**Online Orientation Worksheet**

***Complete this worksheet as you read the Culture Orientation for Students Currently Abroad. Once you have completed the Orientation Worksheet and submitted it to Rachel Thiel at*** [***rthiel@nd.edu***](mailto:rthiel@nd.edu)***, you will receive a confirmation email and an Answer Key.***

**STEP ONE: CULTURE TRAINING**

**Read the following excerpts from The University of Pacific’s “On-Line Cultural Training Resource” and “Tales from the Peace Corps.” Then complete the exercises on the Orientation Worksheet.**

**STEP TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Complete the Region Specific Orientation Questionnaire and submit it with your Orientation Worksheet. The Questionnaire can be found under the Forms and Information tab of your program’s webpage.**

**STEP ONE: CULTURE TRAINING**

**Exercise 2: Behaviors: Universal, Cultural, or Personal?**

Through the following exercise, you will explore categories of behavior:

This exercise contains a list of behaviors. After each sentence, put a "U" if you think the behavior is universal, "C" if it is cultural, or "P" if it is personal.

a. Sleeping with a bedroom window open

b. Running from a dangerous animal

c. Considering snakes to be "evil"

d. Men opening doors for women

e. Respecting older people

f. Liking spicy food

g. Preferring playing soccer to reading a book

h. Eating regularly

i. Eating with knife, fork, and spoon

j. Being wary of strangers

k. Calling a waiter with a hissing sound

l. Regretting being the cause of an accident

m. Feeling sad at the death of your mother

n. Wearing white mourning robes for 30 days after the death of your mother

o. Not liking to wear mourning clothes for 30 days after the death of your mother.

***Before completing Exercise 3, return to the orientation materials where you left off on page 2.***

**Exercise 3: In the Mind of the Beholder**

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.

a. 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.

b. Someone kicks a dog.

c. At the end of a meal, people belch audibly.

d. Someone makes the OK gesture at you.

e. A woman carries a heavy pile of wood on her back while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing.

f. A male guest helps a hostess carry dirty dishes into the kitchen.

g. A young man and young woman are kissing each other while seated on a park bench.

h. 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.

a. 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?

b. 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?

c. 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?

d. 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?

e. 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?

f. 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?

g. 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?

h. 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?

***Before completing Exercise 4, please return to where you left off in the orientation materials on page 3.***

**Exercise 4: Sharing the Reward**

First, answer the questions on Sharing the Rewards...

For six weeks, you and the three other people in your division have been working on an important special project. Now the work is done and the four of you have been awarded a cash prize of $20,000. How should this money be distributed? In answering this question, you may find the following information useful:

a. Person A did 25% of the work.

b. Person B did 40% of the work.

c. Person C did 25% of the work.

d. Person D did 10% of the work

In the blank spaces below, write the cash prize you think each person should receive:

Person A $ :

Person B $ :

Person C $ :

Person D $ :

How did you reach your decision?

How would a collectivist interpret this?

***Before completing Exercise 5, please return to where you left off in the orientation materials on page 4.***

**Exercise 5: Tales from the Peace Corps**

***Please choose 4 of the 7 scenarios (pgs. 8-11) and write a 1-2 paragraph about each situation. What did they do right or wrong? Compare their experiences to your own. Which situation do think is most relevant to what you might experience this summer?***

1. **Madagascar**

It was a soul-wrenching heat on the southern tip of Madagascar in February, around 115 degrees Fahrenheit. The Antandroy tribal people walk an average of twelve kilometers a day to retrieve water in the arid spiny desert! With my host family, I lay on a sisal mat as still as possible to avoid using too much energy while my sisters prepared the dinner. Whenever I got up to walk to the bathroom, which was a prickly pear cactus of my choice, a five-minute walk from the huts, my face would burn from the relentless western setting sun. When dinner was served and we were all seated around under the shade of the Baobob tree, for some reason my family started screaming amongst themselves in anger and chaos, every once in a while pointing at me. Unable to understand their rapid Malagasy, I was startled and confused, sensing I was definitely the cause of this upset. What had happened?

1. **Dominican Republic**

When I first arrived in my village in the Dominican Republic, I began to have a problem with my morning jogging routine. I used to jog every day when I was at home in the United States, so when I arrived in my village in the Dominican Republic, I set myself a goal to continue jogging two miles every morning.

I really liked the peaceful feeling of jogging alone as the sun came up. But this did not last for long. The people in my village simply couldn't understand why someone would want to run alone. Soon people began to appear at their doorways offering me a cup of coffee; others would invite me to stop in for a visit. Sometimes this would happen four or five times as I tried to continue jogging. They even began sending their children to run behind me so I wouldn't be lonely. They were unable to understand the American custom of exercising alone.

I was faced with a dilemma. I really enjoyed my early morning runs. However, I soon realized that it's considered impolite in Dominican villages not to accept a cup of coffee, or stop and chat, when you pass people who are sitting on their front steps. I didn't want to give up jogging. But, at the same time, I wanted to show respect for the customs of the Dominican Republic and not be viewed as odd or strange.

What's the dilemma?

1. **Guinea**

Upon arriving in my village, I needed to learn the greetings in the indigenous language, "Malinke." Unfortunately this wasn't as simple as "Hello, how are you?" and responding, "I'm fine," as we do in the United States. Among the Malinke people, it is proper to ask at least five questions when you greet someone. Simply yelling out "hello" and waving as you pass a friend would be considered rude, even if you did it because you were in a hurry. Instead, you must stop and shake hands. Then you ask, "How are you? How is your day going? How are you feeling? How are your family and friends? What's new?" Even if you know that the person will respond the same way every time (i.e., "Fine"), it's still important to ask because it shows that you care and that you are willing to take time out of your day to talk with individuals.

For Guineans, it's the ACT of greeting that counts more than WHAT you are actually saying. It took me about four months to realize this and to get used to it. I had assumed that my neighbors would understand when I couldn't chat because I was running late or that I had an appointment to get to. Eventually, I understood that this was not the case. For Guineans, social obligations are more important than any job-related responsibility**.**

1. **West Africa**

It had been a challenge to accept the fact that meetings or scheduled events never start "on time" in West Africa. If a meeting is set for 8 o'clock, people begin arriving around 9 o'clock and the meeting actually starts at 10 o'clock. After this happened several times, I asked my friend if all Guineans were habitually late. Surprised, she told me, "We Guineans aren't late. You Americans are just early!" I had been acting like a typical American by arriving 15 minutes before a scheduled appointment, whereas I should have been arriving an hour after the scheduled time, which is the Guinean way.

In the beginning, I failed to notice the true meaning of the phrase "In'shallah" (God willing) which, people add to the end of certain sentences. For instance, someone might say, "See you at 4 o'clock, In'shallah (God willing)!" I now interpret this as, "I'll try to be there at 4 o'clock, but if something comes up, I may arrive a bit later than that." These words give people permission to come later than the scheduled time, so that they'll be able to greet people along the way and take care of whatever other problems may arise.

And in Guinea, many other interruptions can and WILL arise! The first and foremost obstacle is the weather. In the rainy season, it faithfully pours down every day, leaving knee-deep puddles of muddy water that form small lakes in the dirt roads. Plans are often delayed until the rain lets up a bit. In the dry season, the sun's hot rays beat down and force people to take cover in the relatively cool shade of their homes between noon and 3 p.m. So it is common knowledge that any meeting scheduled during mid-day will have few attendees.

Difficulties with transportation also cause delays. Few Guineans own personal vehicles so most people use public transportation, such as taxis, vans, buses, motorcycles, and dump trucks. There are no bus schedules or set times for departures and arrivals. Vehicles simply leave when they are full.

In the U.S., we'd consider a typical car "full" when it contains five people. But in Guinea, as many as eight people plus a few children will pile into a car. Then about five people will ride on the roof of the car, holding onto the luggage rack. And that's not all! During each trip, a breakdown or an accident of some sort can be quite normal, even expected. When this happens, all of the passengers get out. Some will push the vehicle as others cut off tree branches or search for rubber bands and tin cans that may be used to repair the car. (It's amazing what Guineans can fix without any tools or special parts!) Often, these repair jobs can take up to five hours or more, but people rarely complain. They simply eat mangoes that they pick off the trees, talk to one another, and sleep along the side of the road.

When I was in the United States, I never thought twice about how easy it was to leave my house 15 minutes before work and arrive on time almost every day. I remember getting upset when I had to wait in traffic for an extra half-hour because of a car accident …or becoming extremely upset when I got a flat tire, even though AAA would come to repair it within 45 minutes. Now, I've learned to be very patient. I've also become more tolerant. I realize that I don't have control over certain things, and that sometimes I must accept my fate and not get upset about unexpected events and problems. Also, instead of letting misunderstandings complicate a situation, I take the extra effort to talk about it until all the confusion is cleared up. My Peace Corps experience has taught me that a problem is only as big as you make it.

1. **India**

Three weeks after I arrived in Dharamsala, India, my host family and I were invited for a special dinner at a relative’s house. I knew the dinner would last for hours and hours, and I couldn't leave to study for my exam the next day because it would be considered rude to do so. Therefore, I stayed and studied during the long preparation of the dinner. I read and highlighted our textbook, *A Joyful Picnic for Those Who Have Come from Afar*.

Visiting Tibetan monks were watching me with what I thought was fascination. I continued to read and highlighted more. As the dinner was served, I placed my textbook at my side near my feet. (I was sitting in a meditation posture, with my feet on the chair.) While I began enjoying my meal, the monks were still staring at me, this time with anguished looks. Suddenly they emotionally addressed the group in Tibetan. It was obvious they were both angry and frustrated and they glared at me the whole time. My host mother apologized, explaining to the monks, "*inji, inji*" (Westerner).

What did I do wrong?

1. **Jordan**

I had been invited to the home of one of my language teachers for a family get-together. The home was small and quite crowded. Eventually a nice middle-aged gentleman came over and sat down close beside me on a sofa and asked me a bunch of questions about my background and family. He asked if I had seen some of the local archeological ruins. I said I had and they were impressive. He got excited and moved even closer to me, put his hand on my thigh, and began to extol the past glories of the country. His face was really close to mine, and I was feeling overwhelmed and extremely uncomfortable. He even took my hand in both of his for a minute or so. I felt totally invaded and had to get up and go outside for a minute. What was going on?

1. **China**

I decided to study abroad in China. I am also a very affectionate person. When I arrived in China, I gave big hugs to all the members in my travel group.  When we went to meet our instructors, I spontaneously gave them all a warm hug. After that first meeting with my instructors, I found that their attitude toward me had changed. Each time I saw my instructors, I found them to be very distant and cold towards me. I became depressed and withdrawn.

What happened and Why?

**STEP TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE**

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