

Culture Shock

As you ready yourself to study abroad, you have gone through a number of preparations: making sure that you were academically prepared, securing necessary finances, saying good-bye to the comfort of

Stages of Cultural Adaptation

The Honeymoon Stage

Common thoughts during the Honeymoon Stage include:

Isn't this exciting? I can't wait to tell _____ about this. Aren't they interesting? Everything here is so _____!

Characteristics of the Honeymoon Stage:

- You are busy taking care of business (registration, housing, bank account, etc.)
- You are observing the new culture and familiarizing yourself with the new environment
- You are meeting useful and friendly university staff
- You are making your first social contacts with members of the host culture
- You are seeing and doing new things and enjoying a new world

The Conflict Stage

Common thoughts during the Conflict stage include:

*We would never do that in my country! Why can't they just _____?
I only have ___ months before I go home. These people are so _____!*

Characteristics of the Conflict Stage:

- You begin to desire more personal relationships with members of the host culture
- You find you have little time or opportunity to make friends
- You are feeling isolated, out of place
- You may feel tired, sick, depressed, angry, or frustrated
- You have a growing awareness that your home culture's behaviors may not be accepted in the host culture, and you may have to give up, suspend, or modify your own behavior
- Your high expectations remain unmet
- You blame the host culture for your problems
- You spend lots of time with members of your home culture complaining about the host culture
- You experience problems with the subtleties of the target language

The Critical Stage

Common thoughts during the Critical Stage include:

Why shouldn't they say/do that? We say/do that too, but differently

Characteristics of the Critical Stage:

- You choose to become an "explorer" in the new culture
- You accept the challenge of self-reflection
- You assume responsibility for your own cultural adjustment

The Recovery Stage

Common thoughts during the Recovery Stage include:

You don't understand them like I do. I'm beginning to like this.

Characteristics of the Recovery Stage:

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View Yourself as a Teacher

ON-LINE CULTURAL TRAINING RESOURCE FOR STUDY ABROAD

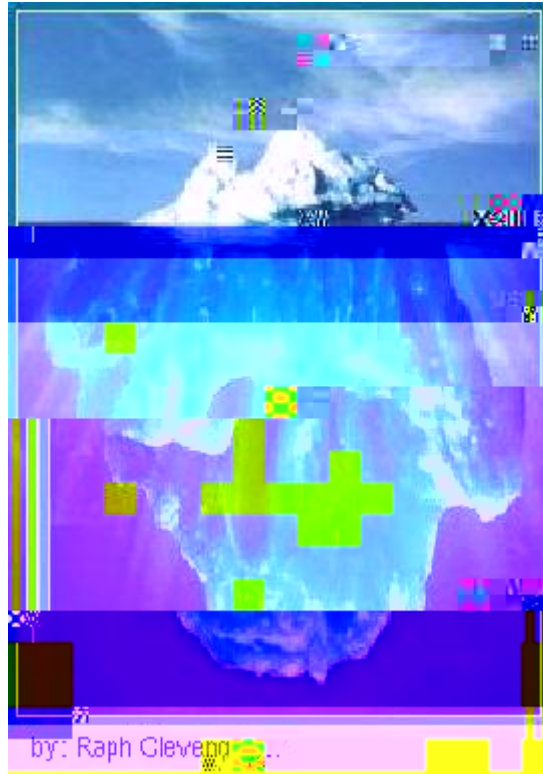


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WHAT'S UP WITH CULTURE?

<http://www3.uop.edu/sis/culture/index.htm?page=/sis/culture/>

The Iceberg



Iceberg Exercise

Culture has been aptly compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a visible section above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the water line, so culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be suspected, imagined, or intuited. Also like an iceberg, the part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole.

The items that appear below are all features of culture. Keeping in mind that observable behaviors belong above the surface of the water, while the invisible aspects of culture belong below the surface, drag each feature to show whether it should be "above" or "below."

Facial gestures

Gestures

Paintings

Values

Holiday customs

Food

Concept of beauty

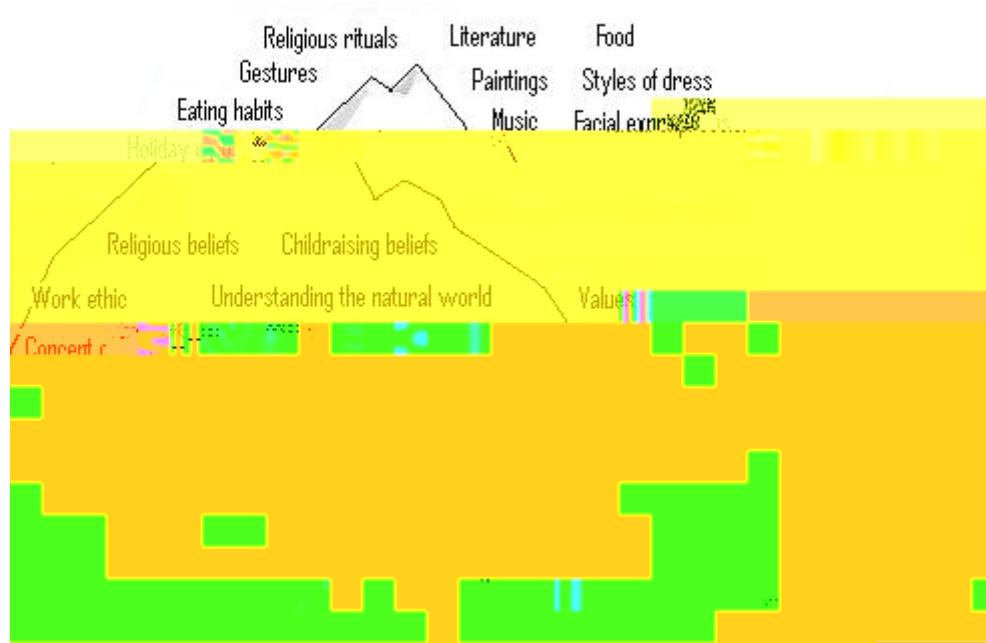
Eating habits

Music

Concept of fairness

Childraising beliefs

Suggested Answers



You can see that there is a relationship between those items that appear above the waterline and those that appear below it. In most cases, the invisible aspects of culture influence or cause the visible ones. Religious beliefs, for example, are clearly manifest in certain holiday customs, and notions of modesty affect styles of dress.



INSIGHT..! Surface behaviors are influenced by beneath-the-surface values and assumptions.



Discussion

On the one hand, culture is what makes us all human in a *general sense*. Every culture, past and present, has had to decide how to satisfactorily solve common human problems and concerns. Some universal categories of human activity that have been addressed for millennia by all cultures are:

- religious beliefs and the relationship of humans to the supernatural
- political power and the exercise of leadership in governance
- concepts of justice, fairness, punishment, and right conduct
- child raising and traditional processes of acculturation
- economic organization and division of labor
- rites of passage (life cycle celebrations), rituals, and ceremonies
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CROSS – CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

“I have often thought there ought to be a manual to hand to little kids, telling them what kind of planet they’re on...called ‘Welcome to Earth’...and one thing I would really like to tell them about is cultural relativity. I didn’t learn until I was in college about all the other cultures, and I should have learned in the first grade.

A first grader should understand that his or her culture isn’t a rational invention; that there are thousands of other cultures and they all work pretty well; that all cultures function on faith rather than truth; that there are lots of alternatives to our own society. Cultural relativity is defensible and attractive. It’s a source of hope.”

-Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Wampeter, Foma and Granfaloon

Strategies for adjusting to a new culture

Strategy	Effective form	Ineffective form
Avoidance	Temporary, occasional withdrawal to overcome “Cultural fatigue”	Frequent or complete withdrawal, no interaction with the culture
Participation	Working to learn the ways of the culture (assertive behavior)	Fighting against the culture (aggressive behavior)
Utilizing Resources	Using resources to promote learning and self reliance	Becoming totally dependent on resources
Utilizing stereotypes	Using only as a tentative guide to culture; constantly challenging them	Using as a complete guide to the culture; never testing them
Studying the culture	Striving to acquire cultural insights; learning new perspectives	Fitting new culture into own framework; rejecting new insights, perspectives
Utilizing the culture	Developing effective coping strategies; enlarging skills; maintaining own identity	“Going native” – totally adopting the culture as one’s own; losing own identity. Most cultures do not want you to “go native” – they want you to learn and respect their culture

Certain personality characteristics are useful to develop when living in another culture. They include:

1. Flexibility
2. Tolerance of ambiguity or living with uncertainty
3. Non-judgmental attitudes
4. Patience
5. A willingness to take risks

Some other guidelines of cross-cultural effectiveness would include:

1. Remember that you are a guest in another culture and a representative of your own. Don't assume that the American way is the best way; this is an arrogant, ethnocentric attitude. Be gracious.
2. Be realistic and don't try to understand everything immediately. You will undoubtedly have times when you are not able to communicate as well as you would like or are used to. This will help you develop creative "coping" strategies.
3. Be open to new experiences. Explore and get off the tourist track. Take an interest in the culture, ask questions, and be enthusiastic.

Source: This material comes from a hand-out by Nancy Westfall de Gurrola