

Activity Suggestions: Grades 10-12**Brief Encounters¹⁸**

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- Cultural-norms sheets for the Pandya and Chispa cultures (half of the players will receive Pandya sheets and the other half Chispa sheets)
- Recorded music
- A whistle and a timer to help you pace the game

Objectives

- Students will gain skills in observing and describing behaviors.
- Students will develop an understanding of how our cultural values influence the way we view other groups.

Introduction

Science fiction fans will recognize a familiar theme as they participate in this simulation. Many science fiction authors have explored how humans will behave when we meet an alien race for the first time. “Brief Encounters” brings the question closer to home and asks students to explore the interaction of two cultures—**one outgoing and casual, the other more reserved and formal**—with very different social norms.

Procedure

1. Remove all furniture from the center of the classroom. Students will need space to move around.
2. Divide the participants into three groups. Two groups should be about the same size and should have roughly equal numbers of males and females, if possible. A smaller group of two to three students will act as observers.
3. Tell the observers that they will be watching closely as two different cultural groups interact. They may move among the participants, but they may not touch or speak to them. Their observations will help the class view the activity with a wider perspective during the debriefing.
4. Send the Pandya and Chispa groups to opposite corners of the room. Distribute copies of the Pandya cultural-norms sheets to one group and the Chispa cultural-norms sheets to the other group. Ask the members of each culture to read these sheets and to discuss their norms among themselves.
5. Visit the Pandyas and clarify their values. Emphasize the importance of staying in “character.” Emphasize that the male students should be chaperoned at all times. Remind them of their reluctance to initiate contacts with people of other cultures.
6. Visit the Chispas and clarify their values. Emphasize the importance of making several brief contacts rather than a few lengthy ones. Define a contact as eliciting a verbal or a nonverbal response from a member of the other culture. Remind them of their friendly, outgoing nature and their eagerness to meet people from other cultures.
7. If students ask about the scoring system that appears on the norms sheets, tell them you will discuss this aspect of the game during the debriefing. Actually, you will not keep score. The point systems are printed on the norm sheets to establish a reward system for “good” behavior as defined by each of the two cultures.

8. Announce that the two student groups have been invited to a party sponsored by an international student exchange organization. The party organizers hope the two groups will get acquainted and learn about each other. When students return to their home schools, they will present culture reports to their classmates. The students are welcome to mingle, dance, and talk.
9. Start the music and let the two cultures interact. The teacher and student observers should walk among the groups, looking for behaviors that can be described and discussed during debriefing.
10. After 10 to 12 minutes, blow the whistle to end the party. Ask the students to meet once more in opposite corners of the room and to make notes for their culture reports.
11. Give each group about 10 minutes to create a brief report. The Chispas' report will describe the Pandya behavior and values that their classmates might expect to encounter if they visited the Pandya nation. The Pandyas will create a similar description of the Chispas.
12. Ask a representative from the Chispas to present the group's report to the class. Then ask a representative from the Pandyas to read that group's norms sheet. Ask the Chispas to note how their reports compared to the Pandyas' norms sheet.
13. Repeat with a Pandya representative sharing the group's report on the Chispas.

Debriefing

Use questions such as the following to guide discussion of how our cultural "biases" influence the way we view other groups. Be sure to ask the observers for their views on the participants' attempts to communicate across cultures and to maintain cultural norms.

1. How did you feel about the behavior of the members of your own group? Of the other group? Did your group's culture report use positive, negative, or neutral terms to describe the other group?
2. How did your group organize to observe the norms of your culture? During the party, what did you do if a member of your culture did not observe a particular norm?
3. Did your group attempt to keep score during the game? What are the real-world rewards for following cultural norms?
4. Ask students to discuss whether they agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
 - People have difficulty describing the behaviors of other groups in nonjudgmental terms.
 - People acquire cultural norms fairly quickly.
 - People seldom question the cultural norms that are handed to them.
 - Most of the group's norms are maintained through peer pressure.
 - Americans tend to feel uncomfortable without eye contact, even though in many parts of the world, eye contact is considered to be rude and impolite.
 - The same behavior can be perceived differently depending on your group's norms. For example, the same behavior appears friendly to Chispas and pushy to Pandyas.
5. What are some real-world situations that were illustrated during the game?
6. Pandya women were instructed to speak for the Pandya men. In what real-world situations does one group speak for another?



7. How would the game be different for players if the Pandya men dominated the women?
8. What would have happened if the two groups had been required to complete a science experiment or organize a field trip together? If the “party” had lasted for the entire class period?
9. What lessons from this activity would you want to keep in mind if you were going to spend time in an unfamiliar culture?

Extending the Ideas

- Ask students to list as many examples of cross-cultural experiences as they can. Remind them that not all cross-cultural experiences take place in other countries or between people who speak foreign languages or come from different racial backgrounds. Attending worship services, for example, with a friend who holds different religious beliefs is a cross-cultural experience. Brainstorm ideas about what students can do to encourage clear communication in such situations.
- If you are corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer, ask him or her to describe the typical conversational style of people in the host country. What adjustments did the Volunteer make to avoid misunderstandings in the host country?
- This lesson could lead to a service-learning project. If you have a multicultural class or have international exchange students in your school, help your students develop a project to foster better understanding and communication. Some ideas for action follow.
 - Conduct a survey to determine what communication difficulties, if any, exist among the students and between students and teachers.
 - Research the customs and culture of the groups that are represented in your class or school.
 - Plan a cultural awareness week.
 - Invite Returned Peace Corps Volunteers or parents of international students to speak to your students and share information about the language(s), culture, and customs of their countries.
 - Develop a feature article or regular column in the student newspaper that introduces various peoples and cultures.

Use the Service-Learning Rubric, found in the introduction to this teacher’s guide, to plan a project that will have a strong impact.



You Are a *Pandya*

Pandya Cultural Norms

- *Pandyas* prefer to interact with members of their own culture.
- *Pandyas* do not initiate conversation. They speak only when spoken to.
- *Pandyas* have very formal speech patterns. For example, they always use “sir” and “ma’am.”
- Among *Pandyas*, women have more status than men. Men are chaperoned by *Pandya* women.
- *Pandya* men avoid eye contact with women from other cultures.
- *Pandya* men do not talk directly to women from other cultures. They respond through their chaperones.
- *Pandya* men can talk to men from other cultures. They can maintain eye contact with men from other cultures.

Scoring

- *Pandyas* lose 1 point for initiating conversations with anyone from another culture.
- *Pandya* men lose 2 points for talking directly to women from another culture.
- *Pandya* women gain 1 point each time they respond to a woman from another culture on behalf of a *Pandya* man.



You Are a *Chispa*

Chispa Cultural Norms

- *Chispas* are informal and friendly.
- Among *Chispas*, there is no gender discrimination. Men and women behave the same way.
- *Chispas* are outgoing. They love to make contact with people from other cultures.
- *Chispas* contacts are brief and casual.
- *Chispas* are democratic and call everyone by first name.
- *Chispas* value cross-gender contacts more than same-gender contacts.

Scoring

- *Chispas* get 1 point for making a same-gender contact.
- *Chispas* get 2 points for making a cross-gender contact.
- *Chispas* lose 5 points if they fail to make a cross-gender contact within one minute.



Becoming Part of the Community

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

Copies of “She’s a Thai,” “Drip Diplomacy,” and “Features of Culture” for each student

Objectives

- Students will identify the features of culture experienced by Peace Corps Volunteers in two different countries.
- Students will identify the skills and attitudes required for successful cross-cultural experiences.

Introduction

Volunteers come to the Peace Corps from all the U.S. states and territories. Some are just out of college; some are just starting retirement. They represent a cross-section of ethnic and economic backgrounds. But when Volunteers return from their host countries, they share a new perspective on the world and its peoples. They appreciate the diversity of human life, and at the same time they treasure our common bonds.

There are many stories from Volunteers that describe a moment in which they realize that they have come to feel at home in their host countries. The following two stories illustrate that moment for two Volunteers.

Procedure

1. Review or introduce the “Features of Culture” printed at the beginning of this section. Emphasize the idea that these universals serve as a way of looking at the things that cultures have in common. For example, all cultures have ways of acquiring food. American families who shop at supermarkets and Ugandan families who grow almost everything they eat have that need in common.
2. Ask students to read “She’s a Thai” and “Drip Diplomacy.” As they read, they should look for details that correspond with the “Features of Culture” printed at the beginning of this section, and for evidence of the ways each Volunteer learned to fit into the host communities. Be sure students know that the stories do not correspond to all of the features of culture.
3. When students have finished reading, divide the class into several small groups. Have each group match details from the stories with as many features of culture as possible. Students should discuss and negotiate their ideas until all group members agree on the best representation. Each group’s conclusions should be listed on a large sheet of paper and posted on a classroom wall. Then, as a full class, discuss the differences and similarities among the small-group observations.
4. Ask each group to identify two to three attitudes or actions that they believe helped the Volunteer have a successful experience in the host country.



Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion of Sharon London's and Keith Talbot's experiences.

1. How does it feel to be in a place that is completely new to you?
2. What are some of the cultural differences that Sharon London and Keith Talbot faced in their host countries? (*Possible answers: new languages, different standards of courtesy and beauty, different foods*)
3. Which features of culture are most apparent in these readings?
4. What did the Volunteers do to learn to feel at home in their host communities? (Students will need to infer responses. Possible answers: The Volunteers carefully observed the behaviors and practices of their hosts; they made efforts to learn Spanish and Thai; they each approached their assignments with curiosity and a sense of humor.)
5. What lessons do these readings offer about dealing with unfamiliar situations or people?
6. What if these stories were written about the Volunteers from Thai or Dominican perspectives?
7. What are some questions you can ask yourself the next time you are puzzled by another person's way of doing things?

Extending the Ideas

- If your class is matched with a Peace Corps Volunteer through the World Wise Schools program, have students find examples of cultural universals in letters from the Volunteer.
- Have each student research the customs and norms of a country they would like to visit. Have students use the "Features of Culture" list to outline a report on the country they choose. The Peace Corps web site <<http://www.peacecorps.gov>> will be helpful in this activity.

She's a Thai¹⁹

This week I received a very special compliment: “*Sharon ben kone Thi laow.*” (“Sharon is a Thai person.”) What satisfaction—I am considered one of the gang. Yahoo! Seven months in this country, with three months of intensive training, have granted me the auspicious title of “Thai person.”

What is it, however, that makes me “Thai” rather than “American”? Perhaps this question will explain why I can no longer easily pinpoint my identity, and why I often feel like the person I was eight months ago has been lost somewhere along the way in my travels to this place high in the mountains of northern Thailand.

First, let's look at my physical appearance. Sure, my hair is dark for a *farang* (a westerner), but it is brown and curly, not straight and black. It definitely cannot be my body. Not only am I taller than most Thai men and women, but I probably weigh more as well. At least nobody calls me fat, which Thais have no qualms about saying. (My threats to cry nonstop may be the reason *ooahp*, or shapely, has been used to describe me instead.) Also, I have far more body hair than any of my Thai friends and co-workers. Thai women rarely have arm, leg, or armpit hair. My eyes are round, my skin is white, and I have body hair. There is no mistaking me for a Thai.

Maybe, then, it's my food consumption. My spicy food intake is definitely increasing. I can eat sticky rice with no problem and actually even prefer it to steamed rice. There is more to my “Thai-ness” than food, however. Possibly it's my con-

versational abilities. I can hold a simple conversation in Thai (and a tiny bit in the northern dialect, too). For example:

Sharon: Hello.

Thai: Hello.

Sharon: Have you eaten yet?

Thai: Yes. Have you eaten?

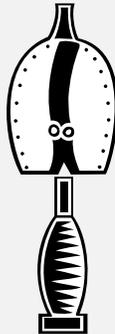
Sharon: No. What did you eat with rice today?

Thai: Spicy pepper dip. And what will you eat with rice today?

Sharon: I don't know yet. Probably stir-fried vegetables.

Thai (not knowing I don't eat meat): Will you eat beef or pork? Would you like some?

Sharon: No thanks, just vegetables.



Occasionally, conversations go further:

Thai: Do you have boyfriend? Are you married?

Sharon: Nope, not yet.

Thai: Do you want a Thai one? I know a nice guy.

Sharon: Sure, only if he'll do all my laundry and cooking. And could you find me a couple? One won't be enough.

Yes, I would definitely say I am very Thai in my conversational patterns. I raise my voice in conversation more than I ever have in my past 24 years of life. I ask Thai people personal questions with no qualms, like how old they are, how much money they make, where they are going, and what they are eating. People in America may think I am prying upon my return.

Sharon London served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 1994 to 1996.



Drip Diplomacy²⁰

Strange and subtle sometimes are the habits of courtesy. Water is a precious commodity out here in the *campo* (countryside). So there is a whole culture built around its acquisition and usage. If you go to any store or wait for a *guagua* (bus), the custom, usually, is to push or shove your way to the front. When it comes to water, at least in my community, the rules are different. I spent the morning collecting water for myself at the communal tap. The same *Doñas* who elbowed me aside in the *colmado* (corner store) last night made sure I got my water when it was my turn—first come, first served.

Water is one of the first things you offer a visiting Volunteer, water to drink and to wash off the dusty road. A good host is not stingy with his water even if he has to go through great effort to get it. A good guest notices how difficult it is to get the water and limits her usage accordingly. Even better, the guest helps replace the water used.

Volunteers from water-poor communities are often quick to notice the lavish habits of Volunteers from water-rich communities. “I can’t believe she used three full gallons to take a bath. You’d think she were washing an elephant.” On the other hand, Volunteers from water-rich communities are struck by the unreasonable stinginess of the water-poor. “He hoarded water like it was gold at Fort Knox, rationing it out drop by drop.”

I consider myself a decent host in this area. I keep about 15 gallons in my house almost all the time. Since the average Volunteer uses about three to four gallons a day, that’s a pretty good quantity.

I never tire of marveling at the combinations of strength and grace displayed by the women and girls who carry five gallons on their heads, with a gallon in each hand. My favorite is when they casually turn to chat with a neighbor, blithely ignoring the burden with which they are laden. I once watched a woman gracefully bend down and pluck a *peso* without spilling a precious drop!

I carry the water on my shoulder. I’ve assumed that the wide berth the folks give me is not due to unpleasant body odor, but because of the constant splashes that leap forth from my bucket. But I’m improving. Now, people rarely ask me if I’ve recently gone swimming after I’ve actually been carrying water. And the water source is one of the best places to catch the latest gossip. I have concluded that *chesmes* (rumors) are flying due to the occasional, “*No me digas!*” (“Don’t tell me!”) and “*Adquerosa!*” (“Gross!”) that escapes from their mouths while they are huddled over the tap.



I suppose that’s what I like best about the water collection process. It’s one of the places where I fit into the community best. My Spanish is what it is, and I do remain the *gringo*. Yet, I understand the rules at the tap and even some of the subtleties. The community sees I am on even ground with them and ask no privileges. It is a calm and orderly place. Maybe I will fondly remember the communal tap when I am reaching for the hot water faucet in the shower. And then again. . .

Keith Talbot served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Dominican Republic from 1993 to 1995.



Activity Suggestions: Grades 10-12

Beauty

Class time needed: Two to three class periods

Materials

- Objects provided by students
- Art supplies

Objectives

- Students will develop appreciation for the individual experiences that shape our views of what is important or valuable.
- Students will practice tolerance and acceptance.

Note: This activity asks students to share potentially sensitive aspects of their personal lives. Help shy or reluctant students find “safe” ways to participate and set clear expectations for mutual respect in the class.

Introduction

Objects tell stories. Each of us owns treasured mementos that hold little meaning or appeal for other people. These objects help us remember significant events and serve as symbols of personal or family milestones. This activity will help students understand how individual experience influences the way we view the world. It also provides a forum for discussion of the value of diversity and of our capacity to change.

Procedure

1. Ask each student to consider the emotional connotations of the word beautiful. An object that has personal or sentimental value may be “beautiful” to its owner, even though someone else might consider it odd, unusual, or ugly.
2. Ask each student to bring an object to class that he or she considers “beautiful” because of its connection to an idea, event, or person important to its owner.
3. Have students display their objects in the classroom as if it were a museum.
4. Have students tour the exhibit and take notes describing their gut reactions or first impressions of each object. Try to maintain a formal museum or gallery atmosphere in the class. Owners should not explain their objects, and observers should not comment aloud.
5. For the second class period, ask each student to find a way to explain the significance of his or her object. Students could use visual art, poetry, storytelling, dance, etc. to illustrate the events and feelings associated with their objects. They should invite their classmates to ask questions about each object and the story behind it. Students should then visit the “museum” a second time, again noting their responses.



Debriefing

Use the following questions (or questions you create) to guide discussion of how perceptions can change when we have the opportunity to hear each other's stories.

1. How did it feel to know that people were looking closely at, and perhaps making judgments about, something you treasure?
2. What happened the first time you looked at the objects exhibited by your classmates? Share some of the observations you made about the objects. What happened when you viewed the objects for a second time? Share some of your new observations. Did your feelings about the object change?
3. What are some things you learned about each other during this exercise? What did you learn about yourselves?
4. Working in groups of two to three, brainstorm a list of things that people judge according to appearance. Is it ever OK to do this? When?
5. What if we did this activity with people who were not familiar with American culture? How would you help them to understand the value of your objects? What questions could you ask to learn about the things they consider "beautiful"?
6. What are some things we can do to stay open-minded about things we don't immediately like or understand? As a group, devise a checklist or guide that students can use to help them remember to re-examine first impressions.

Extending the Ideas

- Ask students to keep a journal of their reactions to new situations, people, food, music, etc. for a specific time. Invite students to share their journal entries with the class and to discuss their progress as they develop perspective awareness.
- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer, ask him or her to compare initial impressions of the host country with later feelings. Ask your Volunteer to discuss perspective awareness. What strategies does the Volunteer use to understand issues and events from the perspective of the hosts?
- Invite a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer or someone from your community who has spent time in other countries to talk to your class about perceptions of unfamiliar things from another culture. Ask the speaker to describe how these impressions influenced his or her behavior. Ask if the unfamiliar became routine over time and how that happened. Have the speaker describe situations that illustrate the concepts brought out in this lesson. Contact World Wise Schools for a list of Returned Volunteers in your area (e-mail: <dpinfo@peacecorps.gov>; phone: 800-424-8580, extension 2283).

Perspectives on Paraguay

Class time needed: 40 minutes

Materials

A copy of “Perspectives on Paraguay,” an interview with returned Peace Corps Volunteer Nichola Minott, for each student

Objective

- Students will develop awareness of diverse cultural norms and values.

Introduction

Nichola Minott was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay from 1991 to 1994. She worked as a teacher trainer and then as a health coordinator. She was interviewed during the filming of a World Wise Schools video, *Destination: Paraguay*. In the interview excerpts printed on the student activity sheet, Nichola tells about her experiences as a Volunteer in a South American country. She provides a glimpse of the lives and culture of the people of Paraguay. Be aware that students may find aspects of Paraguayan life unfamiliar and strange in comparison to their own. Emphasize the need to be respectful of other peoples’ ways of life, ideas, and traditions while reading and discussing the interview. The full interview can be found on the Peace Corps web site at <<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/dp/interview/wwsin1.html>>.

Procedure

1. Help students locate Paraguay on a world map. Ask students to share their ideas about how a Paraguayan teenager’s life might compare to a teenager’s life in the United States. At this point it doesn’t matter whether students have much background information about Paraguay; it will be interesting to see what the students’ expectations are.
2. Provide each student with a copy of “Interview with Nichola Minott.” Ask students to read the interview to learn about aspects of Paraguayan life and to compare it to their own.
3. After the students have read the interview independently, ask them to work in small groups to find specific similarities and differences between Paraguayan and American views. Be sure all of the cultural backgrounds represented in your class are heard during these discussions and during the debriefing period.
4. Ask a student spokesperson to summarize the similarities and differences identified by each small group.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students think about what they have learned.



1. What Paraguayan customs or views seemed most unusual to you? Are there aspects of Paraguayan life described in the interview that would be difficult for you to adapt to? Did Nichola Minott describe family and social expectations that also are important in your community?
2. What are some characteristics of life in our community that might make a teenager from Paraguay feel uncomfortable?
3. What are some values and characteristics that Nichola Minott labels as “American”? Would all Americans in all regions and communities agree with her?
4. Nichola Minott said that the Paraguayan perception of Americans is “blond hair, blue eyes.” If you were a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay, what could you do to give people a more diverse perspective?

Extending the Ideas

- View the World Wise Schools video *Destination: Paraguay*. Ask students if their impressions of life in Paraguay formed after reading Nichola Minott's interview were confirmed or challenged.
- Have students create a video tape that demonstrates daily life in your community. Encourage students to present the community's diversity.
- Use this same reading as the basis for a discussion on generalizations and how to recognize them. See "How Accurate Is It?" in the Grades 6-9 section of this guide for suggestions and debriefing questions.



Perspectives on Paraguay

Question (Q): Describe the people in Paraguay.

Answer (A): OK. They're very open, they're very friendly. No matter how poor they are, they'll invite you to the house and give you the best portion of what they have. They're also very honest. For example, in the United States people are so conscious about their weight. In Paraguay, if someone is overweight, they'll say, "Oh, you know you're fat," but it's not something that's considered negative. It's just how you are. They're very honest about that, and I think that it takes a little bit of adjusting, especially coming from a culture where physical appearance is so important. It takes a little adjusting to realize that they're just being honest, but at the same time, it's not necessarily seen in a negative way.

The people of Paraguay are very friendly. They're shy at first. They feel you out to see who you are, especially if you're a foreigner. But once they get to know you, they are very protective of you. They make sure that nothing happens to you. They're just really open, really loving.

I think they value the family; the family's very close. Daughters, even though they get married, they still come back and they visit their mothers, their fathers. They live fairly close to each other. On weekends and Sundays, they always come back if they don't live very close to visit and have lunch. They're just a very open and loving people.

Q: How is life in Paraguay different from life in the U.S.?



A: Well, there's a term that they use here a lot in Paraguay—it's called *tranquillo*. I think life is a lot calmer, more low key, down to earth in Paraguay than in the U.S. In the U.S. everybody's rushing to get somewhere, rushing to do something. There's never enough time to do the things they want to do, and I think in Paraguay there is. There isn't so much emphasis on job as there is on family, and I think that's something that really differentiates the people in Paraguay.

Q: Describe the differences between men and women in the rural areas and then, if it's different, in the urban areas.

A: Well, there's a great division of the sexes. The men are considered the heads of the families and the women are to stay home and have babies and take care of the kids. That is the way it is. It's to a greater degree in the more rural areas, of course, and there's more freedom for women in the more urban areas. Like, for example, in this town, Carapegua, the women have jobs, they're teachers. They have their own businesses. In the rural areas that's not the case at all. So there are very distinct lines between males and females. And, for example, for a woman to



reach a certain age and not be married is not considered socially acceptable. There are women who have remained single most of their lives, but it is not socially acceptable. Also, it is unheard of for a woman to live alone. They're always living with their families. For me to come into this community, which is a fairly large town, and live by myself was something that they just could not understand. The women have been trained . . . to find a husband and get married and have a family. And that's the way it is right now. Just recently they have started to change that mentality, but it's a very long process, and it's not going to change overnight.

Q: Describe some of the dating customs.

A: Women are not allowed to [go to] dances until they're 15. When they turn 15, there's a huge party and then they're considered eligible. They can get married at 15, and they can go out to parties with a chaperone, either their mother or their older sisters. They cannot go to parties, especially in the more rural areas, without a chaperone or a date. They have certain visiting days when the men go over to the women's houses. They sit with the family and they talk to the dad, and they have very little time alone, and they get to know the family. On the non-visiting days they can do what they want. But when a man comes on those certain days, then that means he's interested and they're dating.

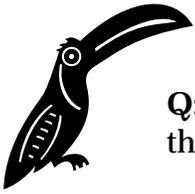
Q: Talk a little bit about some of the friendships you've made here in this area.

A: Well, let's see, I've made really good friends here. I think that's a feat in itself in that [I had] to learn the language. I wouldn't consider the friends I've made here superficial friends. I think it took a lot of work and a lot of trying on both our parts, but I think I've made friends that I hope to maintain when I return to the States. And the thing that is so important to me is that I've made them in a different language. We did not speak the same language when I first came here, and now we've passed that and it's a deeper friendship, and I value it. I value it more because of the work to form the friendships here.

Q: Do you feel that you've become part of the community?

A: Yeah! I felt I became part of the community . . . but you're always a foreigner, you're always the North American. I felt that people accepted me, and they were comfortable around me, but I don't think that I could, at least in two years, ever be completely integrated into the community. I'm still considered a novelty in a lot of ways. Their perception of Americans is blond hair, blue eyes—because that's the majority of what they see on TV and of Volunteers coming down here. I think I was a novelty because they'd never seen a black woman. So it was an awakening for them, and I think a good thing that they got to see an American who was not representative of the white Americans that they see on television.





Q: Do you have any special experiences or moments that you can share with us that come to mind, stand out?

A: I think one of the most rewarding experiences for me, workwise, was visiting a school and seeing them using something that we'd talked about in a workshop. That was really rewarding. For example, seeing a little kid wearing shoes and talking to his little brother or sister and saying, "You've got to put on your shoes," after I talked about not running around without shoes so you don't get parasites—I think that was rewarding. On another level, working with the kids, even though I didn't work with them a lot, was something I had a good feeling about.

On a personal level, I'd say the moment I got past the superficial barrier with my friends was very special to me, the moment we got to the point in our friendship where they started to come to me and ask my advice about things and talk to me. Then I knew we had reached a new level where I could talk to them and get advice from them—just like in the States when you're hanging out with your girlfriends and you're gossiping and going over your problems and getting different opinions. I thought that was one of the more rewarding experiences—when they started to come to me and when I started to do that with them.

Q: So what do you think people in the U.S. can learn from the Paraguayans?

A: I think one of the things we're losing in the U.S. is the importance of family. I've learned that personally being here. Just to value the family, also the importance of the community as a whole and working together for the community. It is not always the case in all communities, but in comparison to the United States, there's still a strong sense of community here in Paraguay. I think in the United States people tend to focus on consuming and having things, and I don't know whether it's to replace something they're lacking emotionally, but I think here people are more concerned with living. They buy things they need, but there is not so much emphasis on work and earning money. There's more emphasis on family. Work is to get the things you need in the house and the things you need to survive. But family is important.

Q: What makes Paraguay special for you?

A: There are a lot of things that make Paraguay special for me. I can't pinpoint one thing. I will say my experience has been enriched by the people I've met. . . . I really enjoy the culture, the language, listening to Guarinese even though I don't understand it. Spanish, learning Spanish, and just learning about a different culture, and communicating when three years ago I couldn't. I think that's part of the reason I really enjoy it, that I now have an understanding of people that I didn't have before.

Nichola Minott served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay from 1991 to 1994.



Understanding Prejudice³³

Class Time Needed: Two class periods

Materials

- A copy of “Prejudice: A Definition” for each student
- A copy of “Bogardus Social Distance Scale” for each student
- A copy of “A Continuum of Social Relationship Among Human Groups” for each student

Objective

- Students will understand the meaning of personal preference, prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating.

Introduction

This lesson can be implemented from several different entry points, or all of the components can be used, depending on your goals and your students’ understanding of the concepts of prejudice and discrimination. When you use all three components, students will have the opportunity to move from theoretical understanding to more personal examination of their own levels of tolerance.

Entry Point A

Role-play the following activities.

- Only students wearing (brand name) ___ blue jeans can attend the school assembly.
- Only students wearing digital watches may take the social studies exam. Everyone else fails.
- Only pupils wearing (brand name) ___ shoes may go to lunch. The others must stay in the classroom during the lunch period.

Discuss the feelings of the “ins” and the “outs.” How did it feel to be denied a privilege because of an arbitrary rule? How did the privileged students behave toward those who were told they could not attend the assembly or go to lunch?

Entry Point B

Have students read “Prejudice: A Definition” and review “A Continuum of Social Relationship Among Human Groups.” Ask students to define prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating. Help students identify behaviors that illustrate each of the terms on the continuum.



Entry Point C

Administer the “Bogardus Social Distance Scale.” Ask students to indicate on which step of the scale they would admit members of the listed ethnic and national groups. Be sure to communicate that there are no right or wrong answers. The scale is designed to help students explore their individual feelings, and their responses should be shared only on a voluntary basis. The debriefing discussion should focus on what factors influence the way we make decisions about people different from ourselves.

When students have completed the scale, ask them to look at their own papers and discuss the following:

- What do you know about these groups? What are your sources of information? How do you know what people in the groups are like?
- How did you decide where to place each group on your distance scale?
- Where do your feelings about these groups fall on the “Continuum of Social Relationship”?

Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion on the importance of being aware of our own predilections and prejudices.

1. How does it feel when someone prejudices you based on your ethnic or national group? What do you learn about yourself? What do you learn about that person?
2. What happened when you used the distance scale? Were there some groups that you would exclude from any part of your life? What information did you use to make your decisions?
3. What did you learn from this activity?
4. What real life ideas are represented by the distance scale? Do you think that you have an unconscious scale that determines your level of tolerance for people who are different from you? How do you think you developed your own scale?
5. Suppose there is a group that you have placed at the sixth or seventh level on the “Bogardus Social Distance Scale.” A person from that group is introduced into your tightly knit social circle by a good friend. What would you do? What happens when people don’t interact with people from other groups?
6. What are some things you can do to learn more about individuals or groups that you don’t know well?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students do research to learn more about the people and culture of some of the groups listed above. Discuss with the students whether having more information changes the way they rank those groups on the social distance scale.
- Using the color poems for “What is Black?” in the introduction to this section as models, ask students to write culture poems based on research on several of the groups listed above or other cultures found in your community. Provide other assignments for students whose learning style is not based on the written word. Students could make collages, slide shows, or musical or multimedia presentations.



Prejudice: A Definition

by Gordon Allport

Let's look at the stages of hostile relationships—starting with “predilection.”

Predilection simply means that someone prefers one culture, one skin color, or one language as opposed to another. If you like Mexican culture and I do not, there is no use arguing about taste. We may disagree on such matters, but, as a rule, we respect one another's choice. Predilections are natural. But they are the first step toward scapegoating if they turn into more active biases, that is to say into . . .

Prejudice. A prejudice is an attitude in a closed mind. (“Don't bother me with facts, I've already made up my mind.”) Some Europeans may think that all Americans are loudmouthed spendthrifts. This stereotyped view is hard to change. It is a prejudice. An Oxford student is said to have remarked, “I despise all Americans, but I've never met one I didn't like.” This anecdote suggests that prejudgments may stand even when available evidence is against them. Some people with prejudices may think that blacks have rhythm, that Scotsmen are thrifty, or that a woman's place is in the home.

Prejudice, if kept to oneself, causes no great harm except to the mind that possesses it. But prejudice expressed leads to . . .

Discrimination. That means leaving somebody out because of prejudiced thinking. Generally it is based not on an individual's intrinsic qualities but on a “label” branding the individual as a member of a group to be looked down upon. It means separating a group forcibly and unjustly from our neighborhoods, our schools, our churches, our labor unions and our professions.

Scapegoating is hostile behavior by word or deed. The victim usually cannot fight back, for scapegoats are usually members of vulnerable minority groups. [Editor's note: “Minority” does not refer only to race or ethnicity.] The essential cowardice of scapegoating is illustrated by the persecution of the Salem “witches,” a small, frail handful of people who could not fight back.

Adapted from ABC's of Scapegoating by Gordon Allport (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1985).



A Continuum of Social Relationships Among Human Groups

Friendly

Cooperation

Respect

Tolerance

Predilection

Prejudice

Discrimination

Scapegoating

Hostile



Bogardus Social Distance Scale

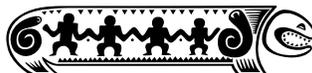
Directions: *The steps below represent a continuum—from close family relationships to complete physical and geographical separation—on which we may place people who are different from ourselves. Write a number beside each national and ethnic group listed below to indicate at what point on the continuum you would feel comfortable with members of those groups. You may keep your responses private, but you will be asked to discuss how you made your decisions.*

Steps

1. To close kinship by marriage
2. To a social group as a personal friend
3. To my street as a neighbor
4. To employment in my place of work within my occupation
5. To citizenship in my country
6. As visitors only to my country
7. Would exclude from my country

Groups

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American | <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Mexican |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenian | <input type="checkbox"/> German | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian | <input type="checkbox"/> Greek | <input type="checkbox"/> Polish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuban | <input type="checkbox"/> Hungarian | <input type="checkbox"/> Scottish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Egyptian | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> Tanzanian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> White American |



Promoting Understanding ³⁴

Class Time Needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- Newsprint or butcher paper
- Markers
- Sticky notes

Objectives

- Students will understand the difference between categories and stereotypes.
- Students will identify ways to respond to the stereotypes they hear.

Introduction

In *Teaching About Cultural Awareness*, Gary Smith and George Otero point out an important difference between categorizing and stereotyping.

*Because of the amount of information we have to assimilate, categorizing is necessary. It is a way to reduce and simplify an otherwise impossibly complex world. Stereotypes . . . go beyond the functionality of thinking in categories. They are beliefs about people in categories that lessen the chances of interaction and diminish the potential for recognizing and accepting differences.*³⁵

This activity is designed to help students understand the negative consequences of stereotyping. Follow-up activities provide opportunities to work together to find ways to confront stereotypes.

Procedure

1. Post several sections of newsprint or butcher paper around the classroom. List one category at the top of each sheet of paper. Some possible categories are listed below, but feel free to adapt this list to make it relevant to your students.

Girls	Asians
Boys	Gays/Lesbians
Athletes	Native Americans
Honor Roll Students	Biracial/Multiracial
Cheerleaders	Disabled
Blacks/African Americans	Various Religious Groups
Whites/European Americans	Elderly
Hispanics/Latinos	Young

2. Present or review the terms “category” and “stereotype.” Point out that categories help us organize the information we have about people, places, and things. For example, it makes sense to describe someone whose ancestors lived in North America well before 1492 as a Native American. But if we assume that person has certain characteristics because he or she belongs to that category, then we are stereotyping. Stereotypes ignore individual differences and assume that all of the people in a given category are alike.

3. Have students look at the posted categories and, using sticky notes, write down stereotypes they have heard about these groups of people. Then have students place the notes under the appropriate categories.

4. After everyone has finished, give students the opportunity to look at the stereotypes posted under each category. Then move to the debriefing session.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to guide student discussion about stereotypes.

1. Were any stereotypes posted about groups or categories that you belong to? How did it feel to see them “in print”?
2. Where do these stereotypes come from? How are they perpetuated?
3. Were positive as well as negative stereotypes posted? Why should positive stereotypes be avoided?
4. What did you learn from this activity? Is there any group that is free of stereotypes?
5. What if there were no stereotypes? Do you think people would behave differently toward one another?
6. Suppose your best friend believes that all the stereotypes about a certain group are true. How would you deal with that situation? What are some things we can do to avoid perpetuating stereotypes?

Extending the Ideas

- Make a list on a flip chart of categories that students in the room fall into, such as African American, Hispanic, Chinese American, band members, honor roll students, cheerleaders. (Be sure that each category will apply to at least two students.) As you go through the list, have the students identify each group to which he or she belongs. Point out that even though each person belongs to many groups, for the purposes of this exercise, students will focus on one group. Then divide the class into several small groups, e.g. a group of Baptists, a group of Chinese Americans. In each group, have students list stereotypes that are commonly applied to the group and facts that dispel the stereotypes. Then have each group present its list to the entire class.
- After all groups have presented their lists, ask the class to brainstorm what they could do to help reduce these stereotypes. For examples, refer to the activity “Fighting Words with Words.” For practice, individuals can role-play what they would say or do if they experienced being stereotyped or hearing someone stereotype others. Emphasize the use of nonaccusatory language when confronting stereotypes.
- Work with your students to make a list of current popular movies or songs. Discuss the plots or lyrics. Ask the students to work independently to examine these for stereotypes. After a few minutes have them bring their findings to a cooperative group, discuss these, and rank the list for the number of stereotypes depicted. Compare all the groups’ rankings and come up with a class consensus. Then pose the question: “Based on these findings, what further action can we take to reduce the use of stereotypes?” This could develop into a service-learning project. See the Service-Learning Rubric printed in the introduction to this guide.

