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CS501
Rynkiewicz's *Soul, Self, and Society* chapter 2

Thesis: The main concern of this chapter is to address the ways one perceives and understands one's own culture, other's cultures, and how to respond to the various actions, beliefs, and constructs that arise.

Summary: As an introductory chapter to a cultural anthropology book, Rynkiewicz spends time defining many of the basic vocabulary terms needed to successfully navigate the subject.

Anthropology at its core is the "study of the ways of mankind." (12) After a lengthy but well worded definition, culture is the system of shared knowledge and beliefs that a group of people use to define their spiritual, social, and physical environments. (19) Ethnocentrism is judging another by your cultural standards. (24) He also defines cultural relativism – the idea that each culture is valid and can only be understood by those within, and culture shock – the feelings one goes through when experiencing life in a culture that is not your own. All this is essential to understand as Christians because if we are to share the gospel with anyone we need to understand their culture so the Bible can be presented in a way that is appropriate to them.

Personal interaction: I found that I could very mildly relate to the concept of "reverse culture shock" that was added onto Kalvero Oberg's concept of culture shock. (34) I went on a very short term missions trip in the late 1980's to visit our CMA mission stations in West Africa.

Whether what I experienced was a true reverse culture shock or not, I was so impressed by what I saw that I was days in bed and weeks before I could even go to a grocery store without feeling

overwhelmed and guilty. (Add my youth and sheltered upbringing, and it probably was more just a wake-up call to the reality of poverty in the world than true reverse culture shock)

Two questions:

1. How in my setting can I be more aware of and sensitive to the unspoken cultural differences within the members of my congregation?
2. How can I then engage my congregation in being supportive of those who have different cultural expressions than their own?