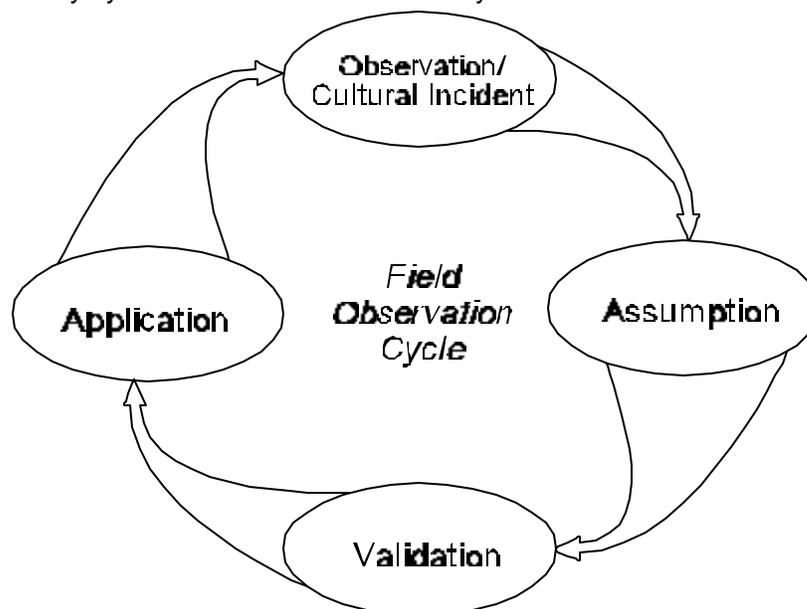


Cultural Adaptation

Understanding man, understanding culture, and understanding the world and unraveling the irrational are inseparable aspects of the same process. Culturally based paradigms place obstacles in the path to understanding because culture equips each of us with built-in blinders, hidden and unstated assumptions that control our thoughts and block the unraveling of cultural processes. Yet, man without culture is not man. One cannot interpret any aspect of culture apart from, and without the cooperation of, the members of a given culture. (Hall, Beyond Culture, p. 220)

1. Characteristics necessary in any Christian approach to analyzing a culture (the first three are from Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, pp. 43-4). To adequately explain culture and maintain fidelity to the Word of God, any approach to understanding culture must:
 - a. Be *holistic*--it cannot concentrate solely on one part of a culture and exclude other parts from consideration;
 - b. Be able to address the forces that shape *identity* in a culture;
 - c. Be able to address the problem of *social change*;
 - d. Acknowledge that people are made in God's image and seek to grapple with the implications of this;
 - e. Recognize the reality and extent of sin as a pervasive aspect of all human interaction;
 - f. Include the real salvific needs of all human beings within the framework of their culture.
2. For general use in any system: the field-observation cycle:

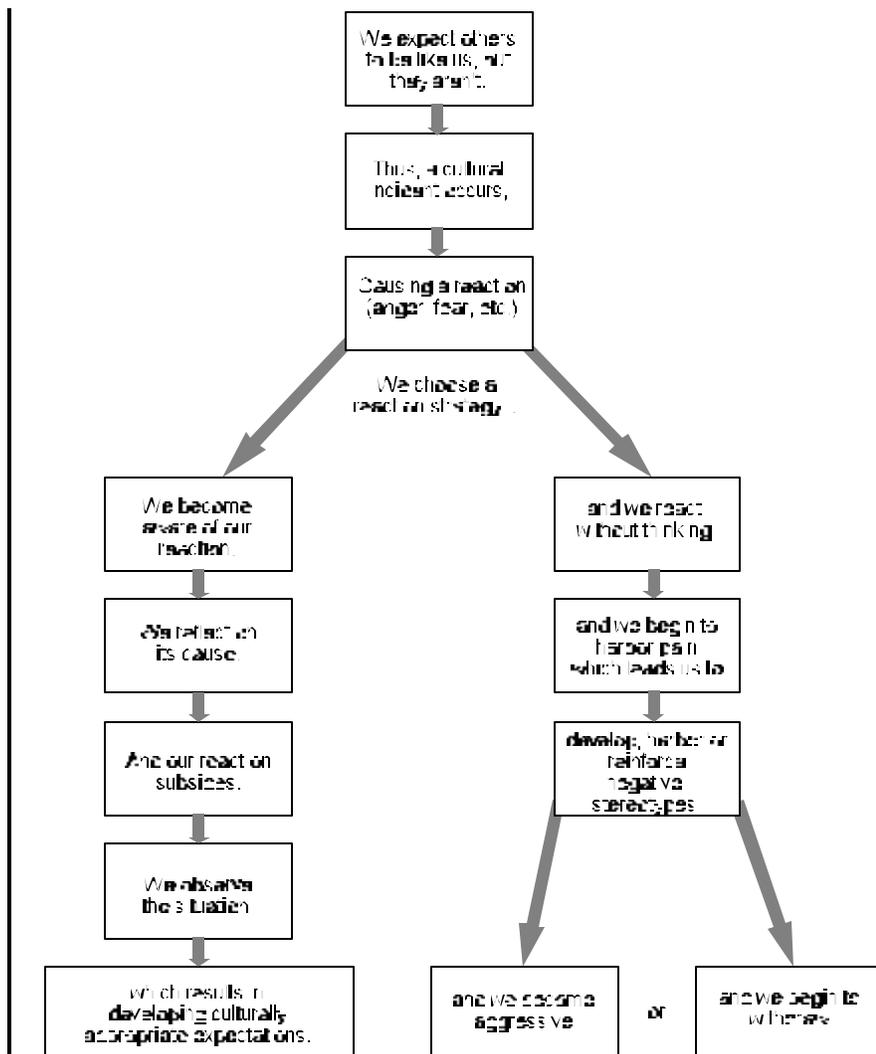


The Field-Observation Cycle is a simple four step process for systematically analyzing any particular component of culture.

- a. **Observe:** Simply look around at what is happening. For example, you see that people rarely look each other in the eyes, even when speaking directly to each other.
- b. **Assume:** Make some assumptions about what you see. Why do they avoid this, when in my culture it is important to 'maintain good eye contact'? You decide to assume that this is impolite in your new culture (at this point, you may not know the reason why this is so). We will expand on this process below.
- c. **Validate:** This can be done in more than one way. In this case, you may ask a trusted national for his/her opinion. Be careful to ask more than one person, since there may be different interpretations. In other cases, it may be good for you to "do as you see", and see if it improves the communication climate.
- d. **Apply:** Based on what you validate, apply your new found cultural knowledge in the cultural setting (for example, begin to develop the practice of looking away from the eyes of the person you talk with).

3. **Conscientization**

and the **cultural incident:** All too often, we don't have the time to simply "observe" what takes place around us--it is all happening too quickly. Instead, we are blindsided by something that we do not expect, which Storti calls the cultural incident:

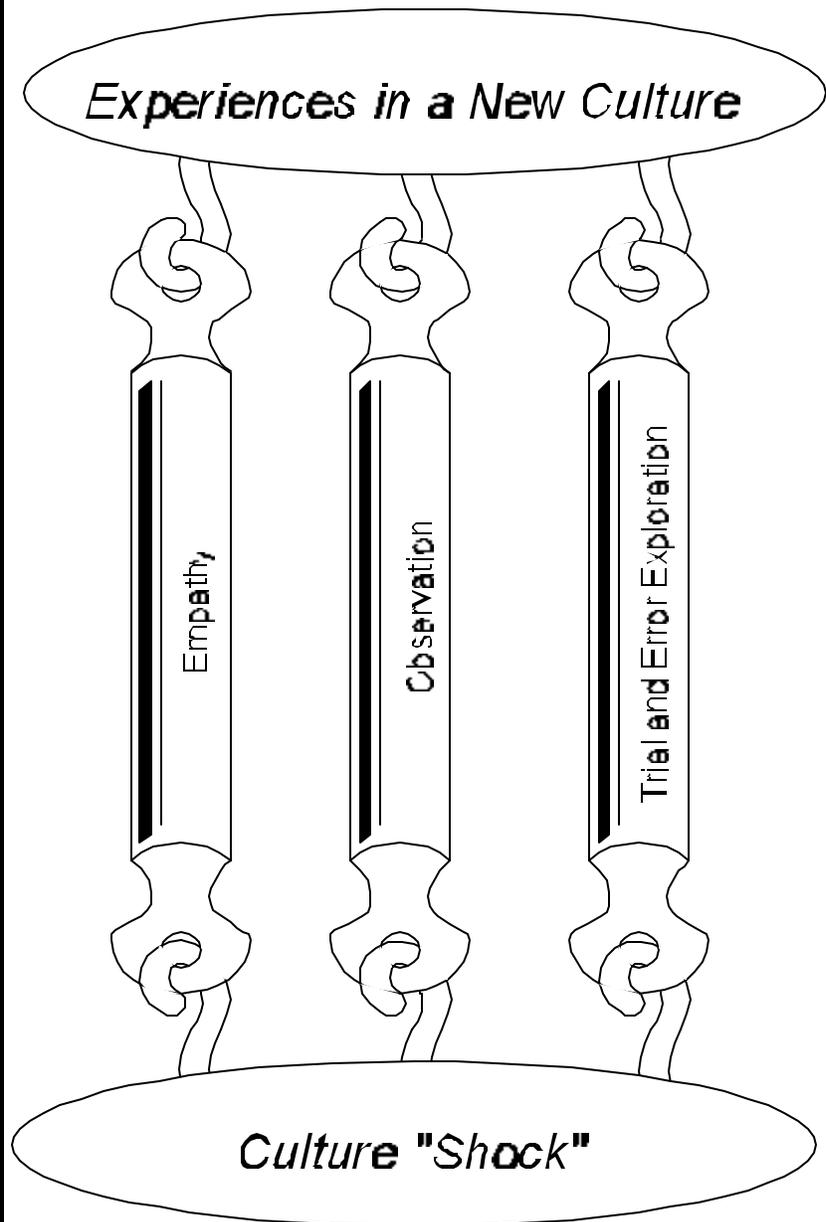


4. Developing a **coping strategy**. Ted Ward notes that much of our adjustment in the intercultural setting is not accomplished through knowing more, but through developing an appropriate set of coping strategies which enable us to absorb the shocks of living in a new culture. He stresses three primary strategies:

a. *Empathy*: How we relate to others is the foundation for competency in cross-cultural encounters. Do we trust them? Can we accept help from them? Do we consider ourselves as superior (or inferior) to them? Are we willing to try to see the world through their eyes?

b. *Observation*: After the initial shock of everything being new and being overwhelmed with different sensory data, do we respond by withdrawal or by maintaining an observer's attitude? Do we assume that things are the same everywhere and filter out significant clues in our contexts? How much attention do I give to details?

c. *Trial and error exploration*: The willingness to explore actions based on our observations is a third shock absorber. Do we try out our hunches, or withdraw as passive participants? This must be tempered with the willingness to see our tests for what they are--tentative attempts to move in line with the things we have observed so as to fit into and understand the new culture more deeply.



5. The cycle of cultural adaptation (adapted from Kohls, *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, pp. 64-68): Four phases of cross-cultural adaptation have been recognized in the literature (compare these with the phases of intercultural communication competence in the previous lecture notes):
- a. **Initial euphoria (the honeymoon phase):** Everything in the new culture is wonderful, curious, exotic, and exciting. There are a million things to learn, and each one can be made into a game.
 - b. **Irritability and hostility (the disenchantment phase):** The differences lose their appeal and we begin to resent never really feeling “comfortable” or “relaxed”--we long for items or circumstances that remind us of home (could also be called the “Where’s the McDonald’s phase”?!).
 - c. **Gradual adjustment (the getting used to it as a way of life phase):** You have started the process of being oriented to the new ways of living. They are no longer new--they begin to feel normal to you.
 - d. **Adaptation or biculturalism (the reintegration phase):** The new way of life has become your normal way of life. You have not forgotten your previous cultural patterns, you simply operate in the new culture without having to think things through any more. The various life patterns in the new culture may feel better, worse, or the same as your old, but you have learned to live them out.

In every culture we must face the fact of human institutions which together give cohesiveness to the culture and facilitate the functioning of all elements of life. KEEPRAH(T) is a helpful acronym for the first letters of the individual systems (see Harris and Moran, "Understanding", pp. 68-69 for the first seven systems; many of these were discussed in the Social Structures notes):

K = Kinship. Every society must provide for the biological reproduction of new members and see that they are nourished and cared for during infancy and childhood. Nearly everywhere it is the family which provides the basic context for the performance of these activities. Most of the early training and socialization of children also takes place within the family.

E = Education. Education is a facet of the socialization process necessary to all societies. As a system, education refers to all those activities which, in any way, directly or indirectly, contribute to providing new members, either by birth or immigration, with the knowledge, values and skills of the society. These are transmitted to the new member in order to prepare him to live and function within the society in a socially acceptable manner with some degree of independence.

E = Economics. Every culture must have some way of producing and distributing the goods and services which sustain the lives of its members. The set of institutions and

roles which are organized around the performance of these activities constitutes the economic system of the culture. Often there is an idealized portrait of what that system is which may not correspond to the actual events of life for the average person.

P = Politics. All communities or cultures must have some means of maintaining internal order and, at the same time, regulating their relations with other communities or cultures. Internal threats to a culture's existence come from the competition for power, here defined as the control over human, man-made, and natural resources. Since the availability of such resources has ultimate limits in any community (or culture) conflict of images and plans over the use of those resources is inevitable. The political system, therefore, is the network of institutions and social roles which exist to control the competition for power.

R = Religion and Recreation. Religion and recreation have been grouped together because both relate to the same functional prerequisite: the need to maintain meaning and motivation. In every culture, social life is supported by and supportive of a system of basic beliefs and values which provide an understanding of man's existence and his place in the universe. At the same time, every culture includes a variety of ritual and recreational activities which add meaning and enjoyment of daily life. Although we may separate religion and recreation for analytical purposes, they are often integrally related as in the celebration of a religious holiday. *(N.B. In my own approach, I would not group these two together, and would place the religious framework deeper at the heart of the culture. In any event, it is an area that must be explored for effective intercultural communication of the Gospel.)*

A = Association. The associational system of a community is one of the more difficult categories to conceptualize. It would include social groupings such as unions, clubs, societies, cooperatives, parties, etc. The associations may be treated as part of one of the other KEEPRAH systems.

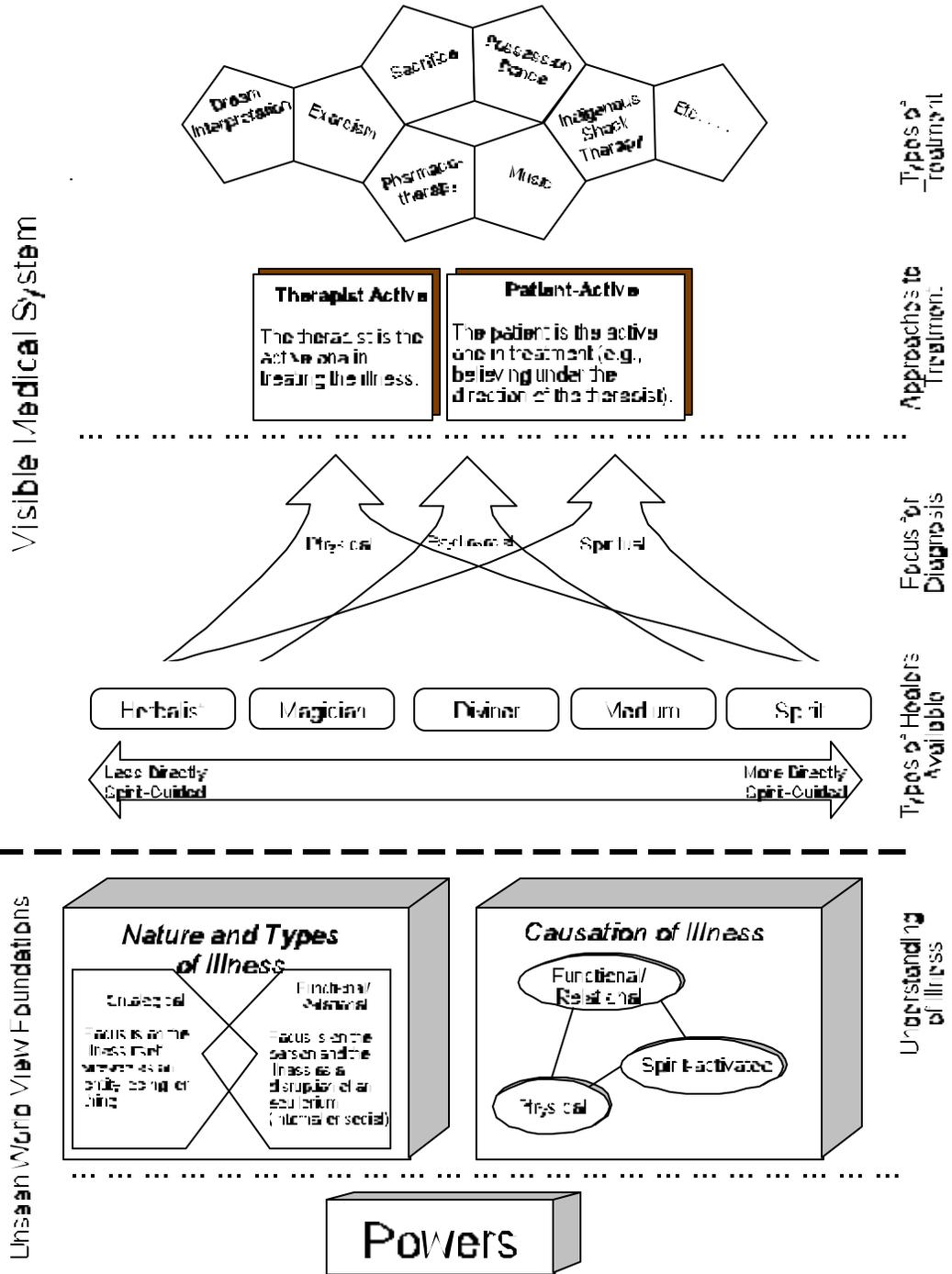
H = Health. People are concerned with their own survival and the survival of those who are important to them. Approaches to health are built on several assumptive areas, such as the definition of health itself, the world view of the power(s) in charge of the world and their impact on health, how those powers may be understood (and, if necessary, placated or appeased) so as to effect better health. The diagram on the next page illustrates the issues involved.

(T) = Transportation. How do people get from one place to another? This question has become exceedingly important in the urban world. More than just the mechanical aspects, the transportation system is built on cultural assumptions. For example, is a paved road only for motor vehicles, or must they share it with other forms of transportation (e.g., bicycles)? In the event of an accident, how is blame assessed? Is there a consistent pattern to the timing of public transportation?

COMPONENTS OF THE KEEPRAH SYSTEM: A comprehensive analysis of all the systems and their interrelatedness constitutes the basis for the holistic approach to cultural research; as an aid to the analysis, three components are added:

- e. The human component: the population, their institutions and organizations.

- f. The human-made component: the structures, facilities, and technology operated and managed by the human component.
- g. The natural component: the land, the climate, the water, the flora, and fauna.



THE KEEPRAH SYSTEM: A SUMMARY CHART

	System	Need	Elements
K	Kinship	Biological reproduction of new members	Descent, authority, residence, inheritance, marriage
E	Education	To provide new members with the knowledge, values, and skills of the society	Formal: schools, universities, trade schools Informal: books, television, newspaper, kinsmen, effective others
E	Economics	To distribute the goods and services which sustain the livelihood of its members	Types of enterprises, population of persons who work, ecology, systems of exchange and means of payment
P	Political	To maintain internal order and to regulate relations with others	Government: courts, city hall, police Public Utilities and services
R	Religion and Recreation	To maintain meaning and motivation	Religion: beliefs, rituals, organizations Recreation: types of play, dancing, singing, sports, story telling, drinking, artistic pursuits
A	Association	Polarization of people with similar purposes and/or objectives	Symbols or slogans, purpose (formal or informal), number of persons belonging
H	Health	Survival	Resources, environment, nutrition, maternal and child care, education, communicable diseases
(T)	Transportation/ Communication	Movement of people and/or goods and/or ideas and/or information	Methods of travel, telecommunications, newspapers, magazines, books, letters, TV, radio, telephone, Post Office