



Bringing the  
learning *home*

# Cultural relativism & analysis



A *resource* for studying abroad

Australian Learning & Teaching Council

Produced by Greg Downey,  
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2012



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# Cultural relativism & analysis

## Program goals

- Teach students the concept of cultural relativism and how it differs from moral relativism.
- Provide examples of cultural analysis to assist students to better interpret new experiences overseas.
- Teach students the D.I.V.E (Describe–Interpret–Verify–Explain) model for cultural discovery and analysis.
- Build upon themes and objectives in the Exploration and Reflection Modules, such as encouraging greater curiosity about other ways of life, discouraging students from being excessively judgmental, and modeling reflection and investigation of experience, using the specific example of encounters with new cultural practices.

## Rationale

Cultural relativism is a key anthropological concept that generations of scholars have used to better understand cultural differences between groups. Because of confusion with moral relativism, and attacks on ‘multi-culturalism’ as a political movement, students can often have unreasonably hardened attitudes about cultural differences that make understanding other ways of life difficult.

In addition, some forms of intercultural training suggest that classifying cultures — individualist-collectivist, high context-low context, modern-traditional — is the most suitable way to teach ‘intercultural competence.’ This classificatory approach, we believe, is too likely to lead to stereotyping as an intercultural strategy. In addition, we may inadvertently convince our students, prematurely, that they are interculturally ‘competent,’ instead of encouraging them to develop greater curiosity about culture and the skills to interpret cultural difference. The cultural relativism approach to investigating cultural difference is more consistent with contemporary anthropological practices than some intercultural training methods, which mobilise out-dated schemes to classify cultural groups.

This module responds to calls by Yershova and colleagues (2000) and others to leverage internationally learning into intercultural awareness, critical thinking skills and comparative thinking. As they write, the ability to think cross-culturally and comparatively can help boost students’ critical abilities, but only if actively prepared to think in unfamiliar ways.

## Mode of delivery

Parts of this module are delivered in pre-departure and in re-entry, with the option, too, of using key concepts from the module when interacting with students during their sojourns. Students should be prepared for cultural difference (including the possibility of 'culture shock,' see the Adaptation Module). The pre-departure materials offer examples of students contending with cultural difference, analyzing cultural practices (or failing to), and coming to new understandings.

### Pre-departure

Conceptual material provided in this module is delivered in pre-departure.

### In country

Supported in country through reflective questions on the blog, Facebook groups or through emails. Especially if students are sharing reflections, encourage them to DIVE using the prompting questions outlined in Exercise 4.

You can also follow up in-country and back home with a discussion of how students adapted to these cultural differences as part of the discussion in the Adaptation and Transformation Modules, and use these examples to build a student's portfolio or professional stories in the Professionalization Module.

### Re-entry

If students have not had a chance to complete the D.I.V.E. cycle while in country, discussion with their peers (using similar questions as the in-country questions and comparisons among destinations) may help them to deepen their analysis and prepare their observations for more serious discussion. The analytical framework will be the same as pre-departure, but as much as possible, use examples from the students' own experiences.

*This module is supported by:*

- ☐ *Reflection*
- ☐ *Exploration*

*The content of this module supports or feeds into:*

- ☐ *Globalisation*
- ☐ *Professionalisation*

## Contents of this module

This **instructor's guide** includes a discussion of the Module's goals, rationale and strategies, a thorough presenter's guide for the workshop, additional resources and readings, and references.

**Slides** (in Prezi, Apple Keynote and Microsoft Powerpoint) are provided for both a brief pre-departure orientation and a much more substantial re-entry workshop on Cultural Relativism and Analysis (see OzStudentsAbroad website for links).

**Student guide** (available if the Module will be run through self-study).

**Video** examples of workshop being run, available through OzStudentsAbroad on YouTube. A complete list is available at the end of this guide, and various sections have links to videos during which specific concepts were discussed.

If you are preparing your own reader to accompany study abroad, the student guide materials are all made available under a Creative Commons licence. You are free to incorporate the materials into your own reader or course package as long as you clearly attribute the origin of the work (see Creative Commons licence). The creators also include in the license the option of using the work for commercial gain, although we respectfully ask that the material not be republished and sold (we hope that the workshop materials will be useful to both university-based and commercial providers).

# Contents

# Instructor's orientation

When crossing cultures, students, like other travelers, often encounter different customs and attitudes that they find strange, off-putting, or even objectionable. One of the key skills and attitudes that we think helps students to learn more from their inter-cultural experience is an understanding of how to make greater sense of different customs in relation to their own cultures. But, just as essential, is training students on the limits to cultural relativism, helping them to realize that 'understanding' another person requires neither approving nor giving up one's own opinion, even if it does, almost inevitably, lead to growth and greater knowledge. Cultural relativism highlights an important intellectual skill that studying abroad seeks to develop, and a tool that can improve students' ability to function while in another cultural context.

Robert Gordon (2010), in a clever and engaging book, encourages American students to travel 'like an anthropologist,' that is, to move close to the ground, engage with local people, and treat study abroad as a kind of 'field work,' investigating other cultures and places. As Gordon points out, traveling like an anthropologist can make travel 'more productive and intentional,' allowing students to 'break out of the commoditized package version of travel abroad' (ibid.: 2).

One of the distinctive challenges faced by the Bringing the Learning Home project team, and by study abroad facilitators in Australia, is that Australian students often choose to study abroad or go on exchange in Anglophone countries like the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada (although some were studying in Quebec). In our 2010-2011 surveys of students, we found that 66% of our students were departing for countries where English was the primary language, and a significant proportion of the rest were spending their time abroad in programs where instruction was to be in English, even if the host country was not Anglophone.

Moreover, Australian familiarity with English and American culture, especially through the media and shared heritage, led many students to believe that cultural adaptation would be quite easy, although they often worried about the arduousness of cold weather. How do we maximise cross-cultural learning when students, because of the cross-fertilisation of their home and host cultures and globalisation of the media, feel that they are in familiar settings when traveling abroad?



**‘Culture shock’** may occur when students confront radical unfamiliarity, but **‘cultural stagger’** is more likely in many of the destinations our students visit; they will feel themselves in familiar surrounds, well-adapted, until some slight difference causes them to stumble, regaining their equilibrium but with occasional moments of disorientation. The Bringing the Learning **Home** team, like many facilitating study abroad or exchange, must develop special tools for leveraging maximum gain from international education that seemingly requires short cultural gaps to be bridged, to get students to ask ‘Why?’ when they encounter cultural difference rather than assume that their native interpretations and evaluations can be imported into the new setting.

The challenge in student exchanges where the cultural difference traveled may not be great, where students experience only occasional ‘cultural stagger’ and not fully blown ‘culture shock,’ is put nicely by Luck and Reberger (2007) in their discussion of Americans’ impressions of Sydney: ‘The challenge for American students in Australia then is to remember to ask this question of ‘why?’ – but in a country where they’re not constantly being reminded that they are in a different culture, by stark cultural differences, this challenge is significant.’ (See exercise four below for a more complete discussion.)

## **An anthropological understanding of cultural relativism**

Among many cultural commentators and conservative pundits, the concept of ‘cultural relativism’ has taken a beating, equated to moral nihilism or bland ‘political correctness.’ Some observers worry that cultural relativism, stereotyped as the old aphorism, ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans,’ demands social conversion, ‘going native’ or losing one’s own distinctiveness and moral compass. When anthropologists talk about cultural relativism, however, they do not mean **moral relativism**, nor do they mean a kind of ‘relativism’ found in physics.

Anthropologist Robert Gordon provides a snapshot of his view in the book *Going Abroad*:

The doctrine of cultural relativism suggests that one should try to judge and interpret the behavior of others in terms of their traditions and experience. This does not mean that one should not make judgments; it simply means that one should suspend judgment while engaged with aspects of that particular culture. (Gordon 2010: 25)

Although we agree with Robert Gordon, we believe that the best way to teach cultural relativism as a skill is to clearly distinguish it from moral relativism: leave judgment out of the equation as a separate issue. Cultural relativism leads to greater understanding, not to either judging *or* refusing to judge. If you want to judge somebody else’s behaviour, judgment is a different step, we would argue, after you understand what they think they are doing. Cultural

relativism helps with that earlier step: understanding how people's actions or beliefs make sense to them or what motivates them.

A controversial example of how cultural relativism might be used is in relation to the wearing of the burqa, the full body covering worn by women in public places in some Islamic societies. The wearing of the burqa has sparked controversy in Australia, where a Senator called it 'un-Australian', but also in the UK, Canada, Belgium, and especially France. For many people in the West, accustomed to liberal attitudes toward women's clothing, the burqa is a symbol of women's oppression, a physical representation of a woman being confined by religious custom, and may be considered a refusal by a Muslim immigrant to assimilate or become 'modern.'

A cultural relative analysis, however, asks, not what the burqa means to the observer, but what it means to the person who wears it, just as cultural relativism asks what does a practice mean relative to its *own* cultural context. To return to our iceberg metaphor (see the slides), what underlies the observable tip – the wearing of the burqa, in this example – in terms of cultural values, assumptions, expectations and practices? For the burqa, the women who wear it often talk, not of being oppressed as women, but of the way that the clothing symbolizes their high status (not all women wear burqas), their religious convictions (especially when the practice is under attack from non-Muslim critics or their religious life is being suppressed), even the women's freedom, because without the burqa, respectable women cannot travel about as freely in their societies. To demand that they wear a different mode of dress is tantamount to demanding that Western women wear less clothing than they would prefer, undermining their sense of security and respectability. In fact, as anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) described, Muslim women can often get irritated that Westerners seem to be obsessed with banning the burqa as a way to 'liberate' Muslim women, and far less concerned that these same women go hungry, remain uneducated, or lack basic health care.

The point is not that the observer needs to 'approve of' wearing the burqa, or that 'understanding' means that the observer him- or herself wants to wear a burqa. In fact, a culturally relative analysis will also help outsiders to understand why some people are also deeply disturbed to see new refugees arriving in their societies who refuse to give up confusing, unfamiliar habits from the very societies that they are fleeing, like the wearing of a burqa. Rather, the goal is to at least understand what a cultural practice means to those who do it, or, as the iceberg metaphor suggests, to understand the invisible assumptions, concepts and meanings that are below the surface, supporting the visible tip of cultural expression, not assume that the practice has the same meaning it would have if we ourselves were to do it. Moral evaluation and judgment, let alone conversion, are completely separate issues.

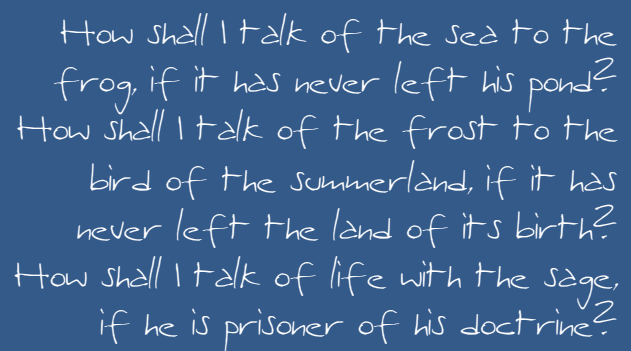


Cultural relativism, as anthropologists use the concept, is a tool for understanding people on their own terms, as best we can, across cultures. If we are to judge, at least we should do so from a basis of understanding rather than ignorance.

## Teaching cultural relativism as a skill

In our experience teaching about cultural relativism, and in the Bringing the Learning Home instructional materials, we have found that clearly distinguishing between moral relativism and analytical relativism is crucial at the onset. Some students are very prone to rush to judgment of other people's ways of life; especially first-time travelers may assume that any 'comparison' must necessarily involve evaluation, judgment, or choosing which practice or attitude is superior. The rush to judgment can prevent students from engaging with other cultures or recognizing how they function on their own terms.

For example, a student who volunteered in a school in eastern Africa, at first, was very judgmental of the teachers who used corporal punishment. Left alone with a classroom with fifty primary school students, however, she stood by as the room quickly descended into noisy chaos. When the deputy principal returned to the room and spanked a child who was particularly boisterous, order was immediately restored, and no further



How shall I talk of the sea to the  
frog, if it has never left his pond?  
How shall I talk of the frost to the  
bird of the summerland, if it has  
never left the land of its birth?  
How shall I talk of life with the sage,  
if he is prisoner of his doctrine?

Chung Tsu, 4th Century BC.

punishment was meted out. With the threat of the deputy principal hovering over them, the very large group of students moved rapidly through their lessons, smiling and engaged. Although the student still felt herself opposed to corporal punishment, she understood better how the practice could fit into an over-arching educational system, where large class sizes, under-staffing, and teaching methods all required greater discipline than she was accustomed to seeing in grade schools in the US. She did not lose her moral opposition to corporal punishment, but she could see a more complex set of issues to consider than her interpretation of the practice: that the teachers were cruel and the punishment unnecessary.

# Orientation

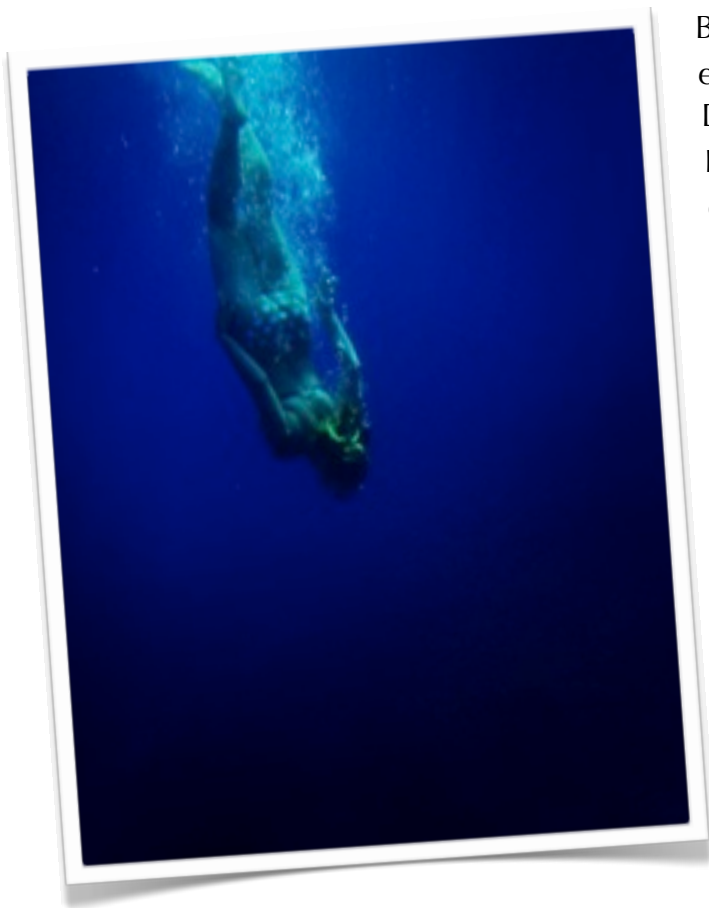
# The DIVE model for cultural analysis

This module is closely related to the modules on reflection and exploration, specifically addressing an important set of conceptual and analytical tools to encourage more successful cross-cultural engagement. The module discusses how anthropologists use the concept of ‘cultural relativism’ as a technique to understand the strange and unfamiliar, introducing the **D.I.V.E (Describe–Interpret–Verify–Explain) model** for remembering how to contend with cultural difference by analysis.

Although the literature on intercultural communication can be a helpful place to start, in our experience, these approaches can sometimes depend upon stereotypes and lead students to overly quick conclusions that their experience simply confirms what the literature has led them to expect. Living with cultural difference is always more complicated and challenging than reading about cultural patterns, and cultural differences can make the challenges of experience-based learning even greater.

Brewer and Cunningham (2009:14) advocate a four-stage, ‘DIVE’ model for helping students to acquire the skills to learn experientially from cultural difference. Building upon earlier

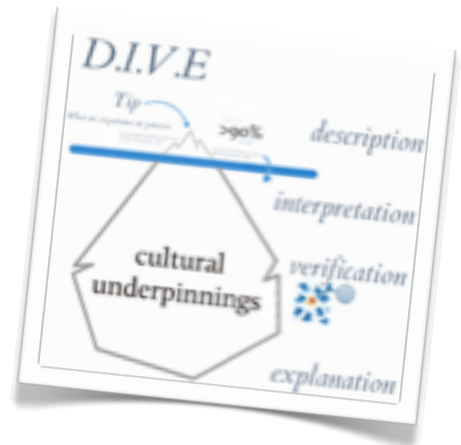
ideas from Bennett and colleagues (1977), Brewer and Cunningham advocate encouraging students to move through Description–Interpretation–Validation–Explanation to better understand cultural difference. The DIVE model encourages students, not to reinforce stereotypes, snap judgments, or blanket generalizations, but rather to investigate, think of many possible interpretations, and try to imagine what another person’s perspective might be. For this reason, cultural relativism is both a powerful analytical method and a practical tool for interacting with people who do not share our own customs or perspectives in life. In the module that follows, we provide examples of each phase and exercises to cultivate more active cultural analysis.



# D.I.V.E.

**Describe:** As richly as possible but with minimal judgment, either positive or negative, try to describe the practice, event or other feature of life. The very act of describing can help move students away from evaluating and comparing, asking them to study other ways of life or culture more closely with a measured eye so that they can get the details correct. Encouraging good description also feeds curiosity and reinforces observation skills, helping to turn a student's reflective skills on other people and ways of life, and not just their own learning and development (all of which are important, we hasten to add).

**Interpret:** In the second phase of the DIVE model, we encourage students to try to interpret a practice, to understand why people do it, what it means to them, and possible origins for a practice. Interpretation of any new experience is almost inevitable; the DIVE model in our approach stimulates a creative and open-ended interpretive phase, with students actively encouraged to think about multiple possible interpretations rather than settling on their most immediate reaction as a final verdict.



**Verify:** The crucial third phase of the DIVE model for cultural analysis is to verify or validate preliminary interpretations so that we can choose among alternative interpretations or test what we think is happening. Snap judgment sometimes does not stand up to verification, but many travelers never test their initial impressions. Verification can happen through specific investigation, asking people in the host country, and examining whether our interpretation is part of a broader pattern.

Students who are in-country together sometimes 'verify' only by consulting with fellow students from their own home country. This narrow validation (a potentially very biased one) poses significant dangers, as homogeneous groups can simply confirm each other's pre-existing prejudices, ethnocentric judgments and stereotypes. Verifying instead with members of the host culture, or with visitors from other places, can be enlightening, as they may have competing interpretations or see cultural practices in quite different light.

**Explain:** Once we have a validated interpretation, we can ask bigger questions about the source and significance of patterns of cultural difference. Explanation of cultural phenomena tends to be 'restless,' as students will learn that sometimes many interpretations are possible. This tentativeness is not just the result of their investigations being incomplete; cultural phenomena themselves are often quite complex, as multiple causes may feed into a single phenomenon, or a practice might mean different things in different contexts.

# An example of description

A student traveling to Korea, Ray K., happened across a 'dog café,' a hangout where the proprietors had a number of dogs that patrons could sit with while they enjoyed drinks or talking. His account, together with photographs of the dogs, captures both the excitement of discovery and Ray's playful sense of humour and eye for detail as he explored the phenomenon of the 'Bau Haus':

## IF YOU ARE A DOG LOVER – MUST MUST MUST READ

First of all the name of the cafe is Bau Haus and it's in Hongdae, just a station away from Sinchon, so it's awesome. Basically you can feel like owning a dog, without the fuss of feeding and cleaning up after them.

I must say the idea intrigued me, and I wondered the insurance that needs to come with it ie. dog bites person or person bites dog etc. BUT nevertheless, it was a smart idea, I think.

They only offer Cold drinks for around 5000 KRW (AUD\$5) upwards, so it is pretty decent since you can play with the dogs and stay for as long as you want. You can also buy them treats to win their puppy love. Oh yes, they love you more if you have treats of course. Little like bribing, so they have been taught well.

The dogs are hug-able, pet-able, but not ride-able, nor are they edible. 😊

Although in my mind I did. Ride them, that is.





'Bau Haus - dog cafe' available at <http://tiny.cc/hy8du>.



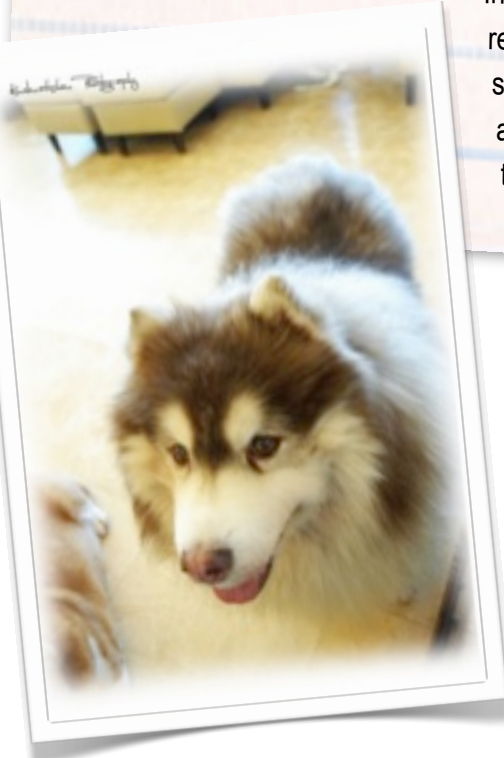
They are amazingly huge and furry and would give you love under one condition: Scooby Snacks. So you can judge their popularity by how FAT they are.

ꦧꦸ ꦲꦸꦱ is quite possibly the most popular of them all. His fur is like Chocolate... and he modestly begs for treats just by sitting next to you with his tongue out. I gave him like 5 by the end of the day.

I also love this guy. The shopkeepers must have drawn eyebrows on him, which I found hilarious.

Although they were smart enough to not put hot drinks on the menu, spillage does happen, dogs will be jumpin' on tables and your lap sometimes (the small ones quite possibly), but they are all well-behaved.

Also I know what you're thinking, they must stink right? (Interesting fact: 'Bau' in Indonesian means 'Smelly'.) Surprisingly, not at all really. The room is well air-conditioned with a lot of sprays and odour-killing technology. If you are allergic to dogs, I don't know why you would want to come here.



Ray accompanies his description with a number of photos (and assures us that he has many more): dogs, treats, the sign with the name of the café. From his writing, we experience his sense of adventure, his genuine curiosity and willingness to try something new, his eye for detail, and, in his particular case, his propensity to snap pictures along the way.

One of the many advantages of taking photographs is that they can enrich descriptions, aid in memory, and assist in reappraising one's experience, as we discuss in the Reflection module. But to help description, photographs have to be taken, not simply of the sojourner in front of landmarks or during parties with other international students, but also of the surprising, troubling, remarkable, and even the ubiquitous objects, scenes and people in the host country. A keen eye for observation, coupled with increasing skill with a digital camera, can be a powerful way to actively document the many dimension of overseas experience.

Good description and photography results from observation skills, from patience and from turning on the senses, noting details, paying attention, remembering and being curious.

Good description demands turning down the volume on one's own internal dialogue or one's conversations, worrying, thinking about plans, and rehashing old events. You can do it in groups, but everyone has to be committed to taking in the environment; it's hard to observe if someone else demands your attention or is trying to pull you on to the next experience. Remind students that observation and description are not easy, but that good observers take in more of the world than other people, see more opportunities, take away more from experience than those who are living and thinking elsewhere as they move through life. Studying abroad will be a great opportunity to observe life, as so many things will be new, unfamiliar and intriguing. (See the module on Communication for tips on good descriptive writing.)



# Description



# Interpretation

As anthropologists like Clifford Geertz describe, cultural analysis is more than description; Geertz writes that it is explanation based on an understanding of the ‘webs of significance’ that people themselves spin. Culture is not just what we do, but what the things we do mean to us. The anthropologist, like a student sojourning abroad, is unlikely to find unbending cultural ‘law’: in every culture we find exceptions to any rule, and we are not ‘cultural zombies’ just acting out our customs. But observers and anthropologists use interpretation to try to change what is ‘enigmatical’ or even disturbing at first glance into something that makes sense. This process begins as we move to the second stage of the D.I.V.E. model: interpretation.

Ultimately, description, even description as fun and detailed as Ray’s, is just a first step, however thorough and astute. So, in our comments back to Ray when he shared his description of the Bau Haus, the project team tried to get more information and put forward some possible interpretations; on the radio, we had heard a story about urban dwellers trying to ‘out-source’ pet ownership with dog walkers and pet carers. We wondered if something similar was happening in Korea at the Bau Haus; people without enough space or without the time wanted to have a ‘pet experience’ but not to own a pet. So we asked Ray: ‘Who goes to the dog cafe though? Is it any particular group of people — men/women, age group, groups of kids, single individuals?’

‘Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expression on their surface enigmatical.’

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*

Ray used his observations, however incomplete, to try to come to a number of interpretations; since a lot of the clientele appeared to be young women, some of them teenagers, and many were repeat customers judging from the fact that the people working at the café knew their names, Ray decided the appeal was most likely the fact that the young women couldn’t have pets of their own (perhaps they lived with their families) and liked interacting with the dogs. Some customers might have been prospective pet owners trying out the experience, giving the dogs a kind of ‘test drive’. Maybe boys went to meet girls who might be attracted by the cute dogs. (See the exercise section at the end of this module for a discussion of some of the cultural context, including recent political events, that might help to interpret Bau Haus.)

The bottom line is that great observation produced a wonderful description, and then we could begin the DIVE process and suggest interpretations (e.g., ‘pet out-sourcing,’ ‘try before you buy,’ ‘meet people’). Our next stage would be to try to verify those interpretations by bringing other evidence and resources to bear: did the profile of customers match our expectation based on this interpretation and did their behaviour match our interpretation? What can other people tell us? What sorts of research can we do to test our interpretation?

Although one interpretation may stand out to us as the most plausible, the Interpretation phase of DIVE encourages many different possible explanations. Each one offers various lines of investigation, suggests cultural possibilities, and, perhaps most importantly, simply fights the tendency to see any cultural phenomenon rigidly from a single perspective, especially a normative one. Training students to think of various interpretations improves their analytical imagination, feeds curiosity, and helps them to develop more intercultural agility.

## **Questions to help with cultural interpretation**

In pre-departure sessions, cultural interpretation can be very difficult, so we suggest that facilitators focus on teaching students to see possibilities, to practice generating hypotheses, not get overly concerned with getting a definitive explanations for cultural practices. However, especially once students have returned, the following questions may help them think about potential interpretations for cultural practices. Remind students that, often, not a single interpretation alone provides the entire explanation for a cultural practice or difference; many cultural institutions have a range of explanations, especially once they are firmly entrenched and affecting a society and its members in many ways.

- What examples of closely related or linked practices can you think of in your host culture?
- What practice at home might this practice be seen as replacing or substituting for?
- Who in a society is most engaged in a practice or opinion? Who seems to be absent or dissenting?
- What interest or purpose might a practice serve? Who benefits?
- Does anyone seem to have authority, and, if so, on what basis?
- What values or ideals are implied by a practice? (Or, conversely, what practices seem to be linked to an ideal or principle, or inconsistent with it?)
- How might different people experience a phenomenon? How did they act?
- Do there appear to be different opinions within a society about an institution?
- Does the practice look new, changed, or established? Do people act confidently or seem to have to negotiate or consult?
- What sort of large-scale historical, social, political or economic processes might be in play?
- What sort of small-scale psychological, interactive, or personal motives might be involved?

- What other sorts of practices, institutions or attitudes support the phenomenon being considered? What else has to happen for this practice to be possible?
- Which emotions seem to be experienced by participants?
- What do they say or do that might indicate what they are experiencing?
- What sort of pacing does the event or activity have? Fast? Urgent? Slow? Undirected?
- What do participants seem to ignore or overlook that might be obvious to an outsider?
- What do people do that you don't expect?
- What appear to be the alternatives or choices that members of the society make to produce this phenomenon?
- How are people interacting? Do the rules or patterns of interaction seem to change?
- What symbols, insignias, logos, or signs are present?
- What training or preparation is necessary for an event or phenomenon?

At this level of generality, the questions are so vague as to be almost useless. A facilitator will have to, as much as possible, teach students that figuring out which questions to ask is part of the interpretive process. Sometimes just figuring out what question is most important or crucial to a cultural phenomenon takes a long time in anthropological fieldwork.

Many anthropologists, including one of the members of the Bringing the Learning Home project team, spend months in the field before realising that they're asking the wrong questions to truly understand a phenomenon. In that case (Downey 2005), after months of trying to figure out the political and social significance of the Afro-Brazilian danced martial art, *capoeira*, realised that participants were much more concerned about the effects that the practice was having on them, how training changed their perceptions, and their aesthetic and sensory experiences, including such factors as enjoying the music and competition. A whole series of possible interpretations had to be tested before Downey was able to find an explanation that made sense both to him and his Brazilian colleagues.

As they start to consider different interpretations, remind students to ask local people. They will find that many participants in cultural practices are not very reflective; remind them not to be surprised if some of the answers are unhelpful, 'That's just the way we do things.' 'That's the way we always have done things.' 'Doesn't everyone sensible think the same way we do?' Eventually, students will find local people who share their interests, and some great interactions will occur. Anthropologists call these people 'key informants,' but they're really just people who like to chat and think and share their culture. Many people find interest in their ways of life and ideas really gratifying and will reward the curious questioner with invaluable insight. In return, the visitor will provide a local person with a fresh set of eyes and the satisfaction that comes from finding someone interesting in them and their way of life. Not everyone will be able to share their culture this way, not everyone has the time, but the interest travelers show in a host, the town, its history, and the local way of life is partial compensation for providing hospitality to visitors.

# Culture in context

The interpretive process should encourage students to see the broader context of a specific phenomenon, including the vested interests of participants, members of the society who dissent or abstain from a practice, or the other institutions that have to be in place for a practice to make sense. Cultural relativism, in part, requires recognizing that, when a practice happens in another country or a member of a different society holds a particular view, these phenomena cannot be understood in isolation, nor is the relevant context for understanding the phenomenon one's own society. Considering culture relatively means taking into account the broader picture.

For example, many of our students commented upon the fact that, in many European countries, bicycle riders were not obliged to wear helmets, which some thought was superior to the Australian requirement. More astute students, however, as part of their interpretative process noted that driving practices, road construction, speed limits, and the presence of dedicated cycle-ways provided a significantly different cultural context for this practice. They realized that, rather than a clear case of one practice being better than the other, each cultural standard was embedded in a more complex set of considerations; what worked in one place could have been disastrous at home (unless other cultural and geographic changes occurred).

Sarah S., bound for a student exchange program in Japan, spent time in Okinawa working at a beach-front resort. At the resort, she discovered that beach culture was far from universal. She could only understand local practices when she took account of the broader context:

## No qualifications required!

Before beginning my student exchange I participated in a working holiday in Okinawa, ... Despite having no prior experience working in a restaurant or a bar, I was placed working behind a bar, pouring beers and mixing cocktails for the Japanese customers. What surprised me is that anyone who wants to can work behind a bar. During my two months working at that restaurant we also had numerous high school work experience students who worked with us behind the bar, not only serving drinks but also making them. The legal age to consume alcohol in Japan is 20, so these students were definitely underage. This contrasts the strict RSA laws that exist in Australia.





Furthermore, marine staff and lifeguards are not required to hold any formal qualifications; they do not even need to know how to swim! Being a qualified pool lifeguard, holding numerous mandatory first aid certificates myself this shocked me, particularly to think what would happen if there was an emergency. Frequently the marine staff would be asleep at their post despite being the only lifeguard on duty and people being in the water.



Another thing that I found strange was that despite living on a beautiful island, the Okinawan people do not swim, and if they do they go in the water fully clothed (shoes included) and almost always wear a floaty. Very different to the Aussie beach lifestyle that I am used to!

'No qualifications required' available at <http://tiny.cc/zytnc>

In her account, Sarah clearly tries to put cultural practices – like sleeping while on duty as a lifeguard – into their proper context (people who do not swim, or when they do, wear floaties). Taken out of context, relative to one's own cultural Australian expectations that surf lifesavers will be competent and effective, for example, a cultural phenomenon might appear daft, crazy even, like a sleeping lifeguard with minimal training.

# Interpretation

## 17

# Warning!

## **A cautionary note on critique**

Although we warn against overly quick judgment, students and other travelers will almost inevitably evaluate and compare their home and host cultures. Evaluation is normal, as is ethnocentrism to some degree; no one can suddenly shed two decades or more of socialisation just because they've traveled across a few time zones. Some students will do the opposite, finding so much to like about their host country that they will begin to think that home compares badly.

Ultimately we are not advocating that students throw away their moral compass or their ability to compare different cultures. In fact, increased global awareness can lead students to feel strongly about injustice or social problems in other places of which they were not previously aware.

Our goal in advocating an analytical cultural relativism is not to rule out judgment but rather to postpone it, and in some cases, to mitigate evaluation with a proper consideration of what is at stake. Judgment should be coupled with understanding, not allowed to prevent or stop dead greater understanding. So make sure to let students know that it is okay to weigh the benefits of different approaches to social problems, but that they should try to get sufficient information that their judgments are well informed.



# Culture and taste:

## The US & Australia from the grocery store

In one example from our student weblog, Emily G. takes an observation of a difference in flavours of corn chips to reflect on the cultural differences between Australia and the United States. She does a little bit of research and finds out that her frustration at not finding her favourite flavour of Doritos is not as simple as it might seem. Without realizing, Emily follows the path of anthropologists like Sidney Mintz (1976) who have explored how our palates, our preferences for the taste of sugar or coffee or Vegemite, are the result of cultural history and social change. Emily's discussion is an excellent example of how an observation, a difference in flavours, may be the 'tip' of a much larger cultural difference once we start to interpret:

Grocery shopping in a foreign country, even if that country is America, is a unique and confusing experience. Apart from the obvious problems with locating familiar brands at a grocery store, there's also that feeling you get when you realise you aren't going to find what you're looking for – because it doesn't exist.

Like Doritos, for example.

Doritos Australia market a total of four Doritos products to their consumers: Cheese Supreme, Nacho Cheese, Original and Mexicana. The U.S market for Doritos has a remarkable 19 different flavours (remarkable to me perhaps), among them: Jalapeno, Fiery Buffalo, Spicy Nacho, Pizza Supreme and even Cheeseburger.

To my disappointment, this list of 19 doesn't include one of Australia's most commercially successful (and incidentally my favourite) Doritos flavour, Nacho Cheese, the yellow packaged Doritos ('Nacho Cheese' is actually packaged red in the United States and tastes completely different, just to be confusing). The experience of not being able to find Nacho Cheese is not the most impressive cultural slap across the face, but it's still pretty mind-blowing. People tend to think of Australian consumers in much the same way as American consumers, and to be fair, we are reasonably comparable: we eat fast food, watch Hollywood films and listen to American produced music. But geographical and cultural influence still drives the market for some things, and I find that many of the goods available here in the States would probably not enjoy a successful launch in Australia. Due to the Mexican influence here in California, the market for spicy foods is very wide. The standard flavour is almost always some variety of seasoned chili, and as a white person with very limited tolerance to spicy food, I've suffered at the hands of Mexican cuisine. But of course, Americans love it. Spicy food in every form – sweet, savoury, cold-serve, warm-serve – is available in excessive abundance.

Fortunately for me, Australia's limited knowledge of Mexico and the wide variety of spices found there, means that Australians will remain with a single spicy version of Doritos (which I didn't

know existed until I sought help from Google). And that's okay by me since I can't obtain any benefit from heterogeneity in spicy corn chips anyway.

Emily's observations – she couldn't find her favourite flavour of Doritos, and the variant with the same name didn't taste the same – build into a discussion of the difference between the Australian and American palates, especially the American preference for spicy food. More importantly for our discussion, Emily hypothesizes that the difference in sensory preference has a link to the historical and cultural relations with Mexico, a relationship that distinguishes Australia from the US even though the two are quite similar in other ways.



Conversely, an American student who a team member helped to advise while on exchange to Australia discovered the reverse in grocery stores: she found unfamiliar fruit that she learned originated in Southeast Asia. The student recognised the contrast was a sign that the US and Australia were being culturally influenced by recent immigrants from Central America and Southeast Asia respectively, changing mainstream cuisine in both countries in diverging directions.

When anthropologists interpret cultural practices, they have to ask a lot of questions, both of themselves and their subjects (sometimes calling them 'informants,' although the term makes them sound like criminals who collaborate with police). In your interpretation, try to perceive connections, make hypotheses, discard those that don't seem to hold up, and keep asking yourself, 'Why?' If you find someone who likes to talk about their own culture, feed them the questions you've been mulling over; some people will love to talk about their home and culture of origin. But don't try with everyone; some people don't have this willingness to respond to an outsider's curiosity.

Everyday cultural differences will seem more intriguing if you do some research; check online, ask tourist information, leaf through a guidebook, or ask a local friend or other person. In a simple observation, you may find that you've happened upon something really significant.

Don't worry about evaluating differences between home and your new location or figuring out which culture is 'better' (some of the other exchange students will likely be coming to opposite conclusions). And don't worry about converting or 'going native'; certainly, none of the 'natives' will be fooled if you think you are passing as one of them. People will laugh at your questions; we often laugh when people say surprising things, and your questions are quite likely to be unusual and unexpected.

'Grocery shopping and Doritos: an outsider's experience' available at <http://tiny.cc/8fihs>.

# Drinking culture, law & social interaction

Students frequently posted discussions online about differences in drinking across cultures, and the topic is among the most popular in re-entry debriefs. Although the topic might appear superficial and egocentric (about student social life), using a reflective learning and cultural relativism approach to student observations about night-life, alcohol consumption and even student drunkenness can open up much deeper reflections on cultural expectations and differences, if the facilitator uses the reflection tools suggested in the Reflection Module and the DIVE method.

In the following reflection, Luke traverses a number of points of cultural difference between French and Australian life, focusing specifically on men's behaviour in bars and nightclubs. Although the post is a bit long and rambling, and Luke does use some normatively charged and evaluative language, the discussion shows in specific ways how multiple forms of interpretation, verified and unverified, start to build up to a complex, robust explanation for differences in social patterns:

While we were out I kept noticing things different about the drinking culture in France. All the bar people drink while working, but they're all just generally more ... responsible? Maybe that's why we have such strict laws in Oz.

At one point I saw the bar girl filling up this keg with beer – it was kind of like a gigantic transparent tube with a tap, and I thought 'here we go'. But no, the gentlemen who bought it simply kept it next to them, refilling their glasses politely and drinking it in a responsible amount of time. I was floored. In Australia, the sole purpose of such a contraption would be to pass it around drinking it as fast as possible and sculling it beer-bong style. Later that night I saw some guy buying a massive bottle of Champagne at the bar, which wasn't weird until I saw him taking it back to his table. It was four young guys with Champagne glasses, taking photos of themselves. Not allowed in an Australian bar, haha. The men also all kiss each other hello. Often on the lips. So different!

On the subject of diverging cultural conceptions of acceptable masculine behaviour... they're really into their foosball [a table-top soccer game] over here, apparently instead of pool? Can you





imagine four beer-bellied, tattooed, shearing, singlet-sporting Aussie blokes crowded around a foosball table in a pub? VBs in one hand, handles in the other? We were just sitting next to a foosball table, and these three French guys asked us if we wanted to play. Jean-Paul, being a more experienced European traveller than I, immediately declined. I was on the verge of accepting when another one turned up, making their number an even four – and lucky for me 'cause they have CRAZY skillz. It would've been

pretty embarrassing.

I think it has something to do with passion – that's why the Europeans love soccer so much. We're too cool, laconic. Emotive displays make us cringe. We're embarrassed by the idea of a sport where scoring is so rare that it necessitates explosive outbursts of joy, a sport that encourages you to play-up your injuries – it's just not cricket ... Aussie men need a pub game where they can stoically stand back, an appropriate distance from one another, drinking their beers, taking stock, and casually sauntering up and knocking a ball into a hole with a big stick, not the intensity of foosball, squeezed in around a table yelling. Maybe it's all the pulling and spinning and gyrating of those little knobs that doesn't appeal to us, I don't know.

Their clubs reflect this kind of thing as well. Obviously there's all the Dance RNB Hip-Hop Pop stuff we get in Western clubs, but there's also this weird kind of ballady-folkie-empowering anthem-type stuff that's sung in some European language which gets a reaction out of them that the other stuff doesn't. They all stand around in a circle swaying and singing along and waving a pointed finger around in the air for emphasis. It's kind of cool and kind of cringey, I think because it's related to something that was in fashion for the rest of the world in the nineties, which originated in Europe but





never died out there....

I think the clubs we went to were more fun/nostalgia-oriented and less cool-oriented. Let's just say I thought I'd danced my last Macarena when I stopped going to school discos, and I had no idea I remembered all the words to 'Mambo No. 5'.

This reflection and accompanying set of photos, touches on a range of subjects – masculinity, drinking customs, musical taste, public displays of emotion, sports preferences – demonstrating how a set of cultural practices may be inter-related. In this case, the author has taken a much more anthropological perspective, seeing culture not as isolated or unrelated traits but as a fabric of interwoven attitudes and practices, like Geertz's 'webs of significance.' To do analysis is to start to unravel that fabric, to see how threads connect together a pattern of cultural difference.

More specifically, the subject of cultural differences in inebriation is a continuing source of fascination, not just to anthropologists, but also to international travelers more generally. Marshall (1979:1) pointed out that the effects of alcohol are an ideal forum for noting cultural variation: 'The cross-cultural study of alcohol represents a classic natural experiment: a single species (Homo Sapiens), a single drug substance (ethanol) and a great diversity of behavioural outcomes.' Travelers are often startled when drunk people behave in unfamiliar ways overseas, whether it's crying in their beers, singing boisterously, fighting with their mates, or demonstrating very little change at all until they abruptly fall asleep on a table or pass out.

Students accustomed to assuming that alcohol's effects are inherent in the substance – 'the goon made me do it' – are likely to be quite surprised when they see the depth to which local social norms, expectations and practice can shape even altered states of consciousness. (Exercise Five is recommended especially if students are talking extensively about drunkenness or nightlife in their reflections or re-entry. See below for questions and additional materials.)



'Boulangerieboulangerieboulangerieboulangerie' available at <http://tiny.cc/smjgu>.

## Verification

Especially if they are doing cultural analysis in country, students can take advantage of local people for verification. But even once they have returned, they can check hypotheses about their host culture through research. For example, the material on South Korean relations to dogs, included at the end of this module, was all found relatively quickly through an online search.

Encourage students to use, not just Wikipedia and Google to search for information, but also local media. For example, Wikipedia hosts an extensive list of English-language newspapers from countries around the world (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:English-language\\_newspapers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:English-language_newspapers)), so students can consult local journalists and writers even if they do not read their host country's primary language. For those students who want to conduct research more widely, and have some language facility, the resources in global media available online are even more extensive ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Newspapers\\_by\\_country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Newspapers_by_country) is a list of online newspapers organized by country).

Encourage students to use other techniques from the Exploration Module to search for information that might allow them to verify their interpretations of practices or perspectives in their host country. Investigating cultural differences can be an excellent stimulus to get outside a too-small cultural bubble of fellow exchange students if an individual is stuck in such a situation.

In addition to techniques for verification, though, the DIVE model also reminds us that cultural interpretations are contingent and subject to later reappraisal. Many practices are not what they appear on the surface – the iceberg of culture can be much bigger than we initially realize. We may come back later to an interpretation we initially thought was straightforward and, through the verification process, realise that our explanation is overly simplistic, partial, or just inaccurate.

# Verification



# Cultural explanation:

## Turtles all the way down.

Cultural analysis is seldom a simple matter of uncovering the precise and single cause of a specific practice; as students interpret, verify and explain, they will find themselves linking one cultural practice to another, one idea or symbol to a host of possible interpretations – turtles all the way down (note that this story is also attributed to the philosopher William James). As anthropologist Geertz elsewhere warns, “Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is” (1973: 29).

‘There is an Indian story -- at least I heard it as an Indian story -- about an Englishman who, having been told that the world rested on a platform which rested on the back of an elephant which rested in turn on the back of a turtle, asked (perhaps he was an ethnographer; it is the way they behave), what did the turtle rest on? Another turtle. And that turtle?

“Ah, Sahib, after that it is turtles all the way down.”

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*

The more threads in a fabric you are aware of, the more connections you can see.

As anthropologists have shown, cultural practices and symbols are so useful precisely because they are multipurpose; once in place, people attribute different meanings to culture, co-opt it for new purposes, and find that each part is or becomes linked to other customs and beliefs. Cultural practices are enduring because they frequently become self-reinforcing, so that cause and effect are difficult to distinguish; a type of institution, such as a particular approach to education or family structure, produces

psychological tendencies and expectations in individuals that reinforce, even demand the continued existence of that institution. The re-entry module Education and Culture explores this phenomenon further in relation to universities. As a part of culture endures and transforms through multiple generations, it can accumulate layers of new meanings. Even culturally central institutions can be reinterpreted in new contexts as conditions change, or become ambivalent and points of content. We can cite a host of examples in Australia: the

beach, Uluru (Ayer's Rock), the Australian flag, the Queen, cricket, Holden, kangaroos, Mel Gibson...

When we train students to use the DIVE method to work toward cultural explanation, we should assure them that the best explanations are open because culture itself is open and adaptable. They might find it difficult to decide which part of the web of significance and practice is the cause and which the effect because all parts of the web can become mutually reinforcing over time. Our interpretations are contestable or subject to dispute because members of a culture themselves can disagree about what an institution, symbol or custom means, or change their opinions over time. What might be scandalous to one generation can become unremarkable in the next; an event that seemed to be a one-off can transform into a recurring part of the calendar; and people can reinvigorate traditions or ideas that seemed to be on the way out.



But the first step for a visitor to understand an unfamiliar part of the host culture is to try to see it relative to its own context, not with his or her feet still planted firmly at home. You can't know the shape of the iceberg under the tip because you're familiar with another iceberg somewhere else. Cultural analysis should be fun and surprising, like exploration itself, because it offers us a ground to see how other people experience the world and specific shared interests about with we can talk to people who may be quite different (or just a bit different) to ourselves. Comparison is crucial, not because we want to rank or score cultures, but because culture can be a bit like water to the goldfish; only by going to another bowl can we really perceive what the water is like.

# Explanation

## Some key cultural concepts

The DIVE approach as a way of teaching cultural analysis diverges from some types of intercultural training which focus on teaching people sets of categories to classify and navigate cultural difference. Some approaches advocate designating cultures as either 'collectivist' or 'individualist,' or as 'analytical' or 'holistic,' or understanding cultures as points on continua of these traits between extremes. Although these contrasts may be helpful descriptions, they can easily slip into stereotypes, and can obscure as much as they reveal (for a theoretical discussion, see Cohen 2009).

For example, although some forms of cross-cultural psychology classify Asians as 'collectivists' and Westerners as 'individualists,' on some tests of independence or the strength of group identity, groups can wind up with their attributes reversed (see Oyserman et al. 2002). For instance, Americans and other Westerners can often have a strong sense of group identity and, in some regards, Asians may believe more emphatically in individual responsibility for error or the need for self-sufficiency than 'individualist'

Westerners. For this reason, we believe that cross-cultural training that depends upon culture-wide generalisations or 'strategic essentialism' (Fisher 2011), an intentional use of stereotypes or blanket descriptions, is not satisfactory to a learning program designed to move beyond an awareness of cultural difference to some type of deeper understanding and engagement.

The *descriptive vocabulary* of these other forms of intercultural training, however, may be helpful, although we strongly caution against seeing these descriptions as hardened categories into which whole cultures can be bundled. Such a pattern over-generalises and ignores countervailing trends within every group. For this reason, we provide a brief account of some of these concepts for the instructor or facilitator, in order to help students find a descriptive language to talk about and explain some of the cultural differences that they encounter. We advocate teaching them as ways to think about and describe the differences



that students will encounter, but highlight how no descriptor captures an entire way of life, nor is any likely to be true in every situation.

## **‘Modern’ and ‘traditional’ cultures**

The contrast between ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ cultures is one of the most often used but most criticised in anthropology because it can easily suggest that some societies are more ‘advanced’ than others, or that, given enough time, one society will turn into another or

‘progress’ to such a point that a group becomes like Australians. Few theoretical distinctions have been as prone to ethnocentrism as the comparison of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional.’

However, anthropologists have found that, when people in different places use the term ‘modern,’ they can mean quite distinct things. For example, in some societies, ‘modernity’ is a movement towards secularism; in others, it is religious revitalisation and the purifying of the faith by removing inconsistent elements. The members of the Chinese Communist Party, free market advocates in the United States, and European socialist and social democratic groups in Scandinavia and elsewhere have very different ideas about what is ‘modern.’

Anthropologists talk about ‘multiple modernities,’ because what people think is ‘modern’ can be quite different in many places.

Likewise, what some societies consider ‘traditional’ can actually be subject to change

and quite recent innovation. Anthropologist who dig into the history of supposedly ‘traditional’ practices sometimes find they are much less ancient than proponents suggested. (The example of Scottish Highland kilts is one classic example from the anthropological literature of a relatively recent ‘traditional’ innovation.) Often, the claim that a practice is ‘traditional’ is an attempt to cut off controversy or indicate greater legitimacy than was generally accepted. Ultimately, the only cultures or languages that don’t change are dead cultures and languages (and even these might be subject to editing and revision). The pace of change can vary, and some changes are more convulsive than others, but ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ often turn out to be harder to distinguish the deeper we dive.



If students are using a language of 'traditional' and 'modern' a lot, if possible, shift the discussion to try to get them to see that what is 'traditional' or 'modern' depends on one's perspective. Something an Australian might see as 'traditional,' a local person may just think of as 'the way we do things.' Similarly, a practice or bit of material culture may be called 'traditional' specifically because it is under threat, whereas an equally old and respected institution may not be considered 'traditional' because it is unaffected by change in the same way. For example, universities are some of the most 'traditional' institutions around, preserving systems of degrees, titles, robes, and a host of other bits of culture that date back to medieval European and even Islamic institutions, yet many students will not perceive the universities that they attend as 'traditional.' In fact, one of the characteristics of some of the wealthiest and most technologically sophisticated states is that they actually become quite 'traditional' in some regards: preservation of historic buildings, spending money on re-enactments and commemorations, construction of museums. One way to shift a student discussion of 'traditional' and 'modern' countries, as if arranged on a scale of 'progress,' is to ask students what dimensions of life in their host country seem to be changing most quickly and which seem to be quite conservative.

## **'High context' and 'low context' cultures**

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1977) popularised the concepts of 'high context' and 'low context' cultures. Hall alleged that in high context cultures, people shared close connections for long periods of time, leading to extensive shared information and understandings; because so much knowledge is shared, communication tends to be sparse, with little explanation needed and few formal processes. Individuals in a 'low context' culture may have many more social interactions than in 'high context' culture, but these interactions are spread among many people, so little shared knowledge accumulates. In low context situations, more information is explicit, processes are formalized, and rules are clearly articulated.

Luke encountered a 'low context' cultural practice while traveling in the UK:

They're AWFUL at giving directions. Literally every single person we've asked has given us a massive spiel detailing every possible route with any additional information they can think of. I've never seen a trait so present in every member of any society. And the way they do it is by mentioning landmarks along the way that are just confusing because you don't know the area anyway: 'You'll come up on the fish and chip shop, keep going past that until you get to the paper shop and turn right, then look out for the post office on the right etc etc'.

In contrast, one of the project team members spent a year in Rhode Island in the US, where the tightly knit community possessed such a robust 'high context' shared culture that they gave directions with references to landmarks that no longer existed ('Take a left where the



Woolworths used to be...'). For an outsider without the shared context, the directions were impenetrable.

No clear distinction exists between the two types of cultures, and few groups are always either 'high' or 'low'; most societies have situations in which shared knowledge is assumed and others where new people need to be incorporated, procedures clearly described, and it's safer to spell things out. Students may learn how hard it is to penetrate a 'high context' group because so much needs to be learned, but also because group members are sometimes unable to articulate or make explicit what they all know implicitly. 'High context' cultures tend to be characterised by 'inside jokes,' unwritten rules, subtle communication, and long-term residency. Social change and members entering and exiting a group can lead to a 'low context' culture, so members get better at explaining and integrating new entrants. Going on exchange overseas may remove students from a circle of friends who were 'high context.' He or she may have to develop more numerous, less intimate relationships, and become more flexible when communicating, learning how to articulate things that might be taken for granted at home. Universities are an environment where, because of international and diverse students, high context situations sometimes have to be opened up to people without that context, such as an understanding of how universities work, the unwritten rules of academic standards (including ethics) and a host of other issues.

## Cultural dimensions theory, Geert Hofstede

A rich stream of thought in applied psychology and intercultural training has been inspired by the comparative work of Dutch psychologist and anthropologist Geert Hofstede (1980), started when he was head of research for IBM. Hofstede has sought to create a classificatory framework to analyze cultural diversity along six axes in his 'cultural dimensions theory' for practical purposes, such as understanding how management style had to vary in companies across a diverse, international workforce. The six axes were:

- **power-distance** (the degree to which people expected equality or inequality and the degree of hierarchy),
- **collectivism-individualism**,
- **uncertainty avoidance** (or their tolerance of risk),
- **masculinity-femininity** (an axis that some users of Hofstede's system redesignate 'quantity' or 'quality' of life),
- **temporal orientation** (whether a group tends to plan well in advance or tends to focus on maintenance of traditions), and
- **indulgence or restraint**, especially if hedonistic impulses.

Hofstede thought that societies could be scored in these different characteristics, and the scores used in comparative research.



Most anthropologists have rejected out of hand the attempt to quantify cultural attitudes on simple numerical scales, pointing out that this effort does not necessarily produce useful outcomes even if it is possible to come to a single score. In many cases, Hofstede's axes are also considered problematic; for example, gender roles vary considerably across cultures, so trying to argue that a society is 'masculine' or 'feminine' can be fraught with conceptual problems and ambiguity, in addition to being prone to misinterpretation.

However, the **descriptive language** of axes can help students to see that cultures vary in a number of different ways, and the categories can be used to generate discussions, rather than score different host countries. For example, students may want to think about 'temporal orientation' in their host country: What sorts of events do people 'live toward' or await? Is there a strong sense of the calendar? Do people observe changes in seasons? Which recurring events seem to orient people's daily lives? How does advance planning work in different places? Is the structure of the school week or work week similar to Australia or different? Is the structure of the workday familiar or unusual? Are meals, starting times, closing times, or other events during the day substantial different than in Australia? How is the clock experienced by local people (prayers, siesta, everything closes at 5pm, restaurants open very late, clubs close, etc.)?



Similarly, a discussion of **differences in gender roles** across cultures can be an excellent way to get students to talk about cultural diversity: Which roles are reserved for men and women? In what ways are women and men expected to be alike? In what ways are they expected to be different? Are there ways that you, as an Australian, did not conform to gender expectations? Are men or women expected to be more emotional? More vain? More in control of public life? Were university courses disproportionately male or female in ways that surprised you? Were rules of politeness or respect different for men and women? Did you ever feel uncomfortable because of gender expectations?

In the case of **hierarchy or power-distance**, few societies are as uniform in this respect as Hofstede's model suggests. A more open question is to ask students, in what ways were people allowed to be unequal in the host society? In what ways were they expected to be equal? What types of authority were respected, such as, whose opinions seem to matter on what subjects? In what sorts of circumstances were hierarchy important? In which situations

could hierarchy be ignored? What was considered a legitimate basis for expecting special treatment: Age? Wealth? Birth? Achievement? Religious authority? Disability? Minority status?

The danger with Hofstede's categories is that a whole range of literature has tried to pin down these differences and make blanket pronouncements: for example, arguing that Euro-Americans are '**individualist**' and Asians are '**collectivist**' cultures. Individualist cultures allegedly support greater personal autonomy and self-reliance whereas collectivist cultures demand loyalty from the individual to groups, so that decisions take greater consideration of the good of the collective (see Gudykunst 1998). Recent psychological research has shown, however, that individuals in each culture are capable of thinking both individualistically and collectively, and that individual tendencies can vary considerably within each cultural group. Moreover, the 'individualist' and 'collectivist' labels may collapse a number of separate traits; for example, an individual may think of him- or herself as 'relational,' or having different characteristics depending upon the group in which they are moving, or seek to avoid confrontations, without demonstrating other pronounced 'collectivist' tendencies (see Oyserman et al. 2002). In other words, 'individualist' and 'collectivist' may be applied to a range of traits that don't all vary together or derive from a single underlying dimension of character.

For this reason, discussion may be richer if we ask students, what groups mattered to their host? Were individuals in the host society patriotic or loyal to their countries? Was some other sub-national identity, like a local ethnic or regional group particularly important? Was there an 'out-group' or minority against whom the hosts tended to contrast themselves, whether that was an immigrant group, national minority, or rival country? Did family membership matter heavily? How large was the family group? Were people encouraged to be independent at particular times, and other times encouraged to go along with a group?

Likewise, although in the West, people are frequently told to be individuals in marketing, they are also told subtly that they will be odd or inadequate if they do not go along with society or general trends. Similarly, Westerners may think that they are 'risk-takers' but, in fact, be very surprised that the usual 'risk management' techniques found in Australia – signs alerting people to dangers, prohibitions on getting close to anything that might injure a person, elaborate defenses against legal liability – may be absent in the host country.

As long as the discussion facilitator alerts students to this complexity, he or she may find that the students are quick to bring up exceptions; exceptions to expected patterns tend to stand out, so students will often be able to recall them quite vividly once the discussion turns in the direction of acknowledging these types of complexities and the way in which sojourning in another culture can undermine a simplistic self understanding. **That is, cross-cultural experience can often lead to a reassessment and more nuanced understanding of one's own culture, including lacunae or blind spots in cultural self-awareness.**

# key point

## Final note on cultural explanation

Other distinctions drawn from cross-cultural psychology may also prove useful in cultural description, for instance: between ‘analytical’ and ‘holistic’ thought patterns (Nisbett et al. 2001; Nisbett 2003); polychronic and monochronic time concepts (Hall 2000); independent or interdependent concepts of the ‘self’; and between monocultural and multicultural societies. While all of these concepts are useful as descriptors and in cultural analysis, in many cases, they have taken on a life of their own, becoming analytical constructs that support cottage industries in cross-cultural research. We encourage facilitators and students alike to explore these concepts but discourage the tendency to rank or measure these traits, as they often capture a range of characteristics that are liable to vary internally and possibly even change over time, and can often have implicit value judgments attached.

The key is to **encourage cultural curiosity**, to discourage an over-emphasis on judgment, and to advocate adaptability as pragmatic, not moral, change. As Bhawuk and Brislin (1992: 416) write: ‘To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures.’ In our experience both as educators and living in other cultures, curiosity is half the battle when it comes to having a positive attitude about cultural difference. As cultural analysis grows more sophisticated, students are liable to find that their analyses grow more ambivalent, nuanced, and balanced as they start to see the various effects of different practices, but also how each one occurs in a particular context.

# Sample exercises

## **Pre-departure**

1. Old places with new eyes: practising description
2. Bau Haus brainstorm: hypothesising about cultural meaning
3. The 51<sup>st</sup> state: an American student in Sydney

## **In-country**

4. DIVING while overseas: cultural reflection and analysis

## **Re-entry**

5. Beer for fighting, beer for singing: Inebriation across cultures.
6. Cross-cultural comparisons: education, sport, politeness, interacting, men and women, getting around, clothing...

Please note that student worksheets are available for many of these exercises. Especially if the group is engaged in in-country reflection, journaling, blogging or discussion, the texts provided may be replaced or compared to some of their own work.

# Exercises



# Exercise One

## Old places with new eyes: practising description

If students have done any activities in their local communities as part of the Exploration Module, such as gone on neighbourhood walks or local exploration in their hometowns, they can use their observations as part of this exercise. If they have not, you can ask them to work on a short description of campus.

Once they have a description, ask them to edit it using the principles for better descriptive writing. Encourage students especially to:

- Find a specific detail that captures the feel of a place, not just pile on more details.
- Use senses other than just sight.
- Change vague adjectives to more specific adjectives.
- Get a sense of action, things happening, rather than just use adjectives.
- Move away from writing about their reactions ('I felt...') to provoke a similar reaction in the readers.

If students are working on the same description, get them to read off their favourite phrases from their own descriptions and put them on a whiteboard. Have other students talk about how the description makes them feel, what other details it inspires for them, or how they might build upon each other's descriptions to capture different moods or senses of place.

If they haven't been to the same place, or are describing their own exploration activities, ask each one to read off a single sentence or item from their description. Ask the other students to describe what they think the rest of the scene will be, or how it makes them feel.

Especially encourage students who have singled out unusual details or demonstrated acute perceptions of a place that all have visited. If they are stuck, move around campus, picking



different places, and have students share what details of the scene comes to their minds when they think about each successive scene or place. Remind students that thinking of details can make description vivid even without florid language. For example, when I describe the scorching parking lot on the east side of campus, the one that looks naked without any trees around it, where you inevitably wind up with molten-hot gum stuck to the bottom of your shoe after you park your car, or the outdoor dining area where you always have to fight pigeons for an empty table and the rubbish bins seem to be over-flowing, the descriptive sense is not so much in the vocabulary, but in picking a few details that capture a sense of place.

Encourage students to let the audience have its own reaction, to provoke that reaction, but not to talk about their own reactions. Also encourage specificity and concrete, sensory impressions, without too much explanation (at this stage).



# Exercise Two

## **Bau Haus brainstorm: hypothesising about cultural meaning**

Use handout with Ray K.'s 'Bau Haus' description. The worksheet includes reflection questions from the Module's worksheets.

**Objectives:** The goal of the exercise, especially without any cultural context or confirmation, is to practice generating interpretive hypotheses and further questions that would allow a sojourner in that country to disprove or develop these hypotheses.

**Rationale:** Cultural analysis is very difficult to do at a distance because anyone who attempts it is missing two key resources: both the surrounding cultural context and the possibility of investigating or asking questions, two of the most important ways that we can verify cultural analyses. But even at a distance, we can attempt the creative phase of cultural interpretation by brainstorming possible hypotheses about the meaning, origins or effects of cultural practices like the Bau Haus.

Cultural analysis makes use of many of the tools developed in the Reflection Module, both for the students and the workshop facilitator, but encourage students to really shift their focus away from their own feelings or evaluations. Cultural analysis requires observers to grapple with the significance of other people's cultural practices, not to the observer, but to the people who do them. Cultural analysis then, unlike some forms of reflection, is directed outwards and requires an exercise of analytical imagination, encouraging students to try to see the world as someone else might.

**Facilitator advice:** Give students a few minutes to think about the questions alone or in pairs, then lead a group discussion. Having the discussion as a group will allow the facilitator to discourage overly judgmental evaluations and head off the proliferation of stereotypes.

## **Possible reflection questions to spark interpretation:**

These questions are also available on the student sheet. See below for some questions to help students think about the case, and how they might do cultural comparison to improve their interpretive abilities:

- Where do students hang out with their friends or meet during the day in their own peer groups? Why is that?
- What other options might students choose, and under what conditions would they choose them?
- What could someone visiting from overseas tell from your choice of hangout?
- Would the Bau Haus do well in Australia? Why or why not?
- Judging from what Ray writes, do Koreans have similar relations to dogs?

- What sort of questions would you ask Ray to better interpret Bau Haus? What would you ask to better understand the dog café?

### **Instructor orientation for discussion**

Ray jokes about eating the dogs, but in fact, some South Koreans do eat dog meat, which the call, *gaegogi* (개고기), but the practice was outlawed in Seoul in 1984. Although the ban was enforced during the 1988 Olympics, dog meat is still available, and some officials have discussed removing the ban, as it is not enforced. A dog meat wholesaler prosecuted for selling the project in 1997 had his charges dropped when the courts decided that the practice was generally acceptable to South Korean society.

However, significant activist groups such as the Korean Dog Protection Society are opposed to the consumption of dogs, just as a smaller group of dog-meat advocates, like the Korea Dog Farmers' Association, vocally supports the practice and seek to encourage it. In June, 2011, a festival specifically held in suburban Seoul to promote consumption of dog was canceled because organizers feared disruption by animal rights' advocates (Ramstad 2011). The majority of South Koreans do not consume dog meat, but also may feel that others should have the right to do so, and may bristle at outsiders' criticisms, especially if they feel that a traditional Korean custom is being vilified. Attitudes toward consumption of dog are changing; a survey of young South Koreans found that the majority of them regard dogs as 'pets,' not 'food,' and that 59% of people under 30 would not eat dog, a practice they regard as old fashioned (Jeffreys 2007). Activists have successfully campaigned for changes to the way that dogs bound for the kitchen are treated, much as standards for the treatment of animals have been subject to scrutiny around the world.

In fact, even those South Koreans who do consume dog meat often keep pet dogs, who they might feel strongly are 'pets,' different to the animals that are turned into food. Although a Western pet lover might be quick to judge the practice, the same critics may spare little consideration for the animals that are killed as part of their own diet; those groups that are vegetarian for moral or religious reasons, or who regard particular types of meat that Westerners eat as unclean (such as pork) may find the diet of many Australians disgusting.

In other words, Ray's account of Bau Haus is not just a curious or quirky cultural phenomenon, but is a symptom of broader changes happening in South Korea. Cultural analysis need not focus on 'tradition,' but might actually capture the dynamism of culture change, including how debates are raging within cultures about values. According to other accounts of Bau Haus, people go to the establishment for 'love and attention,' especially those that are too short on time to take care of their own pets; some couples go on dates; and some dog owners even bring their own pets to play with the resident animals.

For more information on Bau Haus at SeoulStyle.com, see the short feature: [http://www.seoulstyle.com/art\\_bau\\_haus.htm](http://www.seoulstyle.com/art_bau_haus.htm)



# Exercise Three

## The 51<sup>st</sup> state: an American student in Sydney

One thing that may help students to prepare for cross-cultural misunderstanding and the need to re-interpret is to reflect on how their own culture might be misrepresented or misunderstood by outsiders.

Merlin Luck and Hedley Reberger. 2007. Australia, The 51st State - Student learning and intercultural development. Paper presented at the 2007 ISANA International Conference "Student success in international education", 27-30 November, Adelaide, Australia.

*Note: The version of this story on the student worksheet includes only the account of the Americans' impression, initial interpretation, and their re-interpretation after the facilitators did not verify their initial interpretation. The additional material is provided here so that the facilitator has more of the context and interpretation available to guide student discussion.*

There are many examples of how cultural differences can lead to an incorrect judgement of values – based on a misunderstanding and lack of context. As students develop their intrapersonal perspective of culture, they learn to step back and ask 'why?' 'Why is this different here?' rather than jumping to a value judgment.

For example, during the IES Sydney orientation, students are taken on a guided walking tour of downtown Sydney, through the botanical gardens and around to the Sydney Opera House where they embark on a sunset dinner cruise on the harbour. During the walk, they stop at a public bathroom. Inevitably they walk out murmuring to each other with furrowed brows. Upon a little coxing they sheepishly express concern at the fact that the public bathroom has a needle disposal bin, and that they didn't realize Sydney had such a problem with drug addicts. Furthermore they seem concerned that their drug use is encouraged



through the provision of the needle disposal bin. It makes sense that they jump to this conclusion, based on their own frame of reference – and straight away, the student has had a negative experience, and formed a negative assumption about Australian values.

The IES staff member then explains that Australia will often have needle disposal bins in public bathrooms, and that the explanation is very simple. It's not that there are a lot of drug addicts in Australia, but like in any country there are some. Australia has very strict workplace and public safety laws, and in order to protect the staff that clean those toilet facilities, and the public that use them, it makes



sense to offer a safe disposal of syringes. The reality is that many of the disposed needles are often from medical users (such as diabetics) rather than addicts.

[The following discussion is included only in the

facilitator's material:] *Whatever the case, the intrapersonal dimension helps students to work through the scenario. Interculturally competent students start looking at emotional reactions, start understanding why feelings occur, and begin coping with the diverse feelings (such as unease, uncertainty, ambiguity, and ethnocentrism) that are triggered by unknown cultural settings (Bochner 1982; Gudykunst 2003). This shows how through a basic understanding as to why a country and a culture does things the way they do, a far fairer assessment can be made about that countries values and norms. Of course it's only natural to form judgements based on your own frame of reference, and your own cultural bearings. By being informed however, stark misinterpretation can be avoided – and for the most part, the values of peoples all over the world are shown to be far more closely aligned than what many people expect. The challenge for American students in Australian then is to remember to ask this question of 'why?' – but in a country where they're not constantly being reminded*

*that they are in a different culture, by stark cultural differences, this challenge is significant.*

*In any case, students that come to Australia do learn to be far more open-minded and measured in their assessment of differences, looking at situations from different angles before jumping to conclusions. Obviously, this transformation in students occurs to a greater or lesser extent, but it's fair to say that they do all leave with a broader horizon and a deeper understanding of the world around them; and how their own values are shaped by the cultural window through which they've viewed that world.*

Discuss with students some of the ways that visitors might misinterpret their own actions or culture. This exercise may be a challenge because students often struggle to reflect on their own cultural practices from another person's perspective. The facilitator may start with a discussion of the passage from Luck and Reberger (2007) and move to a more general group reflection on practices that others might misunderstand, but do not be surprised if this exercise is hard going.

If any of the students has lived overseas or is an international student or recent immigrant, he or she may be able to offer examples from experience crossing cultures. As with any discussion, however, the facilitator cannot force reflection, but some patience may be rewarded with a rich conversation from which the students can genuinely learn a great deal.

- How might a fundamentalist religious figure misinterpret practices that are common in Australian popular culture? What other groups might struggle with Australian cultural practices?

For example, the notorious case of Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali's 2006 sermon likening immodestly dressed women to 'uncovered meat' left out only to have cats find it, or the fact that the Rev. Fred Nile prays every year for rain during Sydney's Mardi Gras celebration. (Web links to original news stories are provided in the supplementary materials.)

- Has anyone in the group been in a situation where their sense of humour was misinterpreted? What other practices do you have that someone might misinterpret?
- For a traveler to Australia, what people, places or things would likely be their first impression of the country? What do students expect would be the most difficult things for a visitor to see, notice or understand if the visitor only came for a week or two to Australia?

# Exercise Four

## **DIVING while overseas: cultural reflection & analysis**

After completing the DIVE orientation during pre-departure, you can encourage students to write about and photograph cultural differences that they encounter. The Bringing the Learning Home project team used a weblog to elicit student observations and descriptions of cultural difference, but a more private forum such as a personal journal or non-public content management system (like Blackboard or Moodle) may also be appropriate if you are not intending to generate content available to the public (see the Communication module for a discussion of platforms for supporting reflection).

The following are some of the general questions that might help students move through the stages of the DIVE process:

### **Describe**

- What are some of the local practices that surprised you most at first?
- What events or places have you been that you would use to tell someone back home what your destination is like, especially how it is different to your home?

### **Interpret**

- Why do people do things differently?
- How do you understand this particular local practice, place, or phenomenon?
- What are the effects or apparent consequences of this example of cultural difference?

### **Verify**

- Is the case of cultural difference that you've described part of a pattern?
- Do you see the same forces or considerations that you think produce this particular phenomenon causing any other differences?
- What do local people say about the cultural phenomenon when you ask?

### **Explain**

- Now that you've seen a pattern or verified your interpretation, why do you think this difference might exist?
- Is there some broader pattern of difference – history, social relations, religion, economic considerations – that might support this difference?
- Is there some smaller pattern – the school system, how families interact, social life – that the cultural difference either supports or might be caused by?
- Are you confident that your explanation is not simply a stereotype but might be accepted by your hosts?



## Exercise Five

### **Beer for fighting, beer for singing: Inebriation across cultures.**

This exercise is designed for students to reflect on their experiences overseas, especially around alcohol intake and socialising. In our re-entry sessions, when asked to reflect in an open-ended way on cultural differences, alcohol-related behaviour was one of the topics students most frequently brought up. Draw on Luke's account of drinking in France, Ray's account of 'Somaek' in South Korea (see supplementary materials), or the students own reflections about alcohol while overseas, gained either through their reflection activities while overseas or in the re-entry session.

The topic of alcohol consumption may be inappropriate with some student groups; especially in the case of service learning in the developing world, some students may find the topic trivial or off-putting. These students will often have far more salient and pressing experiences to discuss and make sense of, as some may have

encountered great poverty, health care problems, the consequences of conflict, environmental degradation or other social issues (See Exercise Six).



As we discuss in the Reflection module, each group's learning trajectory will be distinctive because their experiences will be unique to them, but the workshop should become easier to run as the facilitator develops a repertoire of materials generated at their own institution, with their own students, that can be substituted for the examples used here.

## **Reflection questions on alcohol, inebriation & social norms**

Students will not be able to answer all of these questions, but they are all potential points of departure for more in-depth discussions of alcohol consumption and social norms.

- Where do people typically drink alcohol in your host country?
- Where do students typically drink? With whom? Is everyone in the group the same age? Same sex?
- Is alcohol consumption 'gendered'? That is, are men's and women's drinking behaviours distinctive?
- Are there legal constraints on the consumption of alcohol? Are they enforced? Are the conditions under which those regulations can be broken with tacit approval?
- What do people do while they drink? Games? Karaoke? Singing? Watching sports on television?
- What do they drink? Does everyone in the group drink the same thing? Do individuals drink different sorts of alcohol at different events?
- How is alcohol priced or taxed?
- How do people behave when they get inebriated? What emotions do they seem to experience?
- Do people do things while drunk that they don't when they are sober? What do people seem to think inebriated people want to do? Dance? Take off their clothes? Sing? Fight? Tell stories? 'Hook up'? Is inebriation a license to do certain acts that are otherwise stigmatized? Is alcohol a legal defense?
- Is alcohol consumption seen as a problem by the community?
- How do people respond after they have drunk too much? Is getting drunk a source of shame or social stigma? Do people forget when they or someone else has been drunk?



## Exercise Six

### **Cross-cultural comparisons: sport, politeness, interacting, men and women, getting around, clothing...**

Following the same format as Exercise Five, encourage students to compare amongst their sites if they've been on exchange to a variety of countries. As much as possible, find issues where a number of students in the workshop have experiences around similar topics. For example, in the Education and Culture Module, students are encouraged to reflect upon the ways that tertiary education reflects differences in cultural norms, expectations and structures. A facilitator or the students themselves can suggest a topic about which many have experiences. If a facilitator or instructor has interacted with students while they were in country, or students have contributed to a thematised blog or thematically threaded online discussions (such as in Blackboard or Moodle), instructors can choose based upon these prior interactions.

The point of comparison is not to evaluate the students' host sites.

Instead, comparison uses

the common anthropological technique in order to help students to recognise the particularities of each culture. Moran, Harris, and Moran (2010) suggest that cultures can differ especially in the following areas: 1) sense of self and space, 2) communication and language, 3) dress and appearance, 4) food and feeding habits, 5) time and time consciousness, 6) relationships, 7) values and norms, 8) beliefs and attitudes, 9) learning, and 10) work habits and practices. The list is hardly exhaustive, but it may provide some inspiration of issues to bring up in discussions of cultural variation. In our workshops, we found students discussing a wide range of additional topics: arts, sports, architecture, ethnic relations, travel and mass transit, environmental attitudes, and awareness of current events.



# Supplementary material

## Suggested additional readings

Geertz, Clifford. 1972. Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *Daedalus* 101(1): 1-37. Also reprinted in Geertz's book, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973, Basic Books).

The classic work from one of the greatest American anthropologists, the late Clifford Geertz. 'Deep Play' tells the story of the anthropologist and his wife, at first treated as invisible by Balinese villagers, who become local celebrities after fleeing with the entire community when the police break up an illegal cockfight. Not only is the article a wonderful example of how an anthropologist interprets an alien practice, verifies his interpretation by consulting with local people, and explains what initial seems incomprehensible, but it also is a ripping travel story that shows the value of being able to laugh (over and over again) at oneself while traveling. A bit of a challenge to read, but well worth considering.

Gordon, Robert. 2009. *Going Abroad: Traveling Like an Anthropologist*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Gordon's book is an excellent, light-hearted, but quite thorough discussion of the challenges of going abroad and how to get the most out of studying overseas. Although the advice is applicable in many situations, he especially targets American students traveling to developing countries. In a longer pre-departure program, especially one servicing students bound for the global south, *Going Abroad* is well worth considering and supports a number of the modules in the Bringing the Learning Home curriculum.

Shirts, R. G. (1977). BaFa BaFa: A cross-culture simulation. Del Mar, CA: Simile II.

In a more elaborate pre-departure program, many organisations have very successfully used the BaFa' BaFa' game created by Dr. Garry Shirts in the 1970s and made available commercially in 1993. Shirts originally designed the simulation, in which a high-context, relationship-focused Alpha culture comes into contact with a trade-focused, individualist Beta culture in order to help prepare US sailors who were stationed in Greece, later broadened to help sailors also stationed in Japan, after interactions between local people and the navy personnel broke down in a number of new-worthy incidents. Simulated Training Systems sells a version of the BaFa BaFa simulator especially for schools and non-profit organisations, and it's an excellent low-tech, interactive simulator for understanding the value of intercultural communication and the origin of stereotypes. For more information, see their website: <http://www.stsintl.com/schools-charities/bafa.html>.



## Web-based resources

Ray K. 2010. 'Somaek.' *Oz Students Abroad*. <http://ozstudentsabroad.com/2010/10/29/somaek/>

Ray discusses drinking practices in Korea, including the social standards for ignoring just how badly each other got drunk the night before. One of the best parts of the post is an amazing advertisement for alcohol which suggests that a particular brand (Soju Charm) is superior because, if you drink enough of it, women look more beautiful. If you as a facilitator wishes to expand the discussion of cross-cultural differences in alcohol and social interaction, you may want to consider this student piece. Ideal to help spark discussion in Exercise Four.

'Ethnic leaders condemn Muslim cleric.' *The Age* 26 October 2006. Available online at <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/ethnic-leaders-condemn-muslim-cleric/2006/10/26/1161749223822.html>

Other pieces are available on the controversy surrounding Sheik Taj Din al-Hilali's likening of immodestly dressed women to 'uncovered meat,' but this particular piece also allows the facilitator to discuss the diversity of opinions within societies that some students may see in stereotypical ways. The article includes interviews with other Muslim clerics who criticise the statements and say that they do not represent the view of 'mainstream Australian Muslims.'

'The Power of One.' *Sydney Morning Herald* 5 January 2008. Available online at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/the-power-of-one/2008/01/04/1198950075839.html>

Profile of the Rev. Fred Nile, conservative Christian representative in the New South Wales Parliament.

## Other resources

PICO profiler & online resources – free online resources, paid training for consultants. <http://www.pico-global.com/>

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