International Social Etiquette

Rene Sanchez
Education Abroad

Marcia Taylor
International Services

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxoB6Mhmlbg&feature=player_embedded
Objectives

- Define culture and recognize its influence on personal and group behavior.
- Develop or enhance the ability to recognize the role that cultural assumptions play in influencing behavior.
- Analyze American culture and stereotypes to develop greater personal understanding.
- Identify skills, competencies, and personal qualities that promote cross-cultural communication.
Definitions of Culture

“Culture is the shared assumptions, values, and beliefs of a group of people which result in characteristic behaviors.”

- Craig Storti in Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide. (Intercultural Press, 1999.)

“A nation’s culture ...is an all embracing pattern of a group’s entire way of life, including a shared system of values, social meanings and agendas passed on from generation to generation.”

Nature of Culture: The Iceberg Conception

Surface Culture - Tip of the Iceberg

food  dress
fine arts  folk dancing
literature  drama  classical music
popular music  games  cooking

conception of beauty
cosmology  relationship to animals
notions of modesty  definition of sin
ideals of child raising  rules of descent
patterns of superior/subordinate relations
courtship practices  conception of justice
conception of time: past, present and future
conversational patterns in various social contexts
incentives to work  notion of leadership  tempo of work
definition of insanity  nature of friendship  ordering of time
patterns of group decision-making  conception of cleanliness
body language  social interaction role  notions of adolescence
patterns of visual perception  preference for competition or cooperation
roles in relation to status by age, gender, class, kinship,
occupation, and so on  attitudes toward the dependent  theory of disease
approaches to problem-solving  conception of status mobility
conception of "self"  eye behavior  notions about logic and validity
patterns of handling emotions  facial expressions
arrangement of physical space... AND MUCH MUCH MORE...
Cultural Theories: Hofstede

5 Dimensions of Culture

- Power Distance/Hierarchy
- Identity
- Gender
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Virtue

HOFSTEDE (1980)
Cultural Theories: Lewis
Categorizing Cultures

Why is it important to categorize cultures?

It enables us to:

1. Predict behavior
2. Clarify why people do what they do
3. Avoid giving offense
4. Search for some kind of unity
5. Standardize policies
6. Perceive neatness and order

Lewis (1996)
What is American Culture?

- Activity to identify stereotypes
  - Positive and negative
  - How can this shape our understanding
Individualistic
Every “Man” for “Himself”

- We greatly value the individual rights/freedom of each person (sometimes above the common good?)
- We need our own ‘space’
- The American Dream -- We believe that anybody has the right to become whomever they want to be with hard-work and effort.
- We are self-confident and have a strong belief in our country’s values
- We value thinking out of the box, ingenuity and are results-oriented
- We can be more self-occupied and less interested in what is going on outside of our own lives, and to a great extent, our borders, making us ignorant of what is happening around the world.
- We value equal treatment and fairness.
Time Oriented
Time is Money and Money is the Measure of Success

- Time allows us to get work done and move ahead.
- We get to the point and get down to business immediately.
- Compared to others, we have a highly scheduled and regimented life and value being on time.
- Our success is largely determined by how much money we have rather than the positions we hold.
Informal/Casual
Let’s Not Stand on Formalities

- We do not value and respect formalities and protocol as much as many cultures.
- We do not value authority and hierarchy to the extent that many cultures do, and may not give the expected respect that a title or person is accustomed to receiving.
- We can be more direct and blunt, and value hearing the truth.
- We are casual in the way that communicate and hold ourselves.
- Gift-giving is not generally a part of our culture outside of friends or family.
Mobile/Changeable
You Can Be Whatever You Want to Be

- We move from place to place easily
- We tend to have more social mobility (largely dependent upon the salary one earns)
- We are exposed (within our own culture) to many different cultures which makes us more culturally sensitive.
Friendly/Superficial
Let’s Do Lunch...

- We commonly greet and smile at strangers
- We are courteous, value good service and respect.
- Humorous but sometimes sarcastic
- We are perceived as having primarily surface relationships
- Often use polite phrases with little meaning – “How are you?”; “Drop by anytime.”; “Let’s do lunch.”; “Call me.”
10 Tips to Improve Cross Cultural Skills

1) Show empathy
2) Fully describe and explain
3) Summarize your message
4) Avoid idioms/slang
5) Avoid interruptions
6) Do not generalize
7) Cultivate Respect
8) Do not focus on the negative
9) Give people time to understand and respond
10) Cultivate tolerance
One last thing!

- OBSERVE, OBSERVE, OBSERVE!