

PRIME Pre-departure Cultural Orientation 5/19/12

Agenda

1. Icebreaker – Sharing previous travels
2. The Iceberg Conception of the Nature of Culture (Go Global! p. 1)
3. The Four Levels of Cultural Awareness (What's Up With Culture 1.7.2)
4. In the Mind of the Beholder (What's Up With Culture 1.3.2)
5. Insiders and Outsiders Activity

-BREAK-

6. Skills that Make a Difference (Go Global! p. 3)
7. Concept of Self: Individualist or Collectivist (What's Up With Culture 1.3.4)
8. Context of Cultures: High and Low (What's Up With Culture 1.4.6)
9. Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) discussion
10. Critical Incidents small group discussion (PRIME Critical Incidents handout)
11. Evaluation
12. Self Study
 - Get to Know Your Hosts
 - Pre-departure Expectations

Handouts

The Four Levels of Cultural Awareness
Skills That Make a Difference
Concept of Self: Individualist or Collectivist
IDI Key Terms
Get to Know Your Hosts
Pre-Departure Expectations
What Can I Do Before I Come Home to Help Myself
PRIME Critical Incidents
Evaluation

Resources

Go Global! Resources for your Experience Abroad
http://icenter.ucsd.edu/_files/pao/pre-departure/oap/Go_Global.PDF
What's Up With Culture
<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>
Intercultural Development Inventory
<http://www.idiinventory.com/>
Lonely Planet
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>
Culture Shock! Books
<http://www.marshallcavendish.us/marshallcavendish-us/trade/catalog/travel/cultureshock/index.xml>
The World Factbook
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
World Travel 101 Workshop Handouts
http://icenter.ucsd.edu/_files/pao/WorldTravel101Handouts.pdf

3. The Four Levels of Cultural Awareness

As you go through the cycle of adjustment, your awareness of the host country culture naturally increases. This awareness tends to progress through a series of levels, described below.

I. Unconscious incompetence

This has also been called the state of blissful ignorance. At this stage, you are unaware of cultural differences. It does not occur to you that you may be making cultural mistakes or that you may be misinterpreting much of the behavior going on around you. You have no reason not to trust your instincts.

II. Conscious incompetence

You now realize that differences exist between the way you and the local people behave, though you understand very little about what these differences are, how numerous they might be, or how deep they might go. You know there's a problem here, but you're not sure about the size of it. You're not so sure of your instincts anymore, and you realize that there are some things you don't understand. You may start to worry about how hard it's going to be to figure these people out.

III. Conscious competence

You know cultural differences exist, you know what some of these differences are, and you try to adjust your own behavior accordingly. It doesn't come naturally yet—you have to make a conscious effort to behave in culturally appropriate ways—but you are much more aware of how your behavior is coming across to the local people. You are in the process of replacing old instincts with new ones. You know now that you will be able to figure these people out if you can remain objective.

IV. Unconscious competence

You no longer have to think about what you're doing in order to do the right thing. Culturally appropriate behavior is now second nature to you; you can trust your instincts because they have been reconditioned by the new culture. It takes little effort now for you to be culturally sensitive.*

*This paradigm is based on work by William Howell.

4. In the Mind of the Beholder (Observe-Interpret-Evaluate)

From What's Up with Culture 1.3.2

<http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

Another way to understand why making cultural distinctions is useful in figuring out "what something means" in another culture, is to acknowledge that what we call "reality" may have more than one meaning or interpretation, often vastly different. Most human beings have a tendency to believe that what they see is "real," and assume anyone observing or experiencing the same situation would "naturally" describe, react to, or characterize the event in the same way they do.

Anthropologists call this propensity "naive realism," or the belief that everyone sees the world in the same way you do. A corollary is that most human beings also assume that there is only one reasonable way to look at the world. However, psychologists and interculturalists have shown that the world rarely looks the same to everyone, and that the culture you are raised in will strongly influence how you will view even the most simple behavior.

The Mind of the Beholder Exercise that follows will help you see how this works in everyday situations. It will also give you some idea of how seemingly ordinary activities can have very different meanings depending on whether you are the person who does the behavior or the person who observes (and judges) the behavior.

In this activity, you are being asked to consider the phenomenon of perception. We all believe that we observe reality, things as they are, but what actually happens is that the mind interprets what the eyes see and gives it meaning. It is only at this point, when meaning is assigned, that we can truly say we have seen something. In other words, what we see is as much in the mind as it is in reality.

If you consider that the mind of a person from one culture is going to be different in many ways from the mind of a person from another culture, then you have the explanation for that most fundamental of all cross-cultural problems: the fact that two people look upon the same reality, the same example of behavior, and see two entirely different things.

Any behavior observed across the cultural divide, therefore, has to be interpreted in two ways:

- the meaning given to it by the person who does the action
- the meaning given to it by the person who observes the action

Only when these two meanings are the same do we have successful communication, successful in the sense that the meaning that was intended by the doer is the one that was understood by the observer.

In the Mind of the Beholder Exercise

Part One

In the first part of this exercise, read the description of the eight instances of behavior given below and write down your immediate response to or interpretation of that behavior in terms of your own cultural values, beliefs, or perception. The first one has been done for you.

1. A person comes to a meeting half an hour after the stated starting time.

This person is late and should at least apologize or give an explanation.

2. Someone kicks a dog.
3. At the end of a meal, people belch audibly.

4. Someone makes the OK gesture at you.
5. A woman carries a heavy pile of wood on her back while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing.
6. A male guest helps a hostess carry dirty dishes into the kitchen.
7. A young man and young woman are kissing each other while seated on a park bench.
8. While taking an exam, a student copies from the paper of another student.

Let's go to the second part of the exercise ...

In this second part of the activity, you are asked to imagine how these same eight behaviors would be perceived or interpreted by someone from a culture different from your own. (The particular cultural difference is described in each case.) Read each behavior and the description of the culture, and then write in the space provided how you think a person from such a culture would interpret that behavior.

1. A person comes to a meeting half an hour after the stated starting time. How would this act be interpreted:
 - by someone from a culture where people always arrive half an hour after the stated starting time?
 - by someone from a culture where meetings never start until at least an hour after the stated time?
2. Someone kicks a dog. How would this act be interpreted:
 - by someone from a country where dogs always carry disease?
 - by someone from a country where most dogs are wild and vicious?
3. At the end of a meal, people belch audibly. How would this be interpreted:
 - by someone from a culture where belching is the normal way to compliment the cook?
4. Someone makes the OK gesture at you. How would this be interpreted:
 - by someone in whose culture this gesture is obscene?
 - by someone in whose culture this gesture has romantic connotations?
5. A woman carries a heavy pile of wood on her back while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing. How would this be interpreted:
 - by someone from a culture where carrying wood is never done by men?
6. A male guest helps a hostess carry dirty dishes into the kitchen. How would this act be interpreted:
 - by someone from a culture where men never clean up after a meal?
 - by the hostess from that same culture?
7. A young man and young woman are kissing each other while seated on a park bench. How would this act be interpreted:
 - by someone from a culture where men and women never touch in public?

8. While taking an exam, a student copies from the paper of another student. How would this act be interpreted:
- by someone from a culture where exams are not fair and are designed to eliminate students at various stages of the educational system?
 - by someone from a culture where it is shameful not to help your friend if you can do so?

DISCUSSION

In the first set of answers you were asked to give your immediate reactions to the scenarios. We assume you did so and that they likely reflected your US-American culture to some extent. For example, your response to #4, "Someone makes an OK gesture to you," probably was that they were trying to tell you something like "things were going well" or that they were all right. That gesture works for most US-Americans. However, if you used that gesture in much of Latin America or other places in the world, it would have distinctly different meanings, mostly of a sexual or aggressive nature. The only reason it "works" for us is that it has the same meaning for the person who does the action as it does for the person who observes it. If the meaning being inferred changes then communication breaks down, often badly.

When you filled out the second part of the exercise, which specified certain differences as they were perceived or interpreted by someone in another culture, it became clearer why the same action can be construed as having radically different "meanings." This is what makes some aspects of crossing cultural boundaries so tricky. Overseas, an apparently innocent remark or careless gesture on your part can occasionally result in a breakdown of communication, a misperception of your intent, and a negative impression—or possibly all three when you don't understand the other culture's norms!

For instance, in another culture burping (which adults always told you was gross) might turn out to be a regular part of post-meal etiquette and it might be considered a breach of manners and impolite not to!

To avoid making unnecessary mistakes, it is useful to remember, as the second part of the exercise shows, that seemingly simple everyday events may be interpreted quite differently when observed by people from different cultures. So, while you are a guest in another country you should take special care not to make snap judgments about people and situations before you know the background and examine the reasons why they might be behaving and reacting differently than you normally would. Once you can see another (or multiple) reason for a specific human cultural behavior, you will be on your way to being able to interact and communicate more effectively with the local population.

Cultural Simulation - "Insiders and Outsiders"

Instructions: (10-15 minutes game time)

Ask for a specific number of male and female volunteers to step outside the room (one pair per group inside the room). Inside the room, form groups of about 10-15 with at least 2 males per group.

Send outsiders out. Explanation to outsiders:

The insiders are part of a fictional culture. They have 2 cultural norms. Your task, as a pair, is to discover what the norms are by:

A) Observing and asking yes or no questions only.

B) Asking questions directly to a specific person (don't address a question to the entire group at once).

When you think you've figured out a norm go to a facilitator and ask them if it's right. The key is to ask lots of questions.

Explain "cultural norms" to insiders:

1) A man can only answer a man and a woman can only answer a woman.

2) If the person asking a question is smiling the answer must be yes, if the person asking a question is not smiling or is frowning the answer must be no.

Give a number of examples so that insiders can practice the norms.

Bring outsiders back in

Allow 10-15 minutes for interaction. If your group figures out the norms keep it to yourself until the game is over.

Discussion within group led by facilitator(s) - see below.

INSIDERS-OUTSIDERS DISCUSSION

Have a participant identify the 2 norms. **Tell everyone not to mention the norms to others because we have more Living Abroad Orientations left.**

Ask the foreigners/outsideers:

- How did you feel? (frustrated, annoyed, confused, unsure) **Write answers on board.**
- What did you think of how your host culture treated/thought of you? (helpful, cold, liked to see you suffer) **Write answers on board.**
- How do you think you would have felt as an insider? (relaxed, less confused, etc.)

Ask insiders:

- What did you think of the foreigners? (felt sorry for them?) **Write answers on board.**
- How do you feel about how you treated them? (tried to help, wanted them to suffer)
- How do you think you would have felt as an outsider? (confused, annoyed, anxious)

Whole group discussion.

The assignment in this exercise was to learn about your host culture by attempting to communicate with the natives.

Ask:

- 1) What was not realistic? [Insiders can only answer yes or no.]
- 2) What was realistic?

Realistic:

- 1) The feelings of frustration, isolation, etc. that the outsiders experienced. (Point to lists on board).

Get returnee confirmation.

- 2) That something other than the actual, verifiable truth would be a culturally appropriate answer.
 - Korea example: “Yes” to maintain the “han.”
 - France example: When offered food the first time, “No, thank you.” But accept on the second or third time. The host must continue to ask.
 - U.S. example: “I’ll call you.” “Let’s get together soon.”

Ask: Given that the culture itself may make it difficult to understand the culture, what might you do **to learn about your host culture while you are there**, and learn how to communicate competently within your host culture?

- Look beyond verbal communication to non-verbal clues.
- Observe everything, carefully; learn from what others do.

- Talk with other "outsiders." What have they learned?
- Find a cultural insider who will help you make sense of the host culture and explain the elusive cultural norms and expectations - especially someone who has spent time outside of that host country.

Mapping Your Host Culture: Start learning right away!

Something to do when you get there to get yourself oriented. Examples:

- Irvine Spectrum - we value entertainment
- Streets around UCI - named after universities = value academia

Explain culture shock curve - draw on white board (know what to expect to lessen stress/anxiety).

For further explanation of this and how to cope:

- Read the section in the EAP Guide on "Cultural Adjustment"
- Read *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*. We have several copies in the office.

Red Flags: It's time to implement your coping skills!

Pay attention to these Red Flags as you are trying to figure out the cultural norms of your host country.

They often signal that a cultural difference has caused a misunderstanding or confusion. Keep this list

handy and refer to it when you find yourself getting frustrated by the funny new culture you are living in.

(We have an article in the office explaining the "Red Flag" concept in detail for any one who wants to read it.)

Ask: Given that the feelings (frustration, etc.) are realistic, what might you do to **cope (and be less stressed)**?

- Know/expect that you will encounter many differences - Expect the unexpected
- Have a high level of tolerance for ambiguity (not knowing what's what and what's expected)
- Expect to look stupid/silly at least part of the time!
- Know that having a high level of anxiety is normal
- Lower your goal-orientation (you are probably successful & a high achiever)
- Expect to have a decreased level of self-confidence
- Observe rather than compare or judge

Returnees – Any last words of wisdom?

Have a great time and learn, learn, learn!

6. Skills That Make a Difference

Some people seem to take to another culture more naturally than others. And some foreign cultures seem to be easier for Americans to adjust to than others. But there are certain skills or traits which you may have-or, with a little effort, develop-which will facilitate your rapid adjustment.

Before going on, jot down in the space below some of the skills-they are usually attitudes, ways of responding, and styles of behaving-which you might think to be most helpful in the overseas adjustment process.

NOTES:

Here are the skills that our experience has shown to be the most important:

- TOLERANCE FOR AMBIGUITY
- LOW GOAL/TASK ORIENTATION
- OPEN-MINDEDNESS
- NON-JUDGEMENTALNESS
- EMPATHY
- COMMUNICATIVENESS
- FLEXIBILITY; ADAPTABILITY
- CURIOSITY
- SENSE OF HUMOR
- WARMTH IN HUMAN RELATIONS
- MOTIVATION
- SELF-RELIANCE
- STRONG SENSE OF SELF
- TOLERANCE FOR DIFFERENCES
- PERCEPTIVENESS
- ABILITY TO FAIL

Circle the traits you think are the *most* important (or guess what our choices are - it'll be no surprise that we're going to tell you) and star the traits that you're currently good at.

7. Concept of Self: Individualist or Collectivist

Individualist—

The individual identifies primarily with self, with the needs of the individual being satisfied before those of the group. Looking after and taking care of oneself, being self-sufficient, guarantees the well-being of the group. Independence and self-reliance are greatly stressed and valued. In general, people tend to distance themselves psychologically and emotionally from each other. One may choose to join groups, but group membership is not essential to one's identity or success. Individualist characteristics are often associated with men and people in urban settings.

Collectivist—

One's identity is, in large part, a function of one's membership and role in a group, e.g., the family or work team. The survival and success of the group ensures the well-being of the individual, so that by considering the needs and feelings of others, one protects oneself. Harmony and the interdependence of group members are stressed and valued. Group members are relatively close psychologically and emotionally, but distant toward nongroup members. Collectivist characteristics are often associated with women and people in rural settings.

Exercise:

Look at the list of characteristics and behaviors given below. If you decide the statement is more likely to apply to people living in an individualist culture, write "I" in the underlined blank space; if you think it is characteristic of a collectivist culture, write "C."

1. ____ People answer the phone by giving the name of the organization.
2. ____ People give cocktail parties.
3. ____ Inter-group rivalry is strong.
4. ____ Employee-of-the-year awards are offered.
5. ____ People adhere to tradition.
6. ____ People are promoted based on production and results.
7. ____ Contracts in business are used frequently.
8. ____ There is a need for autonomy.
9. ____ People change jobs frequently.
10. ____ People believe that conflict clears the air.
11. ____ There is a need for affiliation.
12. ____ Short-term relationships are common.

13. ____ It's okay to stand out.
14. ____ Face-saving is important.
15. ____ It's common for mothers to ask their preschoolers what they want to wear each day.
16. ____ Self-help books are popular.
17. ____ Decisions are made by consensus.
18. ____ The language has one word for mother's brother, another for father's brother.
19. ____ Marriages are arranged.
20. ____ People have potluck dinners.

8. Context of Cultures: High and Low

Edward T. Hall was an anthropologist who made early discoveries of key cultural factors. In particular he is known for his high and low context cultural factors.

High context

In a high-context culture, there are many contextual elements that help people to understand the rules. As a result, much is taken for granted. This can be very confusing for person who does not understand the 'unwritten rules' of the culture.

Low context

In a low-context culture, very little is taken for granted. Whilst this means that more explanation is needed, it also means there is less chance of misunderstanding particularly when visitors are present.

Contrasting the two

French contracts tend to be short (in physical length, not time duration) as much of the information is available within the high-context French culture. American content, on the other hand, is low-context and so contracts tend to be longer in order to explain the detail.

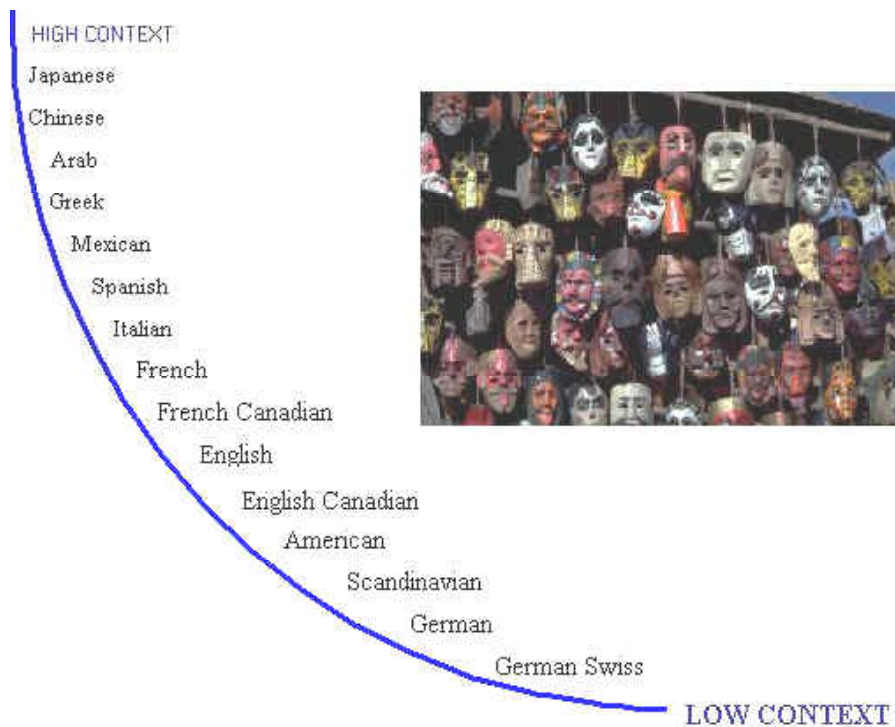
Highly mobile environments where people come and go need lower-context culture. With a stable population, however, a higher context culture may develop.

Excerpted from http://changingminds.org/explanations/culture/hall_culture.htm

High Context	Low Context
<p>Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships depend on trust, build up slowly, are stable. One distinguishes between people inside and people outside one's circle. How things get done depends on relationships with people and attention to group process. One's identity is rooted in groups (family, culture, work). Social structure and authority are centralized; responsibility is at the top. Person at top works for the good of the group. 	<p>Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships begin and end quickly. Many people can be inside one's circle; circle's boundary is not clear. Things get done by following procedures and paying attention to the goal. One's identity is rooted in oneself and one's accomplishments. Social structure is decentralized; responsibility goes further down (is not concentrated at the top).
<p>Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High use of nonverbal elements; voice tone, facial expression, gestures, and eye movement carry significant parts of conversation. Verbal message is implicit; context (situation, people, nonverbal elements) is more important than words. Verbal message is indirect; one talks around the point and embellishes it. Communication is seen as an art form—a way of engaging someone. Disagreement is personalized. One is sensitive to conflict expressed in another's nonverbal communication. Conflict either must be solved before work can progress or must be avoided because it is personally threatening. 	<p>Interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low use of nonverbal elements. Message is carried more by words than by nonverbal means. Verbal message is explicit. Context is less important than words. Verbal message is direct; one spells things out exactly. Communication is seen as a way of exchanging information, ideas, and opinions. Disagreement is depersonalized. One withdraws from conflict with another and gets on with the task. Focus is on rational solutions, not personal ones. One can be explicit about another's bothersome behavior.

<p>Territoriality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space is communal; people stand close to each other, share the same space. 	<p>Territoriality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space is compartmentalized and privately owned; privacy is important, so people are farther apart.
<p>Temporality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everything has its own time. Time is not easily scheduled; needs of people may interfere with keeping to a set time. What is important is that activity gets done. Change is slow. Things are rooted in the past, slow to change, and stable. Time is a process; it belongs to others and to nature. 	<p>Temporality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Things are scheduled to be done at particular times, one thing at a time. What is important is that activity is done efficiently. Change is fast. One can make change and see immediate results. Time is a commodity to be spent or saved. One's time is one's own.
<p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge is embedded in the situation; things are connected, synthesized, and global. Multiple sources of information are used. Thinking is deductive, proceeds from general to specific. Learning occurs by first observing others as they model or demonstrate and then practicing. Groups are preferred for learning and problem solving. Accuracy is valued. How well something is learned is important. 	<p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reality is fragmented and compartmentalized. One source of information is used to develop knowledge. Thinking is inductive, proceeds from specific to general. Focus is on detail. Learning occurs by following explicit directions and explanations of others. An individual orientation is preferred for learning and problem solving. Speed is valued. How efficiently something is learned is important.

To illustrate how cultures fall along the context continuum, here is a chart that includes some cultures that have been studied.



Excerpted from *What's Up With Culture* 1.4.6 <http://www.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

9. Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Key Terms

Six stages in the development of intercultural sensitivity:

Ethnocentric = assumption that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality

1. *Denial*: sees no real differences among people from different cultures
2. *Polarization*: a) *Defense*: differences considered threatening to one's self-esteem and identity.
b) *Reversal* is opposite reaction when a different culture is assumed to be superior to one's own.
3. *Minimization*: over-generalizes similarities between self and other

Ethnorelative = assumption that one's own culture is one among many and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context

4. *Acceptance*: acknowledgment that identifying significant cultural differences is crucial to understanding human interaction
5. *Adaptation*: proactive effort to use intercultural skills to maximize relationships with people from other cultures
6. *Integration*: effort to combine disparate aspects of one's cultural identity into a new whole

10. Critical Incidents from Previous PRIME Students

AUSTRALIA

When we meet new people outside the University, however, we certainly get the feeling that Australians aren't too keen on Americans. The first thing that almost everyone asks when they notice our accents is, "Are you Canadian?" After getting this question several times, I asked why they assume that. Turns out, it is believed that it offends Canadians when you mistake them for Americans. No one really considers that WE might find THAT offensive!

While I had heard that the Australian culture is extremely friendly, I've been nicely surprised in a number of instances to see just how thoughtful people here are. One example is that we took a trip on the Puffing Billy steam train to see the park at Lakeside. On the return trip the tram Nick and I got into was full, so we planned on standing. However, a family with a number of younger kids saw our situation and the parents insisted that their kids sit on their laps to make room for Nick and me. This situation made me think about how such a family might feel if they came to the U.S. and was a similar situation.

CHINA

Because there are so many people in Beijing, people need to be physically aggressive to get what they want. In a fast-food restaurant or in a store, people usually do not form lines. They crowd around the cashier and have to push or shove sometimes to get what they want. Because people tend to form a huddle instead of a line, personal space is not really considered. Waiting among other visitors to look inside one of the halls at the Lama Temple, I was in very close contact with strangers, which is what people are used to here. In another example I started from the top level of a shopping mall and went down to the first floor using the elevator. Soon the elevator was packed. By the time we reached the 2nd or 3rd floor, I did not think there was any more space for anyone else to get in, but people still pushed their way in.

After living in China for over 5 weeks now, I have seen various degrees of wealth, ranging from those who are very well-off to those who are very poor. I had always known that poverty existed around me. However, to actually witness a child begging for money on the street corner or to see an ill person lying on the ground in the middle of a subway station struck me in a different way. Every day on the way to work, I see people selling fruit in wooden carts and others selling little knick-knacks on their bed sheets. I have also seen policemen show up, and people gather up their products quickly and make a run for it. Instances like these make me truly appreciate being able to live in the US. I also have realized that I have not thanked my parents nearly as much as I should have for working as hard as they do.

JAPAN

One thing I did not expect, however, was how open they are with prostitution. Often when we are walking in a very popular area of downtown, there are what is clearly a "love hotel" and there are some rooms with women's pictures on the wall with their number and price. I thought the

Japanese would be much more closed about things like that.

Something small that I have experienced since I arrived is that people travel on the opposite side of the road as in the US. This was something I had known prior to going to Japan. However, I had not anticipated that this applies with pedestrians and bicyclists as well. Sometimes when walking down the stairs or on a narrow sidewalk, we learn that we naturally drift to the right side of the road whereas all of the locals drift toward the left side. After a few weeks, we are getting the hang of things and following the locals.

People in Japan communicate very differently from people back at home. Aside from the obvious differences in language (Japanese versus English), they say that the Japanese (at least in Kyoto and a little in Osaka) speak in a very roundabout manner. Direct answers do not tend to be a specialty with the Japanese. I had heard that the Japanese do not make eye contact when conversing but I have not noticed that to be true as everyone I have talked to makes eye contact with me. Also, the Japanese do not tend to touch each other. There is very little hugging and displays of affection in public. At home, I am a very affectionate person and quite frequently partake in hugging my friends. Additionally, the Japanese do not often tell you "I don't know" when asked for directions to a destination. They are very helpful and eager when one asks for directions -even stopping to pull out their cell phones and search for the answer.

Everyone in Japan is very respectful and polite. When we touched down at the airport I could see out of the window the flight-crew on the ground bowing to receive us. In addition every time we past through the subway gates the attendant greets us and bows. Even the people at the train station or at the grocery store bow and are very formal in their interactions with you. In this sense it is nice because there is a great deal of respect communicated to each other however, it leaves me with a feeling that is somewhat cold and artificial. In these such situations eye-contact is not emphasized as it is in the US.

One really odd thing I did not expect was a Jehovah's Witness Church group going to my door and asking us to go to church. It never happened to me in the US, and I thought it was funny how it would reach me here.

I noticed that Japanese people share a lot with their community. Our gifts (chocolate) to our mentors are put out on the tables for the whole office to share. There is another man who came back from the business trip and gave me snacks from his trip, and I later saw the same snacks in the office kitchen. People seem to care for their community. Also, people seem to care about conservation a lot. Most people take the stairs, ride bicycles (even on rainy days), and walk everywhere. There is a policy about casual dress code at work, so people sometimes don't need to wear ties, in order to reduce the use of air conditioning (because of global warming).

I'm part of a music club here at NiCT. I keep meeting musicians, and whenever I ask them what instruments they play, they always say "___, but I'm not very good at it" or "Just A LITTLE BIT of ___". Then they bust out something challenging on their instruments. Real modesty here! Now I'm starting to be self-conscious when people introduce me as the girl who plays the piano and me agreeing to that - would people think I'm arrogant if I don't say "I'm not good at all"?

People assume Jade and I are much more American than Asian (we are Asian-Americans). When Aoi, a postdoc, was picking out utensils for us the first day, she was worried because there were not enough dining knives. We told her that having forks and fruit/cooking knives is enough, and she asked, "What if you want to eat steak?" We both looked at each other and said, "Umm... I don't think we're going to eat steak (trying not to laugh)". It was just really funny to experience the "American image" on ourselves. People are also surprised with our chopsticks skills! A man said to me at lunch one time, "There are a lot of Chinese restaurants in the USA. That's why you know how to use chopsticks huh?" so I told him that I would use chopsticks at home as well. It seems like people outside of the US don't necessarily realize that many parts of the US are consisted of mixed cultures, rather just "American" people.

People also use two hands when giving or receiving to be polite. For example, I was refilling someone's glass at the restaurant because I knew it was the table manner to keep refilling other people's glasses. Another man sitting at the same table complimented me for knowing to refill others' cups, but he also told me that it would be even better by holding the bottle/container with two hands. This is the same for receiving – when somebody pours a drink for you, it is expected to hold up your glass/cup with two hands in showing your gratitude. When one gives you a business card (which is really important when two people meet), it is important to take the card with two hands and read through the card (instead of just putting it away immediately).

MALAYSIA

On my first evening in Penang, Malaysia, two Ph.D. students in our lab took J Liu and me to Tesco, a local hypermarket. While browsing through the aisles, we met another one of Dr. Habibah's students. He was there with his wife; she was wearing head scarf that covered her whole face except her eyes. Of course, the Ph.D. students introduced us to him. Naturally, I said "Nice to meet you" and extended my hand. However, he shook his head and crossed his hands back and forth in front of his chest for a while. I was confused for a second but then it dawned on me that maybe his religion didn't allow him to shake hands with a woman. I pulled back my hand and quickly said bye as the four of us proceeded to another aisle. One of the Ph.D. students later informed me that the student was from Jordan and that his Muslim religion is much stricter than that of Malaysians. Thus, he was not allowed to shake hands with another female.

About a week or so into research, I was working at my desk when suddenly one of the Ph. D students in our lab asked me whether homosexuality was legal in the U.S. I responded without thinking that it was and that the main issue now was whether or not it is a "marriage" or a "union". He then responded that in Malaysia, if a citizen is proven to be homosexual, he or she is sentenced to prison for at least twenty years! Though I knew there would probably be less personal freedom in Malaysia, I never expected that one's sexual orientation would be controlled by the government! After learning about this, I was careful when I continued to discuss the topic of homosexuality with the Ph.D. students. When I was asked whether or not I supported homosexuality, I did not really answer the question but steered away from the topic. I was actually a bit scared to respond because even my views on homosexuality (whether or not I thought sexual orientation freedom could be permitted) could offend someone! Further, I was even asked whether or not I was homosexual or heterosexual. Back in the U.S., this would have been quite a personal question! Though I am personally heterosexual, I thought about how

awkward (and perhaps dangerous) it would be for a gay or lesbian individual to come to Malaysia!

Malays eat with their hands so I tried to eat with hands during lunch with other lab members. It was quite amusing for them since I wasn't using my hands properly (there is a certain art to eating with your hands—something about using only certain fingers to control your food), but I think it made them happy that I made an effort to try.

There are three different ethnic populations in Malaysia: Indian, Chinese, and Malay. Each group has their own religious observances, food, and customs and the interface between these cultures in Penang creates a unique city environment. However, this interaction also leads to tension over respecting the culture, and rights of each group even within a small research group. I was for the most part left out of these conflicts, because of my clear status as a visiting student that has the stereotypical characteristics of an American or European women portrayed in media. However, I accidentally instigated controversy in my own lab when I brought in food during Ramadan, a very important Islamic observance in which practicing Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

I returned from a weekend in Singapore with a gift, from the States, that my father brought over for me. I gave it to one of my friends in the lab the Monday I returned, because it just seemed natural to give him the gift as soon as I saw him in the lab. The Malay and Indonesian girls in the lab quickly started talking in *Bahasa Melayu* when they saw the dark chocolate espresso beans sitting on my friend's desk. Later in the day they asked me where he had gotten them.

Me: "I gave them to him as a present."

Girls: "But you gave it to him a long time ago right? And he is just bringing them out now to torture us!"

Me: "Oh, no. I just gave them to him today."

I tried to reassure them that it was my mistake, but they were still upset and the conversation had to be ended by another lab member that mentioned that Ramadan was not about removing temptation, it was about withstanding it. I thought I had done something considerate for my friend, but I created an unnecessary problem for him, and made the Malay girls uncomfortable.

NEW ZEALAND

After spending two weeks in Auckland, I have realized that, there are not a lot of native New Zealanders (KIWIs) that live in Auckland and most people here do not speak English as their first language. This seemed a little out of place since English is New Zealand's first language. The first day I decided to go explore in the city, I intended to start conversations with random people and ask them about places to visit or public transportation. What I realized was that 8 out of 10 people on the streets had hard time responding to me in English and most of the communication occurred using hand gestures and sign language. A few people flat out just ignored me which I found quite interesting. The best direction that I received was from this American Lady from Chicago, which I found quite ironic.

When Amir and I arrived at the motel at which Jackie was staying in in New Zealand, I asked for Jackie's room. The receptionist gave us a note that Jackie left for us saying that we could enter her room. What was so interesting about this was that the person at the reception didn't ask for

either of our IDs to make sure we were the Jefferson and Amir in the note. It seems as though she just assumed we were them and let us into Jackie's room with no hesitation. Not only this, when people buy gas in New Zealand, you fill up your gas tank before you pay. To me, this shows that the culture in New Zealand is very trusting.

TAIWAN

We did not expect to receive so much love and attention from the people at NCHC in Taichung. It is in stark contrast to our treatment back at the NMMBA. One possible critical incident occurred when we decided to return their kind favors with a gift of good beer. Apparently, most people here in Taiwan don't drink very much. Also, our gift giving may have been inappropriate at the time, as they were still in the office working. We learned that drinking isn't a big thing here in Taiwan as back in the States.

Traveling by myself on the High Speed Rail Transit, I was very cautious to make sure I kept an eye on all my belongings. However, I soon reached a snag in my travel plans; I did not know where to meet up with my friends, and neither did I have a cell phone with which to contact them (they also didn't have phone numbers). And so, I contacted the mentor at NCHC, whom I've never met before, and had only contacted hours before I left. She was really friendly, and concerned about my transportation problem. She really tried to walk me through, and eventually I figured out which bus stop to get off of. When I did arrive at the bus stop, the communication problem arose again. This time, there weren't even pay phones nearby, at least, none that I could spot. I walked around for a bit, and eventually decide to ask a security officer for the mall I was circling for directions to a payphone. I have to say, I was quite taken aback by how friendly he was. As soon as he knew my predicament, he eagerly lent me his own cell phone, and also decided to help keep me company while I waited for someone to pick me up.

Apparently I look like somewhat of a local, even though I am not full Chinese and don't speak any Manderin. I have had 3 people ask me for help in Chinese - all of whom I can't help. I was surprised that they would ask me (of the many people around) for help. I've found that since I am starting to dress like the people here, I blend in much more than I might if I wore different clothing.

I have also found that escalators are very orderly. All the people standing stand on the right side, while those that want to walk move on the left. This is much more efficient and orderly. I follow along with what all the other people do. This custom is extremely useful and it is unfortunate that the US doesn't adopt the same.

11. PRIME Cross-Cultural Orientation Evaluation

May 19, 2012

Your Host Country _____

Please rate below each aspect of the orientation session:

E=Excellent G=Good S=Satisfactory U=Unsatisfactory N/A=Not applicable

1. Sharing previous travels

E G S U N/A

Comments:

2. The iceberg model

E G S U N/A

Comments:

3. In the Mind of the Beholder

E G S U N/A

Comments:

4. Insiders and Outsiders activity

E G S U N/A

Comments:

6. Skills that Make a Difference

E G S U N/A

Comments:

7. Concept of Self: Individualist or Collectivist

E G S U N/A

Comments:

8. Context of Cultures: High and Low

E G S U N/A

Comments:

10. Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) discussion

E G S U N/A

Comments:

9. Critical Incidents small group discussion

E G S U N/A

Comments:

11. Self Study

E G S U N/A

Comments:

12. Handouts

E G S U N/A

Comments:

13. Online resources

E G S U N/A

Comments:

GET TO KNOW YOUR HOSTS!

THE NATION

- ◆ What type of government does your host country have? Who do the majority and minority parties represent and who are their leaders? What are the distinguishing differences among these parties?

- ◆ What is the geography of your host country? What is the climate?

- ◆ Do you know a brief history of your country? How long has it been independent? Was it a colonizer or colony? Was it a major power in its region at some time? Did it win or lose any important wars? How long has the current governmental structure and/ or system been in operation?

- ◆ What is the education system like? How much education is compulsory? Does the government subsidize higher education?

- ◆ What languages are present? Are these official or unofficial? Do these languages represent any geographical, economic, or other division?

- ◆ What religions are present? Are these official or unofficial? What do you know about these religions (e.g. beliefs, practices, holidays)? If the country is mainly Christian, does it have a patron saint?

- ◆ Who are the service workers of your host country? Did they come from somewhere else and why? Who are the elites of your host country? Is there an indigenous population? How do these groups relate?

- ◆ Who are the national heroes/ heroines? Who are the celebrities?

- ◆ What relationship does your host country have with the USA?

GENERAL ATTITUDES

- ◆ Are the roles of men and women in your host country distinctly different? How are these manifested? How should you respond to this while in the culture?

- ◆ How do men and women normally dress in your host country? At school? For social occasions? How should you dress in order to be appropriate in your host country?

- ◆ Is your host country culture formal or informal when meeting new people? How does the culture respond to personal questions?

<<MORE ON REVERSE>>

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

- ◆ What is the formal way of greeting someone in your host country? the informal way? Do they use gestures like handshakes, hugs, kisses, bows, etc.?
- ◆ What is a “typical” home visit like?
- ◆ What familiar “western” gestures are used in normal conversation? Which gestures might be considered inappropriate or insulting?

LIFESTYLES

- ◆ What is the place of family life in your host culture? Is most entertaining done in the home or away? Is it formal or informal?
- ◆ What are the dating and marriage customs of your host culture? What is the typical age for dating and marriage? Do couples live together before/ instead of marriage? Are there church or civil ceremonies?
- ◆ What do the people of your host country eat (e.g. what are the typical foods)? Which meals are eaten at home or outside the home? By whom?
- ◆ What are the popular sports and entertainment activities of your host culture? What do these reflect about the people in your host country? About the age groups?
- ◆ What are normal business hours? What are the major holidays and what determines these holidays (religion, state laws, politics, etc)?
- ◆ What kind of television programs are popular among adults? college students? children?

12.b. Pre-Departure Expectations

We believe taking this exercise seriously will eventually assist you to better gauge how the process of overseas adaptation has played out for you personally. It will also facilitate your understanding about how expectation, realistic and unrealistic, play a role in how well you adapt and how you felt about it in retrospect. So take a few minutes and fill out the following questions and put your answers in a safe place. We promise it will be worth your effort as you work through similar pre-reentry and return exercises at the appropriate time.

A. What are the five things that you are *most looking forward to* about going abroad?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

B. What are the five things that currently *worry you most* about going overseas?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

C. What are the five things you believe you *will miss most* from home when you are abroad?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

D. What are the five things (people, places, activities, etc.) you believe you *will miss least* from home when you are abroad?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

E. What will your *greatest single challenge* be?

13. What Can I Do Before I Come Home to Help Myself?

What can you do to prepare to return home? Being aware of the reentry process and following some advice from those who have already returned can facilitate your reentry. The following list is compiled from many sources, but all of the tips come from returnees who have offered these ideas in the hope of making your initial reentry easier for you and for those at home. They are offered to you as things to consider as you prepare to return from study abroad. First, say goodbye. (This was discussed in Section 2.1) Then:

1. Mentally prepare for the adjustment process

The more you consider your alternatives, think about what is to come, and know about why returning home is both similar to and different from going abroad, the easier the transition will be. Anticipating is useful. As one psychologist put it, "Worrying helps." However, obsessing does not, so be prepared -not paranoid!

2. Allow yourself time

Reentry is a process that will take time, just as adjusting to a new foreign culture required a period of acculturation. Give yourself time to relax and reflect upon what is going on around you, how you are reacting to it, and what you might like to change. Give yourself permission to ease into the transition.

3. Understand that the familiar will seem different

You will have changed, home has changed, and you will be seeing familiar people, places, and behaviors from new perspectives. Some things will seem strange, perhaps even unsettling. Expect to have some new emotional and psychological responses to being home. Everyone does.

4. There will be some "cultural catching up" to do

Some linguistic, social, political, economic, entertainment, and current event topics may be unfamiliar to you. New academic programs or regulations, slang expressions, popular culture references, recent events, and even major social changes may have emerged since you left. You may have some learning to do about your own culture. The longer you have been gone, the more you may have to discover, and the more noticeable it will be to others that you are not culturally fully up-to-speed. Approach this challenge in the same way you approached culture learning overseas, with a sense of humor and an open mind.

5. Reserve judgments

Just as you had to keep an open mind when first encountering the culture of a new foreign country, try to resist the natural impulse to make snap decisions and judgments about people and behaviors once back home. Mood swings are common at first, and your most valuable and valid analysis of events is likely to take place after allowing some time for thorough reflection. Most returnees report gaining major insights into themselves and their home countries during reentry, but only after allowing a sufficient period of time for reflection and self-analysis.

6. Respond thoughtfully and slowly

Quick answers and impulsive reactions often characterize returnees. Frustration, disorientation, and boredom in the returnee can lead to behavior that is incomprehensible to family and friends. Take some time to rehearse what you want to say and how you will respond to predictable questions and situations; prepare to greet those that are less predictable with a calm, thoughtful approach.

If you find yourself being overly defensive or aggressive in responding to those around you, it is probably time to take a deep breath and relax. It is tempting when asked for the twentieth time, “How was London?” to sarcastically reply, “Very British!” but the momentary satisfaction will do little to open a real communication channel. As always, thinking before answering is a good strategy.

7. Cultivate sensitivity

Showing an interest in what others have been doing while you have been on your adventure overseas is a sure way to reestablish rapport. Much annoyance with returnees results from the perception that returnees are so anxious to tell their stories and share their experiences that they are not interested in what happened to those who stayed at home. This is ironic because one of the most common frustrations reported by returnees is that those at home only ask superficial questions (e.g., So how was it?) and want short answers. Returnees see this as a lack of opportunity to express their feelings fully. In such circumstances, being as good a listener as a talker is a key ingredient in mutual sharing and you may need to practice those skills upon return.

8. Beware of comparisons

Making comparisons between cultures and nations is natural, particularly after residence abroad. However, a person must be careful not to be seen as too critical of home or too lavish in praise of things foreign. A balance of good and bad features is probably more accurate and certainly less threatening to others. The tendency to become an “instant expert” is to be avoided at all costs.

9. Remain flexible

Keeping as many options open as possible is an essential aspect of a successful return home. Attempting to re-socialize totally into old patterns and networks can be difficult, but remaining aloof is isolating and counterproductive. What you want to achieve is a balance between resuming and maintaining earlier patterns and enhancing your social and intellectual life with new friends and interests.

10. Seek support networks

There are lots of people back home who have gone through their own reentry process and both understand and empathize with a returnee's concerns. Returnees may find it useful to seek out people with international living experience such as academic faculty, exchange students, Peace Corps volunteers, international development staff, diplomatic or military personnel, church mission officials, and those doing business internationally. University study abroad and international student offices may also be places where returnees can find support and empathy as they go through the reentry process.

Adapted from materials originally developed by Dr. Bruce La Brack, School of International Studies, University of the Pacific for the Institute of International Education, San Francisco.