

Discussion Questions

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Date:

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1. Torajans and the Tourists

In the late 1980s, the Toraja people who lived in Indonesia had a rather traditional culture which resulted in many Torajans refusing the people who visited their land. They were threatened that tourists would steal them of their identity and sacred rituals. Toraja people felt that people outside of their territories were intruding on their lands as well as their usual rituals. So, Toraja communities in Sulawesi, Indonesia, refused tourists entry to Indonesian lands and felt resentment because they saw how their sacred rituals and ceremonies were evolving in order to adapt to tourists' needs. They felt that tourists' cultures were as conflicting with their cultures as the East is from the West. Due to such threats and differences, Torajans began staging their rituals especially in the facets of the death in order to provide fake insights to tourists as to how they actually do things in their daily societal and cultural life. Given the context, it is assumed that there were significant cultural differences and rituals that prompted the Torajan people to resist the threats that were posed to their community and rituals, especially due to tourism. This essay focuses on four important factors that Scollon and Scollon (1995) discussed in the study, including worldview, socialization, forms of discourse, and face systems.

The article "Discourse and Intercultural Communication" (2005) describes that Scollon and Scollon (1995) identify several key differences that highlight the complexities and challenges of integrating tourism with traditional practices. The Toraja communities' refusal to accept tourists in the late 1980s underscores their desire to protect their cultural heritage from being misrepresented and commodified (Scollon & Scollon, 2005). Ideology ties in with the worldview of a person and also the history of development. In terms of cultural differences,

Torajan people had more complex funeral traditions in the world and those rituals were part of their identity and culture. When a Torajan dies, people have to follow a series of ceremonies for the person's funeral before he is buried. In their funeral tradition, they consider a person truly dead until he is buried. Moreover, they stay in the house of the deceased with the rest of the mourning family members while the funds for burial are being collected (Baan et al., 2022). This ritual is a historic tradition which affects the way Torajan views the world and the process of death. The process of transforming from one world to the other is significant in their life as they do not see it in a morbid way. Tourists, on the other hand, tamper with the way Torajans live their lives and view the process of death. Therefore, intruding on the way they celebrate one's death as part of their culture would hurt them and their identity in the society which is why ideology or worldview is a significant reason why tourists were no longer allowed in their lands.

Furthermore, socialization, as Scollon and Scollon (1995) presented, involves the process through which individuals internalize the customs, norms, and rituals of their culture. The intrusion of tourism into the sacred practices of Torajan could disrupt the social fabric of the community as they are socialized to respect and uphold their traditions and customs. The intrusion could also lead to intergenerational conflicts especially those related to death and the afterlife as well as a loss of cultural continuity. The younger generation of the Toraja community might feel pressured to conform to the expectations of the tourists while the elders of the community strive to preserve traditional practices. For instance, the sacred funeral ceremonies of Torajans are deeply rooted in their spiritual and cultural beliefs so they viewed the tourists' presence as a threat to the authenticity of their rituals. The adaptation and commercialization of these rituals by tourists would likely clash with Torajans' ideologies which would lead to a sense of cultural invasion and disrespect (Adams, 1997).

The Torajans pertain to the forms of discourse, especially ways of discussing and performing their funeral ceremonies, which are structured within their culture and cultural identity so the introduction of tourism could alter such discourse. The commercialization of Torajans' rituals would lead to less genuine expression of Torajans' traditions as this staged authenticity might be seen as more performative but the degradation of the cultural heritage of Toraja. Face systems, on the other hand, need to be maintained so that the social dignity of the Torajans can be protected and tourism be rejected. The Toraja people might have felt that the presence of tourists threatened the respect and harmony within the community which caused resentment and resistance. Therefore, the need to maintain "face" or dignity could have driven Torajans to protect their social cohesion and cultural integrity.

2. Tourist-Hosts and Cultural Clashes

In terms of the cultural clashes due to non-conformation to cultural identity and rituals in different nations and communities, the contact theory suggests that interpersonal contact reduces prejudice between majority and minority group members which could help to ease tensions. According to Gordon Allport, two or more cultures should have the ability to coexist through equal and meaningful interaction in order to receive equal status of societal importance with "minimal" differences in backgrounds, cultures, traditions, characteristics, and qualities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). The hypothesis suggested by Gordon Allport in 1954 can be applied to understand the dynamics between hosts and tourists in culturally conservative regions such as Muslim countries or conservative Christian communities in the Caribbean, Polynesia, and the Mediterranean. Potential outcomes for successful and meaningful tourist-host contact include mutual cooperation for the opposing culture's values and increased communication to ensure both parties co-exist successfully.

When tourists disregard local customs and cultural traditions such as dress codes, it can lead to negative attitudes from the hosts as their community may perceive tourists as ignorant or sometimes disrespectful of one's cultural norms. This can foster resentment and reinforce negative stereotypes between hosts and tourists. In regards to contact theory, tourists who understand and respect local traditions and customs can foster mutual respect as positive interactions can improve attitudes on both sides. However, cultural clashes often arise between locals or hosts and tourists from differing values and communication styles which can lead to tensions and a sense of invasion. Tourists who openly consume alcohol, wear revealing clothes, or sunbathe topless in religiously conservative countries may inadvertently challenge the values of the hosts and their community (Fan, 2024).

Contrary to that, tourists who engage in a respectful dialogue and wear culturally appropriate local dresses can help hosts see them as individuals, leading to the appreciation of each other's culture. However, if they disrespect cultural codes they are seen as a monolithic group by the host community. Building on that, the contact theory reflects that meaningful and culture-specific interactions can reduce perceived cultural differences and help bridge cultural gaps. The theory suggests that such interactions when conducted under certain conditions of common goals, equal status, and institutional support can effectively lead to greater understanding between locals and tourists as well as reduced prejudice between communities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). When hosts and tourists engage in cultural exchange and meaningful communication practices openly and respectfully, both parties negotiate the differences and find common ground.

The potential outcomes of tourist-host contact foster positive and respectful interactions between host and tourist while they vary widely depending on the attitudes and behaviors.

Negative outcomes include increased tension, breakdown in communication, and reinforced stereotypes which are more likely when interactions are disrespectful or occur under conditions of conflict and inequality. On the other hand, positive outcomes include reduced stereotypes which are more likely due to interactions that greatly appreciate cultural diversity and occur under conditions that promote cooperation and equality in the communities. The contact hypothesis highlights the importance of respectful and positive interactions in fostering mutual understanding and relations between hosts and tourists, thus, promoting respectful behavior and cultural sensitivity among tourists. Moreover, the clash of values between both parties can be increased or mitigated depending on their interactions with each other, leading to either greater appreciation of cultural diversity or blatant disregard of local customs. Such interactions and their outcomes can potentially cause internal conflicts within the hosts' community as they devalue their local traditions while adapting a more inclusive attitude towards different ways of life.

The nature of interactions between both parties, tourist and host, plays an important role in shaping their perception of each other as positive interaction reinforces appreciation whereas negative interaction reinforces conflicts, increasing cultural divides between both communities. Tourists engaging in local customs and showing respect for local cultural traditions help in breaking down cultural barriers with the hosts which helps in locals not resenting new people coming on their lands. Hosts' perceptions of the tourists' community and vice versa are influenced by the quantity and quality of their interaction with each other, leading to more empathetic relationships and accepting the behavior of tourists' presence. However, when hosts' standards are not conformed and tourists' presence is not openly appreciated, it leads to a more polarized perception of each other and the overall communities. Therefore, promoting a

harmonious relationship between hosts and tourists is crucial for effective tourist-host relationships.

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