Cultural Norms

Megan C. Lawther
What is Culture?
cul•ture
/kəltʃər/ Show spelled [kuhl-cher] Show IPA noun, verb, -
tured, -tur•ing. noun

- The quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc.
- That which is excellent in the arts, manners, etc.
- A particular form or stage of civilization, as that of a certain nation or period: Greek culture.
- The development or improvement of the mind by education or training.
- The behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic or age group: the youth culture; the drug culture.
- Anthropology. The sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another.
- Biology. a. the cultivation of microorganisms, such as bacteria, or of tissues, for scientific study, medicinal use, etc. b. the product or growth resulting from such cultivation.
- The act or practice of cultivating the soil; tillage.
- The raising of plants or animals, especially with a view to their improvement.
- The product or growth resulting from such cultivation.
How would you describe culture?
Culture is like an iceberg
The Iceberg Concept of Culture

Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.

Surface Culture
Above sea level
Emotional load: relatively low
- food
- dress
- music
- visual arts
- drama
- crafts
- dance
- literature
- language
- celebrations
- games

Deep Culture
Unspoken Rules
Partially below sea level
Emotional load: very high
- courtesy
- contextual conversational patterns
- concept of time
- personal space
- rules of conduct
- facial expressions
- nonverbal communication
- body language
- touching
- eye contact
- patterns of handling emotions
- notions of modesty
- concept of beauty
- courtship practices
- relationships to animals
- notions of leadership
- tempo of work
- concepts of food
- ideals of childrearing
- theory of disease
- social interaction rate
- nature of friendships
- tone of voice
- attitudes toward elders
- concept of cleanliness
- notions of adolescence
- patterns of group decision-making
- definition of insanity
- preference for competition or cooperation
- tolerance of physical pain
- concept of “self”
- concept of past and future
- definition of obscenity
- attitudes toward dependents
- problem-solving
- roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

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No matter how many books you read...
Friends you talk to...
You cannot prepare for everything.
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Cultural norms here

China

- Group harmony
- Loyalty
- Long-term relationships
- Indirect, reading between the lines
  - People may say “maybe” when they mean “no”
  - People are polite, saving face
- Crowds
Cultural norms there

United States

- Independence
- Self-reliance
- “Friends”
- Recognition
- Direct, to-the-point (usually)
  - “We should get lunch sometime.”
- We like lines, don’t jump in line in front of others
Initial impressions of Americans

- Stereotypes of people in the United States:
  - Fat and lazy
  - Arrogant
  - Self-absorbed
  - Everyone has a gun
  - Loud
  - Self-centered
  - Bad at geography
- How did you develop these stereotypes?
Initial impressions of you

• You will be asked questions
• Americans may have stereotypes about you that may cause some silly questions:
  – Do you have computers in your country?
  – Do you have electricity?
  – Do you own a pet panda?
  – Do you wear clothes when you are at home?
  – Do you know karate?
  – Are there fast-food restaurants in your country?
  – Have you ridden an elephant?
Ohio State Values Diversity

- Freedom of speech, a source of pride
- Allows people to sometimes express unpopular opinions
- Very tough presidential election
- A lot of differing rhetoric
- Ohio State is not a place for hate in any form
- Ohio State values diversity and the learning that results from it
- Reporting hate speech or crimes
- Resources available
Making friends and living in America
Megan C. Lawther
Cultural clues when making friends with Americans

- Non-verbal greetings
  - Handshakes
  - Wave
  - Nod
  - Man-shake/Hug
- Verbal greetings
  - “Hi, how are you?”
  - “Hey! What’s up?”
  - “What’s going on?”
Cultural clues when making friends with Americans

- Popular Culture References
  - Movies, music, sports and TV shows
- Making “Small Talk”
  - Campus events
  - Hobbies/activities
  - What is going on in the news or in class
  - Share something about your home country
M&M Activity
Popular phrases and American idioms

- “BFF/Bestie/Bae”
- “LOL”
- “JK”
- “BRB”
- “ROFL”
- “Play it by ear”
- “For here or to go”
- “Legit”
- “Okie Dokie”
- “Drive thru”
- “Hang Out”
- “On Fleek”
From our current students

Things that may surprise you in America

• Tipping
• Sales tax
• Everything is so cold
• Lack of public transportation
• American system of measurement
• Shoes on inside the house
• Overt patriotism
• People talk about “semi-private” issues in public
Things that may surprise you in America

- Americans are generally friendly
- Electronics are cheaper
- Diversity of culture
- Politeness
- Informality
- Customer service
- Unlimited refills on drinks in many places
- Open mindedness

From our current students
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WeChat</td>
<td>IM/Facebook messages</td>
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<td>Skype</td>
<td>Skype/FaceTime</td>
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While in America…

- Drinking age is 21 years of age
- We are a Tobacco Free Campus
  - No cigarettes or smokeless tobacco
- You will need extra-long twin bed sheets in the residence halls
- Making friends can be challenging, even for American students
- You need to practice your English
- People you don’t know will say hello or smile
- When people ask “how are you” it’s a form of hello
- Ask questions