

Shaules, Joseph, ***Deep Culture: The Hidden Challenges of Global Living***
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Reviewed by Katrin Volt, MA, at www.diversophy.com. January 14, 2010

Deep Culture: The Hidden Challenges of Global Living is a useful addition to the literature of intercultural education and should be of interest to sojourners (students and professionals going to live and work abroad) who are interested in the intercultural learning process as faced by those sojourners. Shaules points out that there has not been much focus lately on the hidden side of the intercultural experience. The book provides a theoretical model to illustrate how the inner cultural learning as a process should help sojourners function effectively in intercultural situations.

Some people might think that, as a result of globalization, all cultures are beginning to be the same and intercultural contact is effortless. However, since one's culture is embedded deeply inside and influences what one says, thinks and does, the answer is no. It is also useful to remember the link between language and culture, as culture affects the way we communicate and when doing so foreign language sojourners might transfer their native language patterns to the foreign language (e.g. being direct or indirect, not using "please" and "thank you" and thus coming across as rude). Deep intercultural experiences are based on the hidden elements of cultural difference, and these come into play in intercultural situations, especially when one is under stress. Thus, awareness of one's own culture is a good starting point for intercultural learning. How we make sense of our world (e.g., professional people are always on time; it is not good to trust strangers, etc.) can create barriers to successful intercultural contact. The question is whether we behave according to our cultural patterns or question the validity of these in other cultural contacts and adapt our behavior to the situation.

Part One (Chapters One to Six) of *Deep Culture* examines the cultural learning experience with existing cultural theories, while Part 2 introduces Shaules' own formal model of intercultural learning which is seen as developmental. Shaules points out that sojourners develop this ability as they respond to the gap between requirements in their new cultural environment and their internal competencies. The book uses classical intercultural theories (e.g., Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, Bennett, Hall, Triandis, Byram, Sapir and Whorf) to examine how we learn about cultures. Part two (Chapters Seven to Thirteen) provides quotations from sojourners that are used to illustrate their intercultural learning process. It should also be noted that nowadays a sojourner can be abroad without having a deep intercultural learning experience, e.g., by keeping to expatriate communities and remaining electrically

connected to home. Also, since some sojourners are more successful than others in acculturating to their new environment, Shaules ponders why this is so.

To explore this phenomenon, Shaules uses the labels *resistance*, *acceptance* and *adaptation* to describe whether and how intercultural experience results in a change within a sojourner; all three elements are involved in the process. He also mentions Bennett's *Intercultural Development Inventory* (IDI), and examines his six degrees of intercultural sensitivity (DIS), as found in his *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS). Shaules points out that these might be less useful for describing individual reactions to particular experiences. They do, however, help understand where the sojourner is on the way to intercultural learning. According to Shaules, "the DMIS attempts to describe an overall state of intercultural sensitivity, while the model presented in this book attempts to describe the ongoing process of how an individual reacts to adaptive demands." Shaules also questions the validity of Bennett's DMIS model across cultures.

Shaules' work "attempts to model the intercultural learners' reactions to specific adaptive demands" and thus, a sojourner may adapt to one element of his or her experience while resisting another, referred to as a "mixed state". Shaules' deep culture model of intercultural learning is "intended to allow sojourners and educators to describe intercultural experiences in neutral terms." The model assumes that all reactions to adaptive demands are normal parts of the intercultural process. He makes a distinction between deep and surface differences and the intensity with which the sojourner faces hidden adaptive demands.

Shaules questions our ability to describe intercultural sensitivity in terms of discrete stages of intercultural development, and his work is an attempt to describe the experiences that "drive the intercultural learning process". According to him, the most challenging intercultural experiences are demanding, meaningful and deep.

Shaules also provides a hierarchy of intercultural relationships and points out that "the deepest intercultural experiences are related to developing relationships within a group of people in a new cultural environment".

Sojourners' intercultural learning is successful when, for example, they do not judge negatively something they dislike. Differences in deep culture often lead to negative reactions; when managed successfully they require changes of behavior in intercultural situations. Therefore, we should avoid

judgment in such situations and instead we should experience a new way of doing things. After all, we all learn from the intercultural experience.

Shaules addresses the issue of what one's "true self" is in intercultural situations. Shifting between different selves is not achieved by many sojourners—it requires deep involvement in the host culture, time and patience. Yet, when successful it gives one the pleasure of deep learning experience.

The book also provides "A Glossary of the Intercultural Learning Experience". This is very useful and clearly explains the concepts used in his model. For example, Shaules makes a distinction between norms and values, i.e., "norms define how one should behave, values define how one wants to behave. These can make deep cultural learning challenging."

Deep Culture is useful reading, especially for educators and sojourners facing intercultural contact or simply for people interested in the subject matter. It is a comprehensive book giving an overview of different cultural theories, questioning and applying these in light of Shaules' Deep Culture Model of Intercultural Learning. What I valued most about the book is the enriching and personal approach to such learning.