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## The “Outsider/Insider” Assignment: A Pedagogical Innovation for Teaching Cross-Cultural Understanding

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In this paper, I describe an innovative assignment for teaching undergraduate students cross-cultural understanding. The Outsider/Insider assignment simultaneously teaches facts about cultural difference and skills for managing cross-cultural encounters. Briefly, the assignment is to write two short papers, one in which the student describes a situation in which he or she was the outsider, and the other a situation in which he or she observed a newcomer to a group where that person was an insider. The paper begins by reviewing previous research on cross-cultural interaction and its relevance for pedagogy, and describing the course, its goals, and the “Outsider/Insider” assignment. The effectiveness of the assignment is demonstrated through an analysis of excerpts from student papers. This analysis shows how the assignment can accomplish learning on a range of dimensions. The main themes that will be addressed are the following: (a) being seen as the outsider; (b) challenges related to outsider status; (c), the relevance of social class, poverty, and wealth on insider/outsider status; (d) strategies for coping in cross-cultural encounters; and (e) benefits to the student of being willing to cross boundaries. The paper concludes with a discussion of how the assignment facilitates student learning and its relevance for a range of undergraduate courses.

According to George Herbert Mead (1934), the ability to “take the role of the other” is a fundamental part of being human and of the communication process between humans. This social process may be more challenging when interacting with someone from a different culture or when acting in a culture that is not one’s “home” culture (Al-Makhamreh & Lewando-Hundt, 2008; Brown, 2005; Chawla-Duggan, 2007; Maeda, 2011; Yakushko, Badiee, Mallory, & Wang, 2011). The problem for the instructor of undergraduate courses in diversity, globalization and cross-cultural understanding is therefore how to convey information about culture and cultural difference while at the same time helping students develop the insights and skills they need to successfully engage in intercultural interactions. How can we help students learn to take the role of the other and to see beyond cultural difference into the fundamental human circumstances and relationships that underlie these differences? In this paper, I describe an innovative assignment for teaching cross-cultural understanding, which simultaneously teaches facts about cultural difference and skills for managing cross-cultural encounters. Briefly, the assignment is to write two short papers, one in which the student describes a situation in which he or she was the outsider, and the other a situation in which he or she observed a newcomer to a group in which the student was an insider. I will first briefly review previous research on cross-cultural issues in pedagogy and will then describe the “Outsider/Insider” assignment and analyze its impact through a discussion of examples excerpted from student papers. This analysis will illustrate how the assignment can accomplish learning on a range of dimensions. I will conclude with a discussion of the benefits of this assignment for students and its relevance for a range of undergraduate courses.

### Issues in Teaching Cross-Cultural Understanding

The need for cross-cultural understanding is uncontested in today’s increasingly globalized world (Martin, 2010; Sohoni & Petrovic, 2010). A wide range of current research into social problems and dilemmas that involve cultural difference serves to illustrate the types of social problems that can be addressed with better understanding of culture and cultural difference (e.g., Christiansen, 2009; Gamson, 2010; Magnusdottir, 2005; Wessells, 2009; Wong, 2011). Crose (2011) provided useful strategies for facilitating learning for international college students, including ideas that will help students increase their knowledge of culture and cultural difference by engaging with each other in the context of class activities. A number of scholars have described specific pedagogical techniques for increasing cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity, including the use of photography (e.g., Brown, 2005), student-conducted research about student experiences and culture (e.g., Deakins, 2009), sociological autobiographies (e.g., Kebede, 2009), oral presentations about cultural differences in communication dynamics (e.g., Miller, 2004), interviews (e.g., de Anda, 2008), and exercises based on Miner’s (1956) *Body Rituals of the Nacirema* (e.g., Schopmeyer & Fisher, 1993).

The outsider/insider frame has been used to explain fundamental properties of social structure. Regardless of culture, we are all continually interacting with others who either share or differ from us on a wide range of social categories such as age, gender, or occupation (Merton, 1972). The outsider/insider frame is an effective way of conceptualizing cultural difference and studying a wide range of cultures and substantive areas (e.g., Bagnoli, 2007; Brown, 2005; Chawla-Duggan, 2007; Moran, 2007; Richardson & LeGrand, 2002;

Rudwick, 2008). For example, in Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt's (2008) study of social workers in a Jordanian hospital, they explained how a researcher's insider status (e.g., having the same gender or nationality as the research subjects) can facilitate ethnographic research.

Previous researchers have reported a variety of uses of the outsider/insider frame in educational contexts. Schopmeyer and Fisher (1993) used the concepts of insider bias and outsider bias to convey to undergraduate students in sociology courses how ethnocentrism affects their perceptions of those from other cultures. Robles (2009) used the insider/outsider frame to describe the experiences of undergraduate students doing fieldwork abroad. de Anda (2008) used the insider/outsider frame in a series of assignments she uses in her undergraduate course in social work for multicultural populations. Brandt (2007) used an insider/outsider frame and the concept of "border crossing" to analyze how a Native American undergraduate student experienced the science teaching at her university.

Some research done in secondary school contexts is also relevant for understanding how the outsider/insider frame can be useful in educational contexts. Allard (2006) analyzed how an instructor used his outsider status as a resource to connect with a diverse student body. Rychly and Graves (2012) recommend that teachers "be reflective about their attitudes and beliefs about other cultures and their own cultural frames of reference" and "learn to step outside of their own thinking in order to examine it and also to acknowledge others' thinking" (pp. 48-49). Cushman (2009) used an active learning methodology to explore minority students' insider knowledge and make outsiders aware of their lack of knowledge relative to these students. Her students created their own version of an SAT test based on minority students' insider knowledge. Cushman's (2009) survey of non-minority students who took the test showed how it expanded their knowledge of what is like to be an outsider (i.e., a minority) in a majority culture.

The Outsider/Insider assignment, which I describe below, expands on the work done by others by requiring students to put themselves in the position of both outsider and insider. This practice in taking the role of the other from both positions helps students learn how to see the impact of cultural difference on their own experience and that of others.

### **Brief Description of the Course and the Outsider/Insider Assignment**

I developed the Outsider/Insider assignment for a Global Studies Department course in Cross-Cultural Understanding. The purpose of this course is to teach

students from a range of backgrounds about culture and cross-cultural communication both globally and within the United States. The goals of the course include not only academic learning but also the ability to apply the knowledge learned to students' interactions with others.

After the concepts of culture and cultural difference have been introduced, the students read and discuss Polly's (2007) book about the experience of being an American in a fairly remote part of China during the 1990s while he was studying traditional Chinese martial arts, as well as Fadiman's (1997) book on the problem Hmong immigrants living in California faced as their language, cultural and spiritual practices clashed with the expectations of health care providers and social workers. Polly (2007) discussed the challenges he faced being an outsider in a very different cultural context than the one in which he had grown up. The students also watch two films relevant to these topics, *Beijing Bicycle* (Wang, Chiao, Han, & Hsu, 2001) and *Spirit Horn* (Siegel & McSilver, 2001). Students write essays on the films and write quotes and questions on the books read to display their understanding of these course materials and the issues being addressed. These materials are also discussed extensively in class. The Outsider/Insider assignment is designed to help students integrate the knowledge from this first unit of the course and to accomplish one of the main goals of the course, developing the ability to apply knowledge learned in the course to their interactions with others. The students are then given the following instructions for completing the assignment:

- On Being the Outsider: Write two pages about a situation or a time in your life when you were the outsider. If you had the experience of visiting or living in another country, that would be an ideal thing to write about. However, your essay could be about being the new kid in a school where everyone else already knew each other, getting to know someone of a different ethnic group if you were used to a life where your friends and family were relatively homogenous, or the experience of joining a new team or club. What was it like being the outsider? What did the others know that you did not know? How did they react to you? Were you able to gain entry to the group and become a member? How did your perspective change after you became an "insider"?
- On Being the Insider: Write two pages about a situation in your life when you were one of the insiders and one or more "outsiders" were joining the group. It could be the experience of having a visitor from another country, having an immigrant move to your neighborhood or your

work place or school, or simply a new kid of any background moving to your school or joining a team or club you belonged to. How did it feel having the newcomer join the situation? How did you and others treat them? How did they react? Were you able to get to know the person, or did they remain in an outsider status? What issues, problems, or challenges came up through the process of integrating this new person into the situation? What was hardest about it? What was best about it?

### **Methodology and Results**

#### **Participants**

Over a third of the 30 students in the class of study were majority group Americans, and the remainder of the students were equally split between foreign-born students and US-born ethnic minorities. Most of the students had already either lived or visited abroad or were planning to do so in the context of a university-sponsored study abroad trip or semester. The students' firsthand knowledge about different cultures and their cross-cultural experiences enriched their work in the class and their work on the Outsider/Insider assignment.

#### **Research Design**

After grading the Outsider/Insider papers, I selected portions of each student's paper (ranging from a few sentences to a couple paragraphs from each paper) and anonymously shared them with the class so that the students could learn from each other's experiences. This sharing of the results enabled students to learn specific facts about different cultures at the same time they were learning how their own experiences were similar to, and different from, that of others. They also benefitted from hearing the coping strategies and techniques their classmates used to meet the challenges of a wide range of cross-cultural encounters.

I used a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2003, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 1994) to analyze the issues and themes in the students' papers and identify the key themes students addressed which were relevant for the goals of the course and the goals of understanding cross-cultural experiences from the insider and outsider perspectives. This involved a process of coding and sorting into categories the different issues the students raised. Some categories that had only a few numbers of student examples were deleted since the purpose of the analysis was to discover the main issues and themes identified by the students.

#### **Results**

The themes that emerged from the students' work were the following:

- On being seen as the outsider.
- Challenges related to the outsider status.
- Social class, poverty, and wealth.
- Coping strategies.
- The benefits of crossing boundaries.

I will next briefly describe how I integrated this pedagogical innovation with the other course activities to achieve the goals of the course.

#### **Pedagogical Impact of the Outsider/Insider Assignment**

In this section, I describe the pedagogical implications of the Insider/Outsider assignment. This assignment was an integral part of the pedagogy of the course. It also served as an assessment of how well students achieved one of the main goals of the course: understanding how knowledge learned in the course could be applied to interactions with others.

#### **Challenges of the Assignment**

The main challenge students had with this assignment was with the process of taking the role of the other. A number of students at first could not see the difference between the outsider and insider perspectives. I dealt with these questions on an individual basis and in class, and I was able to get all students to see the difference between one's own experience as an outsider and understanding another person's experience as an outsider to a group where the student was an insider. The evidence that this fundamental concept of how to take the role of the other was learned was that all of the students' papers displayed an ability to distinguish between the two positions.

#### **Benefits of the Assignment**

The main benefits of this assignment were that students were required to demonstrate their ability to take the role of the other and to switch between the outsider and insider perspectives as they reflected on their life experiences with cross-cultural encounters. The assignment also functioned as an assessment of the effectiveness of their prior work in the course in terms of how well the first unit prepared them to apply knowledge gained to understanding their life experiences.

### Sharing the Results of the Assignment with the Class

The instructor shared key excerpts from each student's paper with the class in a unique way. I pulled the best paragraphs from each essay and arranged them by theme. The students then came up one-by-one and read an excerpt aloud to the class. I had the collective reading videotaped in order to focus the students' attention on reading carefully and listening carefully to each other's work. Because the paragraphs were arranged by theme and the students came up to read in the order in which they were seated, students were almost always reading a paragraph written by another student. They thus had the experience of reading a first-person account of an insider/outsider experience from the point of view of another student (who might well be of a different race, ethnicity, gender, and/or age). This further decentered their individual perspectives and required them to take the role of the other as they did the reading. Through this collective reading experience, all students had an intense exposure to the work done by others so that they could experience the commonalities and differences in their individual perspectives, experiences, and insights. The experience of this dramatic reading then became a shared resource for the class. Throughout the rest of the semester, both the instructor and students referred to paragraphs from this reading while we discussed the remaining topics of the course. For example, one of the subsequent topics was the effect of social class on culture and ethnicity, and some of the students' essays from the outsider/insider assignment were directly relevant for this topic and were referred to by students in class as we considered those issues.

#### Lessons Learned from Students' Outsider/Insider Papers

In this section, I illustrate the lessons learned from the Outsider/Insider paper assignment by presenting excerpts from students' work that illustrate the range of issues examined. These excerpts show that students were able to articulate what it felt to be an outsider, the challenges in being an outsider, how they handled the challenges, and how they experienced being an insider responding to the needs of an outsider. Not all students wrote about international travel or living abroad. In the course, we defined culture and cultural difference broadly to include such issues as difference in social class, disability status, or social role, in addition to ethnicity and nationality.

#### On Being Seen as the "Outsider"

Being an ethnic minority is one of the primary ways that people experience being an "other" in a

society. Students learned that, while cultural differences can sometimes be hidden, differences in race or ethnicity sometimes make it impossible to blend in. A Korean-American student wrote: "There have been times when I walked into a restaurant in West Virginia and literally have had the whole restaurant stare at me the whole time while I ate." A student from the Caribbean wrote: "Being the minority at a primarily white school has been a norm for me. . . . I was a student of color and that has always made me the outsider."

However, being treated as an outsider did not only happen to those who were perceived as racially different. A Greek-American student talked about visiting her parent's hometown in Greece with her family. She found that although she was also Greek, she nevertheless stuck out like a sore thumb due to her dress and behavior.

The experience of being temporarily disabled made another student aware of what it was like to be easily recognizable as an outsider. This student explained that, through the lesson, he learned about taking the perspective of the other and articulated how this insight changed the way he treated others:

The collision broke both bones in my shin, in such a way that a simple cast would not bring about the right results. My orthopedic drilled four ten inch titanium screws through my leg and into the bones. After the surgery let us just say, I was easily noticed. I was disgusted how everywhere I went people would stare at me like I was in the circus. That bothered me because they had never met me before or knew what I had gone through. From that point on, I made sure never to stare at a person with a disability because I know what it feels like and I would never want to put someone in that situation.

When examples such as these are shared with the class, students who are not minorities (whether in terms of race, disability, or some other social status) are exposed to their classmates' perceptions of being treated and perceived as the other, thus gaining practice in taking the role of the other.

#### Challenges Related to Outsider Status

Students who had traveled to a different country often found the transition to a new society difficult. These challenges resulted in unexpected emotional stresses. A foreign exchange student from Australia wrote:

I had some misconceptions about coming abroad to study. I thought that it would be really easy for me

to fit in. I had no idea going into it how I was going to feel about initially having no friends and family around to talk to, hang out with and lean on. I felt no familiarity with anything or anyone whatsoever. Having to build new relationships from scratch is a difficult thing.

Even those students who had travelled a lot in the past and knew the language of the host country found living in another country challenging in many ways. Students became aware of the impact of different degrees of fluency in a language on their ability to engage with others. A Vietnamese-American student who was visiting relatives in Vietnam wrote:

Although Vietnamese was my first language, I found forming sentences and phrases took too long, while my cousins were spitting out sentences without rethinking. Because of my slow processing of the language, I felt more like an outsider than I already had. As an outsider, I was silent and did not speak unless spoken to.

An international student attending college in the United States wrote about the challenges that existed in spite of his fluency with the language:

The most prominent situation in my life when I felt like an outsider was during my first semester at [college]. As an international student I had to adapt to not only new country, but also to a completely different academic system. . . . At the same time I had to also learn the everyday life in the US: how was it appropriate to meet people, what topics was it fine and not fine to talk about, who paid for the lunch in what situation, etc. The only benefits on my side were that I already knew the language on a somewhat decent level . . . and that I had traveled a lot and thus was mostly protected from being overwhelmed by the culture shock.

### **Social Class, Poverty, and Wealth**

Several students specifically addressed how social class differences affected their experience of being an insider or an outsider. The examples they gave illustrated that many aspects of culture (e.g., behavior, values, housing, and clothing) can be affected by social class standing. Differences between developed and undeveloped economies were also recognized in their papers:

The beaches and homes in Dominican Republic are very different from the apartments that I walk through every day in Boston, MA. Seeing houses having tin roofs and also other forms of covering

was very interesting. I didn't know what to say. I was astonished, as when it rained all you could hear is the banging of the hard rain on the cold tin roof. At home you could only hear the rain if it is pouring and only hitting the windows, but here a mild shower can be heard as if popcorn popping.

A student from a poorer family wrote about the difficulty of attending a university where many of the students are from very well-to-do families:

As I got to learning about my new friends and classmates, I was stunned—beach houses, private educations, brand-new cars, money to buy everything from designer clothes to alcohol, and month-long trips to Europe. . . . Back home, I'd bought all my own clothes at the cheapest price available, re-used plastic water bottles, and searched the sale circulars whenever I was planning on making a purchase. It became very clear to me that now, I was the tourist, the outsider, the odd-man out. . . . There have been many occasions where money has been an issue for me at [college], especially in social situations: not being able to go out to eat, having to consider which places I could afford to go to on weekends, and having to buy my textbooks used online. There has been even more times where I've felt incredibly alone at [college], never remembering that not everyone is a business fanatic with a sailboat to their name.

Another student wrote about how he started off as an outsider in a new job, but then became an insider. Being accepted into the group of employees as an equal enabled him to learn about how their social class position was different from his and led to a different attitude toward their jobs:

The job became easier as I was able to settle into a routine that allowed me to excel at my position. The wait staff complimented my unrelenting work ethic and rewarded me by increasing the percentage of tips I received. Once I became an insider my perception about the employees changed drastically. I always thought the wait staff believed they were "above" assisting a kid and that's why they avoided helping me for weeks but as an insider I was able to see that their problems were far superior to my own. Many of the employees worked 6 days a week just to get by and I understood the pressures that this took on their lives. I always tried to have a positive attitude along with strong work ethic to make the lives of the waitresses a little bit easier. The employees at the restaurant became a second family to me after three short months.

These examples illustrate how being an outsider can increase a student's knowledge and awareness of social class differences and their impact on one's life.

### **Coping Strategies**

In both the outsider and insider essays, students described techniques and strategies they used to cope with their outsider status or to help someone else become an insider. One foreign exchange student from Russia recommended getting to know the "natives" (in this case, students from the US) rather than segregating yourself among other foreign students. He recommended not being shy about asking questions and not feeling bad about making mistakes:

When I just arrived in the US, I was really afraid of doing something completely wrong and as a result being criticized or even ostracized by the group I was trying to fit in with. In retrospect this fear was completely baseless. Even though I made a lot of social mistakes (such as refusing to tip in the restaurant, something that is absolutely normal in Russia, but apparently completely inappropriate in the US) I was never punished for them. My American friends laughed at me, questioned me, called me an idiot, etc. However no one stopped hanging out with me, just because I was making all these mistakes.

Another student recommended trying to learn at least a little of the language of the people you will be visiting or living with, and avoiding "hot button" issues such as religion and politics:

Looking back, I am fascinated in how we all managed to keep our differences aside, and make everything else work. And I believe this was the key to the success of our relationships. We did not let politics, religious beliefs, norms, and traditions get between us. We all approached each other with an open mind, and we all supported each other to make the process of assimilating to a foreign environment more pleasant. Something that really helped us move forward is a tradition we started ourselves. Every Friday one of us is responsible for cooking something that comes from our native culture. This went on for the remainder of our freshman year, and it played a big part in us learning about each other and understanding each other's cultures.

The "insider" essay of a student from Jordan illustrated the importance of having an open mind and being willing to try new things when visiting a society not your own:

Anthony was very open-minded about his visit. He wanted to make the most of it by learning about the country, its culture, its language, its traditions, and even its food. He tried all the traditional dishes made in Jordan, some of which are not easy to eat if one isn't used to it. When I previously had visitors it would have been impossible to feed them sheep brain or tongue but, with Anthony, he was interested in trying them.

A Vietnamese-American student wrote about the importance of knowing and practicing local customs and ways of behaving politely: "After landing in Vietnam, my family and I were welcomed by our grandmother, cousins, aunts and uncles. As a sign of respect, I bowed and said hello in Vietnamese."

One student's insider essay described the efforts he and his friends made to welcome an exchange student and make him feel part of the group:

Since Christo did not know anyone in the United States, we wanted to do whatever we could to make him feel comfortable and happy. We began including Christo in all our extracurricular activities, such as going to the beach, out in Boston, and Saturday cookouts at our friends. Luckily, it was not hard to connect with Christo because the two of us had a lot in common. The only time we happened to really disagree was when the United States was playing England in the FIFA World Cup soccer match.

Another student, who was an "insider" at a dance academy, described how the instructor guided the students to welcome and mentor new students:

Throughout those many years of Irish Step Dancing, I have seen many students come and go but every time someone left, a new student would join us. At first it's weird when a new girl or boy joins us because the students who are already in the school have formed such tight bonds and friendships that it is difficult to open up but our instructor knows just how to welcome the new students. Our instructor, Michael, usually takes an older more advanced student and pairs them with a newcomer to show them the ropes and teach them a beginner step so that the new member won't feel out of place. I often am that student who works with the newcomers because I am one of the senior dancers in the school and a high ranked preliminary champion dancer so my practice time always runs over the beginner practice time. I always like having a new person join the group because it is nice to meet someone fresh. However, it is also sometimes difficult to incorporate them into certain dances just because

they don't know how things work yet. Whenever a new person joins the class, all the rest of my fellow dancers try to be welcoming and make the new dancers feel like they belong there.

Another student described the advantages of being an insider. As a returning camp counselor, she knew the routines and expectations and could accomplish them quickly and easily:

I leisurely arrived at . . . "pre-camp" later than all of the other counselors. I knew that I had to move into the counselor bunks immediately, before any of the new counselors settled in. I knew exactly which bunk I had to move into in order to stay near all of my friends. I then had to visit to the office in the main house where I would find the co-directors. . . . They told me that I needed to move my things into a bunk, but I already done this because I have been through this process many times. [They] then asked me to hand out nametags to all of the counselors, new and old. I could easily pick the new faces out of the crowd because of their actions. They usually stood alone and were extremely quiet, taking in their surroundings. After this, my friends and I sat at the bench in the grove area. We were a closely-knit group. We had all been counselors with each other for a few summers, so we knew how things worked at Camp.

### Benefits of Crossing Boundaries

Students described many of the benefits and insights they received from the experiences of being an outsider and of being an insider welcoming newcomers:

I walked around a lot. Luckily, it was those moments that held me captivated by the beauty of Kenya. It was a world entirely different from mine. Although there are signs of the impoverished state of the country, I cannot help but feel amazed by the cultural experience.

In his insider essay, another student wrote about the experience of welcoming a new student at his high school into his group of friends:

The best thing about bringing John into our group was that I now have six lifelong friends instead of five. I know he will always be there for me if I need him. . . . Our friendship has transcended high school and we remain friends to this day.

A student wrote in her insider essay how proud she was to have helped another student who had recently moved into her town to feel welcome at her new school and to

make friends. This experience gave her insight into how hard it is to be new:

I will never forget the day I met Jenny's mother. She came up to me at the end of our last game my junior year and thanked me. I had no idea why she was thanking me; but then she went on to say how she hadn't seen Jenny this happy since before they moved; and that joining the team was one of the best things for her. "She truly looks up to you and I want to thank you for making her feel welcome and part of this team." I was speechless. I don't know why but it never occurred to me that Jenny was also having a hard time fitting in at school as she adjusted to the move. I have never moved to a different town, so I never experienced being the new kid at a new school. I didn't realize how challenging it was for Jenny to integrate into a new school her freshman year of high school when girls are "cliquey" and "catty."

For a Mexican-American student studying in Italy, her experiences led to her ability to take the role of the other. She wrote in her outsider essay about an epiphany she had as she realized that under the many differences between the two cultures are some fundamental similarities:

During *pranzo*, or lunch time, we would all gather at the table and feast on a great amount of food. . . . We would sit there and talk for hours and hours about everything imaginable, and then it all clicked: It was just like back home. I was surrounded by my host family, eating, having great conversation, just like I was used to with my family. It was then that I realized that the Mexican and Italian cultures weren't all that different.

A Korean-American student expressed a similar insight:

I found that being stuck between two contradictory cultures, such as the South Korean and American ones, truly force one to accept that no one culture is perfect, and that there are only differences. There is no better or worse, no right or wrong.

These decentering experiences helped the students step outside their own culture and view it from the perspective of the outsider, thus leading to greater understanding of both cultures.

## Discussion and Conclusions

### Pedagogical Benefits of the Assignment

From the instructor's perspective, there were a number of benefits from the Outsider/Insider assignment,



the results of which informed our class discussions throughout the remainder of the semester. I briefly summarize some of the main positive outcomes next.

First, writing the Outsider/Insider papers provided students the opportunity to reflect on what they had learned about culture and cultural difference in class and from the course readings. Students learned to apply the definition of culture and its many components to their life experience to gain a solid understanding of the concept and its real world implications. They also had to integrate their own experiences in cross-cultural interaction (broadly defined) with this academic learning.

Second, the students learned to see beyond a particular culture and its characteristics to the fundamental underlying issue of recognizing difference and learning strategies for coping with it, both emotionally and interpersonally.

Third, the students learned about a range of challenges and about specific types of problems that can occur in cross-cultural encounters as well as specific ways of handling those situations.

Fourth and finally, the students practiced the skill of taking the role of the other in two ways: (1) they wrote about their own experiences being an outsider and then their experiences of being an insider so that they had to look at situations from others' points of view, and (2) their exposure to the experiences of fellow students in the class through the sharing of key excerpts of each paper enabled them to see both of these types of situations from their fellow students' perspectives.

### Implications for Pedagogical Practices

Using teaching methods and assignments that ask undergraduates to integrate course materials with their own experiences can be an effective method of teaching cross-cultural understanding. Asking students to analyze the experience of being both outsiders and insiders helps them learn what the challenges of cross-cultural interaction are, and how cultural differences become relevant in everyday life and experience. By sharing excerpts from all the papers with the class, the students were able to learn from each other. Instructors could also use student responses to the assignment to deepen learning on any of the themes addressed. For example, a student's description of a strategy for coping in cross-cultural encounters could be used as a writing prompt for reflective responses. Students could be asked to conduct a survey of students on their campus (both foreign and domestic), asking them which of the coping strategies they find most effective. Student responses could also be integrated into the remainder of the course. For example, when covering social class differences and differences in wealth in developed and

developing countries, the instructor could use student responses to this assignment as examples or as question prompts. The class could be asked to explain how the students' observations were similar to and different from the descriptions of cultural differences in social class given in course readings.

### Applications in Other Disciplines

While the course in which I used this assignment was focused in building cross-cultural understanding, the Outsider/Insider assignment could be used for a variety of courses in global studies, sociology, psychology, or communication departments. For example, in a psychology course, the assignment could direct students to focus on emotional reactions and differences in personality in the people they encounter, while in a communication course students could be directed to focus on interactional style, preferences for verbal or nonverbal communication, gender differences in communication, and so on. Students in sociology courses could be directed to focus on the implications of race, class, and gender for outsider/insider status.

### Further Research

Further research should be done to address the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques such as those used in this course on student's future success in cross-cultural encounters. As many of the students in this course were planning to participate in study-abroad programs, sections of the course in which students complete the Outsider/Insider project could be compared with sections without this assignment. Students participating in study abroad programs could be surveyed or interviewed about their experiences to see whether their awareness and ability to cope with cross-cultural encounters has improved relative to students who have not completed this assignment.

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