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Sojourn and Intercultural Communication Research: A Social Constructionist Viewpoint

Introduction

The various facets of a diverse culture become a part of a person's lived experiences in any intercultural encounter. In intercultural interactions people are presented with the opportunity for dialogue that may unravel the array of similarities, differences, discoveries, and possibilities that exist in their lives. As such, intercultural interactions are compositions of a variety of everyday situations that articulate the diversity of human experiences.

Numerous scholarly publications have defined intercultural communication as the exchange and sharing of meanings between people from differing socio-cultural backgrounds either through the media or interpersonal encounters (Dodd, 1981; Gudykunst, 1989; Hall, B.J., 1992; Kim, 1984). This however is a rather simplistic notion of what this phenomenon entails and does not fathom the magnitude of each intercultural experience nor does it unravel the particularities of each interaction. Moreover, it often assumes an emphasis on ethnic traits and focuses on the similarities and differences of the cultural patterns rather than on the creations in conjoint actions.

The multiple dimensions of actions and meanings that comprise an intercultural interaction are coordinated in some unique fashion to create varying degrees of sense-making between people who may or may not share a commensurate cultural reality. It is undeniable that the complexities and

contradictions of differing cultural patterns have resulted in misunderstandings and conflicts between intercultural actors. Nevertheless, to reduce it to a cause and effect situation without regard for the minuscule details that make up each interaction is to diminish the richness and profoundness of human experience.

This paper introduces the phenomenon of sojourn as an act of intercultural communication and offers an alternative research perspective on the subject by viewing it from the social constructionist framework. First, a review of literature on existing intercultural studies focusing on issues, theories and methodologies commonly employed is presented. Next, the theoretical positions of both the objectivist and social constructionist paradigms on these areas are contrasted in an attempt to reveal the implication of these theoretical underpinnings on research. The paper concludes by offering an episodic analysis of sojourn as a contrast to the variable-analytic approach.

Sojourn and Intercultural Studies

Sojourn is an age old phenomenon where the accounts of travellers dating back to early migration movements, conquests, missionary endeavours, explorations, pilgrimages, trading and other forms are relevant in the understanding of sojourning activities. Studies of sojourners and the subsequent development of the study of intercultural communication grew out of the post World War II experience. This is due to the increase in the number of diplomatic officials, military personnel, exchange students, expert technical personnel affiliated to international agencies and others from the foreign services who travelled to the United States or from the United States to other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Chan, 2000; Church, 1982; Jacobson, 1963; Ellingsworth, 1981; Latiffah, 1996; Khwaja (1991); Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990; Okoli, 1995). The above studies used the term "sojourners" to refer to many types of travellers including, military personnel, tourists, business people, students, missionaries, immigrants and others who have lived and worked in a foreign culture.

The results of a number of studies have shown that the sojourn is a new living experience often involving observation, participation and overt instructions. It is undeniably affected

by a number of variables including interpersonal relationships and living conditions. It has been shown that having close interpersonal relations with the local community contribute to the creation of positive attitudes toward that country. In addition, the local community's efforts at intercultural contact have a significant effect on whether or not the sojourner has a meaningful, uneventful or unsuccessful intercultural experience. Also, the sojourner's motives prior to arrival in the foreign country can sometimes result in a self-fulfilling aim (Boekestijn, 1988; French & Zajonc, 1957; Snow, 1993).

Subsequent studies revealed that the anxieties associated with immersing oneself in the social environment of the local culture led many sojourners to form enclaves of fellow nationals that largely determined their living arrangements, friendship patterns, and organizational affiliations. Such enclaves allowed the sojourner to re-establish primary group relations and maintain familiar, traditional values, and belief systems while minimizing psychological and behavioural adaptation. A protective function was served whereby psychological security, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging were provided while anxiety, feelings of powerlessness and social stresses were reduced.

Such enclaves also served as reference groups where the new environment is discussed, compared, and interpreted. In some instances inaccurate prearrival perceptions and rigid cultural patterns is maintained and conformed to as a result of restrictive in-group cultural patterns. The concept of "subjective culture" reflects the unique ways of perceiving the social environment by each group and emphasizes the diversity in human responses to the environment (Triandis, 1977). As a result, sojourners tend to refer to familiar cultural practices as the basis for comparisons and evaluation of the acceptability of the other culture. It is the interpretations of the other's behaviour from one's own cultural frame that pose a barrier to intercultural understanding (Prosser, 1978; Ellingsworth, 1981).

Despite the acknowledgment by researchers of the benefits of such enclaves, the majority of them also felt that restrictive social interaction with the local nationals led to superficial encounters that were self-defeating in the long run. This was

because it inhibited learning the language, values, and customs of the new culture and could reinforce a sense of alienation (Befus, 1988; Nishida, 1985).

Findings in several studies often made a reference to "cultural distance" and suggested that the greater the similarity between the home and host culture, the greater the likelihood of feelings of acceptance, positive attitude and close interpersonal relations with nationals of the host country. Significant cultural differences between the sojourner's own country and the host country subsequently resulted in culture shock and the sojourner's perception of these differences were pertinent to effective cross-cultural communication (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; McEnergy & DesHarnais, 1990).

Empirical studies have supported the notion that national or cultural origin is a determinant of successful sojourn experience. However, it is important to distinguish the different indices of adaptation. The results relating national or cultural origin to social interaction and general adjustments are quite consistent. Although it is not possible to rank order all geopolitical areas or national groups, Canadians and Europeans are consistently found to be more socially involved with American nationals and have fewer identity crises during their stay than people from the Middle East, Africa or Asia (Lysgaard, 1955; Tamam, 1995)

Results from longitudinal studies suggest that attitudes toward the host country appear to change over time in a U-curve pattern. This pattern consists of initial excitement, followed by more critical attitudes toward the host nation, that finally result in more positive attitudes and finally re-appreciation before returning home. It was also found that an inverted U-shape curve is more typical of sojourners' coming from less developed countries. This is due to their inability to adjust to the drastic changes in material comforts and facilities encountered in the initial phase that often left these sojourners with a feeling of inadequacy. However, this inadequacy was replaced with heightened expectations once they integrated those changes into their everyday lives. Finally, there is a regression or less enthusiastic phase created by the impending return to a social environment that may lack the material comforts or that is resistant to their newly acquired living

habits (Church, 1982; Deutsch & Won, 1963; Oberg, 1960; Trifonovitch, 1977).

As for sojourners from developed countries, Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) and Trifonovitch (1977) took into account the period of readjustment after returning home and proposed an extension of the U-curve into a W-curve. Their curve suggested that the sojournerís feelings and attitudes regain strength upon arrival home. However, the U-curve and the W-curve have not been observed consistently in empirical studies. Church (1982) noted in his literature review that support for the U-curve is weak and inconclusive. There is also marked differences in the time parameters of the curve. Thus, making it a less useful tool for describing sojourner adaptation (Kim, 1989).

Several studies have also found a relationship between the perceived loss of social status and successful sojourn. The criteria for personal status may change substantially in a new culture due to the status accorded to the sojourner's home nation by the host country. Hence, the status of oneís home country or culture (high or low) is an important determinant of personal status, self-esteem and adaptation during sojourn (Grove & Torbiorn, 1985; Reece, 2000). Adler (1975, 1987) on the other hand viewed the adjustment of the sojourner as a transitional experience that reflected "a movement from a state of low self and cultural awareness to high self and cultural awareness" (p.15). He identified and described five phases of encompassing the progressive changes in identity and experiential learning. Adler's five phases of adaptation offers a schema to understand a sojournerís adaptation process. However, it is a general schema that failed to take into account the various categories of sojourners, their diverse background details, goals and experiences that may or may not describe their adaptation process according to the listed five phases.

The literature on intercultural studies revealed that there seem to be inconsistencies in the use of the term to describe the behaviour of persons living in other cultures. Many theorists including, Gudykunst (1993) and Brislin (1981, 1986) used the term 'effectiveness'. Meanwhile, Ruben and Kealey (1979) and Howell (1982) used the term "competence or competent behaviour" to describe the same phenomenon. Another term offered by researchers to describe the same phenomenon is "success" (Harris, 1972; Mischel, 1965).

Theoretical and Methodological Orientations

Studies on intercultural encounters have been based on a variety of theories and methodological orientations. These theories ranged from the communication perspective, adaptive theories from other disciplines to various new theoretical developments (Gudykunst, 1983, 1989; Kim, 1989). However, with regard to intercultural interactions among sojourners, a closer look of the literature reveal several theories that are frequently employed in research.

First, the social exchange theory of Kelley and Thibaut (1978) is based upon the economic principles of costs and rewards where people in interaction are assumed to anticipate rewards from a variety of interactions. The "comparison level" is the given standard for the evaluation of an outcome (Griffin, 1994). There is a second standard by which people evaluate their potential outcome called the "comparison level of alternatives". Within this theory the prevailing norms are considered as the acceptable rules of behaviour. As such, people in interaction are assumed as striving to achieve the socially rewarding transformations. Hence, people are expected to predict their rewards based on the normative values. One of the limitations of this theory is the disregard for differences in what is meant by the "costs and rewards" of the two people from different cultures. There is a tendency to generalize that both participants share similar notions of what are the gains or losses. Furthermore, to assume that all participants were aware during all interactions of the cost and rewards of their interaction is rather presumptuous and highly deterministic in nature.

A further limitation of this theory is that it is based on the Aristotelian logic that is predominant in the western view of reality. As mentioned by Yoshikawa (1984), the eastern worldview sees reality as holistic and not as sum of the whole. Therefore, in intercultural situations one cannot view personal happiness and satisfaction in terms of two causal variables that affect an individual. The collectivist eastern cultures place relational intuition, fate and letting go as intrinsic to the creation of consensual harmony. An approach such as this that disregards the influences of differing moral frameworks at play in human interactions could only provide findings that are superficial and reflect an inherently western bias (Griffin, 1994; Ting-Toomey, 1989).

The theory of anxiety/uncertainty management (Gudykunst, 1988, 1993) is a theory of relationship development that is based upon the uncertainty reduction theory of Berger and Calabrese (1975). This theory is based on a single law: the goal of reducing uncertainty about one another governs the process by which persons form relationships. Furthermore, in the process of such interactions individuals are supposed to know more of their cultural traits (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Through this perspective, it has been learned that cultures attempt to reduce uncertainty in different ways. Several variables, namely knowing the language of the other, strong identification with one's own cultural group, previous encounters with other groups, and a lesser level of expectation of positive outcomes will aid in more successful intercultural encounters (Gudykunst & Kim, 1988; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984; Gudykunst, Chua & Gray, 1987).

Gudykunst (1988, 1993) revised the theory to focus on cross-cultural encounters between cultural in-group and the stranger. In his initial work he posed axioms from the perspective of the stranger but his recent revisions posed axioms from the perspective of the in-group as well. According to him, in any intercultural interaction at least one person is the stranger. Thus a series of initial crises result in anxiety and uncertainty for the stranger. He further separated anxiety and uncertainty as two issues. Uncertainty is cognitive and can be retrospective while anxiety is affective and is about the anticipation of what is yet to come. Moreover, communication between in-group and stranger are affected by both interpersonal and intercultural factors but because of their hyper-awareness of cultural differences other distinctions are blurred. According to this theory, communication is effective if both participants are able to predict and explain each other's behaviour accurately. In his latest revision of this theory, Gudykunst and his associates outlined forty-nine axioms that specified the causal links from individual factors of motivation, knowledge and skill to his key variables of anxiety and uncertainty (Griffin, 1994).

A criticism of this theory is that the high number of theoretical predictions as encompassed in those axioms can be confusing. In addition, Ting-Toomey (1989) in her critique of this theory mentioned that the implicit goal of uncertainty

reduction is to control one's social environment. This is very much a western concept where individualism is highly valued as opposed to collectivism in most Eastern cultures. Although this theory professes to be an intercultural theory, its inherent western bias creates a methodology that imposes western concepts and labels onto the experiences of others who do not necessarily share a similar framework. Moreover, this theory views an intercultural encounter as a unidirectional move from a state of uncertainty to certainty. Thus, successful intercultural communication is achieved when there is a significant reduction (if not total elimination) of uncertainty variables. Lastly, the assumption that the goal of participants in intercultural encounters revolves around the reduction of uncertainty about the other makes intercultural interactions a methodical and strategic process. It reduces real life experiences that are laden with emotions and ambiguity to a series of muted variables.

A theory that has been widely adapted from psychology is Heider's Attribution theory. This theory dealt with the manner in which persons organized the information they received from their environment into meaningful actions and events. Thus, when two persons from differing cultures interact they use the knowledge and skills from their own culture to make inferences about the event or behaviour (Ehrenhaus, 1983; Gudykunst, 1989). Inasmuch as this theory provides an explanation for how different cultures perceive the actions of one another, it does not go beyond mere assigning of cultural labels to include an explanation of adaptation and transformations that occur over time. Perhaps, it is better applied to studies of brief or initial intercultural encounters, for instance, with tourists and business people rather than immigrants and refugees who remain in another culture over an extended period of time.

As for new theoretical developments, Kim (1979; 1988a; 1988b) advanced a theory of intercultural adaptation that attempted to integrate the processes of adaptation and acculturation. This theory was generated from her various studies of Korean immigrants in Chicago. She suggested that intercultural communicators developed relationships by drawing cultural distinctions and subsequently, adjusted their communication behaviour on the basis of this information. Moreover, her theory suggested that adaptation inevitably

occurs for all immigrants who are dependent and continue to communicate with the host culture. The theory of intercultural transformation (Kim & Ruben, 1988) is an extended version of this theory. It predicts that after an extended period of adaptation individuals move toward greater interculturalness in their psychological state. Again, these adaptation theories correlated variables identified as affective components of intercultural competence with components of intercultural effectiveness.

As for the methodology of the studies mentioned earlier, there appeared to be several recurring patterns. First, there is a lack of studies that focus on women's experiences set apart from men or studies that compare the experiences of women and men. Previous reviewers have also criticized the frequent overgeneralizations from limited samples and national groups, and the predominance of studies dealing with American sojourners or of persons from other cultures in the United States. There is also a need for integration and collaboration between studies of immigrants and sojourners, and between local and foreign researchers (Kim, 1989).

Moreover, most research on sojourner experience depended largely on questionnaire surveys or instruments and problem checklists sometimes supplemented by interviews (Gudykunst, Chua & Gray, 1987; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1984; Kim, 2001). Such studies tended to be superficial and generally failed to relate to specific sojourn experiences or cultural differences because of the tendency to standardize instruments across cultures. Other methodologies suggested for the study of sojourner experience to include more in-depth interviews, intensive case studies of experienced and long term sojourners, autobiographies, ethnography of small groups and various other unobtrusive measures (Brislin, 1983; Carbaugh & Hastings, 1995; Cohen, 1987; Gudykunst, 1984, Chen & Pearce, 1995).

Finally, as mentioned by Gudykunst (1989) the focus of intercultural communication from this objectivist perspective is on the degree of cultural similarities in the interactions of people from differing cultures. Thus, the goal of most research in this approach is on effectiveness and predictability. This has been hypothesized as leading to greater control that subsequently allow for greater effectiveness in interactions. For example, in isolating specific variables such as empathy (Kim,

1989), a researcher is said to be able to predict the problems of effectiveness in intercultural encounters (Hall, B.J., 1992).

This variable-analytic approach results in studies that view intercultural experiences as fragmentary accounts of cause and effect variables. Such studies fail to fathom the richness and connections between the various sequences of everyday events that comprised an intercultural experience. Thus, the intricacies and nuances of intercultural interactions call for an alternative way to render the account intelligible and contextualized.

Intercultural communication research : An alternative perspective

In contrast to the objectivist approach, social constructionism is the foundation of the theory of Coordinated Management of Meaning (hereafter referred to as CMM) that looks at communication as "a form of social action that can best be studied as a process of creating and managing social reality rather than as a technique for describing objective reality" (Pearce and Cronen, 1980, p.61). This theory builds upon earlier works that shared common assumptions about the nature of social interactions and the ability of humans as agency with the ability to act and interact. CMM encompasses within its theoretical foundations the works of Wittgenstein, the systems perspective, Dewey and American pragmatists ideas, symbolic interactionism as with the works of Blumer and Mead, and in the works of Bateson, Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (Cronen, 1994, Littlejohn, 1992; Pearce & Cronen, 1980; Pearce, 1995).

CMM is a practical theory that offers an expanded conception of communication as being the primary process. Cronen (1994) described communication as "the primary social process through which are created the secondary processes such as forms of identity, consciousness, creativity, institutions, relationships, cultural patterns, etc." (p.6). In addition, people create, maintain and transform these forms of life that include culture, relationships and identities through the communication process. It is with communication as the primary process that persons in interaction co-create and in conjoint action manage social reality (Cronen, 1994; Pearce & Cronen, 1980).

Moreover, CMM is a practical theory since, "A practical theory describes those features of a discourse that provide a general method for the study of social *praxis* and action, internally consistent and defensible in light of the data, that generate useful interpretation, explanation and critique of situated human action. Practical theory and the discourses it generates are in the real world of human action as much as they may be about it " (Cronen, 1994, p.9).

Thus, CMM theory offers a framework for the interpretation of everyday practices and looks into the activities in an interaction as places to locate meanings that are described cogently with an inside grammar. Within this view, communication is viewed as inherent in being a person and that persons in conversations are embodied, material entities in a real world (Cronen, 1995a). There is also reflexivity in all social actions in that they are connected to prior experiences and that these become the basis for practical judgment.

This perspective offers an understanding of culture as fundamental patterns of grammar that interpenetrate the constructions of stories lived and told. These patterns are co-evolving and polyphonic in nature. It is the composition of all stories lived and told that create the social worlds. In the CMM view, a variety of possible transformations are possible as a consequence of social actions. Thus, culture also gets (re)created in daily actions and is therefore not stagnant for it is always in the making. Culture is both visible and invisible patterns that are often times taken for granted and only discovered when placed in contrast to "others" (Cronen, Chen & Pearce, 1988; Pearce, 1994).

Pearce (1994) considered all interpersonal communication as one form of intercultural communication or another. The only distinct feature is that in instances of cultural communication the differing socio-cultural background is oblivious to the actors. The subsequent conversations often followed familiar patterns and perpetuate the existing social worlds. Conversely, intercultural communication are:

> "those conversations in which the participants are aware of their cultural horizons; these conversations are usually perceived as rupturing the taken for granted surroundings of the social worlds in which they occur"
>
> (Pearce, 1994; p.316).

As such, intercultural communication is not merely about the cultural differences and similarities of each actor but more so about the various forms of life that is brought forth or transformed in each interaction. It is the social actions of the actors in an intercultural context that gives intercultural communication its meaning (Pearce, 1994).

The CMM position on distinguishing patterns of cultures uses Bernstein's (1988) differentiation of incompatible, incomparable and incommensurate realities in order to articulate pluralism in forms of experiences and meanings as found in intercultural interactions. First, cultures may be incommensurate when there exist differences in beliefs and morality, etc. that cannot be measured or translated readily point by point. Thus, one needs to create a neutral language by which the differences can be compared without distorting any system (Bernstein, 1988; Pearce, Chen & Cronen, 1988, Pearce, 1992). Second, cultures are incompatible when there are inevitable differences but that it is possible to translate and transformed these differences according to some shared criterion. Third, cultures are viewed as incomparable when there is a lack of available resources to compare the differences and that communication is impossible at one point in time. However, given the possibility of human life and the transformations of explanations over time there is the possibility to develop a variety of family resemblances in objects and actions (Cronen, 1995a).

Pearce (1989) offers an alternative explanation of successful intercultural communication in the concept of cosmopolitan communication. In cosmopolitan communication there is a commitment to search for ways of coordinating without denying the existence of the other's ways. There is a recognition on the part of communicators that there cannot be one single deterministic framework for comparisons and judgment. Cultural differences are respected and the recognition of incommensurate realities necessitates the creation of a new language. This new language will allow for the reconstruction, recreation and transformation of old ethnocentric stories that posed a barrier to coordination in an intercultural context into a neutral one that is acceptable to all.

The CMM perspective brings a shift in how one views the process of intercultural communication for it goes beyond the "cause and effect" of two differing socio-cultural variables of

the actors. In this perspective it is in social interactions that the various forms of life including cultural patterns, autobiographies, relationships and episodes of the actors are (re)constituted and possible transformation is the consequence of social actions.

There has been various intercultural communication research using CMM theory. Among them is the Harris, Cronen and McNamee (1979) study that reflected a more useful conception of competence. The model in their study elaborated the CMM schema of competency and described it in terms of a particular actor's relationship to a system of meaning and action. Here, competency is the ability to co create and maintain the social order rather then merely learning a particular skill (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). Competency is further explained in the relationship of what a person can do and the game-like patterns of social interactions.

The game-like patterns of social interaction may range from episodes that are stable and clear to those that are ambiguous and unstable. Intercultural interactions can be assumed to comprise of patterns that are unstable and ambiguous. Hence, competency or game-mastery in such situations cannot be reduced into a set of skills to be learned rather it is an ability to rise to the occasion. What this means is the ability to perform in certain ways that are responsive to the needs of the specific situation (Pearce, 1994).

Alexander, et al. (1980) made comparisons in topic sequencing and information gain in relationship development between Chinese and American cultures. Wolfson and Norden (1984) examined the meanings and implications of interpersonal conflict in Chinese and North American cultures. This study addressed the questions of cultural definitions of interpersonal conflicts and the ways to respond to them. Pearce, Stanback and Kang (1984) used the CMM perspective to study the reciprocity between culture and communication. In a study of American and Korean College students, Kang and Pearce (1984) compared the concept of reticence across cultural groups. It was found that Americans regarded a reticent woman as socially unattractive while Koreans did not. This study revealed that the meaning of reticence in both cultures expressed the differences in the two cultures. Cronen, Chen & Pearce (1988) in a comparative study of conversations

at the dinner table between a Chinese and an American family provided a critical perspective on the study of communication and culture. Richardson (1993) in a study of American and Chinese student-teacher interactions applied the related concepts of "practical certainty" (Dewey) and "going on" (Wittgenstein) as a means to an alternative analysis of successful intercultural communication. A study by Chong (1994) explored the extent of coordination in an intercultural relationship between a Korean and a North American through the analysis of their interactive patterns.

Thus, these studies showed that CMM theory focuses on the role of culture on communication and the creative role of communication as the morphogenic process in the (re)constitution of culture. The theory is itself a cultural product that allowed for comparisons of incommensurable systems (Cronen, Chen & Pearce, 1988). Each application of the theory in intercultural settings has raised pertinent methodological issues and developed the heuristic potential of the theory further.

Episodic Analysis and an Understanding of Sojourn

It is evident from the preceding discussions that there are distinguishable epistemological differences between the two paradigms. As such, their theoretical posits affect the kinds of research generated within each perspective. Research of similar topics conducted within each perspective asked and looked for answers in differing places. Due to its earlier inception into the discipline of communication, there is a preponderance of intercultural studies from the traditional perspective. Thus, the field of intercultural communication continues to be flooded with repetitive variable analytic studies.

These studies (though relevant) often replicated research designs and instruments that were subsequently used to study diverse cultural groups. This method of standardizing research designs and instruments revealed a lack of regards for the uniqueness of each culture. The tendency is to view cultures as compatible and ignore the incommensurability of cultures. Thus, such studies also imposed the moral and political agenda of the researcher's cultural group.

The majority of studies of sojourners as cited earlier employed the traditional objectivist approach and focused on adaptation in the various phases of sojourn. One of the early

scholars of this field, Jacobson (1963) categorized sojourn into numerous phases including, pre-departure preparation, act of departure, enroute, entry into the new culture, post arrival, exploration, tentative commitment and ultimate commitment. Thus, subsequent studies tended to explore the experiences of sojourners in the various phases.

In addition, the focal issues revolved around four main areas, namely culture shock, sojourn effectiveness, adaptive changes and personal development (Church, 1982; Kim, 1989). It is not that these focal issues were inadequate to provide information on the experiences of sojourners, but rather that the variable analytic methodology employed resulted in a general and superficial account of a sojourner's experiences. Furthermore, the analyses of focal issues in terms of cause and effect variables tended to provide only one aspect of a sojourner's experiences (Gudykunst, 1989; Kim, 1989, Hammer, 1987).

The social constructionist perspective and in particular through the application of particular theories such as CMM, is a shift from the mainstream method of general surveys or narrative accounts of sojourners to one that explores the experiences of sojourners in episodic analysis. With this episodic analysis of situated acts, sojourn takes on a new meaning. That is, sojourn is more than a description of places, phases, adjustments and cultural similarities for it reveals the communicative acts with others where various forms of life (cultural patterns, autobiographies and relationships) are (re)created as they unfold within the array of real lived experiences. This episodic method renders sojourn as an experience that is situated and interactive. This method provides a closer, in-depth, reflexive and interactive look into the lived experiences of sojourners. Through an episodic analysis, the researcher is able to identify and make connections between the array of situated acts that make up each sojourn experience. Thus, each sojourn is unique and is viewed within its own context. Moreover, each episode is treated as data laden and given due focus within the context of a particular sojourn. Thereby, it is the minuscule details in the episodes of a sojourner's everyday life that reveals the richness, diversity and profoundness of a sojourn.

Conclusion

Intercultural interactions are about the intricacies of daily life and include all the nuances, ambiguities and idiosyncrasies inherent in mundane everyday life. Sojourn is an act of intercultural communication whereby all forms of human activities are expressed in everyday practices. It is the recurring, reflexive communicative acts between people that (re)constitute their cultural patterns in any given situation (Cronen, 1994; Pearce, 1994). Therefore, in intercultural research where one explores interactions within cultural patterns that may be incommensurate, incompatible or incomparable (Bernstein, 1988), the research must be viewed as a situated and contextualized account.

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