

“Creating encounters with difference that make a difference”

Larry A. Braskamp



For more information contact:  
Chuck Calahan  
[calahanc@purdue.edu](mailto:calahanc@purdue.edu)



# INTERCULTURAL EMPATHY ASSIGNMENT



## SKILL OF INTERCULTURAL EMPATHY

A person with intercultural empathy demonstrates adequate understanding of the complexity of what can be important to persons from a different culture. Often a person with intercultural empathy can interpret experiences or perspectives from their own and more than one worldview. This person can act supportive and recognize the feelings of a person with a different cultural perspective and different cultural values.

The exercise on the following page is adapted from Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva Chung's workshop at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication, July 2013, in Portland, OR.

Rubric	High (2)	Med (1)	Low (0)
1st sentence Identifies	clearly ranks all 5 characters	clearly ranks all 5 characters	ranks less than 5 characters; unclear ranking
2nd Sentence Describe	clearly describes all 5 characters	clearly describes all 3 to 4 characters	unclear descriptions; 0 to 2 characters
3rd Sentence Interpret	clear interpretation for all 5 characters	clear interpretation for 3 to 4 characters	unclear interpretation for 0 to 2 characters
4th Sentence Evaluate	thoughtful evaluation for all 5 characters	thoughtful evaluation for all 5 characters	less than thoughtful evaluation for 0 to 2 characters



“Strength lies in differences,  
not in similarities”

Stephen R. Covey

## PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING PARABLE:

### The Parable

ROSEMARY is a young woman about 21 years old. For a long time she has been engaged to a young man named HERNANDO and she is coming from a great distance to meet him for their scheduled wedding. The problem she faces is that between her and her betrothed there lies a river. No ordinary river, mind you, but a deep, wide river infested with hungry crocodiles.

ROSEMARY ponders how she can cross the river. She thinks of a man who has a boat, whose name is SVEN. She approaches SVEN and asks him to take her across the river. SVEN replies, “Yes, I’ll take you across the river if you’ll spend the night with me.”

Shocked at this offer, she turns to another acquaintance, LEE PAI, and tells him her story. LEE PAI responds by saying, “Poor ROSEMARY, I understand your problem, but I don’t see how I can help. It’s really your problem, not mine.”

ROSEMARY, in desperation, decided to return to SVEN, and spends the night with him. In the morning, SVEN takes her across the river. She completes her journey and arrives in time.

Her reunion with HERNANDO is warm, but on the evening before they are to be married, ROSEMARY feels compelled to tell HERNANDO how she succeeded in getting across the river. HERNANDO responds by saying, “I can’t believe you would do such a thing. I wouldn’t marry you if you were the last woman on earth.” And he banishes her as a soiled woman.

### The Parable Exercise

Step 1. Write down, in rank order, the character whose behavior you MOST APPROVE to LEAST APPROVE.

MOST APPROVE: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LEAST APPROVE: \_\_\_\_\_

Now write as a Word document or other file, a 4 sentence reflection paragraph on each choice. The first sentence should identify the character and your rank order. Your second sentence should concisely describe the behavior of the character. The third sentence should interpret the behavior using a cultural lens. Sentence four is your evaluation of this behavior. Write a 4 sentence paragraph reflection for each of the 4 characters above.

Step 2. Next reverse your rank order from above. Make your MOST APPROVED person your LEAST APPROVED person and your LEAST APPROVED person your MOST APPROVED person.

MOST APPROVE: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LEAST APPROVE: \_\_\_\_\_

For this new reversed rank order write a 4 sentence reflection paragraph on each new and revised choice as Word document. The first sentence should identify the character and the new rank order. Your second sentence should concisely describe the behavior of the character. The third sentence should interpret the behavior using a cultural lens. Sentence four is your evaluation of this behavior. Write a 4 sentence paragraph reflection for each of the 4 characters above. In other words, you are writing a reflective paragraph using a new cultural lens to justify the opposite of what you presented in Step 2.

## ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS

The same rubric can be used for step 1 and step 2, noting that the ranking has been reversed.

## OPTIONAL GROUP ACTIVITY

Split into groups of four or five. Each group member should take turns to share his/her first choice, second choice, then third choice, etc.

Probe each other for the reasoning behind the rank-order decision-making process. Discuss and arrive at a group consensus of the rank-order choices.

One member of the group should be responsible to record group choices and report back to the entire class.









Source: Adapted from William Weeks, Paul Pedersen, & Richard Brislin (1979). *A Manual of Structured Experiences for Cultural Learning*. La Grange Park, IL: Intercultural Network.

*Understanding Intercultural Communication* (2012) by Stella Ting-Toomey, Leeva C. Chung and Alex Flecky, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012

# INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND EFFECTIVENESS RUBRIC

## Definition

A set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together to enable systems, agencies, or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

		<b>Proficient 3</b>	<b>Emerging 2</b>	<b>Developing 1</b>
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Cultural self- awareness</i>		Articulates insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g. seeking complexity; aware of how her/his experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description.)	Recognizes new perspectives about own cultural rules and biases (e.g. not looking for sameness; comfortable with the complexities that new perspectives offer.)	Identifies own cultural rules and biases (e.g. with a strong preference for those rules shared with own cultural group and seeks the same in others.)
<b>Knowledge</b> <i>Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks</i>		Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	Demonstrates adequate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	Demonstrates partial understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.
<b>Skills</b> <i>Empathy</i>		Interprets intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.	Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.	Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.
<b>Skills</b> <i>Verbal and nonverbal communication</i>		Articulates and demonstrates understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.	Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.
<b>Attitudes</b> <i>Curiosity</i>		Articulates and demonstrates understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.	Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.
<b>Attitudes</b> <i>Openness</i>		Interprets intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.	Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.	Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.

## Emerging 2

Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.

## Developing 1

Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.

expresses a willingness to change.

- Adapted from AAC&U Core Value Rubrics