behaviour. Collectively, Australian and Korean informants seemed to show little tolerance for their respective differences. They questioned each other’s sincerity. There appeared to be little basis for mutual trust although self interest seemed to offer an opportunity to work through this barrier. Apart from a lack of understanding of what notions of Australian-ness and Korean-ness actually meant to their counterparts, their reference to the notions seemed to mask unconscious anxieties and act as defence mechanisms to hide more deep seated concerns.

I examined historical and philosophical material as a means of finding new interpretations of Korean-ness. In the process, I revisited the notions of *universal I-ness* and *we-ness* discussed in Korean Concept 1 and the practice of Cheong from Korean Concept 2 to help explain how and why Koreans value and place such emphasis on the development of human relations as a way of life. I then applied this view to the present

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<sup>439</sup> Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) p3

international business scene where in Korean eyes, the current antithetical commercialisation of self interest is threatening their traditional values. I also considered business ethics. Referring to *pujo*, a conceptualised form of gift giving, I sought to clarify and provide a perspective for the traditional practice of reciprocal help and its arguable degeneration, or reinterpretation, as the practice of bribery in current Korean business enterprise. I then engaged a speculative discussion about Koreans in a state of transition in terms of their traditional values and patterns of management. The notion of transition was extrapolated to include all informants in the study as a means of further developing the interpretation of Australian and Korean National character in-the-mind.

Chapter 4 concluded with an examination of unconscious anxiety and defence mechanisms via a second case study - **The Name Card Dilemma**. This case explored some of the dynamics present in an Australian-Korean encounter experienced by me when meeting and interviewing a Korean informant. The event was seen as a simulation of a business encounter. This case study could well reflect the fear anticipated by Australians and South Koreans as they enter their first (preliminary) business encounter. The parties come together with expectations. When some appear not to be met emotions are mobilised, responses, reactions ensue.

One would assume that no self respecting Australian business person would attempt personal contact with a Korean counterpart without a name card. That was not the point of this case study. At issue was the arousal of emotions and the psychodynamics engaged as part of the individual's appraisal of a preliminary business encounter. Whilst consciously choosing not to conform with the practice of presenting name cards, I was not prepared for the angst I experienced as a consequence. Whilst my situation as a researcher vis a vis a long term relationship with the informant was perhaps less significant than what may have been the case for an Australian business person, I still wanted to create a good impression and establish a good rapport. Needless to say my survival skills were put to the test. My experience suggested that during the emotional turmoil of a cross-cultural encounter unconscious anxieties come to the fore and are acted out in various ways whilst matters of National character recede. As the emotional tension dissipated, the anxiety subsided and matters of National

character returned to prominence. The process demonstrated the nexus between surprise and sense making in the research context and highlighted the potential for a multiplicity of interpretations. The potential for misunderstanding or misinterpretation of communication cues was clearly apparent. It seemed clear that to assume cross-cultural expectations are similar and shared; that inter-cultural communication is straight forward; and that mutual understanding is assured is to engage in folly. The cross-cultural environment and the dynamics are far more complex.

Whilst some elements of the case analysis reflect a degree of speculation, I feel it is legitimate to hypothesise, whilst acknowledging the presence of difference, that attempts to defer judgement about one's own or the other's National character in-the-mind may enable countertransference responses to occur which reduce stress and conflict rather than exacerbate them.

Both the constructed case - **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** and the action research case - **The Name Card Dilemma** - demonstrated how the dynamics associated with the conceptual framework of National character in-the-mind has a significant effect on Australian-Korean business encounters and strengthened the hypothesis that studying the psychodynamics of an event provides for clearer interpretations of the event.

Chapters 3 and 4 detailed and discussed the research findings. They considered the Australian and Korean informant's interpretation of images of National character in-the-mind and how this was perceived and expressed during business encounters with their respective counterparts.

The next Chapter draws the thesis to a conclusion. It provides some final reflections on the research and then puts the account into a different perspective by proposing a model for evaluating *Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour* with the aim of seeking improved understanding of Australian and Korean National characters. The model applies some of my learning from the research experience by suggesting Australian and Korean business people take a more adaptive

approach to the contrary behaviours they encounter during their exchanges. The model also acknowledges the value of investing time to establish and maintain relationships based on access, whereby Australian and Korean business people see themselves as resources of mutual gain, reducing the potential for misunderstanding, fear and mistrust and the subsequent invocation of defensive responses.

Finally, I will offer some lessons for researchers and proposals for future research gleaned from my experience throughout this thesis project. I will also identify some practical business implications drawn from the findings.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.0 Introduction

“When you are a Bear of Very Little Brain, and you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it.”<sup>440</sup>

This study attempted to identify and explore some of the psychodynamics of Australian and Korean business encounters in Seoul, Republic of Korea by describing and discussing *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* as representations of National character-in-the-mind. It concentrated on the individual reports of 12 Australian and 6 Korean business people about how *Australian-ness* and *Korean-ness* is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals; and how it influences the emerging business relationship. Within this framework, the study also considered the hypothesis that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind may act as a holding environment and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences.

This Chapter draws the thesis to a conclusion. It provides some final reflections on the research and then puts the account into a different perspective by proposing a model for evaluating *Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour* with the aim of seeking improved understanding of the Australian and Korean National character. The model applies part of my learning from the research experience which emphasises the need for Australian and Korean business people to take a more adaptive approach to the contrary behaviours they encounter. The model also acknowledges the value of investing time to establish and maintain cross-cultural business relationships based on *access*, whereby Australian and Korean business people see themselves as resources of mutual gain, reducing the potential for misunderstanding, fear and mistrust and the subsequent invocation of defensive responses.

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<sup>440</sup> A.A. Milne, “The House at Pooh Corner” (1966) p99

Section 5.2 considers the research implications. It offers some lessons for researchers and proposes several areas for future research gleaned from my experience throughout this thesis project. It describes how my competence has improved as a consequence of the research; and describes some practical business implications arising from the research. The thesis is drawn to a conclusion in Section 5.3 with some final remarks.

## **5.1 Reflections on the Research**

This Section reviews the study and provides some reflections on the research process.

A cornerstone of the research was that the dynamics of a cross-cultural business encounter could not be interpreted without familiarising oneself with and appreciating the culture and identity of the people concerned. A reading of the dynamics of Australian-Korean business encounters in this research was seen as an interpretation of culture and National character represented as Australian-ness and Korean-ness.

Chapter 1 established the foundation for the research and examined composites of the Australian and Korean identity as a prelude to the exploration of the concept of National Character in-the-mind. I indicated differences exist between Australian and Korean cultures and suggested these differences are multifaceted and multi-layered. I suggested individual psychodynamics may be an integrating spiral within this labyrinth. I noted the complexities associated with Australian-ness and Korean-ness and acknowledged the lack of an adequate working definition of the terms. I suggested Australian-ness and Korean-ness appear to represent projections of the human imagination, willed within the bounds of individual experience and perception. I proposed that these idealised mental models, carried by Australian and Korean business people, of their own and each other's National character (labelled Australian-ness and Korean-ness) depict structural images; feelings and beliefs. I implied these images were dynamic, changing with life experience. I suggested these changes arouse uncertainty and anxiety and that attachment to National character may provide a

psychological and emotional holding environment which helps facilitate the interpretation of the images and feelings. I suggested membership or a sense of belonging to *Nation* may also relieve stress. I noted National character may not be a tangible entity and suggested, notwithstanding, that the images and feelings associated with National character in-the-mind form the basis of Australian and Korean business people's perceptions; and influence their behaviour.

Finally, I proposed the detailed exploration of the dynamics of business encounters may provide insights into Australian and Korean business behaviour and contribute interpretations that may enhance our comprehension of cross-cultural business communication. I defined the main objectives of the research as being to ascertain how Australian-ness and Korean-ness is manifest in a business context between Australian and Korean nationals; and how Australian-ness and Korean-ness influences the emerging relationship. Within this frame, I proposed consideration of the hypothesis that in highly charged emotional settings, like those associated with foreign business encounters, National character in-the-mind acts as a holding environment and a protective screen to hide more intricate institutional anxieties and defences.

In Chapter 2, I described the research method associated with exploring the influence Australian-ness and Korean-ness appears to play in the dynamics of Australian and South Korean business encounters in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The study was anchored by a descriptive cross-cultural research method which embraced several theoretical concepts including cross-cultural psychology, phenomenology, heuristics and the interpretive paradigm. It adopted and conveyed the notion of a progressive development of interpretation: both as a concept and as an integral part of the research process as a way of making sense of the informant's and the researcher's reality.

In the context of this research, the conduct of semi-structured interviews enabled the full engagement of both informants and researcher. It enabled access to the essence of each individual's experience of an event or circumstance; provided the potential to identify, define and interpret core meaning; and accommodated and supported my personal engagement as researcher in the research. In doing so, I was better able to



appreciate the essence and nuance of each informant's sense-making; and realise their logic, sense of order, structure and meaning.

Working on the premise that "...involvement and self scrutiny enhance both researcher and research,"<sup>441</sup> my personal observations and experiences as researcher in the research were integral to the data creation and reporting process as well as reflective of a "first encounter" with Australian and Korean business people. In adopting the interpretivist position, I attempted to express my "reality" in terms of the shared social construction of each informant allowing the data, as far as possible, to speak for itself. To this end, I tried to be self-reflective and analytical of my own role as researcher, and contributor to the data. In retrospect the choice of methodology was intrinsic. The research was concerned with the intangible, with the thoughts and feelings of people in an emotionally charged environment. A quantitative approach, because of its premise of precision, would not have been able to reveal the data exposed here.

I found the cross-cultural experience of conducting the research in Seoul a challenge. To a certain extent, I experienced a degree of culture shock. Whilst I had read widely about Korean - history, culture, social systems, traditions and values; and had spent several weeks in Korea the year prior to the interview exercise; operating independently was an adventure. My language skills were limited; and life generally was considerably different from my usual routine. My interpersonal and negotiation skills; and my personal resourcefulness were frequently put to the test.

My interviews with all 18 informants were first encounters. Those with the Koreans could be considered analogous to situations faced by Australian business people meeting Koreans for the first time. As reflected in the case study: **The Name Card Dilemma** discussed at the end of Chapter 4, the encounters had the propensity to arouse fear, mobilise emotions and activate survival strategies. The diversity of apparent multiple realities shared by the parties to the research and the indication of multiple interpretations of the reactive behaviours both enriched and added to the complexity of the data.

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<sup>441</sup> Berg & Smith (1985) p191

The data provided by these interviews was analysed on a line by line dissection of each informant's interview transcript and again, separately, question by question consistent with the interview guide at Appendix B. In this way, I was able to open up the records to see what they contained. At this stage, I was conscious of searching for "chunks of meaning"<sup>442</sup> as distinct from attempting to firm up hypotheses. Two of the most notable features of the analysis were personal realisations associated directly with the interview experience and the processing of the interview notes. First, I did not appreciate the *personal* significance of the Korean informant's experience of a transition between their traditions and values and "Western" systems until my analysis of the data. Secondly, whilst I thought I was familiar with Australia's history and some of the complexities of its multicultural society I had not, until this time, confronted Australians' insularity; their reticence to talk about themselves; their latent apathy toward their country; and perhaps in the process, my own. This may account, in part, for the apparent emphasis on the Korean content of the research. Indeed, it was not until a late draft of this paper that I acknowledged how little there was of me, and my own Australian-ness, reflected in the thesis.

The revealed data was later analysed in concert with the extant literature and theory. In addition, I prepared and rigorously processed two case studies: **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+** and **The Name Card Dilemma**. These cases contributed substantially to the creation and synthesis of context specific data. They provided an effective means of describing, explaining and interpreting the informant's experience. The cases also enabled me to report the intricacy and depth of my role as researcher, in a manner that would facilitate other's learning from my experience. In total, the method was an appropriate means for exploring the individual experience of Australian-ness and Korean-ness within a Korean environment and within the informant's immediate work space - where cross-cultural business encounters actually occur.

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, I detailed and discussed the research findings and considered the Australian and Korean informant's interpretation of images of National character in-the-mind. I explored how this was perceived and expressed during business encounters with their respective counterparts. In presenting the findings, I

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<sup>442</sup> Marshall in Reason & Rowan (1981) p397

used the informant's words wherever practicable in order to relate the characteristics identified *by* the informants, as meaningful *to* them. I subsequently examined and analysed the contents of their description. My experiences as researcher in the research were an integral part of the reporting process. The findings demonstrated how Australian-ness and Korean-ness appeared to represent projections of the human imagination, willed within the bounds of individual experience and perception.

The Australian business people interviewed had difficulty articulating their Australian-ness. In fact they portrayed a high degree of apathy about their National character and things Australian. I interpreted their tendency to deflect their comments about Australian-ness to what Australian-ness-is-not, and/or to stereotypical images of fantasy and myth, as a defence against the unknown or the unknowable. Australian's claims of openness as the most prominent feature of their Australian-ness seemed a contradiction in terms. They seemed to confuse their willingness to be open as individuals in the Korean environment with the concept of "openness" as a characteristic of relationship. The effect was to arouse doubt, fear and uncertainty in terms of their interpretation of the Australian and the Korean National character. This was further reflected in the Australian's difficulty in comprehending Korean culture and values and their apparent defensive behaviour in terms of fear of exploitation; lack of willingness to trust their Korean business counterparts; and their focus on survival. For some Australian informants confusion about openness seemed to interfere with how they performed their business roles. This was reflected in the case study: *Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+*. Koreans did not perceive the Australian's professed openness in their business dealings. On the contrary, Koreans saw Australians as too business conscious.

Korean business people were initially reticent to enunciate what they saw as identifiably Korean, perhaps as a natural caution to the prying questions of the "coloniser/invader" in the guise of researcher. Notwithstanding, the Koreans portrayed and conveyed clear and consistent images of their National character centring on issues of Nationalism and Relationships in a context of rapid change and Korean concern for its effect on traditional values. Nationalism was notable for its descriptors of militarism, coloniser/invader and survival and fear. Relationship was associated with

themes of control and dependency with historical, philosophical, political and psychological sub-texts. Individual Korean informants appeared to be at various stages of transition between their traditional lifestyles, values and patterns of management, steeped in ritual and myth and the incongruity of a burgeoning, pseudo Western lifestyle. A situation ripe for misunderstanding and dis-ease.

I discussed a phenomenon I called the Keystone of Control - systematised, controlled behaviour in response to authority. I argued this concept was integral to traditional Korean customs and values perhaps best represented by Confucianism. I noted the variable relevance of Confucianism to modern Korean life. I also noted that for some of the Korean informants, their controlled behaviour and professed adherence to, and reverence for, their traditions characterised by Confucianism, could be interpreted as a socially constructed defence to the anxiety associated with conforming to authority and control. Here, socially constructed defence refers to "...a collectively agreed upon process similar to shared beliefs and values."<sup>443</sup> A social defence is said to be formed when the behaviours depicting the defence are interpreted and accepted by others as providing the desired relief from the commonly experienced anxiety. That is, members of a group collude consciously and unconsciously in the wish underlying the behaviour, and internalise and project it in common.<sup>444</sup> It became evident to me that control per se, was internalised as a psychic structure learned in the Korean culture and that as such, control acted as an internal regulator of external behaviour. My discussion of the literature suggested this may well be so. For some Korean informants, their psychic structures appeared to be inadequate in helping them to cope with the challenges of life in the global village.

It was apparent that the Korean informant's were variously situated at points between the poles of traditional and global being. Their relative position appeared to change depending upon their emotional state at different times during the interviews. For some Korean informants, Confucianism was interpreted as a metaphor for establishing the critical distinction between the Korean *me* and *not me*. Confucianism could also be seen as having transitional significance as a symbol of reassurance and as

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<sup>443</sup> Czander (1993) p110

<sup>444</sup> Czander (1993) p110

a means of identifying their comparative place in the international scene. For other informants, it was of little or no consequence.

I suggested that part of the Korean informants' anxiety associated with relationship building during cross-cultural business encounters may be due to a lack of an appropriate transitional object.<sup>445</sup> I contrasted and discussed elements of Korean behaviour with Winnicott's theory of the transitional object, using Confucianism as a metaphor, reflective of an *image* of tradition; as a basis from which to perceive change in Korea; and as a means of seeking to better interpret and articulate Korean-ness as it evolves within a climate of radical change.

I suggested there are times when Confucianism as an entity, may fulfil the function of a conceptual and spiritual holding environment where specific elements within it act as transitional objects or transitional space. For example, if we regard belief and acting in accordance with an essential element of Confucianism (like the Five Relationships referred to in Section 1.2.2.2) as a transitional object, not only does it provide guidance on how to behave in specific situations, as say, in a cross-cultural business encounter, but it provides a cornerstone for day to day living. What is important in the business encounter is that the transitional object, for example the Five Relationships, defines role and task. It defines the level upon which the relationships are conducted; how one acts toward the other according to the nature of the relationship and the respective place of the players in the hierarchy of relationships. It defines the reason for the business encounter and how it develops for the participants; and the inherent constraints on behaviours, internal boundaries and relationships (connectedness and separateness) with the external environment. As an institutionalised phenomenon it may also be critical in identifying and "...shaping attitudes that can block creativity, innovation and change."<sup>446</sup> In summary, as a transitional object this process, in action, provides predictability, and ipso facto relative comfort and security. As a holding environment, Confucianism enables the management of the emotional life of the Korean parties in the encounter, providing support, containing aggression and sustaining individual development.

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<sup>445</sup> Winnicott (1958)

<sup>446</sup> Morgan (1986) p221

The role played by the Korean Concepts of Universal I-ness, We-ness and Cheong in this process is arguable. Explained in terms of Turquet's "Oneness"<sup>447</sup> the notions appear to have equivalence in the Western experience, but one needs to be cautious in applying a Western interpretation to what is regarded (by some Koreans) as a uniquely Korean psychology. Certainly, some of the Korean informant's anxiety associated with the changing economic, social and political conditions depicted by rapid industrialisation and population movement from rural to urban environments was notable. I suggested that there may well be a link between these changes and a developing "Me-ness" in Korean society. This notion emphasised a growing separateness from traditions with the fragmentation of essentially egalitarian communities into a broader, hierarchical social order and a confrontation (perhaps for the first time) of personal psychic boundaries. I speculated that perhaps We-ness was being challenged by Me-ness and that Koreans were being propelled by their "own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing realities..."<sup>448</sup> of their new urban milieu. In this scenario, the known and knowable Korean group could be threatened with destruction by the emergence of individual Me-ness, the invader from within. If this is so, then Korean society is potentially facing a consuming schizoid anxiety of variable and varying proportions. This could be read as a significant challenge to the consistency of the image of Korean-ness, or the perceived National character in-the-mind.

As the research progressed, I became increasingly aware of the diversity, intricacy and variability of Australian-ness and Korean-ness. The multi-layered onion of culture discussed in the Preface to this paper, proved an appropriate analogy. The analogy can also be applied to my interpretations of the data, beginning with the first interview and continuing even now. I have found myself engaged in a process of folding back the layers in my on-going appraisal and reappraisal of each individual informant's reported perceptions and experiences; of my interpretations of the actual encounter with each informant; of my subsequent interpretations of the collective group data, developed through various iterations of referencing and cross-referencing;

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<sup>447</sup> Turquet (1974) quoted in Stacey, R.D., (1993) p199

<sup>448</sup> Lawrence, Bain and Gould (1996) p3

modified owing to surprises arising within me in response to my own processing and from what others have said during discussion. My active personal engagement in the research enabled me to experience first hand the potential for misinterpretation of communication cues and the relative ease with which one can take business “associates” (the informants) and business encounters too much at face value...take them for granted.

It was clearly apparent that as international business people, the Australian and Korean informants were operating in a cross-cultural milieu that exposed them to contradictory foreign values and ethics. The challenge to their accustomed business practices and traditions seemed substantial. They appeared to display little tolerance for their respective differences. Mutual suspicion was apparent. They questioned each other’s sincerity. Apart from a vague appreciation of what Australian-ness and Korean-ness actually meant to their counterparts, the informant’s variable reference to the notions may mask unconscious anxieties and act as defence mechanisms to hide more deep seated concerns. The two case studies provided some insight into this hypothesis and whilst there is sufficient data to form an opinion, only further research would confirm or repudiate it.

The data reflect how *the informants* interpreted Australian-ness and Korean-ness. These interpretations and my interpretation of them may apply to other Australian and Korean business people; but they may not. It would be unwise to extrapolate the research findings to the broader community. On the other hand, the research findings provide insight into behaviours that might be encountered by Australian and Korean business people on first encounter. Business people with the inclination and imagination to accept the challenge of cross-cultural exchange might well benefit from the experience documented in this thesis.

### **5.1.1 Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour - A Model**

The thesis highlighted several examples of defensive behaviour and I wish to focus the reader’s attention here because I think defensive behaviour has relevance for interpreting the cultural misunderstanding and in turn the reported interpretations of

Australian and Korean National character in-the-mind. To this end, I refer to the model outlined in Figure 5.1 - *Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour*.

This model stems from my discussion with the Australian and Korean informants; my continuing review of the interview data and cross-matching with issues in the literature. It had its origins in my experience with Mr Jong described in the Case Study - **The Name Card Dilemma**. For me, this was a seminal event. I felt that apparent cultural misunderstanding in that environment aroused fear or threatened closely held beliefs and that issues associated with National character were put aside until the anxiety had subsided. My response to this threat was a defensive/adaptive position leading to a deferred resolution of the misunderstanding. It could have just as easily resulted in increased anxiety depending on the capacity of either of us to cope with the dissonance associated with the threat. The interesting thing about this situation was that icons of National character (the Name Card and familiarity with Language) were proposed as instruments to facilitate future interaction.

The model considers cultural misunderstanding as an event and defensive/adaptive behaviour as a response to the event. Perhaps the key to my clarified interpretation of the issues behind the model was my reading of Senge's notion of "Shifting the Burden".<sup>449</sup> Senge describes various situations in business life where

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<sup>449</sup> Senge (1990) p104



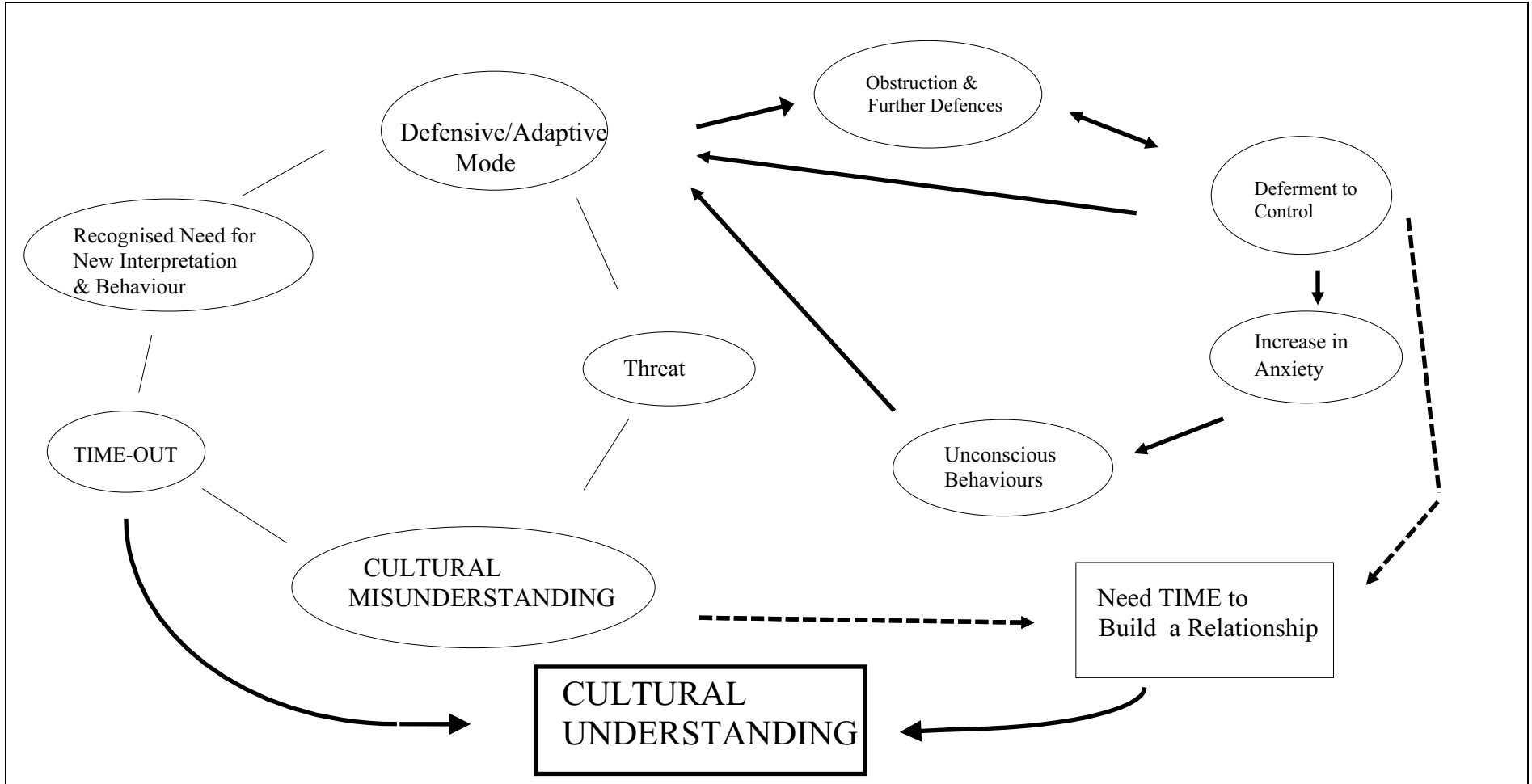


Figure 5.1 - Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour

problems seem difficult to address because of obscurity in definition, or cost. Whilst Senge implies cost reflects a dollar value, in the context of this research, I read cost to mean *human cost*, and saw it as including emotional cost to self, to the other and ultimately, to society. Senge relates how people facing a problem often “shift the burden” of the problem by seeking “creative” quick fixes (the “symptomatic” solution) which pacify the symptoms, but actually avoid the problem with disastrous effects. The symptoms appear to go away but the underlying problem gets worse, often unnoticed. In the process, the ability to resolve the original problem atrophies. Senge suggests the “fundamental” solution to the problem may take longer but is ultimately more effective. He also notes there is often an unfortunate side-effect of the symptomatic solution that actually hampers the implementation of a fundamental solution(s), if not immediately, in the future.

This situation is depicted in the constructed case study **Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**. For example Carl Bragg, when confronted with the dilemma of how to deal with difficult Korean worker Kim Ying Chi, adopted a legalistic “symptomatic” solution and euphemistically “assisted” her to leave. Bragg did not address the underlying problem. Indeed, it was not until Kim Ying Chi had left MultiCorp+ that Julie Leicester, Bragg’s assistant, realised the existence of the Korean age hierarchy within the office; and began to understand notions of Korean seniority, status, loss of face, distrust of foreigners etc. These issues were integral to the “fundamental” solution to the incident related in the Case Study. Only by recognising and accommodating these cultural differences in the working environment could an equitable, fundamental solution be achieved. The unfortunate side-effect of Bragg’s “symptomatic” solution was the antagonism of the union; the alienation of the Korean workforce; the reinforcement of the Korean feelings of distrust of foreign coloniser/invaders; and the potential need to rely on legal solutions for future problems. All of these could potentially jeopardise attempts to seek “fundamental” solutions to future organisational problems at MultiCorp+.

In labelling the Model at Figure 5.1, I see *defensive behaviour* as a mechanism protecting the individual and others from embarrassment and/or anxiety. Defensive behaviour not only protects us from emotional pain, but prevents us from learning about

the sources or causes of the pain. It is in effect a “symptomatic” solution. Argyris suggests in invoking defensive behaviour we seek not to expose the validity of our reasoning to public scrutiny, in case it (we) are found wanting.<sup>450</sup> This description is similar to the use of defensive behaviour described earlier in Section 3.1.3.3, where I noted how Australian informant’s professed *openness* could be seen as a defensive response to disguise their uncertainty or fear of exploitation by their Korean employees or Korean business contacts. Unfortunately for the Australians, the Koreans did not recognise this openness and, in fact, considered the Australians to be preoccupied with business. In Section 3.2.3.5, I used the term *social defence* to describe the Korean informant’s recurring references to the tenets of Confucianism and the use of these references to describe an unconscious, collectively agreed course of action prefaced by the communal experience of anxiety that seems to be reflected in the Korean National character. The effect of Koreans invoking Confucianism kept Australian business people at a distance and inhibited the nurturing of a closer relationship - the opposite of what was considered “desirable”.

I see *adaptive behaviour* as seeking to transcend the self-centredness or self-interest that tends to invoke defensive responses. Adaptive behaviours are based on a realisation and acceptance of personal fallibility; a willingness to reflect and challenge one’s own reasoning; to accept that what we think we know may not be so; and a preparedness to seek out and actively evaluate alternative views and ways on the basis that they might be better than ours. Adaptive behaviour requires us to challenge our sense of purpose; our interpretations of given situations or sets of circumstances; and to actively seek alternative ways of using our senses and skills in dealing with defensive habits.

The research data does not provide an illustration of the informant’s adaptive behaviour in a business context. Ironically, in examining Australian and Korean behaviour in the research context, I can only describe what adaptive behaviour was not. In Section 3.1.3, I noted Australian informants referred to their “open-ness” as a feature of their Australian-ness and the way they operated in their business environments. I indicated how this open-ness was unseen by their Korean staff or the Korean

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<sup>450</sup> Argyris (1985) quoted in Senge (1990) p250

informants. In Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.1.1, I noted Korean informant's views of Australian business people and the way Australians appeared to pay lip service to the notion of relationship building, a process highly valued by Koreans. I also discussed the process of espoused models of behaviour and models-in-use described by Argyris and Schon<sup>451</sup> where, it is said, we articulate models to explain how we behave, but these may not align with, or may be entirely different to, the models that actually drive our behaviour. I illustrated this with **AR8**'s defensive comments about relationship building:

*"We talk about developing and cultivating relationships...each year or so the chaebols move their managers (job rotation)...new relationships need to be built...so the so-called continuity is not established by 'them' why should we be so concerned."*<sup>452</sup>

*"Face and relationship building is a crock of shit...everything is fine when it is going their way and they are successfully pushing their view...if they lose track or can't justify their point of view they call time out or say what is happening is not the Korean way; cry foul or call you a racist as a tactic to cover their ineptitude not save face".*<sup>453</sup>

Whilst his Korean experience could be described as difficult, **AR8**'s words do not appear to reflect the Australian informant's open-ness in a business context, nor are they indicative of a willingness to reflect on adaptive behaviour.

A further illustration is contained in Section 4.1.2.1 and the discussion associated with Figure 4.1: The Transition Matrix of Shared Korean Business Values. There I noted the apparent collective or mutual dis-ease between Australian and Korean informants about their relative acceptance of cross-cultural differences and their experience and interpretation of Australian-ness and Korean-ness. Australian comments like: *"We have little in common with them and vice versa."*<sup>454</sup> *"Australians just don't understand Koreans"*<sup>455</sup> and the Korean response: *"They (Australians) know too little*

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<sup>451</sup> Argyris and Schon (1978)

<sup>452</sup> AR8, ARESPO L397-399

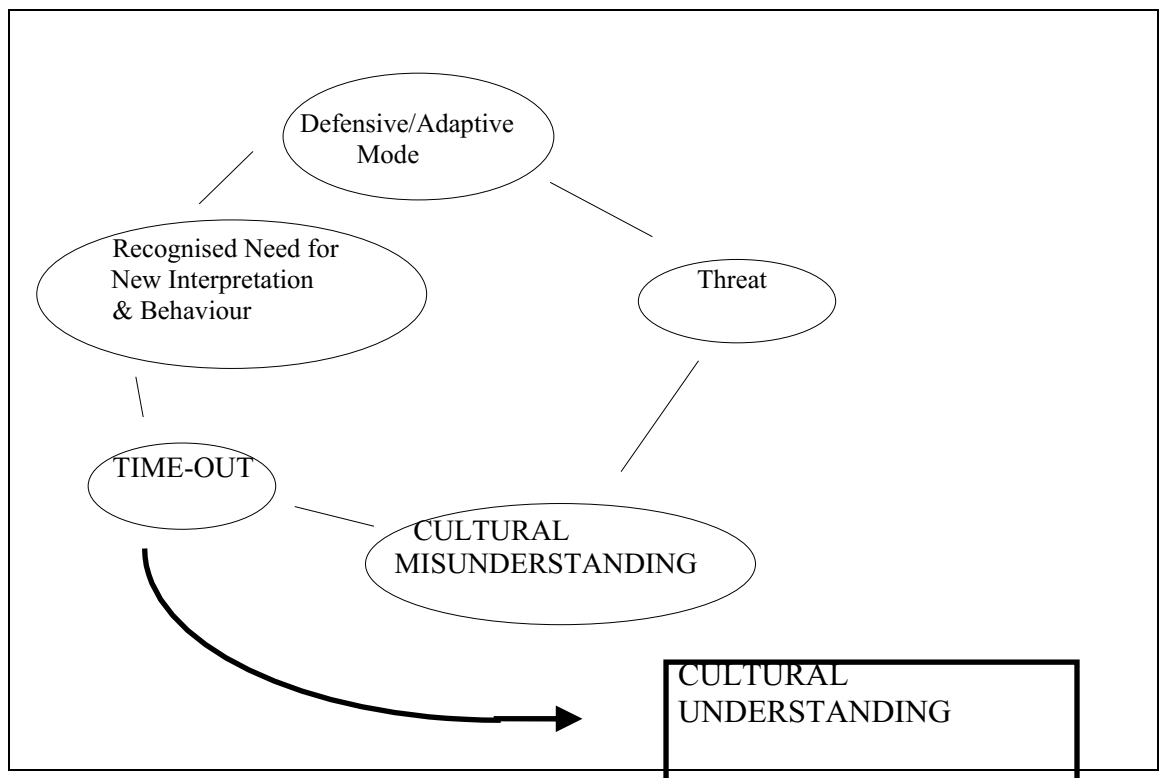
<sup>453</sup> AR8, ARESPO L400-404

<sup>454</sup> AR8, ARESPO L404

<sup>455</sup> AR11, ARESPO L436-7

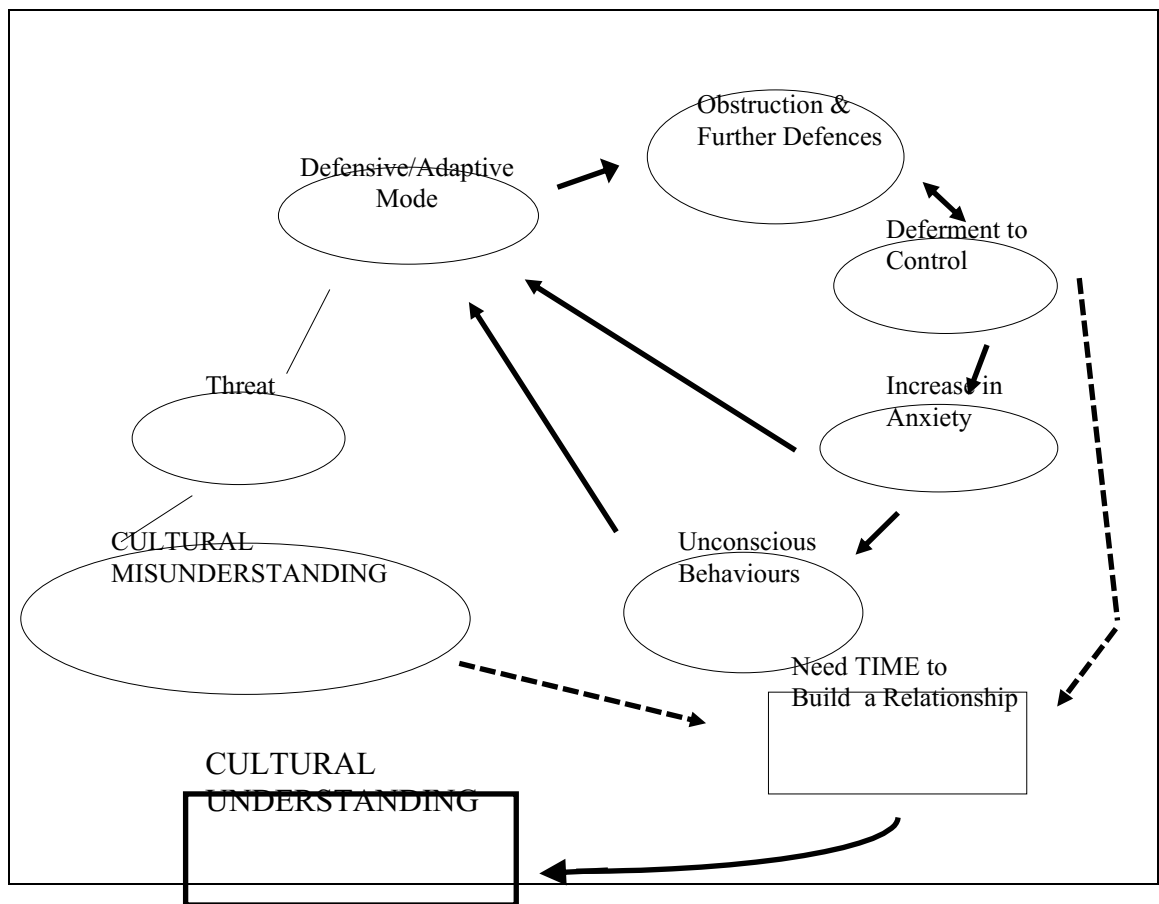
about Korea so their expectations are poorly based”<sup>456</sup> were indicative of the resignation that the informants conveyed. There was no indication of what actually had been or could be done to rectify this impasse. The effect of which is the increased capacity for collective misunderstanding, suspicion and poor relationships.

The balance of this Section will consider the model of Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour in two parts. I shall begin by looking at it’s left half, Figure 5.1a. Here, the individual experiencing a cultural misunderstanding may feel threatened and, in the defensive/adaptive mode, take a positive position, recognise a need for a new or modified interpretation of the threat and the cultural issue causing the misunderstanding, and seek more appropriate behaviours. This would reflect the adaptive mode of behaviour. I suggest the individual would need to take “time-out” whilst the troublesome issues were considered, catalogued and integrated into their cross-cultural mindset and before the new behaviours were acted out as cultural understanding. The scenario portrayed in the case study *The Name Card Dilemma* is indicative of the approach.



**Figure 5.1a - Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour**

<sup>456</sup> KR4, KRESPO L437-8



**Figure 5.1b - Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour**

Alternatively, considering the right side of the model, Figure 5.1b, the individual in defensive/adaptive mode may find the issues causing the cultural misunderstanding to be bewildering, confusing, frustrating, etcetera and be unable, or perhaps unwilling, to accommodate the differences between the familiar and the unfamiliar. This would reflect the defensive mode of behaviour. In the process, the individual may consciously or unconsciously obstruct further progress and invoke additional defences to enable the individual to deal with the conflicting situation. This may lead the individual to take “control” and institute a course of action that relieves the stress but exacerbates the issue, or contributes little to a positive resolution. The outcome of this process would lead to further obstruction and application of defence strategies in search of relief. Individuals might also defer to an external controlling agent to assist them in the temporary relief of their stress or the long term resolution of the cultural misunderstanding for better or for worse as the case may be. Either action may result in a circular defensive routine, increase anxiety and provide the foundation for unconscious behaviours and further defensive action. For example, when Confucian

beliefs or ideals are challenged by outsiders, the Korean's identity appears to be challenged. The Korean's fear of losing this connection to traditional beliefs and values may produce vociferous defence. The strength of the defence may outweigh the potential threat based on the unconscious power of the *image* of Confucianism as distinct from its real power. The outcome could be interpreted as a break down in communication.

In the context of this research, Koreans highlight their *ascribed* characteristics (for example, their attachment to Confucianism) more openly than their *achieved* characteristics as is the Australian tendency. Confucianism is alien to most Australian's experience and knowledge. By freely expressing their Confucian roots Koreans may erect a barrier or establish a respectable distance between themselves and Australians. Maintaining a respectable distance provides the cautious Korean with time to measure the opposition; to compare and reassure the Korean "me". It also confuses Australians because of their general inability to see beyond the facade.

It could be argued the Korean fixation with Confucianism, used here metaphorically as an *image* of their traditions, inhibits their ability to appreciate other ways of seeing and doing; inhibiting growth. In subordinating personal authority and personal control in the name of Confucianism the Korean business person or worker becomes exposed and vulnerable to the outcomes of change strategies implemented without consultation by "legitimated authority". Similarly, the Australians pre-occupation with Confucianism or on the *lip service* paid to Confucianism leads to defensive acts in response to defensive acts. Understanding of the unconscious process is missed, as are the nuances of the Korean "me".

Now, returning to the whole model, Figure 5.1, the deferment to control may also provide the space or time to work through the confusion and frustration such that a new or modified interpretation of the cultural misunderstanding is formulated and the ground prepared for new behaviour patterns, the resolution of the misunderstanding and the facilitation of opportunities to build a sounder relationship.

Apart from a proactive approach to adopting adaptive behaviours, the essential element of this model is time. Time to create an emotional atmosphere that enables Australians and Koreans to overcome their ingrained defences and move to adaptive mode. Time to reality test their uncertainty rather than indulging their fantasies. Time to manage group relationship boundaries. Time to develop and adequately describe a context for learning about, and from, each other culturally, interpersonally etcetera.

Australians and Koreans view time from different perspectives. The Koreans appear to value and invest time in building a relationship. The examples referred to in Section 4.1.1 are indicative. Whilst the Australian informants quoted in that Section, endorse the approach, some of their Australian colleagues in Seoul were less supportive and seemed more concerned about the dollar costs of time delays in business arrangements. Further, from the information provided in the preface to this thesis it would appear their counterparts in Australia share the latter view. Notwithstanding, focussing on time per se, avoids the issue of confronting the defensive behaviour most often unconsciously present during business encounters. It seems to me, the primary difficulty in taking up a more adaptive position in the model is the reluctance of the parties to acknowledge the emotional discomfort that causes the defensive behaviour in the first instance. Recognising that joint discussion of defensive behaviours by Australian and Korean business people may well be undiscussable - whether it be owing to loss of face; or embarrassment; or outside the field of cognition - the separate acknowledgment by Australian and/or Korean business people that they personally find their encounters stressful; and recognise their own defensive tendencies might be enough to result in a behaviour change. As Senge suggests "To see reality more clearly, we must also see our strategies for obscuring reality."<sup>457</sup> Confronting our own defensive behaviour; challenging our own assumptions; and seeking out the causes of feelings and behaviours should all lead to more adaptive behaviours and hopefully greater cultural understanding. In the process it may contribute to a better appreciation of each other's National character.

Genuine openness in the context of this model (even if it is to one's self or one's cultural group) should facilitate the opportunity for Australians and Koreans to better

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<sup>457</sup> Senge (1990) p257



build “access” relationships by behaving differently. In turn, they may see themselves as resources for mutual gain by reducing the potential for misunderstanding and the subsequent invocation of defensive responses.

## **5.2 Research Implications**

This Section considers the research implications. It offers some potential lessons for researchers from the study and makes several proposals for future research. It describes how my competence has improved as a consequence of the research; and describes some practical business implications arising from the research findings.

### **5.2.1 Lessons for Researchers**

This section draws some potential lessons for researchers from the study.

In adopting elements of the interpretive paradigm, I have endeavoured to present the material in a style that creates for the reader a picture of the informants without divulging their identity. I have tried to represent my reality in terms of the reality informant's shared with me; allowing their words to speak for themselves. I believe my interpretations are dynamic. Ultimately, the data represent my perspective rather than an absolute truth. The readers of this paper will have their interpretations and perhaps, see a different set of images on the page.

In Section 2.3.1, I discussed some issues associated with choosing informants. In terms of arranging interviews in a "foreign" country I must emphasise the need for researchers to maintain continuing contact with potential interviewees to ensure the latter's circumstances do not change. This is particularly important on arrival in the country. In my case, I had to renegotiate several scheduled interviews, some almost last minute, owing to the interviewee's business commitments.

In Section 2.3.2.2, I discussed issues of ethnocentrism noting that it is a two edged sword for researcher and the researched. I emphasised the need to adopt (as far as possible) a value-neutral approach. In focussing my reference toward my relationship with Korean informants vis a vis impartial reporting, I did not recognise my potential ethnocentrism toward Australians. For example, multicultural Australia represents some 170 nationalities. The Australian informants in this research turned out to be an extremely narrow representation of the Australian population. They were all of Anglo Saxon/Celtic origin. What of the other 168 perspectives? The result was a sample with an idiosyncratic view. Whilst I knew the family names of most of the Australian informants when I first wrote to them about the prospect of an interview, thoughts about their ethnic origin never consciously crossed my mind.

The question arises why were these people of Anglo Saxon/Celtic origin the ones who were representing Australian business in Korea? What is it about them that

attracted them to the work, and to South Korea? Why, for example, were there no Australian representatives of Eastern European, African, Asian or South American origin? I don't know. This speculation highlights how in a way the Australian informants, representing this "proportion" of the Australian population, selected themselves. It indicates how in designing a research project we may take even the smallest of issues for granted; and the continuing possibility of differing perspectives and interpretations lying dormant in the data. Again, it identifies this paper as a beginning for further investigation. A catalyst for new possibilities.

In Section 2.3.6, I placed a bookmark concerning preparation and maintenance of field notes and the need to document experiences and thoughts that may have a link to the research, as they occur. These notes should include personal feelings and impressions of the research project as it evolves. I commend the practice of typing field notes promptly and maintaining 3 copies of the finished document. I strongly suggest researchers carry a copy (on disk) with them at all times as there is always the possibility of having your laptop computer stolen; or luggage going missing in transit.

I believe it is particularly important for researchers to read their material carefully and to assume different roles whilst doing so in order to perhaps hear a different voice and perceive different meaning. For example, in my commentary on the constructed case study "**Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+**" I noted how, on reading a draft of the case, I was surprised by *the tone* of the writing I had used to describe events associated with particular players. The tone of the writing aroused emotions and feelings about these people I had not recognised until that reading. The more I focussed on the tone, the more I began to realise how my assessment of their behaviour had been influenced by my formerly undisclosed feelings and the projections of my own corporate experience. The surprise led me to reinterpret the old data; to create and develop new data; and to making clearer sense of the case. I commend the practice of trying to read one's work from varying perspectives.

I also think it is important for researchers to have the courage to explore and report situations and/or experiences that might be personally embarrassing or frustrating. For example, as I have indicated the interview described in the action

research case study - **The Name Card Dilemma**, did not go to plan and I was extremely concerned about the potential interview outcome. Whilst I had followed the procedures I'd established for myself, prior to beginning the research interviews, I could not have envisaged what was to follow. It would have been quite easy to leave the event unreported and save my embarrassment. However, to bury the experience as part of my coping with a difficult situation would be to have denied an extremely important example of my subjective experience as a research instrument. For me, it represented significant data that had to be explored. Ultimately, I believe it offered great insight into how Australians and Koreans may perceive themselves on first encounter.

If conducting research in Korea, remember your business cards. If you are a full time student then your University may be able to assist in providing cards with the University crest. It would be helpful to have a Korean (*Hangul*) translation on the reverse side. If you do this, then the translation should be carefully verified as it is possible to create a bad impression with an inappropriate or unfortunate "misprint". Alternatively, you could design and publish your own cards using commercial software products like Microsoft Powerpoint or Word, and not worry about the translation.

#### **5.2.1.1 Transitions**

Just as the Australian and Korean informants seemed to be experiencing transition, so too did I. My transition is contained in the phases of interpretation; in making my sense of the interview, the data, the analysis, the writing of the research paper; and to my interpretation of myself within it all. Many times I felt lost in familiar and unfamiliar places...I didn't know what the data meant...couldn't see its relevance; or recognise what people were trying to tell me; whether what I was interpreting was real, or whether I wished it were real. Introspection was a primary means of exploring the role and significance of perceived multiple realities. I found it to be an invaluable tool. Introspection added an extra dimension to my "knowing" and helped me to make sense of where I was going when, at times, I had lost the map. I commend the practice.

Occasionally, when I thought I had a good appreciation of a particular element, say Confucianism, I found a contradiction or an inconsistency; an alternative view that

would leave me perplexed for some time. In the case of Confucianism, I did not resolve my misconceptions until I visited Seoul and received local advice. My discussions with several managers of Seoul book stores proved invaluable in my clarifying cultural perspectives. I commend the practice of canvassing local advice.

At times in Seoul, I became frustrated by the obscure complexity of the cross-cultural engagement and my seeming inability to make sense of it. The attribution of meaning based on my past experience did not inevitably lead to expected understanding. Anticipation and actual experience did not align. Rather, it seemed to foster uncertainty. This was not always uncomfortable, just paradoxical. As I confronted my experience of the interview process with the Korean informants, I pondered whether my surprises or realisations about their Korean-ness were associated with surprises about my perceptions of my Australian-ness, and me. Was I unable or unwilling to recognise or accept my difference? I wondered how much I reflected the Australian informant's inability to come to terms with openness as a characteristic of relationship, as distinct from the way I saw myself.

The data too, seemed in a state of transition. My perceptions of the mass of material, progressively classified into varying levels of usefulness seemed to change its relational shape and patterns in differing contexts over time. Exploring these differences to discover how they illuminate the preceding and current interpretations seemed endless. Constant reading and re-reading the original material and reflecting on what's there, what could be there; what I wished was there...considering things that were constant, consistent and coherent and those that vary or just don't seem to fit anywhere becomes engrossing and, at times, overwhelming. In terms of the data processing, I found it useful to take breaks away from it all, so as not to become stale. Rather than trying to devour the elephant, I found taking small, regular bites over time to be the most satisfactory way of coming to terms with the challenge. I saw patience and persistence as virtues. Living with ambiguity became an art form.

Finally, in reviewing my experience as researcher in the research, I am drawn to the words of Valerie Simmons:

“...researchers should seek understanding of their own biases, blind spots, and cognitive limitations with as high a priority as theoretical knowledge...we must come to understand how all of us are encased in the perspective of our ethnic, gender, and class backgrounds, as well as our own psychodynamic histories. The need to transcend all such filters is sadly, mired in the impossibility of understanding the social world without them.”<sup>458</sup>

### **5.2.2 Proposals for Future Research**

Recommendations for future research drawn from this research experience appear throughout this thesis. Further areas are now proposed for intensive study.

In reviewing the findings, I recognise a need to further explore the speculation surrounding the suggested unconscious processes apparent in the interviews and the reported data. In Section 2.1.4.1, I described Shapiro and Carr’s model of the interpretive stance and noted the two phases of the negotiated component of the shared interpretation of data between researcher and informant. I later indicated that I had engaged the first phase of this model in terms of the interview process but that the final phase would require further contact with the informants, assuming they felt sufficiently encouraged to explore their roles and were willing to develop negotiated interpretations of my research findings. I acknowledged the speculative nature of some elements of my interpretations that may have benefited from confirming discussion. I also recognise the need to canvas perhaps, a more refined shared interpretation than that offered by the interview process and the reported data.

In this regard, I am conscious of some criticism of qualitative, cross-cultural research method (that might be directed toward this study) being labelled “airport lounge research”. That is, flying into a country for a few days, conducting research activities and flying out. If that accusation were levelled at this study, my defence would acknowledge that immersion in the foreign culture *in situ* is important to obtain an appreciation of its diversity and the range of exclusively cultural behaviours that may be manifest. Over the past 3½ years which this study has spanned, I have been able to

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<sup>458</sup> Berg and Smith (1985) p303

establish a total of five weeks residence in Korea, including a three week study tour of Korean industry and commerce. Unfortunately, I was unable to stay in Seoul for more than 15 days to conduct research interviews owing to my personal financial and full-time employment commitments. I would argue the Korean elements of this research have been anchored by deliberate, dedicated, extensive and purposeful library research, including regular surveys of Korean media via the Internet over 3½ years; and regular discussions with a network of staff at several universities, government officials, service providers and business people with serious interests in organisation behaviour and business with South Korea. I have also taken the first steps toward learning the Korean language. I still have a way to go. Over these years, I have established a good knowledge about and sense of, or “feel” for, Korean business, culture, philosophy and politics. The limitations of geography and the obligations of full-time employment reflect some of the fundamental realities of the part-time graduate student doing research in an off-shore, cross cultural environment. Perhaps an opportunity for future study in and of itself.

I recognise the need for further exploration of the material associated with this study and see it as a starting point for more rigorous investigation of the notions of National character in-the-mind; and Australian-ness and Korean-ness. The following proposals when implemented would certainly expand our knowledge base.

Australia is currently experiencing a re-evaluation of its identity in the light of a changing more outward-looking world perspective. South Korea too, appears to be a nation in transition. In the South Korean case the transition is between a traditional, collectivist culture and a tantalising, Western alternative. Both countries offer possibilities for research emanating from this study. Whilst the following suggestions could be managed by an independent researcher, I believe several of them would perhaps be better addressed if done as joint studies by Australian and South Korean graduate students. A separate evaluation of the duo’s praxis might be a useful adjunct. Several topics come to mind:

**At a Micro Level:**

The Australian Identity: Its implications for Australian Business with South Korea;

The Korean Identity: Its implications for Australian Business with South Korea;  
 The Australian Identity: Its implications for Korean Business with Australia;  
 The Korean Identity: Its implications for Korean Business with Australia;

**At a Macro Level:**

The Australian Identity: Behavioural Influences on East Asian Partnerships;  
 The Korean Identity: Behavioural Influences on East Asian Partnerships;

The question of an Australian identity has been the subject of several books and articles,<sup>459</sup> political policy statements and reports.<sup>460</sup> It has also been a topic of commentary and discussion in the media and open fora.<sup>461</sup> To date, there is wide speculative opinion about Australian-ness but little definitive evidence of what it is. The Korean identity too is shrouded in mystique. As indicated in Section 1.2.2, Western references to the Korean identity appear to be clouded by stereotypes and lop-sided comparisons of Korea with foreign value systems reflective of cross-cultural bias.<sup>462</sup> There appears to be little incentive for Koreans to write or publish English language material.

One of the weaknesses of this thesis was my inability to get to the informant's core meaning of Australian-ness, to probe beyond the defensive barriers of a shoulder shrug and reversion to myths and stereotypes. This of course assumes that there is "something" beyond the myths and stereotypes and that it can be articulated. In this regard, the thesis reflects a bias toward the Korean informant's responses. Korean-ness appeared to be more easily accessible. As suggested earlier in the thesis, I believe the search for *the* Australian or *the* Korean identity is probably counter-productive. Nevertheless, I believe there is broad scope for further research associated with the Australian and Korean identity and determinants of National character particularly its

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<sup>459</sup> Hunt (1972), White (1981), Hilmer (1985), Poole, De Lacey & Randhawa (1985), Price (1991), Smolicz (1991), Carroll (1992), Willis (1993), Mackay (1994),

<sup>460</sup> Harris (1980), Hodge (1988)

<sup>461</sup> Insight Forum (1995), Cochrane (1996), Open Learning Programs, Radio National (1996)

<sup>462</sup> Chang in Kim and Kim (1989); Mahn Kee Kim in Caiden and Bun Woong Kim, (Eds.) (1991); Chang and Chang (1994), Eun Young Kim (1996)



relevance for, and effects on, management and business in Australia, South Korea and East Asia generally.

- **National character, Middle Management and Australian-Korean Business Relationships**

The Australian and Korean informants in this thesis were either Chief Executives or Senior Executives with their organisations. There is broad scope to investigate the views of middle managers and staff about their perceptions of National character in-the-mind and their cross-cultural business experiences.

- **Industrial Relations in Australia and South Korea - A Comparative Study**

My research indicated the application of Australian business values and industrial relations dargs in a South Korean environment proved problematic. This was depicted in the case study: *Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+*. Industrial relations in most business situations are invariably sensitive. Closer comparative study of the industrial principles to be applied in Australian-Korean business alliances might prove valuable in maintaining or improving *access* relationships.

- **The Australian Manager in East Asian Business - Invader or Partner**

In Section 3.2.1, I discussed the South Korean informant's reports of Nationalism and the idea of coloniser/invader as a metaphor for relationship building by outsiders with Korea and by Koreans in the international scene. I suggested in the analysis to the case study: *Industrial Relations at MultiCorp+* that Australian managers were perceived by Korean employees as coloniser/invaders in the way they treated the Koreans; and managed their businesses in the Korean environment. A detailed examination of the psychodynamics of power and control within the boundaries of this cross-cultural management-employee relationship might contribute valuable data to the formation of greater mutual understanding and more satisfactory business outcomes.

- **The Relevance of Tradition to Australian-Korean Business Relationships**

In Section 3.2, I commented on the variable significance of Confucianism to the formation of relationships in modern Korean life. My concern was that without a detailed understanding of the potential sources of Korean behaviour, the Australian business person's interpretation of the happenings within a business encounter may be awry. I later noted that similar circumstances probably applied to the Korean appreciation of Australian behaviour. I believe the study of the relevance of tradition to Australian-Korean business relationships would be a fruitful field of research and might assist in the melding of closer business co-operation. Whilst Australia does not seem to have a metaphysical equivalent to Confucianism, perhaps "mateship" or the values and rituals associated with the ANZAC tradition might be useful alternatives.

- **A Comparative Analysis of South Korean and Western notions of Psychology**

During my discussion of Korean Concept 1, I noted my dilemma in accounting for, and coming to terms with individual differences in the processes of universal I-ness and We-ness. A cross-cultural study of these Korean processes with say, Turquet's "One-ness"<sup>463</sup> and Lawrence, Bain & Gould's "Me-ness"<sup>464</sup> might provide broader appreciation of the Korean and Western psyche.

- **Australian and South Korean Group Dynamics - A Comparative Study**

In Section 3.2.5, I noted how South Koreans and Australians seem to perceive and experience individual and group relationship activities in distinctly different ways. Compared with Australians, some South Koreans apparently do not recognise an individual's separateness and independence. Instead, it is suggested they embrace "We-ness" in individual and group situations. I suggested appreciation and acknowledgment of these differences when ascribing motives to behaviour might help in clarifying interpretations of the behaviour. I noted the possibility that psychological frameworks attributed to the West, may not apply to the South Korean environment and that there was unresolved debate about the proposal that went far beyond the parameters of this

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<sup>463</sup> Turquet (1974) quoted in Stacey, R.D., (1993) p199

<sup>464</sup> Lawrence, Bain & Gould (1996)

study. A detailed comparative study of Australian and South Korean group dynamics might shed further light on the complex issues associated with these seeming differences; enrich our interpretation of behaviours; and contribute to sounder communication during our business encounters.

- **Behavioural Influences on East Asian Partnerships - Pathways to Access**

In Section 4.1.2.3, I noted that the only reference in the (available) literature to the Australian-Korean relationship and *access* focussed on access to each other's markets and the inequity of trade deficits.<sup>465</sup> The behavioural issue seemed to be within the bounds of the undiscussable. Part of the apparent Australian-Korean *relationship* dilemma appears to be finding a pathway to *access* each other's means of thinking - ways of formulating thought and ideas. I speculated that perhaps even wanting to was a first step. How can Australians and Koreans acquire or achieve, sufficient *access* to each other, to enable more accurate interpretation of each other's thoughts and behaviour? In essence acquiring *access*, as a prelude to empathy; and ultimately to productive business relationships. The model proposed in Figure 5.1 and the subsequent discussion provides some indication. This area is ripe for further research.

- **National Character in-the-mind - Fact or Fantasy: A Psychodynamic Perspective**

I noted in Section 4.2.1 that as this research proceeded I became increasingly of the opinion that notions of Australian-ness and Korean-ness appeared to be expressions of fantasy associated with what many individuals perceive, consciously or unconsciously, as their obligation to be "attached to" the country which provides them with a sense of identity, a sense of belonging. I suggested these fantasies may be attached to expressions of institutional anxieties and defences. I believe it is necessary to look behind the rind of overt behaviour and that close study of these fantasies from a psychodynamic perspective will provide clearer interpretation of cross-cultural business encounters and ultimately insight into the notion of National character in-the-mind.

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<sup>465</sup> Korea Herald, Business News, 13 February 1997

### **5.2.3 Improvements in the Researcher's Competence and Its Implications**

This research project has significantly affected my personal and business life. Whilst it is difficult to articulate “mastered” skills per se, my competence in the following areas has been improved greatly:

- I have honed my analytical and research skills and improved the quality of outcomes from my self-scrutiny and reflection. My vocabulary and writing have improved significantly since I began the reporting phase of this research. These skills have universal application in business life.
- This research project has enabled me to develop greater self awareness and resourcefulness in dealing with cross-cultural interview, research and negotiation situations. I believe I can now capably advise students and others contemplating research and business in South Korea on how to manage themselves and their research project(s).
- I have significantly improved my knowledge and understanding of psychodynamics in the business environment. In future, I shall be able to guide others and myself more assuredly during times of change and uncertainty.
- I have developed a substantial knowledge of South Korean culture and values, economics, history, geography, management, philosophy and politics. I am confident I can use it competently in future research and business enterprises; and pass the knowledge on to others. My South Korean language skills are less refined but offer a challenge for future learning.
- I have a far greater appreciation and understanding of the complexity of the concept of National character in-the-mind and the Australian and South Korean identities.
- I am far more conscious of how my learning and interpretations of daily life experiences have been “culture-bound”. My personal competence will improve as a consequence.

- I found this project *personally* challenging. I am more conscious of the idealised mental models I have been supporting in terms of my personal competence; my Australian-ness; and the ethics of International trade and business. I shall be more conscious of alternative scenarios in future.

#### **5.2.4 Practical Business Implications Arising from the Findings**

In Section 5.1, I suggested it may be unwise to extrapolate the research findings to the broader community. Notwithstanding, the research indicated a need for sensitivity to cultural differences and that astute business people actively accumulate information to assist and facilitate their interpretations of National character. This could include an appreciation of the foreign culture and values, economics, history, geography, language, philosophy, politics and traditions. These issues appear to form the basis of people's perceptions and influence their behaviour. Knowledge of such issues is generally interpreted and appreciated as a demonstration of care, courtesy and respect. It should contribute to better relationship building.

A working knowledge of the model described in Figure 5.1 - *Cultural Misunderstanding and Defensive/Adaptive Behaviour* - could help business people when attempting to establish relationships from the moment of their first encounter. For example:

- Australian business people should be conscious that some South Korean business people are experiencing a transition between traditional values and patterns of management and are trying to adapt to a more globalised world. To some extent they may perceive foreigners as "invaders" and respond in a defensive way, perhaps unconsciously.
- Similarly South Korean business people should be conscious of some Australian's reserve of trust and wariness in business dealings and that they may behave in a way that disguises their true intentions.

Appreciation of the various stages of the model may assist in interpreting, understanding and managing seemingly aberrant behaviour in a business context.

- Australian and South Korean business managers should allow for and invest time to establish and maintain cross-cultural business relationships based on *access*, whereby they see themselves and each other as resources for mutual gain. This action should reduce the potential for misunderstanding, fear and mistrust and the invocation of defensive responses.
- Australian business people dealing with their South Korean counterparts may be well served by maintaining regular contact. This should include face to face contact if possible. The focus of this contact should be *building the relationship* rather than the business.
- Australian business people should be aware that their willingness to be *open* as people may not equate with “openness” as a characteristic of a relationship. This research indicates that this apparent *blind spot* for Australian business people is clearly apparent to South Koreans and tends to inhibit business relationships.
- Always carry your business cards.

### 5.3 Final Remarks

From the research and my own experience, I have come to realise that to assume cross-cultural expectations are similar and shared; to assume intercultural communication is straight forward; and that mutual understanding can be assured...is folly. The Korean environment and the interpersonal dynamics between Australians and Koreans are far more complex. Perhaps nation and National character can be seen as transcendental, operating "...as a meta-narrative spanning, linking and facilitating exchanges between political, economic and cultural discourses"<sup>466</sup> For those Australians unable or unwilling to invest time to learn about a distinctive foreign culture (and to reflect upon their own culture and to closely evaluate its meaning; and effect on their behaviour) then "perceptual blocks" and "cultural barrier" are reasonable antecedents of a Korean encounter. The data suggest the same most probably applies for Koreans, too.

I propose that cross-cultural expectations, especially with regard to relationships, need to be examined closely. Australian and Korean business people need to carefully consider their counterpart's ability to first identify and then accurately interpret their expectations before considering whether the counterpart has the capacity to meet these expectations. They need to be prepared to negotiate within a range of likely outcomes as distinct from adopting an "all or nothing" approach to their relationship. For Australians, rather than considering their relationship with a Korean counterpart as exclusive, they should perhaps view the relationship as more one of access and progressive development, leading to mutual gain. Korean informants left me convinced, if one has patience and is prepared to work hard at developing and building a relationship, the opportunity to *access* the Korean people, their mindset and culture, can be a valuable and rewarding experience.

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<sup>466</sup> Willis (1993) pp.19-20

**Appendix A**

My Address

XXXXX

XXXXX

**Insert Address**

1. My name is Les Ryan. I am currently completing the third year of a Professional Doctorate in Organisation Dynamics at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia.
2. My Doctoral project aims to explore the influence “Australian-ness” and “Korean-ness” plays in the psychodynamics of Australian and Korean business relationships with a view to enhancing intercultural understanding.
3. I am exploring how Australians and Koreans experience and perceive each other in a business context; how they recognise, describe and understand “Australian-ness” and “Korean-ness” and what effect this *understanding* has on their mutual relationships. I am studying this through individual interviews with Australian and Korean business people who have had direct dealings with each other.
4. As you have a prominent and influential role in Australian-Korean affairs, I would be grateful for the opportunity to talk with you about your intercultural experiences. I’m sure you will agree Australian-Korean business relationships can only be enhanced by a greater shared understanding of the countries’ collective differences. The cultivation of this understanding is the object of my research. Your contribution will be invaluable in achieving this purpose.
5. I shall be visiting **Seoul** from **Insert Dates** June 1996 and will be available in the morning of **Insert day and date** if you would care to nominate a time. Should this not be convenient, kindly advise me of a more suitable time.
6. If you require further information about my project I can be contacted during the **day** by Telephone on 61-3-9xxx-xxxx or FAX 61-3-9xxx-xxxx; or alternatively, during the **evening** by Telephone on 61-3-9xxx-xxxx. My Email address is: [elryan@ozemail.com.au](mailto:elryan@ozemail.com.au)
7. I look forward to hearing from you soon and meeting you in person in June.

Yours faithfully,

E.L.(Les) RYAN



**Appendix B**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE - MATCHED QUESTIONS** Listed below are questions asked of Australian and Korean respondents during interviews in Seoul, Republic of Korea, conducted between 3 and 14 June 1996. Questions prefaced with “**A**” represent those asked of Australian respondents and those prefaced “**K**” questions asked of Korean respondents.

- A2. Do you have a personal theory as to what is identifiably “Australian”?  
 K8. How do you describe “Australian-ness”?
- A5. When you deal with Koreans, what feature of your “Australian-ness” do you think most influences your behaviour?  
 K9. In your business experience, what features of “Australian-ness” come to the fore?
- A7. With what elements of “Australian-ness” do you think Koreans have most difficulty?  
 K13. What is it about Australian business people you find most difficult to understand or deal with in a business context?
- K2. Do you have a personal theory as to what is identifiably “Korean”?  
 A8. How do you describe “Korean-ness”?
- K5. When you deal with Australians, what feature of your “Korean-ness” do you think most influences your behaviour?  
 A9. In your business experience, what features of “Korean-ness” come to the fore?
- K7. With what elements of “Korean-ness” do you think Australians have most difficulty?  
 A13. What is it about Korean business people you find most difficult to understand or deal with in a business context?
- A4. How has your “Australian-ness” influenced your adaptation to the Korean environment?  
 K4. How has your “Korean -ness” influenced your adaptation to the Australian environment?

**Finally, If you were to provide guidance to your fellow Australian Business people**

- A14. What should they know about Koreans before making first contact?

**Finally, If you were to provide guidance to your fellow Korean Business people**

- K14. What should they know about Australians before making first contact?

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