

to discuss the complexities of the issue with the locals. The way to deal with moral outrage, it seems to me now, is to work it out in dialogue. Simply declaring that “they have their ways and we have ours” is no solution because that denies a connection between us and reduces the chance of crossing cultural boundaries. What is needed now is more than tolerance; what is needed is some kind of engagement (Breitborde 1997, 42). This is the theme of the dialogic question in the next chapter.



Chapter 10



EXERCISES

Exercise 1: Culture Shock

In this exercise you will talk to someone who has been immersed in another culture, to learn if she or he experienced culture shock. Then you will analyze that experience using the three-phase model of culture shock (disorientation, dissociation, reconnection) described in this chapter.

Part 1

The first step is to select a good informant. Seek out someone who has lived for at least four months in a society with a culture different from his/her own. The immersion experience should have occurred during or after the person’s teenage years. Overseas military service qualifies if the informant interacted daily with the hosts other than as combatants. A returned Peace Corps volunteer or a classmate who studied abroad will be a good informant, as will a returned graduate student or professor whose research immersed her or him in the host society. A native of another society who has been in the United States more than four months is also a good informant.

Part 2

The next step is to conduct a semistructured biographical interview with this well-chosen informant. The interview progresses through three stages:

1. Build a chronology. Ask your informant to describe the basic facts of the adventure. Ask, Where were you, when, doing what, with whom, and why? Take notes. From this broad beginning stage you can establish a rough chronology of events for the next stage of the interview.
2. Explore for symptoms. Explain that you are particularly interested in “the problems of adjustment to the other culture.” Working with your chronology, ask questions like these, which explore for “symptoms” of

culture shock, its causes, and ways the informant moved toward reconnection. These questions are stated so as not to force the informant to think in unfamiliar anthropological terms.

- a. What situations or events frightened, disgusted, or annoyed you?
 - b. What blunders or social errors did you make?
 - c. How did the host people's ways seem to you early in your stay?
 - d. How did your views of the host people's ways change? Why?
 - e. What depressed you, made you angry or homesick?
 - f. Were there certain times in your stay when this was most intense?
 - g. How did you deal with those feelings?
 - h. Did you pick up any of your hosts' attitudes toward other cultures?
 - i. Did you at any point begin to think that some aspects of your hosts' culture were better than yours?
 - j. Did you have any troubles or strong feelings when you rejoined your own culture?
3. Address culture shock directly. Toward the end of the interview, become explicit now about your interest, recruiting your informant to help you think about the travel anthropologically: "I'm trying to discover whether you felt culture shock, when, why, and how you expressed it and how you got over it—if you think you did."

Part 3

The last step of this exercise is to analyze your notes for a pattern that may resemble the three-stage process of culture shock described in this chapter. What is the evidence for a stage of disorientation?

- What aspects of the host–guest cultural differences produced the disorientation?
- Which, if any, of the symptoms of culture shock did the informant exhibit?
- What attitudes and behaviors of dissociation did she or he develop in response?
- How did the informant get through the culture shock to reconnect with the host culture?
- If the informant did *not* experience culture shock, why not?

The three-phase culture shock pattern has many outcomes that might fit your study. Here are four:

Experienced: The informant experienced culture shock, recovered from it, and avoided succumbing to it subsequently.

Averted: The informant enjoyed the work routine, personal adaptability, and social support that prevented culture shock.

Chronic: The informant entered into and recovered from culture shock more than once.

Arrested: The informant experienced culture shock and then remained in a state of dissociation from the host culture.

Your interview notes and a written report of Part 3 constitute the product of this exercise. Comparing your results with classmates will reveal whether culture shock is common, what form it took, what conditions generated or avoided shock, and so forth.

Exercise 2: Comparative Values

In this exercise you will identify some of your values, combine them into worldviews, and discover the degree to which you and your classmates share these values—in other words, is there a common culture about the subject? If not, we may at least identify the more common variations of the worldview.

The following survey instrument contains three scenarios followed by three responses. Read each scenario, and then write in the boxes as requested.

SCENARIO 1. Three neighbors who each tended flower gardens were conversing. Each seems to have different ways of handling his garden. Which of these three ways do you believe is usually best? Write a “first” in that box. Which of the other two ways is better? Write a “second” in that box.

A. One neighbor said, “I sow my flower seed and then only tend the flowers enough to keep them going along. How the flowers will turn out depends mainly on weather conditions. Nothing extra that I could do would change things very much.”

B. Another neighbor said, “I selected my flower varieties to be compatible with each other, unattractive to the local pests, and well suited to the soil and light in my garden. I try to stay in harmony with the forces of nature because they have the most effect on the way my flowers turn out.”

C. The other neighbor said, “I planted my flowers and then work on them a lot, making use of all the best horticultural aids on the market. By doing this I can prevent many of the effects of bad conditions.”

SCENARIO 2. Three friends were discussing the weather. Which of these persons do you think had the best idea? Write a “first” in that box. Which of the other two had the better idea? Write a “second” in that box.

A. One friend said, “We have never controlled the rain, wind, and temperature and probably never will. There have always been good and

bad weather years. If you're smart you'll take it as it comes and do the best you can."

B. Another friend said, "People should keep their land and animals in good condition and adjust to the wind and rain and other weather conditions. Only by doing this will we keep things going well."

C. The other friend said, "I see it as our human task to find ways to overcome weather and other conditions, just as we have overcome many other forces of nature. One day we will be successful and may even be able to influence the wind and the rain."

SCENARIO 3. Three cousins were talking about whether people can do anything to make people's lives longer. Which of these cousins do you most agree with? Write a "first" in that box. Which of the other two do you agree more with? Write a "second" in that box.

A. One cousin said, "There isn't much that people themselves can do to make human lives longer. Every person has a certain amount of time to live, and when that time ends, it just ends."

B. Another cousin said, "There are forces in nature that work to keep all living things moving together. If we can just understand those forces and learn to live our lives with them, we'd live longer."

C. The other cousin said, "Human ingenuity is always finding more ways to add years to our lives, with new medicines, gene therapy, nutrition, and surgery. If we took advantage of all these new technologies, we would all live longer."

For each of the three scenarios, assign 3 points to the alternative you selected as first choice, 2 points to your second choice, and 1 point to the alternative you didn't mark. Enter those points in Table 10.2. Compute the total points for alternatives A, B, and C and fill in those lines below the table.

The instructor will suggest to the class some categories of worldview preference. A survey of the class will quickly establish the number of students, or at least the proportion of the class, adhering to each worldview preference. From that survey complete Table 10.3.

- Is there a predominant worldview, indicating a shared culture?
- If the results show wide diversity, how does the society handle that?
- If your view is in the minority, how do you feel about that?
- Does holding a certain worldview influence whether or not a student agrees with the following statements (Table 10.4)?

Table 10.2 Raw Scores for Value Scenarios

	Alternative	Score
Scenario One	A	
	B	
	C	
Scenario Two	A	
	B	
	C	
Scenario Three	A	
	B	
	C	
Total score for alternatives A:		
Total score for alternatives B:		
Total score for alternatives C:		

Table 10.3 Distribution of Worldview Preference in the Class

World View Preference	Proportion of Class

Table 10.4 Proportion of Students Holding Each of Three Worldviews Who Answer “Agree” to Statements

Question	Worldview A	Worldview B	Worldview C
Stem cell research should be expanded.			
U.S. coastal populations should be protected from hurricanes.			
Atomic fission should be used more in the United States for energy production.			
Herbal medicines should be supported by health insurance and Medicare.			

Exercise 3: Reading Ethnographies Relativistically

If you have recently read or are about to finish an ethnography, turn to it for this exercise. Identify the beliefs, practices, and events in the described society that bother you in some way. Sort these items, as best you can, by the intensity of your reaction to them. Also mark each as one of the following:

- a. It is all right if these people do or think this, and many other Americans might not be bothered by this, but I wouldn't want to have anything to do with this.
- b. It is all right if these people do or think this, but many other Americans might be bothered by this, as I am.
- c. I consider this to be objectionable in principle for all people.

Don't avoid marking a cultural feature as "c" for fear of appearing ethnocentric. Remember the argument that there might indeed be universal standards of human conduct, and perhaps this item is a candidate.

Next, analyze each of your judgments as follows: Identify the habit, scruple, taste, or belief in your culture that the cultural feature in question challenges or contradicts. State that reason in a sentence, as I have done below for my opposition to certain forms of seal hunting:

"Game should be killed as quickly and painlessly as possible."

On the basis of that analysis, conclude by predicting whether you could effectively immerse yourself in the society in question, perhaps as an ethnographer. Could you study those features you've identified as objectionable? Even if you didn't have to study those objectionable elements, how would you deal with them while residing in the society?

The product of this exercise is your prioritized and rated list, your analysis of each item, and your conclusion.

Exercise 4: Studying Values with the Semantic Differential

In this exercise, which may be conducted in class, a specialized research instrument will be demonstrated in surveying students' evaluation of the discipline of anthropology, and the results will be analyzed for similarities and differences in values within the class and between classes.

As mentioned in this chapter, anthropologist Douglas Raybeck used the semantic differential in a survey to provide a well-rounded picture of some core values in Kelantanese culture in rural eastern Malaysia. He surveyed Kelantanese opinions about Islam, kinfolk, and village society, among twenty-one other topics that his participant observation suggested were important to people. Raybeck takes pains to explain that the semantic differential instrument is not "Western biased," that it can be constructed and calibrated for any culture, and that it is "particularly appropriate for investigations into people's attitudes concerning values and deviance" (1996, 240).

The instrument I have used in my classes is presented in Table 10.5. It asks fourteen questions about how the respondent rates the given concept—in this case “anthropology.” The answers are recorded on 9-point scales between two terms, such as “warm” and “cool,” that are considered polar opposites in that society. Each student should complete the form by placing a mark between the vertical bars for each of the fourteen terms, as in this example:



To simplify the tabulation of results, take a hand vote on each of the fourteen scales as follows:

- Who marked one of the bullets in the central, or neutral, three positions?
- Who marked one of the three bullets on the left half?
- Who marked one of the three bullets on the right half?

Once the fourteen scales are tabulated, we ask,

1. What are the values associated with anthropology by this student group?
2. How much agreement is there in the class?
3. How well do the students agree with the instructor?

Your instructor may share with you the results from my surveys using this same instrument. My students have been predominantly eighteen to twenty-two years old, of European heritage, suburban or small-town residents, and equal numbers of males and females. Comparing my data to your class data, you ask,

4. How great is the similarity in evaluations between the classes?
5. Might the differences in evaluations reflect cultural differences between the classes?
6. This method yields quantitative data; do they make it easier to grasp the values involved?

If submissions are called for, present your completed survey form, the tabulation of class results, and your answers to the six questions.

Exercise 5: Applied Anthropology

If you have read or are about to finish an ethnography, consult it for this exercise. If you are not reading an ethnography, take as your case study your hometown or the college community. Here are two scenarios for activism.

Scenario 1: The Problem as Insiders See It

1. Do (some of) the people recognize that they have a problem? If so, identify it and continue with the other questions.

2. How widespread among them is the agreement about that problem?
3. What do they consider the source or the causes of that problem?
4. What do they believe to be the consequences of that problem?
5. How would you help them solve the problem, if you were the author of the ethnography or the applied anthropologist working in that community?
6. What would be the outcomes—intended results and side effects—if your work succeeded?
7. What would be the outcomes if your work failed?

Scenario 2: The Problem as the Outsider/Anthropologist Sees It

1. Do you see a problem that is apparently unacknowledged by the people?
2. How would you bring that problem to their attention?
3. How would you win their approval to deal with the problem?
4. What do you see as the source or the causes of that problem?
5. What do you see as the consequences of that problem?
6. How would you guide them to solve the problem, if you were the author of the ethnography?
7. What would be the outcomes—intended results and side effects—if your work succeeded?
8. What would be the outcomes if your work failed?

Exercise 6: Universal Standards

Review the statements of human rights established by the United Nations, an international body comprising representatives of 191 sovereign nations, although not of all the cultures practiced in those nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights may be found at www.un.org/rights/index.html. The Covenant of Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights may be found at the UN High Commission for Human Rights website (www.unhchr.ch). Other documents on rights, such as those of children, may be found at the UN Web site (www.un.org).

1. Could these principles constitute a universal standard against which all cultures would be judged?
2. How well do the cultures you've been reading about meet these standards?
3. How well does your culture (or cultures) meet these standards?
4. Are there rights missing from these declarations that you believe should be included?
5. Several societies with distinct cultures are not represented in the UN, such as the Kurds of Iraq, the Basques of Spain, and the Mohawks of New York and Ontario; shall we also hold these ethnic groups to these principles?

6. Are there rights in these declarations that you would exclude because they seem to be borrowed directly from the cultures of Western Europe and North America?

Compose your answers to these questions after discussing them with classmates.