

60

CROSSING CULTURES

ESSAYS FROM TEACHERS

Edited by

**NAKIYE AVDAN BOYACIÖZLER,
RICHARD ALAN GOODMAN,
and MARGARET E. PHILLIPS**

With a Foreword by Jone L. Pearce

Crossing Cultures

Insights from Master Teachers

Edited by Nakiye Avdan Boyacigiller,
Richard Alan Goodman, and
Margaret E. Phillips

With a foreword by Jone L. Pearce

Foreword

Jone L. Pearce

We always have loved travelers' tales. There is something about the ways foreigners are different from us while also being recognizably like us that beguiles. Yet, as we have learned, such tales tell us much more about the teller than the exotic others. This makes it difficult for teachers of international management. Students arrive expecting delightful tales of foreigners. They might expect to just get by in accounting or statistics courses, but they do expect to be entertained in an international management class. How to do so without perpetuating a superficial exoticism? This book adopts a philosophy, backed up with useful tools, that enables teachers to do just that. *Crossing Cultures* takes on the ambitious task of helping us convey understanding without complacency, and knowledge without arrogance. This book moves us closer to these goals in a way that is insightful, stimulating, and really, very useful.

This work is a twenty-first century tale. It assumes that we all are now cosmopolitans, or as they tell it, carry multicultural imprints. That is, today we have not only the culture we were born into, but also many familiar foreign ones, learned as we live among neighbors from different backgrounds and absorb different cultures from a globalized mass media and literature. Our classrooms now hold students who have had lessons in multicultural tolerance since elementary school (and many who have not). We have students who have lived and worked in other cultures for decades, while others have received all of their cultural imprints solely from the tales of others, not all of them with lessons of tolerance. How to help such diverse cosmopolitans to look deeper and see more? Can we keep them engaged and motivated by the tale, without mesmerizing and pacifying?

Nakiye Boyacigiller, Dick Goodman, and Maggi Phillips have developed a genuinely innovative way to help us all approach this task; it is an approach that puts reflection and reformulation at the forefront. First, they offer the why, not just the how. Accomplished teachers of anthropology, learning, conflict management, ethics, negotiation, human resources management, and alliance formation have been gathered here

and asked to share their best course sessions addressing crossing cultures. By bringing together such diverse specialists, there is more genuine intellectual insight here than I have found in most scholarly books on culture. As they say, they “engage complexity with dialogue,” and the inclusion of so many different approaches to culture gives us the tools to get the conversation going, in our own minds as much as in the classroom.

Yet what is genuinely exciting is the way the material is presented. Each master teacher provides (1) the intellectual background for the subject matter covered in the session, (2) a description of the how-to for the classroom exercise, and (3) common dilemmas the instructor sometimes has with the session. Thus, each chapter, on its own, is extremely useful. In each, we can see the intellectual underpinnings and, depending on the group, can choose to teach them; we can evaluate exercise outcomes, as well as find help in addressing dysfunctional responses.

Further, this book is ambitious while remaining refreshingly modest. Boyacigiller, Goodman, and Phillips describe how they have tried to grapple with the complexity of teaching culture to avoid false epiphanies, an arrogance that is closed to learning, and how not to overplay that seductive “culture card.” They recognize that the topic is one of immense intellectual complexity, but that students come to a class on culture expecting exotic tales, and maybe some fun. They give us tools, clearly labeled for easy access, and then let us decide how we will use them. This respect for the book’s readers, as much as the combination of intellectual heft and practical tools, is what leads me to call this a twenty-first century work. It is innovative, engaging and useful, and I hope it will serve as a model.

March 17, 2003
Irvine, California