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Chapter 1

Worlds Apart in One Village

Some say we are all living in a "global village." This expression was popular in the Western world before 11 September 2001. But if proof need still be given, this chapter will make it clear that our global village has many disparate quarters. It shows how intercultural encounters can generate misunderstandings or worse. The chapter consists of stories and exercises for either individual or group work.

The following story illustrates that misunderstandings between people from different countries can both be sudden and have far-reaching consequences.

Since the end of World War II, Korea has been split in two parts. North Korea has become the devastatingly poor communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea. South Korea has become a comparatively rich capitalist state and has a U.S. military presence. Until the year 2000, these twin countries waged a fierce ideological battle against one another. The government of the United States sided with South Korea and had North Korea on its list of seven terrorist nations, the so-called "rogue states," because of incidents that had happened in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2000 the two Koreas started to talk about reconciliation or even reunification. This, then, is the background for the following incident.



Our global village has many disparate quarters.

The Frankfurt Incident

On the fourth of September 2000, in the last year of the Clinton administration, a North Korean delegation heads from Europe toward the United Nations millennium summit in New York. The delegation includes the country's vice leader, Kim Yong Nam. In New York the delegation is supposed to have a reconciliatory meeting with the president of South Korea.

Changing their prior travel plans, they choose an American airline at Frankfurt Airport. While the North Koreans are waiting for the plane, the airline's security personnel notice them. Following their instructions for members of rogue states who do not have diplomatic immunity, they call out these people and thoroughly search them. The North Koreans are very, very angry and fly home instead of going to the U.N. summit. The incident immediately hits the world press.

The North Korean ambassador, Mr. Li, recounts his version of the story: U.S. aviation security officials came up to the delegation and performed hooligan acts: questioning them and checking their luggage and stripping them to do a body search. They justified this conduct by saying that North Korea was listed as a rogue state and that they had instruc-

tions from home to act as they did. Mr. Li concludes that the incident was purposely and insidiously created by the United States to hinder the reconciliation of the two Koreas, demonstrating that the U.S. is a rogue state itself.

A White House spokesman explains that because the delegation had changed its travel plans, the American airline personnel at Frankfurt Airport did not know who they were. They had done no more than follow the U.S. rules for rogue states, and the U.S. government had not been involved in the incident at all. The airline immediately apologizes and takes responsibility.

Various U.S. diplomats express regret about the incident. Four days later U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright sends a formal letter of apology to the Northern Korean foreign minister and receives a reply that could be called conciliatory. In this reply North Korea says it has noted the American apology and shall watch the future deeds of the Americans but also states that its sovereignty has been injured and that "the Democratic People's Republic of Korea values its sovereignty like its life and soul."

The two Koreas resume their talks.

What happened at the airport was a very clear case of culture clash. Experienced travelers know that U.S. security personnel at airports tend to be heavy-handed regardless of whom they deal with. That fits with the American culture. They may not have been particularly polite to the North Korean delegation. In addition Americans hold the view that everybody is his or her own person, and one cannot hold the government responsible for the behavior of employees of some company as long as they stick to the rules. The North Koreans, on the other hand, come from a country where respect for authority is very important. Moreover, an insult to one North Korean is an insult to all. Looked at from this vantage point, the beleaguered security officials didn't just search a few strangers, they insulted a whole nation! This is evident in the emotional and nationalistic overtones of the North Korean reaction.

So you see that it is possible to explain the behavior of both sides in terms of their own way of thinking and come up with two widely different interpretations. Do you think either the American airline's officials or the North Korean delegation members learned anything from the incident? The Americans probably feel that the North Koreans are blowing this thing up ridiculously, while the North Koreans are now quite certain that Americans are savages. The media on both sides are likely not to have corrected this image.

Fortunately, in this case highly placed politicians on both sides were anxious to put the incident behind them. In many other cases an incident such as this one might have been the beginning of armed combat.

Awareness, Knowledge, Skills

If you were a high-level airline security official, what could you do to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future? Logically, it takes three steps to do this, to be taken in chronological order.

- Make your personnel *aware* that they differ from many foreigners in their social behavior and assumptions.

- Help them learn to *know* their differences from people from various parts of the world.
- Teach them the *skills* needed to communicate effectively with these various foreigners.

There is actually a fourth step, one that is needed throughout the process: motivate them to want to treat people from any country in a way that those people appreciate.

It can safely be assumed that the members of the North Korean delegation at Frankfurt have made it clear in their own way that they did not appreciate the safety measures. With sufficient training, the security people might have been aware of the possibility for misunderstanding, found out who these people were, and treated them with more cultural sensitivity.

The logical sequence of awareness, knowledge, and skills is the basis for this book. Activities and exercises are usually aimed at the awareness and knowledge steps. Simulation games are strong in the latter two areas; you practice intercultural communication skills, and you experience how it feels to be a foreigner. This experience can be very motivating. But we will start by working on awareness and knowledge.

What Do You See?

Consider the following set of pictures. Look at each picture briefly and write down what you think it might show. Then—and only then—read on and find out how a number of other people interpreted the picture. These people ranged in age from fourteen to fifty and came from Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, France, Indonesia, Italy, the Netherlands, Peru, Tunisia, and Uganda. Perhaps your own interpretation is on the list, perhaps not. As you will see, the pictures have an amazing number of possible interpretations, which differ because people concentrate on different aspects. Some look for unique attributes of the people in the picture. Others look for family relationships or for hierarchical relationships. Still others look for gender differences, for cooperation, for antagonism, or for details that highlight professional or religious roles. Try to figure out what attributes influenced your interpretation.

The lesson to be drawn from this activity is that just by looking at a situation, you cannot tell what is happening. Unconsciously, you bring your own cultural frame of interpretation to any situation. This is not to say that culture alone determines how one interprets a picture or a situation. One's own unique history and personality also play an important role. But some of the interpretations made by people from other parts of the world probably seem very strange to you.



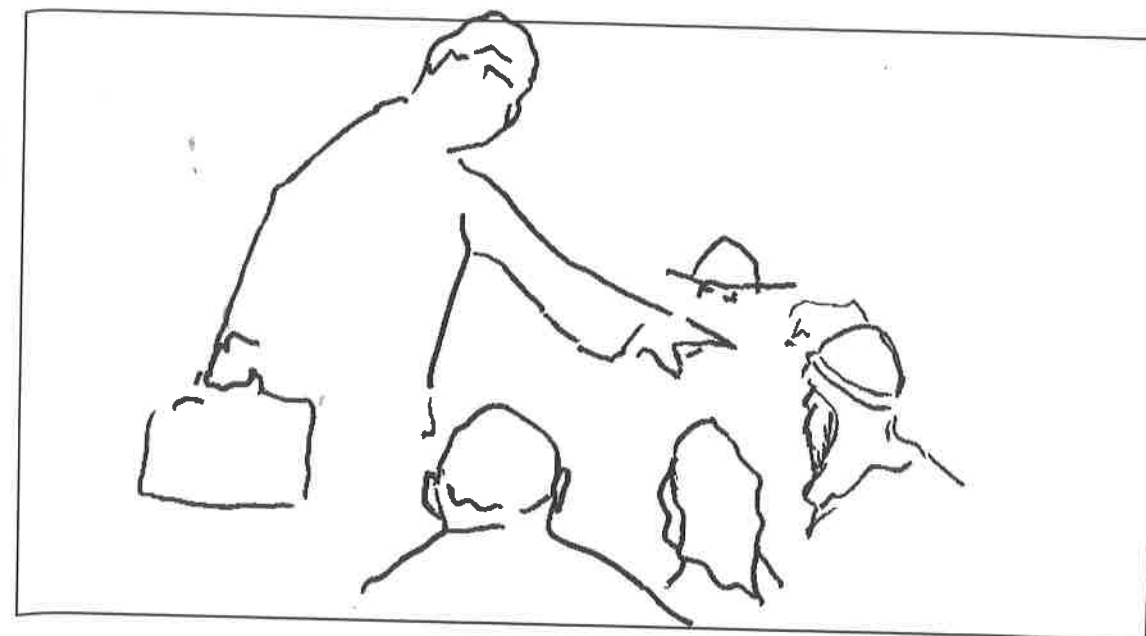
Unconsciously, you bring your own cultural frame of interpretation to any situation.



Picture 1

Possible interpretations:

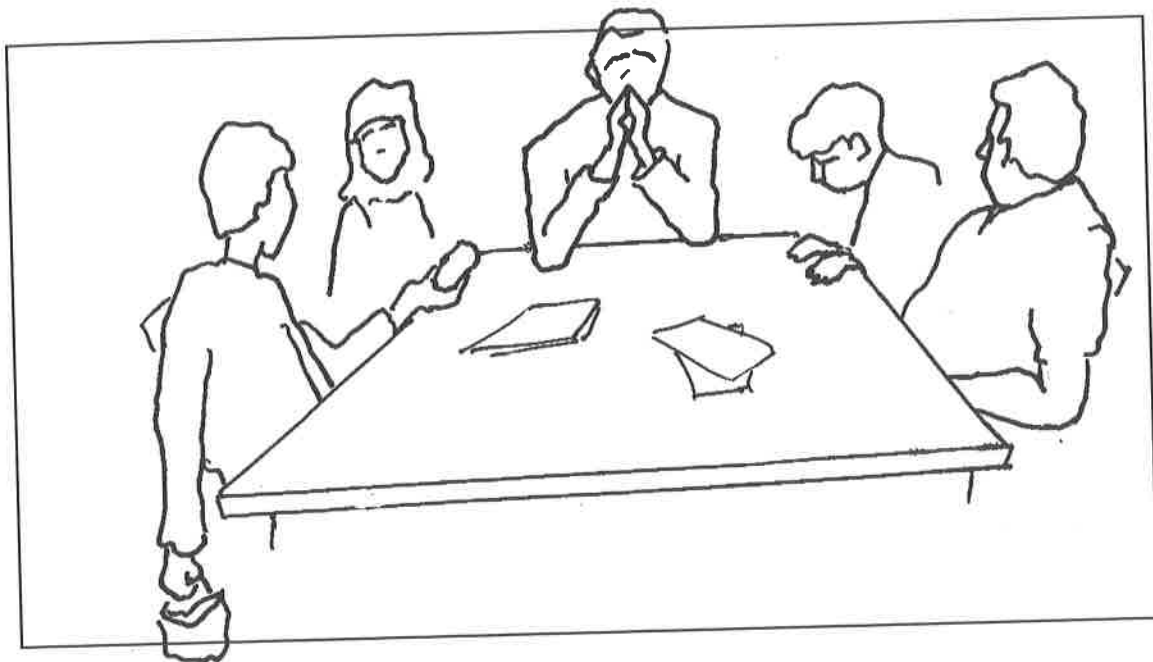
- Two women are walking and a man threatens one of the women with a piece of wood
- Two men are attacking a woman
- A woman steps aside to let a blind man pass
- A beggar and a woman
- Gardening
- A farm family working on their land
- Two people helping each other do something
- Poor people. The man is digging for something and the woman is waiting to take it
- A man cleaning the floor
- A man is digging a hole and a woman is dropping seeds in it



Picture 2

Possible interpretations:

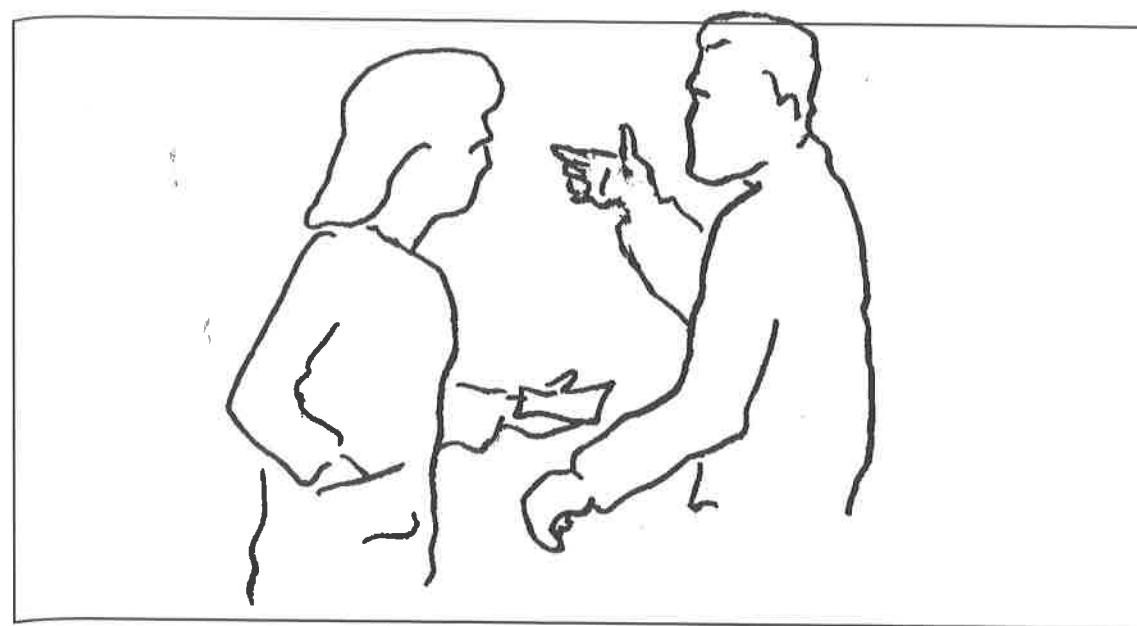
- A teacher reprimanding a student
- A man teaching other men
- A boss giving instructions to employees
- A government official warning a gathering of people with different religions
- Blessing
- A preacher in church
- A film director instructing his crew where to stand for the next scene
- A salesman trying to sell his wares



Picture 3

Possible interpretations:

- Prayer before a meal; two people do not want to pray
- People thinking hard to solve some problem
- Difficult conversation
- A meeting about to begin
- A family that has just received a sad letter
- A meeting. Two women on the left are talking on the side about a mobile phone
- The person on the left just bought some bread and is offering a piece to everybody
- People looking for a solution to some problem. The guy on the left is hiding the important evidence and showing something unimportant to the others
- The man in the middle presides over the debate. One guy is not involved
- A religious ritual



Picture 4

Possible interpretations:

- A woman is giving some money to a man and he is claiming he wants more money
- A woman trying to bribe a man
- A man is taking money from a woman
- A man is giving money to a woman. Something is problematic and they are discussing it
- Negotiation
- Educated people discussing something
- A woman asking the way and a man orienting her
- A discussion among friends
- A violent discussion
- A quarrel. She has insulted him in some way
- A lady giving her address to a man

Are you tempted to ask "But what do these pictures *really* mean?" We must confess that we deliberately asked the artist, Murray Thomas, to make ambiguous pictures that leave room for interpretation. So your interpretation is just as valid as anybody else's. Of course in a real social situation this is not so, because then you are facing real people with real intentions toward one another. We shall address some "real" situations in the following exercises.

How Would You Feel?

Here are some awareness exercises. They are short incidents in which you picture yourself interacting with somebody. That person's behavior stimulates expectations within you about his or her intentions toward you, or causes you to make moral inferences about the person. From a list of available responses to each incident, please choose one or more. Then try to figure out what values guided your choice. We will come back to the stories in chapter 2, when you will be in a position to interpret your responses from a cultural point of view.

The Shabby Guitar Player

You are in a restaurant having dinner with an acquaintance. A shabby man with a guitar comes to your table and offers to play. How do you feel about this?

1. This man is a beggar and should find a job.
2. This man is filthy and disgusting.
3. This man is to be pitied.
4. You do not know this man, and you have nothing to do with him.
5. Could be interesting. Maybe he plays well.
6. The waiter should remove this man.

A Meeting in the Street

You are walking along the street in a town that is not your own. The street is quiet. Somebody crosses the street and walks toward you. What do you think?

1. This person means to rob you.
2. This person means to ask for directions.
3. This person means to have a chat with you.
4. This person might invite you to dinner.
5. This person is going to tell you that you are not allowed to be here.
6. This person means to sell you something.

A Welcome at the Airport

You are headed to a formal business meeting with somebody you have never met before. When you get off the airplane, a warmly smiling woman wearing jeans and sandals is holding up a sign with your name on it. What do you think?

1. She must be a secretary.
2. She is probably the person with whom you will have the meeting.
3. It is wonderful to be welcomed so warmly.
4. How dare someone meet you in such an informal outfit.
5. There must be an error, because you were expecting a formal-looking gentleman.

The Intruder

You are standing at a reception, engaged in conversation with another person you vaguely know. Suddenly a third person arrives and starts to talk to your conversation partner without seeming to notice you. What do you think?

1. This must be a close friend of your conversation partner.
2. This must be an absolute brute to push you aside in this manner.
3. Your conversation partner should ask the intruder to wait a moment.
4. This must be a VIP (Very Important Person).
5. This must be somebody with a very urgent matter.
6. Your conversation partner should introduce you to the newcomer.
7. Nothing.

What Would You Do?

Here are four more short incidents. Read them and choose from the options how you would act. Then think about what values guided your choices. In some cases, different values might make you hesitate between different options. We will also come back to these stories in chapter 2, when you will be in a position to interpret your proposed action from a cultural point of view.

The Returning Athlete

You are the mayor of a small town. An athlete from your town took part in the Olympic Games. The athlete is due to return tomorrow, having obtained fourth place in an event. What sort of official welcome will you prepare for her?

1. None, because a fourth place is not worth anything. If only it had been a gold medal....
2. None, because there is no protocol for officially receiving returning sports players or participants.
3. A grand one, because even if she did not win, she did participate in the Olympic Games and that is a great achievement.
4. A grand one, because she is one of us and she has honored our town.
5. You will ask the city council for advice.

The Accident

You are chairing a very important business meeting, for which some attendees have made a transoceanic flight. Millions of dollars are involved. During the meeting one of your local colleagues, a financial expert, receives a message: his eight-year-old child has been hit by a car and is hospitalized with very severe injuries. How do you react?

1. You cancel the meeting and arrange for a sequel on the following day.
2. You let your colleague leave the meeting.
3. You leave the room for a moment with your colleague and tell him that although you would like him to stay, he can leave if he wants to.
4. You go on with the meeting, asking your colleague to stay.

Train or Car?

You are a commuter. The car trip to work takes approximately one hour, the train ride, approximately an hour and a half. Do you prefer to go by car or by train?

1. By car, because if I travel by train, people will think I can't afford a car.
2. By car, because it is faster.
3. By car, because it is private.
4. By car, because people in my position do not travel by public transport.
5. By train, because it is safer.
6. By train, because it allows me to get some work done while traveling.
7. By train, because I might meet interesting people.
8. By train, because it is better for the environment.
9. Either way is fine, whichever is cheaper in the long run.

A Virtual Contact

On the Web you have found the site of somebody you might want to start a business relationship with. How would you establish the first contact?

1. Write a formal, polite paper letter on your company's letterhead.
2. Send an e-mail starting "Dear Mr. so-and-so" and ending "Kind regards, X."
3. Send an e-mail starting "My name is X and I have a proposal that might interest you" and ending with your first name.
4. Have your secretary arrange a phone call.
5. Call the person on the phone yourself.

Observation and Interpretation

The core of intercultural awareness is learning to separate observation from interpretation. For instance, consider the following dialogue. Suppose that you are in a foreign country, looking for the train station, and meet a woman on the street.

You: Excuse me.

She: (pauses, looks at you fleetingly and walks on)

You: (walk up next to her) Excuse me (she looks down). Do you know the way to the railway station?

She: (points vaguely) Excuse me. Walk that way and turn left.

You: (smiling) Thank you.

She: (walks off in the other direction)

What would you make of this?

- She was afraid of you.
- She disliked you.
- She was being respectful to you.

Your response will depend on your prior experiences and your own country of origin. The usual reaction would be to forget her actual behavior but remember the *intention* that you attributed to her, for example, "She was afraid of me."

If you are cross-culturally aware, you remember her behavior and suspend your attribution of meaning until you know enough of her culture. Her looking away might indicate any of the three suggested intentions and maybe others. It might, for example, be gender-related, or looking people in the eye might be considered impolite in her country.

Cross-Cultural Communication Barriers

LaRay Barna (1982) has elaborated on the distinction between observation and interpretation in cross-cultural communication. Five areas of practice constitute potential barriers. In or-



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Stereotypes are a major barrier to communicating across cultures.

der to overcome these barriers, postpone interpretation until you know enough about the other culture. In other words observe behavior but try not to attach attribution to it.

First, there is the obvious barrier of language differences. Language is much more than learning new vocabulary and grammar. It includes cultural competence: knowing what to say and how, when, where, and why to say it. Knowing a little of the foreign language may only allow you to make a "fluent fool" of yourself. Also, within the same language the same word may have a different meaning in different settings. Ways to decrease the language barrier are (1) learn the language, (2) find someone who can speak the language as an interpreter, and (3) ask for clarification if you are not sure what someone says.

Second, there is the area of nonverbal communication such as gestures, posture, and other ways we show what we feel and think without speaking. Our culture has taught us to communicate through unspoken messages that are so automatic that we rarely even think about them. An interviewer might put his or her own cultural interpretation on your hand gesture, facial expression, posture, clothing, physical closeness or distance, eye contact, or personal appearance, and that attribution may not be what you intended at all. Ways to cross the nonverbal communication barrier are (1) do not assume you understand any nonverbal signals or behavior unless you are familiar with the culture, (2) don't take a stranger's nonverbal behavior personally, even if it is insulting in your culture, and (3) develop an awareness of your own nonverbal communication patterns that might be insulting in certain cultures.

Third, stereotypes are a major barrier to communicating across cultures. We try to fit people into patterns based on our previous experience. We see pretty much what we want or expect to see and reject the possible interpretations that don't fit with what we expect. If we expect people from country X to be unfriendly to foreigners, we will probably interpret their behavior in that way. Steps to overcome this barrier resemble the

familiar triad, awareness-knowledge-skills, that we discussed earlier in the chapter: (1) make every effort to increase awareness of your own preconceptions and stereotypes of cultures you encounter, (2) learn about the other culture, and (3) reinterpret their behavior from their cultural perspective, adapting your own stereotypes to fit your new experiences.

A fourth barrier is the tendency to evaluate behavior from the other culture as good or bad, to make a judgment based on our own cultural bias. Evaluation has been called the third stage of how we attribute meaning. The first two, observation and interpretation, lead naturally to it. Different attitudes about, for instance, food and drink can cause misunderstanding as we evaluate them. Ways to decrease the tendency to evaluate are (1) maintain appropriate distance, (2) recognize that you cannot change a culture (or yourself) overnight, (3) do not judge someone from another culture by your own cultural values until you have first come to know them and their cultural values.

The fifth barrier is the high level of stress that typically accompanies intercultural interactions. Like every other unfamiliar experience, intercultural contact is likely to involve some stress. Ways you can decrease stress are to (1) accept the ambiguity of cross-cultural situations in which you are not sure what others expect of you or what you can expect of them, (2) work to reduce other intercultural barriers, and (3) be forgiving of others and yourself, giving both them and yourself the benefit of the doubt.

In intercultural encounters, then, there are several filters that can prevent us from accurately understanding what others are trying to communicate, and that can prevent others from accurately understanding what we are trying to communicate: our tendency to interpret and evaluate behavior before we understand it, and our willingness to stereotype groups of people, which prevents us from interpreting behavior accurately. When we are looking and listening, the remedy is to try and increase the range of our perception, to observe and suspend our in-



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Like every other unfamiliar experience, intercultural contact is likely to involve some stress.

terpretation (what we think) and evaluation (what we feel), and to ask for clarification when in doubt. When speaking, we should take care to clarify the intention behind our words and check to see if our message has come across correctly. In all cases, we should be prepared for surprises.

What happens if these precautions do not succeed is the subject of the next section.



If people are immersed in a foreign culture for a prolonged period, it can lead to a state of frustration called culture shock.

Culture Shock

If two or more people from different countries meet and a misunderstanding arises, we call it a cultural misunderstanding. If such a misunderstanding escalates, like The Frankfurt Incident, it is called culture clash. This type of encounter frequently arises in international trade or diplomacy. If people are immersed in a foreign culture for a prolonged period, it can lead to a state of frustration called culture shock.

The following account is by a young man from the Netherlands who went to Belgium to study for some months.

Kissing Gets Out of Hand

When I first came to the Université de Liège in September, I saw two girls kissing. I wondered whether that was usual. A few minutes later some more people came into the building. At that moment the kissing seemed to get seriously out of hand. I saw something I had never seen in my life: all the boys kissing girls, girls kissing boys, girls kissing girls, and even boys kissing boys! My God, what was happening here? Just thirty kilometers from my home university, I saw something that I had not expected at all—two boys kissing. I was sure they were homosexual. I knew kissing among boys

was quite usual in Italy, but in Belgium? Seeing girls kissing all boys did not impress me positively either. Then when some of them came toward me I was afraid they would start to kiss me too. I almost ran away. They must have seen how scared I felt, because they just shook hands.

When I saw people kissing at later times, I did not feel so strange about it anymore. This was just different, not wrong. Kissing seemed to be considered as just another way for people to greet each other no matter what sex they belonged to. But I will never get used to it.

Interpretation

This kissing story describes a mild incident that has some typical attributes of culture shock. The young man sees foreigners, among whom he will have to live for some time, kissing inappropriately and excessively. He tries to interpret this kissing in his own frame of reference and gets the uneasy feeling (evaluation) that these people are "abnormal," the boys acting like gays and the girls like nymphomaniacs. So he becomes uncomfortable. He is in fact not sure he will be able to cope if he has to interact with "these people."

He has observed behavior (kissing) that is different from that at home. He immediately interpreted that behavior as odd and evaluated it as abnormal, even scary. After having been immersed for some time in the new culture, he gets used to the kissing behavior of the host culture and realizes that it is only a different way of accomplishing a familiar ritual—greeting a friend, in this case.

What Is Culture Shock?

Culture shock is a profoundly personal experience and is not the same for two persons or for the same person during two different occasions. Yet people who have experienced culture shock will recognize most of the elements that we will discuss.

Culture shock is the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar culture. It is a more-or-less sudden immersion into a nonspecific state of uncertainty where the individual is not sure what is expected of him or her, nor of what to expect from other people. It can occur in any situation where an individual is forced to adjust to an unfamiliar social system where previous learning no longer applies. This need not necessarily be a new country. It could be a new school, town, organization, or family.

There are at least six indicators that one is experiencing culture shock:

1. Familiar cues about how others are supposed to behave are missing, or the familiar cues now have a different meaning.
2. Values that the person considers good, desirable, beautiful, and worthy are not respected by the host.
3. One feels disoriented, anxious, depressed, or hostile.
4. One is dissatisfied with the new ways.
5. Social skills that used to work do not seem to work any longer.
6. There is a sense that this horrible, nagging culture shock will never go away.

Stages in Culture Shock

Culture shock is frequently described as a series of stages that a person goes through. This stage model does not describe each instance of culture shock accurately, and many versions of the model have been proposed, but it can serve as a reference model. These are the stages:

1. Honeymoon
This is where the newly arrived individual experiences the curiosity and excitement of a tourist, but where the person's basic identity is rooted back home.
2. Disorientation
This stage involves disintegration of almost everything familiar. The individual is overwhelmed by the requirements of the new culture and bombarded by stimuli in the new environment. One feels disoriented and experiences self-blame and a sense of personal inadequacy.
3. Irritability and hostility
One typically experiences anger and resentment toward the new culture for its having caused difficulties and having been less adequate than the old familiar ways.
4. Adjustment and integration
This involves integration of new cues and an increased ability to function in the new culture. One increasingly sees the bad and the good elements in both cultures.
5. Biculturalism
In this stage a person has become fluently comfortable in both the old and the new culture. There is some controversy about whether anyone can really attain this stage.

Exercises

Rui is a student from a Southern European country who has been studying for his Ph.D. in Northern Europe for six months. This is his story.

The Day after the Party

I can still remember sitting in the airplane about to start my new life. I was very excited about coming to this country and making new friends. But once I got to the university the first weeks were mostly filled with practical problems. I had to find a room, I had to buy books, I had to register for various things, and so on. I had expected to get more help with these things. My supervisor was always away on a foreign trip or at meetings. Then over the next weeks I started to get the feeling that the people here were cold. During the day they never seemed to have time for anything other than working. Contacts with the people from my apartment building were distant and superficial, and I didn't know how to change that. The best part of the week was calling home on Saturday nights.

Then one of the Ph.D. students got married and invited me to the wedding party. That was great. I got to know the people from the office and many others, and we had a lot of fun. They taught me their way of dancing, and I taught them my way. I finally went home thinking, "Now I know how to make friends in this

country." But the next Monday morning they acted as if nothing had happened! They just said the usual "hi" in the corridor and went on with their work! I felt cold and lonely. What had I done wrong? Were they showing me I was just an outsider after all?

My misery must have shown on my face, because a few days later one of the Ph.D. students I had been dancing with came to me and asked me whether something was the matter. We talked about it, and she explained to me that this was normal behavior and that people made a clear distinction between work time and private time. This conversation made me feel a bit better. Since then, we have talked about these things every now and then, and she and a few others have become good friends. I am doing well now. Work organization is efficient here, and I am making good progress. I have noticed that people do take the time to talk about the content matter of my work when I ask them. I still feel, though, that the people here do not make the best of their lives, and I miss the warmth of home.

Question

Rui went through at least the first four of the five phases of culture shock: honeymoon, disorientation, irritability and hostility, and adjustment and integration. Can you recognize these phases in the text?

Debriefing

When Rui first arrived, he was clearly in the honeymoon stage. He had a sense of adventure but did not anticipate possible problems. He certainly did not think of the possibility that the people here might be different from the people at home.

Soon Rui started to feel that something was wrong. He received neither the guidance that he expected nor the amount of personal contact with his supervisor that he needed. Gradually, he started to feel disoriented and inadequate: "People were cold," "I didn't know how to change that." These feelings became even worse after the wedding party when his hopeful expectations that he was making new friends were not met. This is the stage of irritability and hostility.

The Ph.D. student who noticed his distress and talked to him about it helped him escape from his isolation. Some readers may have experienced casually inquiring after the well-being of an immigrant and suddenly being faced with a vehement outburst of emotion. This is a sign that the person in question is in a stage of disarray and needs help. In Rui's case, he now had somebody to relate to who could help him integrate his experiences. He was able to vent his frustration about his new country to her without being afraid that she would get angry. He was now in the adjustment and integration stage.

When Rui talks about his present situation, he begins to see some advantages to his new country and to understand what is appropriate behavior: "Work organization is efficient," "...when I ask them." He still misses home, though. He has now reached the integration stage.

An Able Secretary

Maria, a young woman from Latin America, and her husband have recently moved to the United States. Having little formal schooling, Maria has taken a job as an assistant secretary. After a few months her boss notices that she is conscientious and intelligent. He takes Maria aside and talks to her about the possibility of taking some training in accounting, which will give her access to higher-level, more responsible jobs in the organization.

She agrees to his proposals, and he leaves her with a brochure about courses

that she could take. However, she does not take any action, despite occasional inquiry by the boss. Three months later the boss gets fed up with waiting and takes Maria to task about why she has still not decided about a course. After much fidgeting and looking down, she tells him that she likes her present job. The boss cannot see why someone would not jump at such a good opportunity, and his good opinion of Maria is largely lost. He feels he has done all he can and takes no further notice of Maria.

Questions

This story was told from the point of view of the boss. What stages of culture shock do you think Maria experiences during this episode? And what about her boss? Does he recognize these stages, and does he experience culture shock himself?

Debriefing

To her boss, Maria's words seemed to contradict her actions. She agreed to take courses but did not do anything about it. This might have made the boss suspect that there was something he didn't know about the situation, and he might have used some tact. When he asked her why she had not done anything about choosing a course, she became so obviously nervous that he noticed. That was a sure sign that something was bothering her. Yet he missed the occasion of inquiring into this and the opportunity to make an able secretary even more valuable to his organization. Perhaps worse, he did not have any idea that he had done something wrong, and if he had

had any prejudices about immigrants, this experience certainly did nothing to dispel them.

Had the boss made an effort, he might have seen that Maria did not in fact want a higher-level job because such a move would be very unusual in the country where she came from and it made her nervous. He might also have seen that Maria could not say no to his face, but that not taking action was a way for her to say no without having to insult him. He might have found a way to make Maria more valuable without scaring her, or at least to make her feel competent in her present job.

In this story Maria missed the bridge to the new culture that Rui found in his fellow Ph.D. student. The story leaves Maria in the disorientation stage of culture shock. She doesn't have a clue about what she did wrong. She is very frustrated that the boss is angry at her although she works so hard and diligently, and she is unable to communicate effectively to him about it. She may well develop hostile feelings toward her boss and her new country.


In this story we see how the lack of intercultural awareness can not only negatively affect an immigrant but also those who work with immigrants, or more generally, those who act as managers in intercultural settings.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have met various degrees of cross-cultural miscommunication, ranging from benign misunderstandings to serious clashes and profound culture shock.

The young Dutchman in the kissing story concluded "But I will never get used to it." Obviously, he did not get completely through the adjustment and integration stage of culture shock. In fact, few people do. Yet we have to integrate cultures if we are to function in a multicultural world. It simply will not do to presume that all foreigners will one day become like us.

In order to understand cross-cultural encounters better, we shall now investigate in what ways cultures can differ.



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