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SEPARATING EXPECTATIONS FROM
BEHAVIOR IN 10 SYNTHETIC CULTURES

Objective: To describe the expectations of 10 different synthetic cultures as those synthetic cultures match their different behaviors to the same expectations.

TIME REQUIRED About an hour

RISK LEVEL High

PARTICIPANTS
NEEDED Any number of students, plus one facilitator

PROCEDURE Please take the following steps:

1. Divide the class into 10 or fewer small groups of two or more people each, and assign to each group one of the synthetic culture perspectives described in Exhibit 3.14. It would also be possible to have individuals select which synthetic culture they want to portray. Assign at least two people to each synthetic culture so that each can reinforce the behaviors of the others in that culture.
2. Once the participants have been assigned to synthetic cultures, organize a town meeting of the whole group on a particularly important or controversial issue locally. Each participant will participate in the town meeting in the role of her or his synthetic culture.
3. Allow the meeting to proceed, and discuss the local issue. Serve as the meeting moderator to keep the discussion moving along.

Note. From *Culture-Centered Counseling and Interviewing Skills*, by P. B. Pedersen and A. E. Ivey, 1993, Westport, CT: Greenwood/Praeger. Copyright 1993 by Greenwood/Praeger. Adapted with permission. More information on the synthetic cultures is available from Hofstede, Pedersen, and Hofstede (2002), *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories, and Synthetic Cultures*, Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

High Power Distance

The primary directive of this culture is respect for status.

Behavior	Meaning
Is soft-spoken, polite, and listens	Friendliness
Is quiet and polite, but does not listen	Unfriendliness
Asks for help and direction	Trust
Does not ask for help and direction	Distrust
Is positive and animated, but makes no eye contact	Interest
Is expressionless and unanimated, but makes eye contact	Boredom

Low Power Distance

The primary directive of this culture is that all people are equal.

Behavior	Meaning
Is loud, direct, and very verbal	Friendliness
Is loud and direct, but does not say much	Unfriendliness
Offers help and direction	Trust
Does not offer help and direction	Distrust
Challenges with direct eye contact	Interest
Is passive and makes no direct eye contact	Boredom

High Uncertainty Avoidance

The primary directive of this culture is respect for the truth.

Behavior	Meaning
Gives detailed responses; is formal, specific, and unambiguous	Friendliness
Gives generalized, ambiguous responses; is anxious to end interview	Unfriendliness
Separates right from wrong unambiguously	Trust
Is openly critical; challenges the credentials of others	Distrust
Is verbal and task-oriented, questions with direct eye contact	Interest
Is passive and quiet; makes no direct eye contact	Boredom

Low Uncertainty Avoidance

The primary directive of this culture is tolerance for ambiguity.

Behavior	Meaning
Is ambiguous, informal, and general	Friendliness
Is specific, rude, and antagonistic	Unfriendliness
Sees rightness and wrongness as relative to the situation	Trust
Is secretive and nondisclosing	Distrust
Is quiet, relationship oriented, and empathic	Interest
Is aggressive and direct	Boredom

(continued)

DEBRIEFING

In debriefing this experience, it is useful to make three observations:

1. The same behavior may have different meanings, and different behaviors may have the same meaning.

High Individualism

The primary directive of this culture is respect for individual freedom.

Behavior	Meaning
Is verbal and self-disclosing	Friendliness
Is critical and likely to subvert or sabotage	Unfriendliness
Aggressively debates issues and controls the interview	Trust
Is noncommittal, passive, ambiguous, and defensive	Distrust
Is loudly verbal and questioning; engages in touching and physical contact	Interest
Maintains physical distance, asks no questions, and makes no eye contact	Boredom

High Collectivism

The primary directive of this culture is respect for friendship.

Behavior	Meaning
Is nonverbal and modestly polite	Friendliness
Is disengaged and likely to withdraw from contact	Unfriendliness
Listens carefully and shows respect	Trust
Is nondisclosing and nonresponsive but polite	Distrust
Listens carefully, seeks to learn, and is respectful	Interest
Is nonresponsive, disengaging, and distant	Boredom

High Masculine

The primary directive of this culture is to win at all costs.

Behavior	Meaning
Engages in physical contact; is seductive and loud	Friendliness
Maintains physical distance; is sarcastic and punishing	Unfriendliness
Is competitive, challenging, and dominating	Trust
Is openly critical and disparaging and is eager to end the interview	Distrust
Is sports oriented, eager to debate, and engaging	Interest
Engages in no eye contact; is discourteous and drowsy	Boredom

(continued)

2. The primary directive of each culture can be achieved without contradicting the primary directive of any other culture.
3. The common ground shared by all participants, such as finding a constructive solution to the local problem, is difficult to identify when participants behave in different and presumed hostile ways.

Once the students have learned their synthetic culture role, there are any number of ways the spectrum of 10 contrasting synthetic cultures can be used. Because the cultures are synthetic (that is, artificial) and do not exist in such an extreme form outside the laboratory classroom, the interaction is relatively safe and also relatively comprehensive. Some questions for discussion might include the following:

1. Were you able to express your synthetic culture role accurately?
2. Can you find aspects of all 10 synthetic cultures in yourself?
3. Can you find common ground across these synthetic cultures?

High Feminine

The primary directive of this culture is respect for the weak.

Behavior	Meaning
Is modest, quiet, and receptive to the other person's ideas	Friendliness
Is polite but disengaged, nonresponsive, and distant	Unfriendliness
Is cooperative and trusting and seeks to please	Trust
Is noncommittal, cold, and nondisclosing	Distrust
Is relationship oriented, warm, and receptive to others	Interest
Is distant, preoccupied, and nonreceptive	Boredom

Long-Term Perspective

The primary directive of this culture is delay of gratification.

Behavior	Meaning
Is direct, questioning, and cooperative	Friendliness
Is disengaged, distant, and exclusionary	Unfriendliness
Is sharing, invested, and purposeful	Trust
Is separate, uptight, stressed, and restrained	Distrust
Is hard working, future oriented, and idealistic	Interest
Is nondisclosing, quiet, distant, and judgmental	Boredom

Short-Term Perspective

The primary directive of this culture is immediate gratification.

Behavior	Meaning
Is extravagant, generous, happy, and smiling	Friendliness
Is blaming, angry, distressed, and rude	Unfriendliness
Is warm, formal, and eager to work with others	Trust
Is disappointed, betrayed, and disengaged	Distrust
Is eager to please, generous, and respectful of traditions	Interest
Is blaming, disrespectful, and eager to end the interview	Boredom

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4. Were you able to maintain integrity while interacting with other synthetic cultures?
5. Did you find aspects of some synthetic cultures in stereotypes of different cultures?

It is possible to find common ground without sacrificing cultural integrity or giving up the synthetic culture's primary directive in the process.

INSIGHT