

Ideology Complexity Model: Towards the soul-searching communication

Haibin Dong

Department of Communication & Journalism, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, USA

Abstract

In communication studies, ideology seems only legitimate in the critical perspective and discussed in a contested manner. However, ideology as an important and unavoidable dimension of cultural identity has profound influences on communication at all levels and in all contexts. The present study is an attempt to theorize about the ideological issues of intercultural communication in Ideology Complexity Model (ICM) based on the current research of cultural identity implied by a metaphorical model---Caltrop Matrix of Identity (CMI). Based on the brief application of a case of ideological conflict in a real-life intercultural setting, I discussed about the theoretical and practical implications of ideological considerations in intercultural communication scholarship.

Keywords: Ideology, Identity, Intercultural Communication, Complexity, Caltrop Matrix of Identity

1. Introduction

An icebreaker activity initiated a graduate-leveled intercultural communication class at a prestigious US Midwestern private university in the spring of 2002. Nine students were from different nations and ethnic groups. The professor instructed the students to draw something on a piece of white paper to represent their own cultures and give brief self-introductions by using the drawings as a kind of visual aids.

A Chinese girl, I call Xin, who was born in the late 1970s, drew a Chinese map and the Great Wall. Xin introduced herself as a girl from Manchurian or Northeast China and told the class that she was proud of the rich history, traditions, and resources of her motherland. Another girl, I call Daisy, who was also in her 20s, drew her map and identified herself as a Uigur girl from "East Turkistan," which is under the control of China.

Daisy admitted that her passport was issued by the government of the People's Republic of China, but claimed that her country was actually "East Turkistan," which has been occupied by the Chinese for over 50 years. Furthermore, Daisy criticized the Chinese crackdowns on the recent East Turkistan ethnic riots and insurgences. At the moment, Xin was embarrassed and felt like being given a slap in the face, on the verge of bursting into tears she did not give any direct response because she thought that the class was for everybody not merely for herself.

After everybody done, the US American professor, a typical white female Midwesterner, started to wrap up the class by announcing that since this course was to learn how to respect the other cultures, the class should deal with some controversial political and religious issues in more constructive ways. Probably because of perceiving such an announcement by the professor as unfavorable, the Uigur girl never showed up in this class again. She dropped out.

This is a true story, but being told only by the involved Chinese girl. I am very curious about what motivation Daisy the Uigur girl had when she was courageous (or aggressive) to confront the Chinese girl, how she felt after she heard about the announcement by the professor, and why she decided to be explicit with her ideological preference and then in the end drop out the class. So another version of the story based on Daisy's narration would make the story sounder. However, this can still be a case for the saliency of ideological elements in a context of intercultural communication. Some aspects of two particular personal identities were interplayed around the incompatibility of two competing ideologies related to historical, cultural, geopolitical, individual, ethnic, and racial factors. The consequential

incongruity implies the significance of cultural differences beyond nationality, ethnicity, social perception, and other conventional categorical dimensions, converging at the core concept of ideology.

Ideological elements often complicate intercultural communication in all contexts. Conflicts resulting from ideological differences could easily escalate to emotional and psychological levels (Bekerman, 2005; Breen & Corcoran, 1986; Hornberger, 2003; Lo & Lau, 1991; Ramanathan, 2005; Ruud, 2000). On the other hand, conflicts with emotional and psychological factors often contain ideological elements. At the personal level, the formation of an individual's ideology is a complex process including many unobservable variances. It is meaningful to systematically illuminate the *interacting complexity of the extant ideological factors* including those unobservable truths. The study of ideological implications in intercultural communication can help with the interpretation, negotiation, and management of ingroup and intergroup divisions and frictions resulting from the distinctive and sometimes incompatible inclinations or dispositions of individual, group, and cultural value systems.

The present study is to propose a theoretical model focusing on understanding ideological complexity to illuminate the influences of ideology on intercultural communication. First, as above, I describe a real-life scenario of ideological conflict in an intercultural context. Second, I briefly review the historical development of ideological studies prolifically evidenced in critical and cultural communication studies. Third, I identify ideology as a new perspective in the current establishment of intercultural communication. Fourth, I utilize a metaphorical model of cultural identity called "caltrop matrix of identity (CMI)" to exhibit the theoretical assumptions of the current ideological theorization in intercultural communication. Fifth, I lay out the system of concepts, notions, principles, and strategies, for which I call "Ideological Complexity Model" (ICM). In order to make sense of such theorization, I apply the relevant constructs in the analysis of the case narrated in the introduction. Sixth, I expand my discussions on the theoretical and practical implications of ICM. Lastly, in concluding thoughts, I focus on ICM's current limitations and future orientations.

2. Ideology in critical cultural discourses

French philosopher Destutt de Tracy coined the term of *ideology* widely used in the field of philosophy (Cavallaro, 2001). The original meaning of ideology is the science of ideas, which makes people realize the existences of prejudices and bias. Ideology is a prominent concept played out by numerous think tanks in modern and contemporary history of thoughts. In *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1965) redefined ideology as politically, economically, and culturally determined group of ideas ensuring certain groups' interests. In attempting to transcend the economic determinism, Antonio Gramsci identifies ideology as a commonsense mode created by and ubiquitous in the hierarchical mechanism, ensuring the subjugation and sustaining the domination exerted by one group over another (Hall; 1996; Grossberg, 1996). James Carey (1975) thinks that British cultural studies should be more accurately described as ideological studies (Carey, 1975 & 1989; Turner, 1992). Stuart Hall (1985 & 1986), an outstanding member in British cultural studies, believes that the "take-for-granted" common sense of practical knowledge, such as media production and social practices, is based on ideology and eventually becomes the constitutive parts of ideology. Michel Foucault (1973) posits the difference between normality and abnormality is fundamental for ideology studies. Althusser interprets (1972) ideology as reflected and embedded in the notion of ideological state apparatuses ---- institutions in the entire social body including both private and public social spheres. Fredrick Jameson (1988) further elaborates Marxist analysis of ideology by penetrating into the ideological implications of political aestheticism under the circumstance of globalization. As a politically and spiritually loaded notion, ideology has been the combustible fuse igniting critical skirmishes and star shell emblazing cultural landscapes. However, ideology is not a limelight in current intercultural communication studies. Next, I identify ideology as a new angle of intercultural communication studies, from which we might develop new insights on how to achieve peaceful, harmonious, and productive relationships with people who are different from us.

3. Ideology as a new perspective of intercultural communication

Immerging into cultural, racial/ethnic, and other communicative issues in intercultural communication scholarship (Carey, 1975 & 1989; West, 1993; Worsley, 1988; Wright & Hailu, 1988-1989), ideology has never become one central theme in any of the established intercultural communication theories. The

cause of such a situation could perhaps be related to the origin and ongoing development of the subdiscipline of intercultural communication studies, which "emerged from occurrences at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the US Department of State between 1946 and 1956" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990). Intercultural communication studies (at least in US) started from a practical perspective of training diplomats' intercultural competence and with an exclusive standpoint of representing to the U.S. national interests. The diplomatic mission and unitary stance determined the ignorance of ideological issues even under the circumstance of escalating ideological conflicts between the East and the West in the ferment period of Cold War. The knowledge and expertise of intercultural studies was explored, inquired, and developed in the cultural-specific and normative-detailed orientations (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990). Distinct from the European scholarship, the ethnocentric American intercultural communication studies scratch out ideology in order to pursue a practical and positivist philosophic stance.

However, as Louis Althusser (1972) posited, ideology is all-pervasive, omnipresent, inescapable, and pivotal at all levels of social existence through story-telling and image-making (Cavallaro, 2001). Ideology has been relentlessly discussed under the realm of identity, power, and hegemony by critical and cultural scholars. There are sufficient argumentations of ideology in critical discourses (Althusser, 1972; Breen & Corcoran, 1986; Cavallaro, 2001; Chan & Lee, 1988; Chang & Poindexter, 1999; Deetz, 1991; Dumont, 1986; Foucault, 1972; Frenzt & Rushing, 1993; Grossberg, 1996; Kellner, 1995; Hall, 1985 and 1986; Hawes, 1989; Hollihan & Riley, 1993; Jameson, 1988; Jensen, 1987; Johnson, 1990; Ma & Gazette, 1995; McCormack, 1987; Moore, 1988; Salmon, 1992; Sigman, 1985; Sparks, 1989; Steuter, 1990; Storey, 1993; Turner, 1992; Wang, 1991), but almost no refined micro-theory or practical model devoted to the delicate demonstration and elaboration of ideological impacts on human communication. Ideology, as the main part of individual spirituality and societal superstructure, has been long ignored by intercultural communication scholarship partly in that it is inherently correlated to political economy, the scholars of which have been overtly engrossed in the economic determinism or the economic base in contrast to the superstructure, where ideology is situated. In short, although ideology is very important, as what McCormack notes (1987), "the ending of communication" predicates "the beginning of ideology."

Although ideology has not been notably theorized by intercultural communication scholars, it has fundamentally important implications in human communication (Moore, 1988; Mumby, 1989; Sigman, 1985; Wright & Hailu 1988-1989). Scholars might refute the political economic determinism, but few can deny the pervasive impacts of ideology on communication. However, most of the intercultural communication theorists stare at the face, conversational, adaptive, categorical, effect-outcome-oriented, and identification issues. Such a schema of intercultural studies is understandable, because in communicating activities involving face elements, the underlying ideological differences or similarities might submerge under the face negotiating, uncertainty avoiding, diversity respecting, or emotion involving problems (Gudykunst et al, 2005). Although face negotiations or uncertainty management might withhold or curb the emergence of ideological contradictions, they could never eliminate the forces of ideology, which exist substantially and profoundly. Under the scene and behind the veil of peaceful face practices, ideology might be the actual source of uncertainties, the real reason of expectancy violations, and the original cause of identity conflicts.

Ideology influences interpersonal communication through its being the variances of personal cultural identities nurtured by social cultural milieus involving cultural infrastructures, agencies, power structures, and personal inclinations. Around the three principal concepts connecting ideology to intercultural communication – identity, context, and interactivity, I develop a theoretical perspective and interpretive scheme intended to elucidate the ideological influences on intercultural communication at interpersonal level, a relative new perspective in the field of intercultural communication.

4. The theoretical assumptions of ICM as implied by Caltrop Matrix of Identity (CMI)

Different levels of ideological elements are embedded in identification and identity (Collier, 1998 & 2005; Hecht, 2000 & 2005). A dynamic model of identity can serve as the theoretical platform of ideological analysis. The ideological problems in intercultural communication scholarship are closely related to the identity issues. Therefore, in order to construct ICM on a foundation of identity theories, I create this *caltrop matrix of identity* (CMI) based on the former identity and identification researches in intercultural communication (Hecht, 2000 & 2005).

The caltrop of identity is a metaphor depicting the relatively stable, solid, relational, and dynamic three-Dimensional structure of identity with the four projecting points as ideological/spiritual, biological/psychological, institutional/cultural, and relational/interactional prongs respectively (Hecht, 2005). When you throw a caltrop randomly on a relatively flat, level ground, three of the four prongs will touch down on the ground as the braced frame sustaining the whole structure and the fourth will be pointing upward (See below).

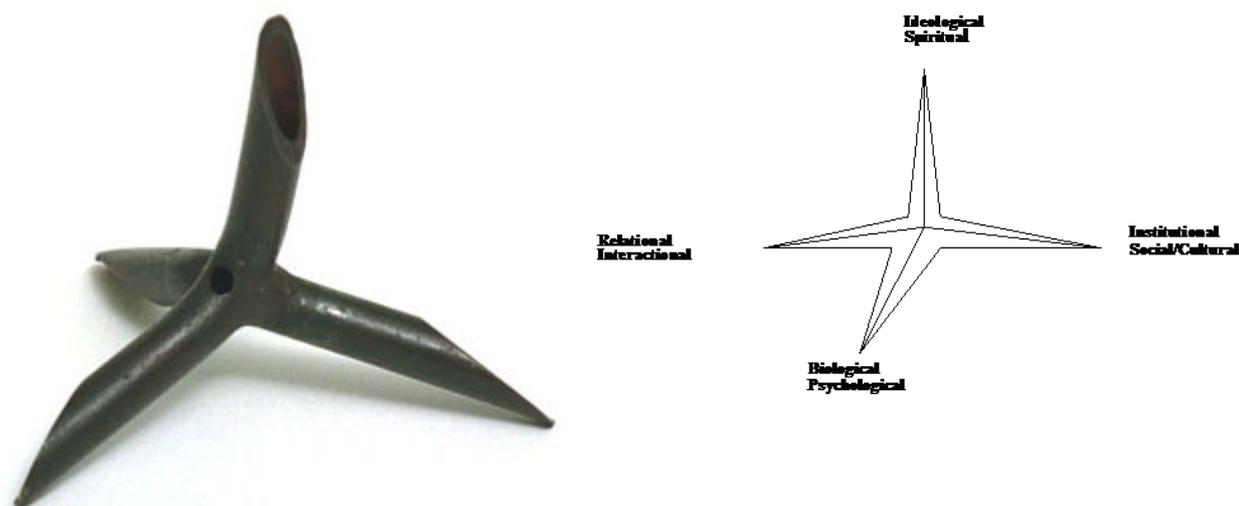


Exhibit: Caltrop Matrix of Identity

CMI nicely fits the dynamic complexity of identity. Actually, such a crystalline structure in shape of a regular tetrahedron is the basic molecular structure of a diamond, one of the hardest substances in nature. Thereupon, CMI is a relatively stable structure of cultural identity with profound dynamic implications constrained by context. The matrix has four distinctive traits: (1) when being placed on a level ground, three spikes will touch on the ground and the fourth one will stay upward; (2) the four prongs converge at the core and therefore interconnect with each other; (3) the matrix as a whole is relatively stable; (4) the salient position of any of the four properties randomly depends on the contextual ground and its relationships with the other three properties. Thereby, the assumptions that CMI implies for theorizing ideological influences on intercultural communications are as follows:

- a. Ideology is a constitutive dimension or property of an individual cultural identity that profoundly connects to the other three properties including biological/psychological, institutional/cultural, and relational/social;
- b. The salience of ideological factors in the process of cultural identification can be reflected by the other three properties sustaining the relatively stable structure and position;
- c. One can change the salient position of ideology by deliberately rotating the entire structure of cultural identity in relation to context.

5. ICM: The notions, concepts, and principles

5.1. Ideology and culture

All intercultural scholars have to deal with the definition of culture. There are numerous definitions of culture, in which beliefs, values, and norms become the most stable symbolic elements in the endeavors of defining culture (Lustig & Koester, 2003). One of the most popular definitions of culture is that culture is a set of shared perceptions about beliefs, values, and norms by a relatively large group of people (Lustig & Koester, 2003). However, it would be problematic to simplify the definition of culture by applying any of the three symbolic systems in a single and deterministic way. Such definition could perhaps come up to saying that most Americans share one value system, most Chinese believe only in communism, or most Europeans are Euro-centric. Such a reductionistic notion of culture overlooks the intracultural heterogeneities, particularly in terms of ideology.

Ideology confounds the cultural issues of intercultural communication. Ideology sometimes transcends national, racial, ethnic, and other cultural elements and becomes culture itself in intercultural communication. For instance, people might feel more comfortable with a foreigner with similar ideological stance than those fellow citizens who are ideological counterparts. When a Chinese dissident, who recently converted himself to become a Christian, meets with an American atheist, who has a deep antipathy to Christianity and sympathy to the Godless China, their communications will quite possibly be at odds.

Ideology is a comparatively stable but structurally alterable trait of an individual. The saliency of ideological trait of different people might vary with the differences of their personalities, characters, and cultures etc (Hall, 1986; Hawes, 1989; Hearth, 1989). People with shrewdness and subtlety are often adept at concealing and even camouflaging their ideological preferences; people with candor and frankness are less concerned about the revelation of their ideological preferences. At interpersonal level, the strategies of hiding or exposing one's ideological preferences might have significant impacts on the effectiveness of communication by distorting communicators' common sense and contribute to what we understand as cultures.

In some cultures, particularly cultures with a relatively large group of people such as Chinese, Hispanic, and Indian, the ideological heterogeneities turn to be more significant than ideological homogeneities. Under such circumstances, the definition of culture by value might lead to many new categories or classifications of cultures, which blur the demarcating borderlines of nations, ethnicities, races, and genders etc. The contradiction between the dominant ideologies and oppressed ideologies or current politics just reinforces such complexity.

Certainly, ideology is not a term that could replace culture. Quite the contrary, ideology is a secondary factor subordinate to culture. Culture is a more encompassing concept. But ideology is a potent and dynamic property of culture, which often creates mists in people's common sense regarding what to expect about a specific culture. Such mists caused by ideological blindness impair a communicator's cultural sensitivities to a great degree. Thus ideology deserves special treatment in the scholarship of intercultural communication.

5.2. Some concepts

By *ideology*, I mean *a certain value system implanted in an individual, group, or culture psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, and rationally in a steadfast manner by a dominant class in both deliberate and discursive ways*. By *complexity*, basically I mean both an individual's or group's structuralized mental state compelled by ideological preference and the intertwined interacting processes of the ideological effects. The concept of complexity contains two distinctive but interrelated connotations---complex and complication. By *complex*, I mean the relatively static and structuralized mental state serving as the cognitive basis for ideologically-related psychological reactions. By *complication*, I mean the dynamic and interactive aspects of communicating processes. By analyzing the underlying structures and operational processes of cultural identification, ICM specializes in helping communicators realize, identify, understand, access, negotiate, and manage the complex, profound, fundamental, and often hidden ideological influences on communication.

Ideology Complex. The complex of ideology in identity is a concept describing the steadfast psychological and emotional attachments of ideology implanted in people's mind and sometimes in their subconscious. As a psychiatric term, complex means the relatively static and structuralized mental state or a group of related, often repressed ideas and impulses that compel characteristic or patterns of thought, feelings, and behavior, such as inferiority or superiority complex. Ideology complex serves as the sticky cognitive knot, from which many anger, resentment, or hatred might be emanated. The formation of ideology complex is a long-term learning process including involuntary, discursive, subconscious, and spontaneous receptivity or passive, intentional, and ritualized indoctrination. The ideological acculturation, communal consensus, brain-washing propaganda, censored public opinions, and pedagogies implant the value system and morality common sense into the subordinated citizenry. Family background, education, personal experience (such as apocalyptic insights), dramatic events (often the cause of mental trauma), and personality traits integrate to form one's ideological complex. Although ideological inclination or preference is not a genetic or innate nature of an individual, because of the long

process and multiplicity of contributing forces, any exterior, situational, and contextual conditions, if not too severe, should be unable to uproot it from one's emotional reacting system of ascription. The psychological basis of the *bigotry* of such ideological preference is one's ideology complex.

As a knotty point, ideology complex can affect human being's communication in various ways. Communication between people with deep and contradictory ideology complexes might be extremely difficult. However, a competitive communicator needs to have the capability to control and manage her or his affective impulses or emotive impetuses emanated from the ideology complex. An important condition to control the underlying influence of ideology complex is the *self-awareness* of the existence of such complex. It's not enough to just realize. One needs to understand, be able to analyze, and even question her or his own ideology complex. Situational or contextual conditions can never eliminate the ideological preferences of the communicators.

Ideology Complication. Complication means the dynamic quality or condition of the complex. In different contexts, ideology complex might function differently. Sometimes it might engender affective impulses, traumatic feelings, and other disastrous consequences. Sometimes it might be just submerged under the peaceful surface. In some cases, communicators need to be evasive with ideology; in some others, be more frank. The interplay of ideological elements in communication might result to vehement fireworks among debaters, bring into the stalemate of unbearable silence, or end up with insightful mutual understandings. Although we call for the constructive communication with respects among people from different cultures and different ideological preferences, we need to be realistically aware of the difficulties in bringing in people with different and contradictory ideologies together. In some situations, ideological silence is perhaps the best strategy in dealing with the underlying effects of ideology. Communicators need the *ideological muffler* to curb their ideological mettles. The sense of complexity can help us with our mundane understandings to ideology and its operation in communication. Different people have different strategies and practices in dealing with ideological complexity in different contexts. Studies about the rules how ideology affects communication are important in terms of enhancing one's cultural sensitivity.

Contexts that affect the saliency of ideology. The salient position of ideology as visually implied the Caltrop Matrix of Identity (CMI, see the exhibit) is determined by the situation when the biological/psychological (individual), institutional, and relational properties of identity are submerged under specific communication scenarios. Situational or contextual conditions can conceal, reinforce, or distort the ideological factors in communication. When any of the three other properties of identity is in a salient position, ideology would merge under the communicating surface. Personality, facework, and career security can effectively withhold the impetuses of ideology in communication. In a context when people don't have to concern their academic or career future, practice face negotiations to maintain relationships, and construe their self-image, ideology becomes salient and constitutes the main energy source of communication. For instance, in many of the online discussion forums of some major overseas Chinese portal websites, I observe the salient ideological conflicts among people in the virtual Chinese community. Their debates often easily escalate to smears, curses, and vituperations. Such conflicts always arise from the profound and contradictory ideological divisions within the speech community. This perishing situation could happen only because the participants are mostly anonymous. In any other contexts, like daily communications, business meetings, or academic conference, disputes still exist but could seldom upgrade to such deteriorative situations.

5.3. Some principles and practical strategies

ICM Principle I: *Realization of the underlying influences of ideology in specific contexts can increase people's intercultural communication competence.* Cultural sensitivity is an important index of intercultural competence. Cultural sensitivity is not only a problem of heartfelt respect, appropriate flexibility, and unconditional openness or tolerance to diversity, but also a problem of scrutinizing the nuances within cultures and self-awareness of one's own ideological preferences. Ideological conflicts in intercultural communication often contain psychological, emotional, and political economic issues. People with different ideological stances might work together, but the different ideological stances might deeply affect their communication styles via shaping their distinctive speech code systems often spontaneously. For instance, as in the story I tell in the beginning of the paper, how to empathetically

understand the subtle ideological preference of a student with profound ideology complex was critical for the professor of intercultural communication in keeping or losing this student.

ICM Principle II: *Ideological divisions exist not only cross-culturally but also intraculturally.* The differences of ideological stances create divisions among people no matter whether they are from the same culture or not. Such divisions are the existing fissures in a community, work group, or institutional unit that robustly affect the interrelationships of the members. Ideological segregations are more and more profound and significant with the increase of intercultural communication activities. To illustrate this principle of ICM, I use the overseas Chinese community as an example.

The ideological divisions among overseas Chinese are very complicated and contradictory. The complexity of Chinese ideological divisions can be ascribed to the existing political economical development of the so-called Greater China including Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao Special Economic Zones, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and the troubled zones of Tibet, Uigur, and Inner Mongolia. In the arena of Global politics, there always exist forces of wishing a separate China. Therefore, correspondingly many things, such as Fa Lun Gong, Taiwanese separatism, Tibetan separatism, East Turkistan separatism, Chinese Christianity, Chinese atheism, unification proponents and sympathizers, and many other Diaspora groups, ideologically divide the overseas Chinese. Even the use of Chinese written language might have some ideological implications. People who are accustomed to the Traditional Chinese might have different ideological preferences regarding pros or con unification from those who use the Simplified Chinese. In the perspective ICM, people can at least be prepared for the potential ideological heterogeneity and avoid to be judgmental in stereotypical ways.

ICM Principle III: *Ideology is profoundly interconnected with the biological/psychological (individual/group), institutional (communal/cultural), and relational (interactive/social) properties of identities but also relatively independent of them.* In the Caltrop Matrix of Identity (CMI, see the exhibit), the four prongs converge at the kernel indicating the interconnection of the four properties. The more solid the kernel, the more stable the ideological salient position. If any of the three submerged underlying properties were in a weak position (sometimes influenced by the outer or inner environment or context), the stability, intensity, and salience of the ideological factor would be negatively affected. For instance, if one's health deteriorates, even in a situation that ideology becomes salient the spike of ideology would bend to a lower angle. An introvert person might be not so explicit and expressive in showing her or his ideological preferences even when the outer context permits. When someone is stranded in serious financial crisis, he or she might show less interest and passion in maintaining his or her ideological preferences. However, even when people are in poor health, emotional restraint, or economically unprivileged, their ideological preferences would not die off but just be in dormancy and still play some underlying roles in their decision-making.

ICM Principle IV: *One way to soften or avoid ideological conflicts in an intercultural context is to rotate the positions of the CMI's properties.* Conversational constraints and face negotiation can help mitigate or avoid severe ideological conflicts, because the outcomes of these practices would lead to the rotation of CMI, submerging the ideological hazards under the surface or behind the scene. Ideological restraint might result from expedient consideration for certain institutional or relational contexts. Deliberation of the rotation of identity properties might be the indispensable quality of an effective communicator such as a flexible mediator. A competent mediator should not only be able to rotate her or his own identity properties but also be quite equally effective in rotating their perceptions of others' identity properties. The rotation of identity properties does not mean to eliminate or diminish the identity properties but rather to alter the salient position of any one of the properties. For example, a Chinese Christian couple came to the United States with the help of the husband's older non-Christian brother, who works as a senior engineer in a big US corporation. The couple failed several times to convert their brother into Christian. So the couple has to rotate their Christian ideology and accentuate their secular brotherhood in order to maintain their relationship. ICM accentuates the maneuverability of one's ideological manifestation.

ICM Principle V: *Embracing the complex and complexity of ideological elements in relation to communicators' multifaceted identities, soul-searching communication with ideological mutual respects can help create a more harmonious and constructive intercultural communicative environment.* A call for ideological respect is strategically important. It is necessary to include ideologies as one aspect of

cultural diversity. The coexistence of different ideologies is not only critical but also realistic in intercultural encounters. In a situation of intercultural encounter, it is never wrong to be cautious with the expression of one's ideological preferences; however, if the communicators could effectively process the potential ideological counteractions and devote to the exploration of the ideological bottom lines of each other, they might achieve the so-called *soul-searching* communications and develop their more profound mutual understandings.

6. Applying ICM in the case analysis of Daisy, Xin, and their American professor

As depicted in the introduction, the conflict among Daisy, Xin, and their American professor in a classroom setting typifies the drastic yet delicate ideological tensions existing in intercultural communication. Such a conflict, perhaps transient for the individuals involved, does present the complexity of ideological influences on mundane communication encounters. One fundamental question raised regarding this case is whether the conflict was caused by ideological antinomy or by cultural difference. Is it a culture or ideology issue? According to my analysis of the connections between ideology and culture, the direct answer, perhaps indefinite but more truthful, is that it is both. Ideology can be a cultural issue or one particular aspect of cultural identification. In this case, ideology becomes salient cultural factor transcending yet being supported by individuality, sociality, and institution. To interpret the nature, causes, forms, and consequences of such a conflict, ICM proffers an analytical framework that can help unravel the complexity of ideological impacts on intercultural communication.

The perspective of ideology complexity precludes a reductionist approach to define the conflict presented in this case. ICM suggests that ideology influences human communication in a complex and sensitive way, involving the different characteristics of the involved individuals' *ideological complexes*. Daisy, Xin, and their professor are largely different in terms of their ideological complexes, which restrained their communication actions and produced the different states of their ideological manifestations. The concept of *ideological complex* leads to consideration of individual peculiarities. Daisy had a particular mindset wired by ideological preference and loaded with negative sentiments against China or Chinese culture. It is hard to assume Xin's ideological complex without further insights, but it is safe to say that Xin had a set of wires and info about ideology distinctive from Daisy. Daisy and Xin became a pair of counterparts in the conflict with the Professor as the third party, who also had her own ideological complex. We could analyze the ideological complexes of the three with more messages from the paths of individuality, sociality, institutional constraints, and the communication contexts. The salient ideological messages are around anti-Chinese sentiment, which got a stronghold in Daisy, relatively unprepared for Xin, and probably overlooked by their Professor. The problem came into being because none of the three parties had sufficient awareness of each other's ideological complexes and failed to produce effective communication to prevent such problem. The eventual silencing of Daisy's voice in the class was not a desired, ideal consequence of intercultural communication, which, however, is not uncommon in intercultural communication with ideological dimensionality.

The complexes exist among the individuals and led to the complication of their communication. Daisy seemed to be the troublemaker, while the actual cause of the fray is her ideology, which, aided by her personality, complicated the classroom, intercultural communication. She was quite explicit with her ideological preference and concerned no or very limited face respect to Xin, who was more passive, naïve, and even timid but also very sensitive. However, without the presence of Xin, even with the exact same messages, Daisy would have never inflicted some a classroom friction. Instead she might have won sympathetic applauds from her peers. The environment or context where Xin was an integral part constrained the consequences of Daisy's speech, which turned out to be explicitly ideologically loaded. In contrast to Daisy's straightforward manifestation of her ideological stance, tit for tat to the speech of a former speaker, a follow classmate, Xin's restraint and self-control to avoid direct reaction also defined the complication. The embarrassment, despondency, and immediate pressure or provocation revealed nonverbally also inflicted a moment exposed to the whole class including the professor, whose tactics of communication were crucial for the general effect. As the instructor, the American professor absolutely had the power and alternatives to comment, critique, or guide the students' communication in class. On the other hand, she also had her principles as an intercultural educator, for which it might be legitimate for her to maintain, such as "cultural respect transcending ideology" or "intercultural communication detached from geopolitics." With largely divergent social perception and self-awareness, in the specific situation, the involved communicators might react to the professor's guideline in diverse ways. In this

case, miscommunication came into being due to the fact that ideology complicated the scenario. With a clear and complex clue on the role of ideology, we might interpret how a class of learning and teaching intercultural communication ended up with a mess of frustration.

As ICM principle 1 indicates, if Daisy, Xin, or the Professor, any one of the three involved communicators had obtained higher cultural sensitivity regarding ideology and been better prepared, the ugly ending of this communication episode could have been avoided or mutated into some constructive opportunity. A rational prediction of Xin's negative reaction could have mitigated Daisy's manifested hostility. Xin's passivity or feeling of being victimized by someone's ideological bashing could have been more effectively controlled if Xin could have been more prepared. With a more empathetic understanding of Daisy's holding in detestation toward the Chinese, the professor might have taken an alternative strategy to deal with the manifested clash. However, just a more profound realization of ideological role in intercultural communication would not ensure a more constructive strategy to deal with ideological conflict. We need to learn about the characteristics of any particular ideological conflict and develop strategy and tactics accordingly to process, negotiate, and manage ideological influences.

The ideological divisions within one great culture can spread to all directions of extremities forming a complex landscape. Sometimes only insiders with great awareness or researchers with thorough understandings can feel the pulses, distinguish the nuances, and catch on the significances of the intracultural fractions. For people who have limited knowledge about the nature of the contradiction between the dominant Hans and oppressed Uigurs, the conflict between Daisy and Xin can hardly make any sense. Even for an insider like Xin, who is relatively naïve about the significance of the political voice promoted by Uigur independent movements inside and outside China, the rationalization of such conflict can be hard. How much we know and how deep we understand about the nature of any particular ideological conflict influence our preparation and choices of tactics in dealing with the latent communication problems caused by it. The emphasis on ideological heterogeneity within one popularly defined culture attests the importance of knowledge of cultural specifics and helps deconstruct the assumption of cultural homogeneity, which can lead to nothing but ingrained stereotypes.

From ICM principle 3, we can have a spatial view of ideological position in one's identity construct and analyze the role of ideology in the process of cultural identification. First, the interaction in the case occurred in a graduate seminar, a setting embedded with the US institutional conventions, which both constrained and facilitated the occurrence of ideological communication. Daisy and Xin share the identity as a graduate business student and therefore had to follow the classroom norm but their distinctive individualities also characterized the happening of the conflict. Daisy's straightforwardness had to do with her interpretation of such a US classroom setting as a democratic forum for free speech so as to abreact a kind oppression she and her Uigur folks had taken. The US professor utilized her power as the instructor that permitted her to set rules to check Daisy's ideological catharsis, which she believed was inconsiderate to the presence of Xin, whose evasiveness or passivity resulted from her own personality, preferences, and the then understanding of the institutional rules. The professor's discouragement of Daisy's denunciation against China made Daisy drop out the class as permitted by the institutional rules. Ideology (anti-Chinese or China-bashing) turned out to be in the salient position but profoundly braced by individuality, sociality, and institutional rules converging at the core process of cultural identification. Next, based on such interpretation, in light of ICM principle 4, I will discuss the possible strategy to prevent or constructively deal with the disheartenment in this case.

ICM principle 4 signifies that people can alter the salient position of ideology in the process of cultural identification by deliberately rotating the structures of their identities. Through a telephone inquiry, Xin divulged that though completely unprepared for and deeply embarrassed by Daisy's blunt statement, she did make internal effort to remain balanced. While feeling like being slapped in the face, Xin kept reminding herself of her role as a student in a classroom shared by many others, who had their rights and turns to voice whatever they stood for. Any confrontation would cost others' time and attention. The internalized social norm and institutional rule helped Xin adopt a strategy of avoidance to muffle the escalation of ideological conflict in a setting where ideological talks, she thought, might be a waste of time. This was perhaps most spontaneous, commonplace, and minimum effort to deal with ideology in interpersonal communication. Particularly for those who are more passive with less power and lower status, avoidance can be a means of survival. For those who have more power and higher status, such as the Professor, the use of avoidance could become an art of rotation. Control of the agitating situation of

ideological clashes should lie on empathetic considerations of both parties from the third party who often has some sort of supervisory power like the Professor. Forceful insertion pushing either or both sides to yield to extraneous rules might cause unwanted responses, as exemplified by this case. A more sensitive, calculative, and thereby more considerate manipulation must result to a communication strategy involving different wordings, nonverbal cues, procedures, settings, and degrees of mediating efforts. For instance, if permitted by circumstances, the professor could have let the Daisy and Xin sit together after class and invited them to converse about their ideological preferences in a less face-threatening setting so as to explore opportunities towards *soul-searching communication*. The rotation is not just a slight change of position. The rotation of communicators' identity properties is embedded in the speeded up flow of communication messages. Given more opportunities to learn each other as more of individual persons and follow students, they might alleviate the existing estrangement by developing shared identification aspects. That would exactly reify the fundamental value of intercultural communication. A more considerate communication strategy based on understanding of the involved parties' ideological complexes would help with the coming of more desirable consequences.

7. Implications

ICM is intended to operationalize ideology at micro-interpersonal level. ICM helps put the often neglected yet perceptibly critical factor of intercultural conflicts in the academic spotlight and theorize its influences on intercultural communications. In ICM, ideology is not only one kind of content of potential intercultural conflict but also a scope through which we can view intercultural communication more wholesomely with greater details. Because of its richness in content specificities and fluidity in communicative forms, ideology is hard to be investigated with a reductionist, linear, and quantitative approach. Therefore, ICM stresses a perspective of complexity in the initial stage of theorization that integrates emotion, identity, culture, communication, and political economics into one conceptual system, which strives to reflect the interactions and perceptions of ideologies in interpersonal situations. Ideology as a factor in intercultural communication, often unspoken and presumptive, blended with prejudices, stereotypes, and discriminations, is treated in ICM as analyzable and manipulable through constructive communication. The basic tenet for such constructive communication is "seeking common ground while reserving and revering differences," which can be achieved through more dynamic intercultural contacts.

As James Carey (1975; 1989) questioned, the positivistic stance deliberately discredits ideology as a solid subject of science and science starts from where ideology leaves off (Moon, 1996). However, ideological conflicts and clashes are definitely something we have to consider, avoid, predict, and manage, because they imply and foster deeper mental traumas and more intensive emotional reactions that could incubate profound ideological hatreds and feuds, which are not only the hindrances to harmonious and benevolent intercultural communication, the obstacles to any peaceful and effective resolutions of intercultural conflicts, but also the latent explosives that could bring about severe international disasters such as terrorism and wars. Hence we need to develop practices, strategies, and solutions to realize, understand, manage, soften, weaken, decrease, and eventually sublimate the odds of ideological elements in our intercultural encounters. Ideology is a serious problem of intercultural communication. The ultimate intent of ICM is to seriously consider ideology in intercultural communication practices and theorizations.

ICM has practical implications for intercultural training, consultancy, and conflict resolutions. Competent intercultural communicators must develop clear clues on how people with conflicting ideological stances might end up in their intercultural encounters. Ideology can be a productive seminar topic for intercultural trainees to discuss about alternative dimensions of cultural differences beyond conventional criteria. ICM can help intercultural consultants with a framework that permits more lively depictions and more profound analyses of intercultural conflicting scenarios involving ideological differences. Via a perspective of complexity stressed in ICM, one can develop one's empathy including the higher level of awareness of one's ideological preference and that of the others so as to become a more competent intercultural communicator.

8. Concluding thoughts: Approaching the soul-searching communication

Just as stressed by ICM, ideology is a complex issue, which specificities are vast and diverse, though all gripped by the law of power. Numerous ideological dialectics coexist in today's world, such as liberal vs.

conservative, global warming pro vs. con, many of conflicting religious ideologies, and countless regional border disputes, many of which can superimpose with each other obscuring the borderlines. Ideological conflicts featured by local specificities might also mingle with other individual, national, cultural, and political factors to increase the ambiguity of practical ideological analysis. Specific knowledge of ideological topography and local information of ideological ecology definitely can help with one's analysis of ideological factors in communication. However, it is beyond the scope of the current theorization for ICM to sort out all the ideological divisions prevalent in the current world and create a numerical scale dealing with such diversity. Such a basic limitation of the current ICM foretells its future research orientation.

As indicated in this proposal, ICM just describes a general roadmap for ideological considerations in intercultural studies. Further research efforts need to be made such as seeking the diagnostic diversity of ideological disheartenments and mindful or mindless communicators' deliberate or spontaneous communicative tactics such as wordings, nonverbal cues, and strategic compliances with environmental constraints. Such efforts would need a wide range of case analysis. In the current paper, the application of ICM is given to just one major case involving just one specific ideological conflict in one unique setting, which particularity limits the application from becoming more productive in the sense of generality. With expansion of ICM application reaching more specific cases with more typical ideological interactions in various settings, ICM might be significantly developed with more integral and specific constructs.

In summary, Ideology Complexity Model (ICM) particularizes the structural and dynamic complexity of ideological identity in various contexts with an interpretive approach. ICM provides a palpable agenda for ethnographical records of ideological specifics of different individuals and cultures. ICM can help scholars develop critical discourses regarding their preferential judgments of the existing diverse ideologies. However, as a scientific device, ICM should be neutral and unbiased, even though it's impossible to eliminate the users' ideological preferences, which are often in the forms of emotional attachments or spiritual ascriptions. ICM might also be metaphorically and analogously applied to international communication such as the dynamics of international relations and global politics. As a microanalysis of ideological influences on human communication, ICM can be best applied at interpersonal or intergroup level, particularly in an intercultural context. Generally, ICM is a theoretical model of studying ideology through the perspective of intercultural communication studies rather than that of political sciences or critical theories.

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About the author

Haibin Dong is a PhD candidate with concentration on intercultural communication in the Department of Communication and Journalism of University of New Mexico. His research interests include the complexity of cultural identity, the aesthetics of intercultural communication, rhetorical criticism of cultural symbolisms, and theory of artistic production from a cultural/intercultural perspective. This paper was revised from the original version, which has been accepted by the annual conference of National Communication Association (NCA International/Intercultural Communication Division) held in Chicago, IL, USA 2007.

Author's address

Haibin Dong
PhD Candidate
Department of Communication and Journalism
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131

Email: hdong@unm.edu