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### K&S Model in *Gods Must Be Crazy*

The deep core values and beliefs of a culture cannot be observed objectively on the surface; in order to fully try to understand the concepts a culture bases their values and beliefs off of, one must observe behavior, language, and attitudes. These are both implicit and explicit aspects of human nature which requires studying a culture from the outside and the inside. In the 1980 South African movie, *Gods Must Be Crazy* directed by Jamie Uys, the audience is shown two cultures that come from entirely different worlds and how their interaction evolves as communication between the two progresses. Intercultural communication usually starts off as very weary and uncomfortable, but through this uncomfortable interaction, relationships can form and grow. In this essay, by using the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Cultural Value Orientation Model (K&S), I will demonstrate that by going through the intercultural communication process, people can overcome cultural misunderstandings to arrive at a stronger, mutually respectful, and richer relationship.

It is extremely difficult to uncover the core values and beliefs that lie within a culture which is not one's own. Different cultural core values and beliefs are seen throughout *Gods Must Be Crazy* through verbal and non-verbal communication among the Bushmen tribe and modern society. The K&S Model asks five basic questions of humanity; how these questions are answered molds those values and beliefs. The first question addressed is, "What is human nature

assumed to be?" (Yan, Lecture 9/13/17). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's explains that human nature can either be good, evil, or a mix of both. Human nature in the eyes of modern society in this film is portrayed through characters such as Mr. Steyn, Ms. Thompson, Mr. Hind, and the rebels fighting against the South African government. They see and interpret humanity as being a mix between good and evil. This is because we can see genuine and good characters such as Mr. Steyn and Ms. Thompson, but then we are shown Mr. Hind who only cares for himself and the rebels who murder people. The Bushmen tribe, where Xi is from, live deep in the African Kalahari Desert. Not having access to or information about the outside world that is bustling 600 miles away, gives the people of this tribe an innocence from corruption and malice. They do not have negative words in their vocabulary such as "violence" or "evil", they do not fight, and they share everything they have. Therefore, they see human nature as being inherently good. This can be seen when the bottle is first given to the tribe from their god but once bad things start happening in the tribe, such as jealousy and fighting, they do not understand what is going on since they have never known these concepts. This creates conflict within the Bushmen tribe because the members do not know how to go about the situation, act, or communicate. This differs greatly than what the modern people see human nature as due to their drastically different experiences.

The K&S Model continues to ask four more questions, of which the second is, "What is the relationship between humans and their environment?" (Yan, Lecture 9/13/17). Three possible outcomes to this question are that humans attempt to control nature, live in harmony with nature, or that humans live at the mercy of nature. The modern people and the Bushmen tribe have very different outlooks on how humans should interact with nature. The modern

people firmly believe that nature is at a human's disposal and that they should conquer, control, and dominate land. This value can be seen in the city they are from considering is nothing but concrete, steel, and pollution. If a culture truly cares for and respects the environment, they would not destroy it for personal gain — which is exactly what modern society is doing. In another scene, the rebels who are fighting against the government hide in what looks like a forest and do not give a second glance when the earth around them begins to be destroyed. The Bushmen believe that people should live in harmony with nature and treat it as an equal. They believe their god has put everything they need on the earth, and to never take more than necessary. This is seen in many scenes such as in the beginning when Xi says, “nothing is evil, even a poisonous snake is not bad, just keep away from the sharp end” (*Gods Must Be Crazy*). His compassion, understanding, and respect for the snake surpasses what most of modern society is capable of. This can also be seen when Xi kills a goat by putting it to sleep with a tranquilizer first, and then apologizes for taking its life to sustain his own. Xi has more respect for the goat he plans to eat than the respect people in modern society have for each other. This scene is the pinnacle of where verbal and non-verbal communication goes wrong. This is because when Xi does this, a boy who is a part of the family who owns the land, tells an adult and they have him put on trial in court. When Xi walks into court, he smiles at all the of the people who are there while they stare blank and coldly back at him. This is non-verbal communication and a cultural difference that Xi did not understand but he did not worry about since he was not fully aware of the magnitude of what was going on due to lack of verbal communication. It was difficult for Xi to communicate since he speaks another language than everyone in the room, M’Pudi has to translate since he spent a couple years living among them. M’Pudi found the job of being an

interpreter difficult since the Bushmen do not share a lot of the same vocabulary with modern society and do not have words such as “guilty” or “stealing” in their language. Through communication, M’Pudi could tell that Xi genuinely did not realize what he was doing was wrong and if he had he would not have done it. M’Pudi and Xi strengthened their relationship through the communication of this story. Their bond grew deeper due to the fact M’Pudi could understand and communicate back to Xi with compassion and respect.

The Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck Model propose a third question in reference to what aspect of time conceptualization a culture emphasizes. Time conceptualization can either be past-oriented in which the culture focuses on tradition. It can be present-oriented otherwise known as consumer-oriented in which people are encouraged to live for the moment they are experiencing. The last is a future-oriented culture which looks toward the future and achieves to always be moving forward. Modern society in “God Must Be Crazy” can be categorized as both present and future oriented. It is present-oriented because it is a consumer culture where people are told they need products now and are encouraged to buy them without thinking about it. But, it is also very future-oriented due to the constant forward motion of people, creation of new buildings, and expansion of man-kind around the earth. The Bushman tribe is also present-oriented but not future-oriented. They are present-oriented like modern society but in a different way, since they live day-to-day only focusing on survival for the moments they are living in. They do not think about tomorrow or the next day and wonder what they are going to be doing — as far as they know life will never be any different than how it is. It can be seen how future-oriented modern society is in the movie when Xi thinks a car is an animal with four legs. The scenes when Xi interacts with motor vehicles is looked at as primitive and even comical at times.

Although, Xi cannot be blamed for this cultural misunderstanding and difference because the two cultures are not in on the same page of the importance of technology and industrialization.

The fourth question in the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Model addresses the type of relationships a culture emphasizes for organizing its social organizations. The modern people exhibit individualism which puts the needs and interests of the individual before those of the group. This is seen in the lion attack scene when Mr. Hind, Mr. Steyn, and Xi are attacked and chased by a lion. Mr. Hind gets into his touring vehicle and drives away without looking back for or making sure Mr. Steyn and Xi are okay, he only cared about his safety. On the other hand, the Bushmen tribe are collectivists. Therefore, the needs and interests of the group are put before those of an individual. From the beginning of the movie, it is seen that the tribe comes before any single person. Collectivism can be seen in how the tribe shares everything, never gets jealous or angry at one another, and when Ms. Thompson gets to village where she will be the new school teacher. They exhibit collectivism and how they value the community as a whole by stopping everything they are doing to welcome her by joining in song. At the end of the movie, Mr. Steyn and M'Pudi — who are a part of the individualistic culture — team up with Xi to save Ms. Thompson and the school children hostages from the rebels. Through this communication and team work, the hostages are freed and Xi is able to return back to his tribe in the Kalahari. The relationships between Mr. Steyn, M'Pudi, Ms. Thompson, and Xi are greatly deepened after this incident due to the amount of trust that was necessary between people who could barely communicate when they first met.

Lastly, the K&S Model asks the final question of humanity: "What mode of action does a culture emphasize to bring about changes in its social-cultural environment?" (Yan, Lecture

9/13/17). The three possible answers provided for this question are that a culture is being oriented, being-in-becoming, and action oriented. The people who live in modern South Africa are shown to be action oriented through using images of the large city they live in, the technology they have, and the way they decide to resolve issues or change something. Ms. Thompson and the rebels are the biggest portrayers of action in the film. Ms. Thompson takes action in her life when she realizes she is not happy in her job so she decides to pick everything up to move to a remote village to teach their youth. The rebels take large scale action in their efforts to overthrow the government that they are dissatisfied with. The Bushmen culture is being oriented due to their static state of living day-to-day the same. The tribe's main goal is to survive on a daily basis, they do not think about the future or the past, only the present they are living in. After the "evil" bottle is given to the tribe by their god, Xi became action oriented and took the necessary steps to get rid of it for the better of the group.

Through the verbal and non-verbal communication between M'Pudi, Mr. Steyn and Xi, they formed a mutual liking and relationship with one another. Therefore, when they see the rebels with the hostages, they all took action together in order to save Ms. Thompson and the school children. Due to language barriers, M'Pudi had difficulty trying to translate everything to and back from Xi. Therefore, most of this operation was done non-verbally and required a great amount of trust between them. This strengthened their bond they had with each other and led to mutual respect.

It is difficult to understand the core values and beliefs of a culture without observing first-hand from the outside and the inside. In order to grasp the best understanding possible, one must peel back each layer to analyze the implicit and explicit information of the culture they are

presented with. Applying the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Model to *Gods Must Be Crazy* while focusing on verbal and non-verbal communication, a person can get a very clear idea as to what the core values, beliefs, and attitudes of the Bushmen's and modern society's culture are. In the movie, Xi begins his day as any other but it quickly turns dark when he and his tribe are cursed with a bottle that brings nothing but "evil". In his attempt to dispose of this bottle, he finds himself in many confusing and frustrating situations due to inability to communicate with anybody from modern society. Meeting the translator, M'Pudi, helped him greatly, thus, giving him the opportunity to focus on his non-verbal communication skills. By the end of the film, Xi has found his way out of jail, survived a lion attack, saved hostages from blood thirsty rebels, and found his way back home in one piece.

Along the way, Xi sparked many new friendships which aided him throughout his journey. Experiencing the world outside of his tribe was a culture shock, but with the help of his new friends, he was able to maneuver his way home while learning a lot about himself and others. As demonstrated through applying and analyzing the K&S Model to the verbal and non-verbal communication seen in *Gods Must Be Crazy*, it can be stated that the Bushmen tribe and modern society's cultural views differ in major ways. Their views differ on topics of humanity such as human nature, the relationship between humans and nature, time conceptualization, social organization, and emphasis on the mode of action. Although experiencing cultural differences feels uncomfortable, if a person can handle it, they have the ability to come out a different and better person at the end. Through intercultural communication, Xi, Mr. Steyn, and M'Pudi overcame cultural, verbal, and non-verbal misunderstandings and arrived at mutually respectful, beneficial, and strong relationships.

Works Cited

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