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(Available Oct. 2007) *Deep Culture: The Hidden Challenges of Global Living*, Multilingual Matters

The Deep Culture Model

Created during a three-year research project of sojourner interviews. It seeks to answer the questions about cultural learning in an age of globalization:

- 1) how to define successful intercultural learning
- 2) whether some sojourners have “deeper” intercultural learning experiences than others
- 3) why some sojourners seem to become less tolerant
- 4) how to explain the wide variety of reactions to cultural difference
- 5) how to understand *mixed reactions* (love France but hate the French)

Theoretical background

- 1) The phenomenological definition of cultural sensitivity proposed by Bennettⁱ in DMIS,
- 2) The open-systems theory view of intercultural adaptation described by Kimⁱⁱ,
- 3) Theory related to the stresses of culture shockⁱⁱⁱ, and
- 4) The dilemma-theory view of cultural difference^{iv}.
- 5) The insights of Edward Hall^v regarding the “deep” or hidden side of intercultural learning
- 6) A constructionist view of culture as shared meaning rather than as a form of social identity.

The cultural learning process:

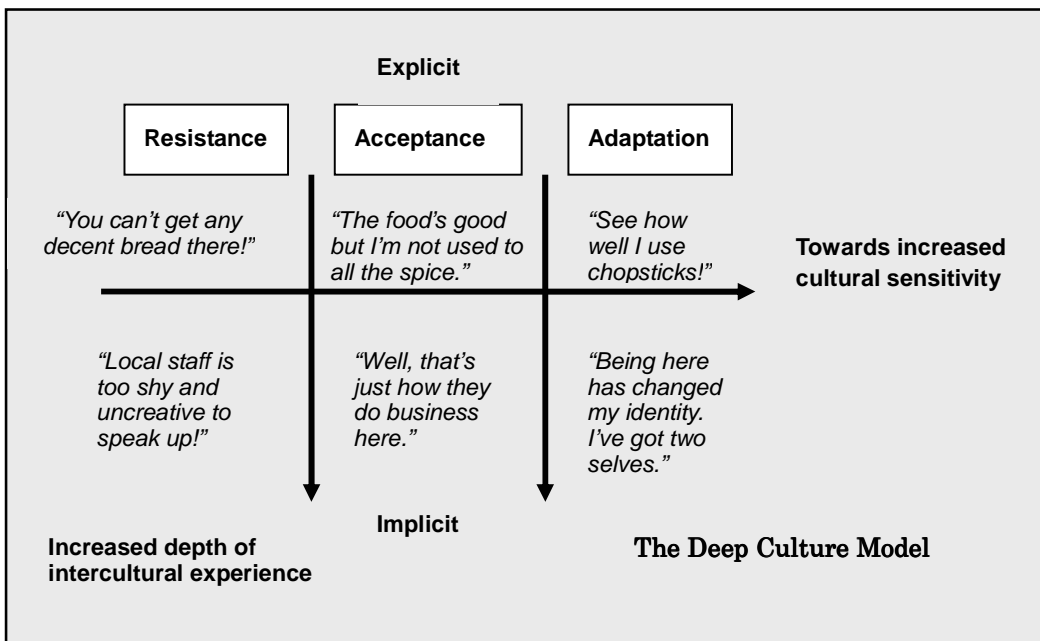
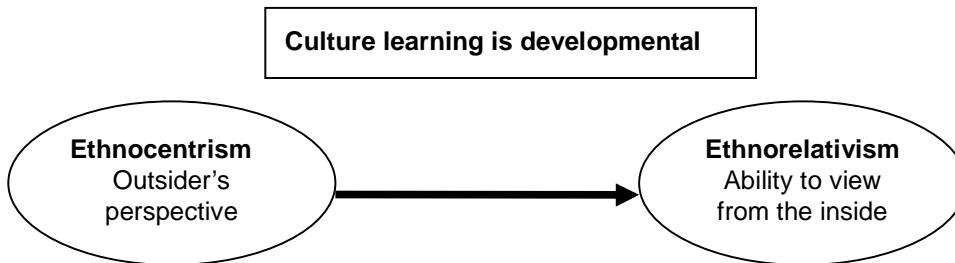
- A sojourner’s reactions to the *adaptive demands* of a new cultural environment are seen as driving cultural learning.
- Sojourners may *resist*, *accept*, or *adapt* to these demands.
- This process takes place at different depths – so that a sojourner may, for example, accept *surface* adaptive demands while resisting other *deep* adaptive demands.
- These reactions can be evaluated using sojourners statements about cultural difference
- These statements can be diagrammed to create a visual profile of an individual’s cultural learning.

Some common cultural learning outcomes:

- 1) *reversal* – valuing the host cultural community while denigrating one’s home community,
- 2) the *mixed state* of accepting some elements of difference but not others,
- 3) *rappport* – a feeling of intuitive attraction to a new community,
- 4) the difference between *deep* learning experiences and *meaningful* learning experience,
- 5) *enforced adaptation* – the negative consequences of sojourners who are forced to adapt behavior without accepting the cultural values underlying those behaviors.

These terms act as a taxonomy and profiling instrument for the intercultural experience.

Deep culture model



Sojourner profiles

Discussion question: Does being happy with one’s intercultural experience imply that one has achieved successful intercultural learning?

Jack is an American high-school English teacher who has been in Japan for 11 years, but speaks only basic level Japanese. He feels quite happy with life there, and overall has positive feelings about Japan. At the same time, he lives an fairly insulated life and his relationships with people are entirely in English. His only close Japanese friend is his girlfriend. He knows Tokyo restaurants and night life spots very well. He has adapted to life in Japan on a superficial level, yet seems indifferent to (or incapable of) deeper levels of adaptation.

Jack

	SURFACE	
	“The trains run on time, and service in stores is great”	“I’ve learned to get along pretty well in everyday life.” “I know some great restaurants”
Resistance	Acceptance	Adaptation
“I don’t think it’s ever possible to really be accepted in this society, so I haven’t really tried.” “No, my Japanese is pretty bad, and I don’t have many Japanese friends.”	“Some Japanese things have rubbed off on me, like patience.”	
	DEEP	

Discussion question: Is it possible to dislike a particular cultural community and still be interculturally sensitive?

Linda is an American doctoral student of Japanese literature that was initially attracted to Japan’s traditional culture and literature. Learning Japanese, however, and life in Japan has proven much more frustrating. She is looking forward to returning to the United States to take up a job teaching once she finishes her doctorate. Her profile shows that she deeply resists many parts of Japanese culture, yet as a product of her studies has spent great energy trying to learn Japanese and understand Japanese literature. She has adapted only in a narrow sense.

Linda

	SURFACE	
	“I love Japanese traditional architecture.”	“My specialty is Showa-era female writers.”
Resistance	Acceptance	Adaptation
“Women are oppressed in this society” “All my friends are foreign academics.” “I can’t stand how young people have lost all the good things about Japanese culture.” “This whole salary man lifestyle is really unhealthy.” “My attitudes about Japan have really changed for the worse now that I have seen the reality under the beautiful surface.”	DEEP	

Discussion question: Why are some cultural settings harder to get used to than others?

Naomi is a Japanese whose husband is Korean. She spent two years living in Seoul and had some trouble getting used to life in Korea. Still, she has many positive feelings about her experience and seems to have developed a deeply empathetic reaction towards her cultural experiences there.

Naomi

	SURFACE	
	“Korean food is pretty spicy sometimes. Some things are good, but I can’t eat much of them.”	“I had to learn not to turn guests’ shoes around. This is rude in Korea.”
Resistance	Acceptance	Adaptation
	“My mother-in-law used to come and clean my house when I was away visiting Japan. This drove me nuts, but I recognize that she was just trying to be kind.”	“I feel comfortable speaking Korean. It lets me express a different side of my personality compared to Japanese.” “Yes, I love my husband’s parents. We’ve really developed a good relationship.”
	DEEP	

Key terms

Deep Culture Model of cultural learning describes how we react to the demands of cultural learning at differing depths of experience.

Cultural learning: An sojourner's particular reaction to the systematic and social demands of a new intercultural environment. Successful intercultural learning leads toward intercultural sensitivity.

Intercultural sensitivity refers to the ability to construct a cognitive reality capable of accommodating cultural difference - the ability to accept and empathize with other cultural realities.

Intercultural depth: Deep intercultural experiences are those which force intercultural learners to deal with more implicit – i.e. hidden – elements of a new intercultural environment, such as differing values, communication styles, world view, etc. Shallow intercultural experiences were those in which explicit elements of cultural difference – different food, transportation systems, architecture – were confronted.

Intercultural demand: The degree of change required of a sojourner by a new intercultural environment. An intercultural experience may be demanding, yet not deep.

Resistance: the reaction to an intercultural experience in which difference is denigrated. *Resistance* is more than simply disliking something in that it involves a negative absolute judgment. Someone may dislike a new food, for example, but accept it as a valid choice for others. *Resistance*, on the other hand, involves a negative judgment such as “The bread here isn't nearly as good as that back home” or “You can't trust people there.”

Acceptance: *Acceptance* involves the recognition that one's own perspective is not absolute but is conditioned by one's experiences. Cognitively, *acceptance* involves the construction of a functional alternative world view. One recognizes that there is a different, yet valid system of meaning at work, and that recognition helps that alternative reality become integrated into one's world view. Affectively, acceptance helps sojourners adapt to cultural difference even when it may be distasteful.

Adaptation: Adaptation means accepting change in oneself in order to respond to the demands of a new environment. Everyone adapts to a new environment to some degree, if only at the most superficial levels. Adaptation does not imply replacing one's *culture* with a new one. It simply means adding to existing knowledge, skills and perspectives. Adapting requires a choice at the conscious or unconscious level not to resist change.

Notes

ⁱ This theory proposes developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity, see Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards Ethnorelativism: a developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. Education for the Intercultural Experience. M. R. Paige. Yarmouth, Intercultural Press: 21-71.

ⁱⁱ Open systems theory sees living organisms as existing in an ongoing relationship with their environment. This approach has been applied to cross-cultural adaptation by Kim (2001). Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation. London, Sage.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a description of how cultural difference creates stress, see Weaver, G. (1993). Understanding and Coping with Cross-Cultural Adjustment Stress. Education for the Intercultural Experience. R. M. Page. Yarmouth, Maine, Intercultural Press Inc.

^{iv} For a view of culture as a way of overcoming fundamental dilemmas in social organization, see Trompenaars, F. and C. Hampden-Turner (1998). Riding the Waves of Culture. New York, NY, McGraw Hill.

^v Hall wrote extensively on the hidden barriers to cross-cultural understanding. See: Hall, E. T. (1959). The Silent Language. New York, Anchor Books, Hall, E. T. (1976). Beyond Culture. New York, Anchor Books Doubleday, Hall, E. T. (1984). The Dance of Life the other dimension of time. New York, Anchor Books.

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