

Paul B. Pedersen 先生

An Aloha to My Mentor and Role Model, Dr. Paul Pedersen



Culture is complex but never chaotic.

Many members of SIETAR are familiar with the Outside Expert Awareness Exercise (Pedersen, 1988), sometimes referred to as Baroomba (Yashiro, Machi, Koike & Yoshida, 2014), which enables participants to experience the stages of culture shock in as little as thirty minutes. Paul Pedersen developed this in the 1970s along with many other creative teaching/training tools, such as the Synthetic Cultures Simulation (Hofstede, Pedersen & Hofstede, 2002) and the Triad Training Model (Pedersen, 1976; 1977; 2000). Please see Fontaine (2012) for a beautiful piece on Dr. Pedersen's life and works.

I recall starting my master's degree program in Counselor Education at Syracuse University in the early 1990s, filled with anxiety about being able to keep up with the academic curriculum. On the first day of class, I remember participating in many exciting activities and simulations from Pedersen (1988), including the Outside Expert Awareness Exercise. I vividly recollect how the simulation made me confused, puzzled, and frustrated because I could not figure out the rules. After the simulation, Dr. Pedersen smiled and announced the three simple rules of the fictitious culture (i.e., you can only ask "yes" or "no" questions; you can only talk to members of the same gender as yourself; if the person asking the question is smiling the answer is "yes," if not it is "no").

With a broad smile on his face, he shared with us his favorite quote, "Culture is complex but never chaotic." He argued that culture may at times seem confusing and frustrating but there are always patterns that can be understood. This unforgettable initiation into graduate school prompted me to write home immediately about how much I had learned through these experiential exercises.

Recently, "active learning" has become a buzzword here in Japan and every time I hear this, I think of the wonderful experiences Dr. Pedersen prepared for us in every one of his lessons. In fact, in his generosity, Dr. Pedersen has published numerous books in which he compiled hundreds of activities to be used in teaching and training (e.g., Pedersen, 1988; 2004).

I learned not only from the content of his lectures, but

from the way he taught his classes, his writing, and from his kindness as a human being. Every class was a new adventure for me, pushing my mind to its limits. Despite his busy schedule, he always made time for any student who wanted to meet with him. He also hosted parties for us at his house and at the faculty dining room. This is on top of being one the most prolific researchers I have had the honor of knowing.

To me, Dr. Pedersen personified the goals of our field. He was the most open-minded, generous, non-judgmental, adventurous, and caring person I have ever met. Dr. Pedersen's mentoring did not end during graduate school but continued throughout his life.

My last encounter with him was about three years ago, when Dr. Dharm Bhawuk asked me to write a chapter on the Triad Training model for the upcoming issue of the Handbook of Intercultural Training (Yoshida, In Press). What struck me when I wrote him for permission to cite his works was his immediate (within five hours of writing him) and generous ("Of course, you may use any of my work!") response. Even though Parkinson's disease had long taken a toll on his health, he continued to respond to my emails quickly.

Returning to the Outside Expert Awareness Exercise, I remember being at a workshop in which he introduced this simulation only to find that many in the audience were already familiar with the simulation but did not know that he was the one who created it. Dr. Pedersen would simply laugh and say, "Yes, this simulation is simple enough that it has really spread but the name did not stick... in fact, I remember going to a conference where someone actually taught that simulation to me!" He smiled once again.

As we face increasingly uncertain times, I continue to think about Dr. Pedersen and the potential towards goodness that each of us possesses. Thank you Dr. Pedersen for making the world an infinitely better place through your existence! Aloha.

吉田友子 Tomoko YOSHIDA
慶應義塾大学 Keio University