

Depending on the country, many Americans may view others as:

- Meticulous and structured
- Private, suspicious of sharing information
- Authoritarian
- Religious zealots
- Warm and emotional
- Courteous and refined
 - Always late

Specific barriers to understanding of other cultures include...

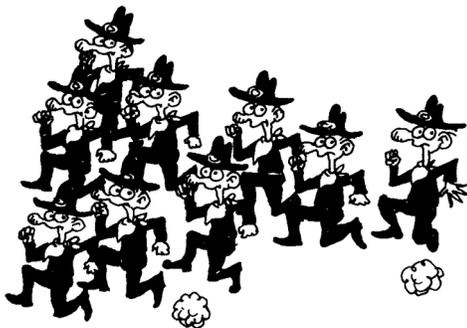
1. Ethnocentrism



Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding one's own culture as superior in all ways, can lead to unhealthy, proud attitudes, arrogant self-righteousness, and feelings of haughtiness which can destroy personal relationships.

2. Prejudice Rigid, negative attitudes based on faulty, preconceived, inflexible generalizations, numbs our ability to understand others. Prejudice too readily violates objective standards of fairness, justice, and impartiality.

3. Stereotypes Rigid biases--applied to all peoples of a particular group--demean others.



Perceptions become immune to logic and experience. A stereotyped template skews all incoming information. Depersonalization and dehumanization result. Individuals become caricatured, distorted, and seen too often only in a negative light.

4. American Cultural Barriers Based upon his experiences as a state department official and former hostage during the Iranian crisis, Moorhead Kennedy identifies the following four cultural barriers Americans distinctly possess. These matters especially relate to ethnocentrism and stereotyping.

a. Self-assertiveness Being bullheaded, successful "winners" often inhibits our ability to listen to others. The insensitive military slogan, "when you've got them by the shorts, their hearts and minds are sure to follow" expresses this barrier.

b. Isolationist Too often we see things as we want to see them, overlooking or denying what is really present in another culture.

c. Moralistic Seeing matters with an arrogant, God-given-destiny approach leads to judgmental, critical, insensitive thinking. The tendency is to believe one's standards as superior to those of others, criticizing others on the basis of standards which may not be appropriate for their culture.

d. Religiosity This crusader instinct defines and advocates views concerning secular issues with an absolute religious certainty. Such definitions are more appropriate to the basic tenets of revealed religion. Religiosity goes contrary to the thoughts expressed by Abraham Lincoln, who advocated tolerance and self-criticism. President Lincoln pointed out that...

"the Confederates prayed to the same God as did the North. We must do the 'right,' but we can do that only to the 'limited extent that God gives us to see it.'" (Ayatollah in the Cathedral, pp. 192-202.)

5. Military Hindrances Sometimes the climate of our Armed Forces creates barriers to cultural understanding. Among these impediments are...



a. Force protection Based upon the legitimate need to protect our Armed Forces personnel in a hostile or ambiguous area of operations, some commands prohibit interaction with local populations and societal structures. They expend little effort to enable soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines to understand the cultures of the area of deployment. Time and resource constraints are part of this oversight. Also, a "less-soldiers-know-the-less-they'll-be-tempted-to-interact" reasoning plays into the equation.

b. Humanize the enemy In the difficult world of force on force conflict, some commanders reason that "humanizing the enemy--knowing about the culture, family structures, religion, education and fine arts of those against whom action is taken--creates too much internal conflict for American warriors. It's harder to pull the trigger against someone about whom you've developed a great deal of positive empathy.

c. Arrogance The old "when you've got them by the shorts, their hearts and minds will surely follow" adage still prevails in some circles. The emphasis is that if threatened with enough overwhelming power, most any people will surely acquiesce and give in. Cultural understanding becomes unnecessary.

6. Culture shock



This concept defines the confused feelings one experiences when confronted with a large number of new and unfamiliar people or situations.

Culture shock inhibits accurate understanding of others who are different. Most people undergo the disorientation and upset which comes when traveling to a new country or being placed in a new situation.

Think back to initial encounters with basic training or officer's basic courses. Many go through disorientation and distress. (Remember the first couple of weeks at the Presidio of Monterey?) Often this sense of frustration and bewilderment is compounded by a move to an overseas duty station. Thankfully, with the passage of time, most often these feelings leave.

Culture shock often follows a predictable pattern. Individuals enter a new setting with high energy and excitement levels.



After the initial euphoria, a letdown occurs. Resentment, discouragement, distress, frustration--even hostility and rebellion surface. For linguists and intelligence operatives, becoming entangled in this stage leads to negative, disparaging reactions.

Individuals lock themselves in the barracks with videos and drinks. Little sense of appreciation for host-nation culture and peoples occur. Only when a renewed stage of learning takes place--the acquiring of knowledge of a new society and people--can an atmosphere of acceptance and calm resurface.

Indications of the longterm effects of culture shock may surface due to a persons being too long, under too much pressure, in a country not his or her own.

Historian Barbara Tuchman describes General Stilwell's frame of mind at one point during World War II in the China/Burma/India theatre of operations. "...Stilwell's own frustrations were uppermost... [wrote Stilwell], 'I have been ignored, slighted, blocked, delayed, double-crossed, lied to and about...' He had lost tolerance." (Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945, p. 379.)

Robert Kohls, in his book Survival Kit for Overseas Living, outlines an action plan for dealing with culture shock:

a. Gather information Before leaving for a new location, duty station, or overseas post/base, learn as much about that new setting as possible.



b. Analyze When hit with the letdown stage, look for logical reasons--describe, interpret, and evaluate what is happening to you.



c. Resist Negativity If the temptation comes to disparage the new culture, fight the tendency to fall to negative jokes and comments. Remain positive.



d. Befriend a Host-Nation

Counterpart Talk over your own reactions and feelings with someone who has a sympathetic ear, who can help you understand the new setting.



e. Demonstrate Confidence

Realize that these feelings too shall pass. Focusing on the long-term, positive outcome outlasts emotional reactions often experienced in the present.



Vocabulary List: Cultural Awareness

Creative generalizations Concepts--tempered with care and refinement, always subject to modification and open to change--which enable us to make careful statements. When kept dynamic, flexible and tentative, this conceptual format enables us to make intelligible statements about others.

Cultural sensitivity Possession of attitudes and knowledge which enables one to be aware of and interact with differing ethnic, racial and national groups

Culture shock The disorientation and upset which often accompany traveling to a new country or situation. Emotions vary including euphoria, distress, resentment, hostility, rebellion, and negativity.

Culture That which guides people in their thinking, acting and feeling. Language, values, customary behaviors; ideas, beliefs and patterns of thinking; these attributes describe social characteristics of a people. The total way of life of a group--passed on from generation to generation

Ethnocentrism Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding your own culture as superior in all ways, which leads to unhealthy, proud attitudes, arrogant self-righteousness, and feelings of haughtiness which can destroy personal relationships

Face Perceptions that others within your social group have of you

Guanxi (gwahn-shyee) Importance of developing a relationship or "connection" to procure goods and services

Hsiao (sheeou) Filial piety. The honor and reverence children show to both living and dead parents

Monochronic time Having a tendency to do only one thing at a time. Describes the approach to time held by many Americans

Peace Operations An umbrella term that encompasses the following types of activities--those that diplomatically lead (preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace building) and other complementary, (predominately military), peacekeeping and peace-enforcement activities

Perceptions Our mental grasp of others and their ideas of us

Polychronic time Tending to be involved in many things at once. Describes those who live in many non-European countries of the world

Prejudice Rigid, negative attitudes based on faulty, preconceived, inflexible generalizations, which numb our ability to understand others. Prejudice too readily violates objective standards of fairness, justice and impartiality.

Proverbs Short, pithy saying commonplace in most every culture

Stereotypes Rigid biases applied to all peoples of a particular group--thus simplifying and demeaning others. Perceptions become immune to logic and experience. A stereotyped template skews all incoming information. Depersonalization and dehumanization result. Individuals become caricatured, distorted, and seen too often only in a negative light.

Stilwell, Joseph W. American General who oversaw American/Allied operations in the China/Burma/India theater during much of World War II.

Review Quiz: Cultural Awareness



Part 1--Matching Place the correct letter in the blank provided. Not all of the lettered items may be used.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. ____ Stereotypes | A. Concepts--tempered with care, refinement, always subject to modification and open to change--which enable us to make careful statements. |
| 2. ____ Polychronic time | |
| 3. ____ Face | |
| 4. ____ Hsiao knowledge aware of and interact with differing ethnic, racial and national groups. | B. Possession of attitudes and which enables one to be |
| 6. ____ Prejudice | 5. ____ Guanxi |
| 7. ____ Creative generalization | C. The disorientation and upset which often accompany traveling to a new country or situation. |
| 8. ____ Monochronic time | |
| 9. ____ Peace operations | D. That which guides people in their thinking, acting and feelings Language, values, customary behaviors; ideas, beliefs and patterns of thinking. |
| 10. ____ Culture shock | |
| 11. ____ Ethnocentrism | E. Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding your own culture as superior in all ways. |
| 12. ____ Culture | F. Perceptions that others within your social group have of you. |
| | G. Having a tendency to do only one thing at a time. |

H. Filial piety. The honor and reverence children show to both living and dead parents.

I. An umbrella term that encompasses many types of activities; those diplomatically lead (preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace building) and two (predominately peacekeeping and enforcement)

complementary, military), peace-activities.

J. Our mental grasp of others and their ideas of us.

K. Tending to be involved in many things at once.

L. Rigid, negative attitudes based on faulty, preconceived, generalizations, ability to

inflexible which numb our understand others.

M. Short, pithy saying commonplace in most every culture.

N. Importance of developing a relationship or "connection" to procure goods and services.

O. Rigid biases applied to all peoples of a particular group--thus simplifying and demeaning Perceptions become immune and experience.

others.
to logic



Part 2--Multiple Choice: Place the letter of the most correct answer in the blank provided.

1. ____ What statement best reflects why cultural awareness is important for military linguists?
 - a. When you have them by the shorts, hearts and minds will soon follow.
 - b. Such awareness promotes harmonious interaction with Allied counterparts.
 - c. Guns and butter get things done.

2. ____ For LTG Pagonis, chief allied logistician during Desert Shield/Storm/Farewell, what was the most important communication pattern he employed during the conflict?
 - a. Fingering worry beads.
 - b. Displaying self-control and calmness in all settings.
 - c. Spouting forth Persian Gulf gender issues.

3. ____ During Desert Storm/Shield/Farewell, General Schwarzkopf discovered that decision-making time with Saudi Arabian counterparts took _____ than that with other Americans.
 - a. excessively longer
 - b. much less time

4. ____ The diversity of American attitudes towards gun control, abortion, and dealing with the federal deficit demonstrates
 - a. that people like to spout off without thinking.
 - b. that Americans are a monolithic, homogeneous people.
 - c. the great variety within our country.

5. _____ What is NOT a cultural awareness advantage possessed by military personnel?

- a. Diversity found within the nation and military
- b. Acculturation of "noble values" occurring in basic training
- c. Being perceived by non-Department of Defense as having the military mindset

6. _____ When developed correctly, creative generalizations most often are

- a. subject to modification and open to change.
- b. sweeping statements leading to erroneous conclusions.
- c. the basis for stereotyped, prejudiced notions about others.

7. _____ In many areas of the world, politics, economics, government, and religious beliefs are

- a. confined to separate, individualized compartments of society.
- b. fused together, being intertwined throughout the culture.

8. _____ The American constitution respects

- a. the division between church and state.
- b. church/state fusion.

9. _____ Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding one's own culture as superior, best describes

- a. ethnocentrism.
- b. religiosity.
- c. culture shock.

10. _____ The American general in charge of Allied operations in the China/Burma/India theater during World War II was

- a. Gus Pagonis.
 - b. H. Norman Schwartzkopf.
 - c. Joseph W. Stilwell.
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Part 3--Identification U.S. or East Asian personnel traditionally possess the following proverbs and values. Place 'US' in front of those held by many Americans; and 'EA' before those held by many East Asians.



1. _____ A stitch in time saves nine.
2. _____ Without old paintings in the hall, a family cannot be said to be established.
3. _____ Peace is happiness; merit is long life; contentment is wealth; and the obtaining of one's desires is honor.
4. _____ One with a settled disposition will think even cabbage roots are fragrant.
5. _____ God helps those who help themselves.
6. _____ All happiness in the world arises from a wish for the welfare of others; all misery arises from indulging the self.
7. _____ The family that has an old person in it possesses a precious jewel.
8. _____ If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
9. _____ An egg should never argue with a rock.
10. _____ The husband will never banish from his household the wife who shared all the weal and woe with him.
11. _____ Change, progress and trust in the future.
12. _____ Individualism and privacy.
13. _____ He who would stand up in the world must first learn to stoop.
14. _____ The riper the grain is, the lower it hangs its head.
15. _____ Open, direct, assertive ways of communicating.

16. _____ Informality in speech, dress and approach to life.

17. _____ As the eagle's call echoes in the mountains, so a person's name continues after his death.
18. _____ Truncated, fast, efficient and organized use of time.
19. _____ Forgetting evil and speaking only good helps to hold society together and preserve [humankind's] dignity with one another.
20. _____ A wise student questions his or her own skill, not the examiner's competence.

Part 4--Identification Place an M (Monochronic [American/European] People) or a P (Polychronic [non-American/European] People) before the trait which tends to describe many monochronic or polychronic peoples.



1. _____ Borrow and lend things often and easily.
2. _____ Emphasize promptness.
3. _____ Change plans often and easily.
4. _____ Do many things at once.
5. _____ Highly distractible and subject to interruptions.
6. _____ Concentrate on the job at hand.
7. _____ Strictly adhere to plans set.
8. _____ Seldom borrow or lend.
9. _____ Do one thing at a time.
10. _____ Take deadlines and schedules seriously.



Part 5--True or False Place a T or
an F in the blank provided.

1. _____ Recent peace operations and combined UN/multinational missions demonstrate the importance of awareness of cultural factors by military personnel.
2. _____ Successful intelligence collection includes religious beliefs, political loyalties, and ethnic backgrounds of regions analyzed.
3. _____ Assessing the determination of a resistance group to persevere can be a part of the intelligence mission.
4. _____ The U.S. military is the largest, most diverse organization in our nation.
5. _____ Concerning time perceptions, Americans tend to be polychronic people.
6. _____ Creative generalizations foster rigid, bullheaded opinions and attitudes.
7. _____ Cultures and peoples are multilayered, complex entities.
8. _____ It is difficult to make broad, accurate, conclusive statements about others.
9. _____ Demonstrating civility and respect promotes understanding between groups of people.
10. _____ In many cultures of the world, religion is an increasingly important force for political/societal renewal.
11. _____ The glut of information available (books, Internet contacts, newspapers, news broadcasts), if

mishandled,
understanding.

can create barriers to cultural

12. _____ Personal "spiritual blinders" may inhibit accurate appraisal of other religious/cultural systems.
13. _____ Arrogant self-righteousness and haughty feelings can destroy relationships and make barriers to understanding.
14. _____ Self-assertiveness often enhances our ability to listen to others.
15. _____ Demonstrating confidence, realizing lousy feelings often pass, and focusing on the long term can help one deal with culture shock.



"Let Off Some Steam!"

Sources Used in Unit 1--Cultural Awareness



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Resources For Further Study

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Storti, Craig, The Art of Crossing Cultures, (Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1989).

Author's fresh and creative style make this book a delight to use. (Aiso Library)



"You've got to go from where you are. You've got to do the best with what you have." (General Edward C. Meyer)

