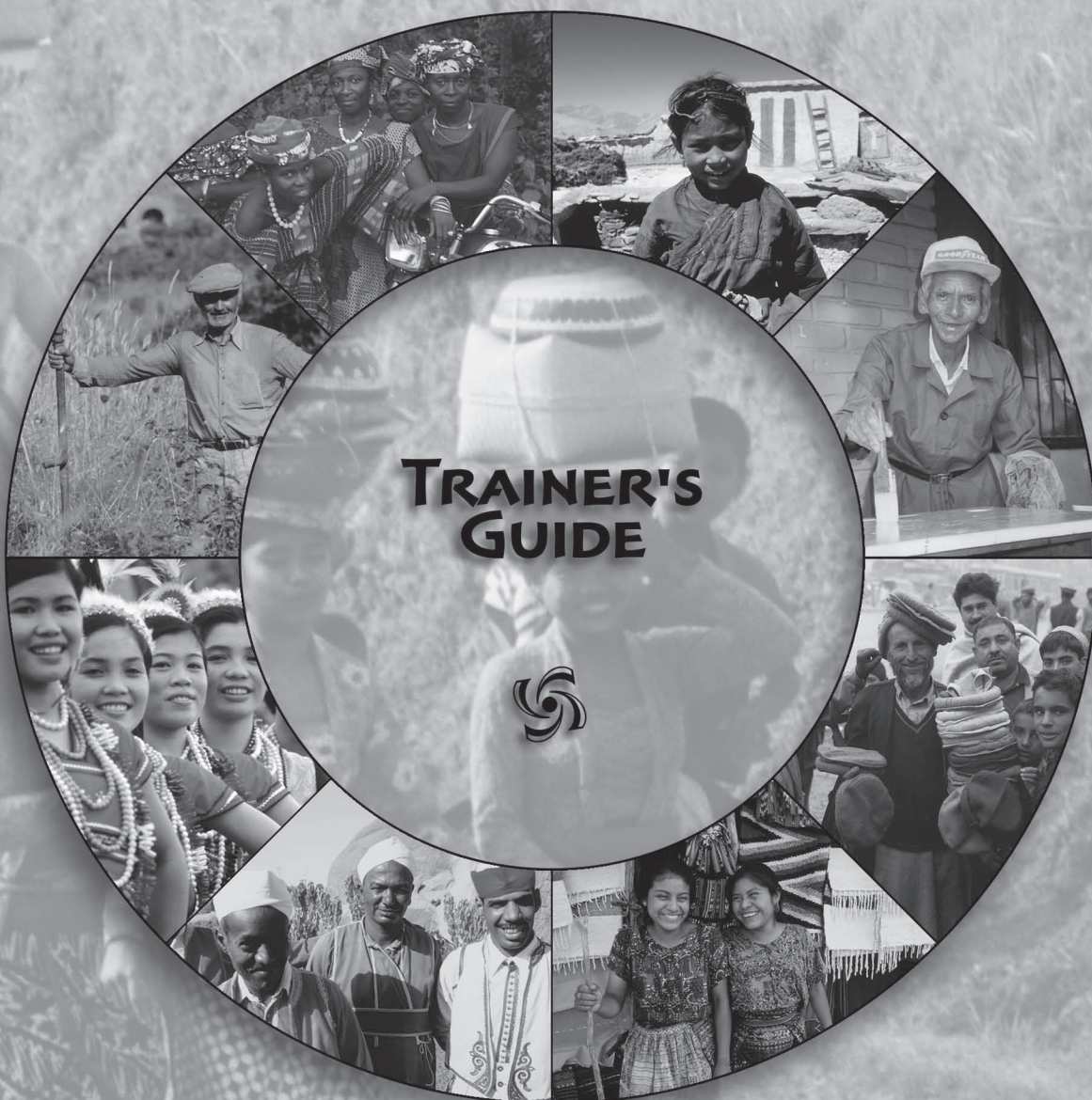


# CULTURE MATTERS



Information Collection and Exchange  
Publication No. T0103

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Peace Corps  
Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support  
**Information Collection and Exchange**  
1111 20<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Sixth Floor  
Washington, DC 20526  
Tel: 202.692.2640  
Fax: 202.692.2641

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# **CULTURE MATTERS**

## **TRAINER'S GUIDE**



**Peace Corps  
Information Collection and Exchange  
Publication No. T0103**

Reprinted March 2010



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# **PART ONE:**

## **USING CULTURE MATTERS IN PRE-SERVICE TRAINING**

### **Introduction**

Peace Corps published *Culture Matters* in 1997. As a self-study workbook, it was intended for use by trainees and Volunteers to teach themselves some of the key concepts in intercultural communication. It was meant to complement and add to country-specific cross-cultural training usually done as part of the Peace Corps pre-service training. As they became familiar with the workbook, trainers in many countries found that they wanted to present various concepts and exercises from *Culture Matters* in formal training sessions in their pre-service and in-service trainings. Indeed, in many countries, trainers have redesigned their pre-service training cross-cultural training using *Culture Matters* as the base.

In response to this development, the Peace Corps has produced this volume, *A Trainer's Guide to Culture Matters*. This guide includes approximately 40 exercises from *Culture Matters*, dealing with the most important concepts in that book, and presents them with extensive background and delivery notes. With these notes, trainers should be able to deliver the various exercises as formal training sessions.

The guide is divided into four parts:

**Part One: Using *Culture Matters* in Pre-Service Training** describes what is in *Culture Matters* —and what is not—and explains how the workbook can be incorporated into pre-service and in-service training.

**Part Two: Trainer Notes for Selected Exercises from *Culture Matters*** provides trainers with a wide selection of sessions from the book and instructions for presenting these sessions as part of pre-service and in-service cross-cultural training.

**Part Three: Group Exercises** keyed to *Culture Matters* which includes group exercises which may enhance *Culture Matters* and instructions for presenting these sessions as part of pre-service and in-service cross-cultural training.

**Part Four: Additional Resources for Cross-Cultural Trainers** includes important information about *Culture Matters* and about designing and delivering cross-cultural training.

The Peace Corps believes that the effort to incorporate the more important concepts of *Culture Matters* into formal pre-service and in-service training programs is a significant development. We are pleased, therefore, to be able to offer this trainer's guide in support of that effort.

### **What is *Culture Matters*?**

*Culture Matters* is a collection of cross-cultural activities for Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers. It introduces and examines the key features or dimensions of culture, such as the concept of the self, the concept of time, the styles of communication, the definition of fairness, attitudes toward fate, friendship, risk, change, and uncertainty, the exercise of power, the concept of status, and many others. These are aspects of the human experience, common to all people everywhere, but with respect to which the people of different cultures, largely because of different historical and geographical circumstances, have developed different opinions, attitudes, and, ultimately, a different set of norms and behaviors. It is these differences that Volunteers encounter and must learn to adjust to when they live in another culture.

*Culture Matters* cannot, of course, present all the views of all cultures on all of these topics. Therefore, culture-specific information is not included in the book. Instead, the purpose of the book is to identify and describe the topics or concepts—the key dimensions of culture—and present the range of beliefs and spectrum of behaviors that exist for each concept. For example, Exercise I.2: The Concept of Self introduces a universal cultural dimension, describes a range of possible views on this subject, and gives examples of how people with certain views may behave. Exercise I.2 will not, however, tell you what the view of the people in a particular country is on this concept, though it will define the two extremes between which a host country’s culture is bound to be located. The reader can appreciate that to provide specifics for all cultures on all the topics presented in the book would require a work of many volumes.

The purpose, therefore, of *Culture Matters* is to pose challenging questions; questions that will prompt trainees and Volunteers to go looking for truly useful information about their host culture. The real challenge of any serious inquiry is not in gathering data and discovering answers; it is, rather, in asking the right questions. The answers, that is the country specifics, do matter, but they can be relatively easily supplied by host country national trainers, and they can serve Volunteers, Peace Corps staff, or other informants.

Finally, a note about “Americans.” The Peace Corps recognizes that the American continent is the home of many nations, any or all of which could rightfully call its citizens Americans (though none but the U.S. actually does). In both this guide and in *Culture Matters*, we have chosen to use the term American—rather than U.S. American—because of its near universal use around the world.

## Is *Culture Matters* Supposed to Replace My Current Cross-Cultural Training?

For many countries, *Culture Matters* covers important topics not currently addressed in either Pre-Service Training or in-service training. *Culture Matters* represents potentially new content that trainers may want to incorporate into pre-service training. If a training staff chooses to include concepts from the book, a later section of this introduction explains how to proceed.

The workbook does not address several topics many posts currently cover in pre-service training. These include area studies topics (history, geography, religion, economics, politics, holidays and festivals, rites of passage, etc.), country-specific social etiquette (greetings, dress, eating, gift-giving, etc.) and various survival skills (cooking, transportation, bargaining, telephones, renting a house, opening a bank account, etc.). *Culture Matters* does not replace important country-specific topics included in pre-service training.

## What’s in *Culture Matters*?

Before proceeding further in this *Trainer’s Guide*, you should open *Culture Matters* and look at its organization and content. There are six chapters, four subsections (called Fundamentals of Culture), and an appendix.

- Chapter 1 .....establishes a foundation for examining culture by presenting the key concepts of the intercultural field (see Table of Contents for specifics).
- Fundamentals of Culture I .....examines how different cultures define self.
- Chapter 2 .....asks trainees to become familiar with their own culture, which will then be the context for examining the host country culture.

Fundamental II .....	looks at how people in different cultures resolve conflicts between obligations to their in-group and the wider society (their out-group).
Chapter 3 .....	examines the subject of communication style, describes key differences between direct and indirect communication, and shows how these differences impact in the workplace.
Fundamental III .....	examines cultural differences regarding time.
Chapter 4 .....	looks at key cultural differences in the workplace, including the concept of power distance (the roles of managers and subordinates) and attitudes toward rank and status, worker motivation, and risk taking.
Fundamental IV .....	describes how different cultures answer the question of how much control people have over their lives and to what extent individuals are responsible for what happens to them.
Chapter 5 .....	examines the question of social relationships and identifies cultural norms concerning friendship, romantic relationships, and living with a family.
The Final Fundamental .....	asks participants to compare American and host country views of some of the topics explored in the previous four Fundamentals.
Chapter 6 .....	explores ways for Volunteers to adjust to the differences identified in the previous chapters.
The Appendix .....	describes six ways Volunteers can continue their cross-cultural learning after they get to their sites.

## How Do I Incorporate *Culture Matters* Into My Pre-Service Training?

Should you decide to add some of the *Culture Matters* content to your pre-service training, you will need to decide which exercises to use. While you are free to select any exercises you wish, you might consider first the exercises included in this guide as you will then have a set of instructions to follow. If you choose exercises not in this guide, be sure to give some thought to how you will train them.

Begin the selection process by reading through the entire workbook and/or this entire *Trainer's Guide* and making a list of all the topics you find particularly important. After making your list, look at what you already do in pre-service training and determine if there is enough time to add the new content from *Culture Matters*. If there is time, then you just have to decide where to add the new sessions.

If there isn't enough time for the new sessions and the current ones, you can either cut some of your current sessions, cut some of the sessions you selected from *Culture Matters*, or, in some cases, adapt some of your existing sessions to incorporate material from *Culture Matters*.

If you have sessions from *Culture Matters* that you think are very important, remember that you may be able to ask trainees to do these sessions on their own at appropriate moments during pre-service training. An "appropriate moment" would be a time when doing the exercises would support or complement whatever you are talking about as part of the formal cross-cultural training program. If, for example, you are discussing adjustment and decide to do session 6.7 in class with the whole group, you might ask trainees to try to complete session 6.4 (which you couldn't fit into your pre-service training design) before coming to class that day.



## Other Uses of *Culture Matters*

The content of *Culture Matters* lends itself to a variety of audiences and purposes. In addition to using it with trainees during pre-service training, (in cross-cultural, language, technical, health and safety sessions, after site visit, to process homestay) you could use parts of the workbook with:

- Volunteers during in-service training
- host families during a host family orientation
- pre-service/in-service training staff during training of trainers
- all Peace Corps staff as part of staff training and development
- training for host country counterparts
- Volunteers during close of service (COS) workshops

## **PART TWO: TRAINER NOTES FOR SELECTED EXERCISES FROM CULTURE MATTERS**

### **Introduction**

This part of the *Trainer's Guide* contains a selection of exercises from *Culture Matters*, and detailed notes on how to execute these sessions. The exercises chosen represent a cross-section of the various types of activities in *Culture Matters*, as well as a kind of Who's Who (or What's What) of the most important concepts in the intercultural field. Trainers can feel confident that whichever exercises from this guide they choose to do in pre-service training, they will be presenting very important information.

Although many exercises in *Culture Matters* are not included in this guide, trainers should be aware, as noted above, that at least one of every type of exercise used in the workbook is included. The major types of exercises are:

- critical incidents
- dialogues
- continuums
- defining/characteristics exercises
- score yourself
- Dear Jan letters
- observation activities

If a trainer plans to do an activity from *Culture Matters* that is not included in this guide but that is the same *type* as an activity that is included, he or she should be able to follow the steps given in these notes and apply them to that “excluded” activity. For example, you might decide that Exercise 4.6 Dialogues or 5.1 Dear Jan contains important information for your trainees, but you discover they are not included in the guide. You will notice, however, that another Dialogues exercise (3.6) and another Dear Jan letter (3.1) are included. If you read through the notes for Exercises 3.6 and 3.1, you should be able to apply them successfully to Exercises 4.6 and 5.1.

### **A Guide to the Format of the Trainer Notes**

The basic format for the trainer notes is the same for all of the exercises, with a few items—Preparation, Staff Needed, Alternative Delivery—only appearing as necessary. A guide to this format is presented below. It explains the purpose of each section and what trainers can expect to find in it.

Each set of notes begins with the title of the exercise, which consists of a number (1.3) and a name (What Is Culture?), which corresponds to the number and name of that exercise as it appears in *Culture Matters*. The first exercise in the *Trainer's Guide*, for example, is 1.3: What Is Culture?, corresponding to section 1.3 of *Culture Matters*.

<b>Content Overview</b>	Each set of notes contains a content overview. This overview consists of a brief examination of the key concept or concepts covered in that exercise. The overview is intended as background information for the trainer, things the trainer should know about or be aware of when introducing this exercise. In most cases, the points made in the overview are points the trainer should make to trainees at the beginning of the session. It is expected that the trainer will read the appropriate section of <i>Culture Matters</i> as preparation for training.
<b>Objectives</b>	This section briefly states what the trainees will achieve by doing this session.
<b>Time</b>	This section indicates approximately how long it might take you to do this exercise.
<b>Materials</b>	In every case, you will need a copy of the exercise; this means trainees must either be told to bring <i>Culture Matters</i> to the session or you must photocopy the relevant pages from <i>Culture Matters</i> and distribute them as handouts.
<b>Staff</b>	This note will not appear for every exercise. Where no recommendation is made, that means that any qualified trainer can deliver the session. If it is important or essential to have a certain kind of trainer present, usually a host country national or a Volunteer, that will be noted in this space.
<b>Preparation</b>	If the trainer must prepare anything special in advance of the session, that will be noted here; otherwise, this item will be omitted. (Of course, trainers should read the session notes in advance and think about how they are going to do the session including preparation of flipcharts and handouts, but that is not what is meant by preparation.)
<b>Delivery</b>	This will consist of a sequence of steps the trainer is to complete as he or she presents the exercise. In some cases, it includes suggestions for what the trainer should say at a particular step. In many cases, it also includes suggested questions a trainer can use (usually with answers) to lead a discussion (for those sessions which have a discussion step).
<b>Potential Issues</b>	This section warns trainers about possible potential problems with the exercise. In most cases, the problem is a common complaint or objection trainees have about the exercise. The complaints will be described here, along with how trainers can handle them.
<b>Alternative Delivery</b>	In most cases, these notes end with a brief description of an alternative way of covering the content of the exercise. This section gives trainers a choice in how to present the information contained in the activity. This section will be brief and not provide the detailed instruction given in the Delivery section.

## Presenting *Culture Matters*—An Introductory Activity

### Content Overview

This brief activity is a way for trainers to formally introduce *Culture Matters* to trainees. This can be especially helpful if the schedule of pre-service training allows little or no time to explore the workbook. Even trainers who plan to make extensive use of *Culture Matters* in pre-service training will find this exercise a useful way to introduce the book to trainees.

The session utilizes an engaging quiz that obliges trainees to look through *Culture Matters* for the answers to the questions. The primary purpose of the exercise is to introduce the workbook to trainees; a secondary purpose is to present the cross-cultural information contained in the answers.

### Objectives

To describe the contents of *Culture Matters*

To use *Culture Matters* as a resource

### Time

30 minutes

### Materials

One copy *Culture Matters* per trainee

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise, saying that you would like to familiarize the group with the Peace Corps cross-cultural workbook. If trainees know what is in the workbook, they will find it useful to them as they learn about the local culture. Explain that the method you will use is a quiz, and they will have to find the answers in the book.

**Step 2**—Distribute the quiz and ask trainees to complete it in 15 minutes.

**Step 3**—Briefly go over the answers.

**Step 4**—Briefly review the Table of Contents of *Culture Matters* explaining how the book is organized and what topics it covers.

## Cross-Cultural Quiz

Answer the following questions quickly and as best you can. When you have completed the quiz, turn to the pages listed at the end of the quiz to see if you answered correctly.

1. True or False    *Values are a visible feature of culture.*
2. Considering snakes to be “evil” is
  - A. a universal notion
  - B. a cultural notion
  - C. a personal notion
3. True or False    *The use of written contracts in business dealings is more characteristic of individualist cultures (as opposed to collectivist).*
4. Which of the following qualities is the most often associated with Americans (by non-American observers)?
  - A. Honest
  - B. Friendly
  - C. Energetic
  - D. Rude
5. What percentage of Venezuelans said they would refuse to lie under oath about a friend who was speeding and caused a minor accident?
  - A. 73%
  - B. 55%
  - C. 34%
  - D. 17%
6. Name one category of nonverbal communication:
7. Define what is meant by the word monochronic:



8. True or False    *Rewarding initiative in a subordinate is characteristic of a low power distance culture.*
9. What percentage of Americans (in one survey) agreed with the statement: “What happens to me [in life] is my own doing”?
- A. 89%
  - B. 66%
  - C. 41%
  - D. 19%
10. What would you do if a close host country national friend asked you to use your influence at the embassy to help him/her get a visa to the United States?
11. What is the name of the third level of the four levels of cultural awareness?

**Where to find the answers in *Culture Matters*:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Section 1.3; Answers Chapter One, 1.3         | 7. Fundamentals III.2                      |
| 2. Section 1.6; Answers Chapter One, 1.6         | 8. Section 4.2                             |
| 3. Fundamentals I.2; Answers Fundamentals I, I.2 | 9. Fundamentals IV.1                       |
| 4. Section 2.6; Answers Chapter Two, 2.6         | 10. Section 5.5; Answers Chapter Five, 5.5 |
| 5. Fundamentals II.1                             | 11. Section 6.6                            |
| 6. Section 3.5 or Section 3.7                    |  |

## 1.3—What is Culture?

### Content Overview

The purpose of this exercise is to show trainees a wide variety of what is meant by the word “culture.” Twenty-five examples of what is included under culture are presented. The exercise also illustrates the two large categories of cultural phenomena: (1) visible and tangible (touchable) things, such as customs, artifacts, and rules of etiquette, and (2) invisible and intangible (untouchable) things, such as beliefs, ideas, values, and attitudes. This exercise will help trainees understand that only some of what we call culture can actually be seen and that the rest, the larger part, is invisible. This is why we use the example of the iceberg, for just as the largest part of an iceberg is beneath the water and invisible, so too is the largest part of culture unseen (but no less influential).

To help support this exercise, trainees should read the various definitions of culture that appear in the margins of this chapter. It is important to do this exercise early in pre-service training so that trainees understand what culture is before you start looking at any one culture in particular, and before you start looking at cultural differences (which are the subject of many of the remaining exercises in *Culture Matters*).

### Objectives

To formulate a definition of culture

To describe the visible and invisible aspects of culture and the relationship between them

### Time

30 minutes

### Preparation

Draw a large iceberg, with a clear waterline, on a flipchart.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise, summarizing the points made above.

**Step 2**—Explain that the task is to examine the 25 items in the list and decide whether they are part of the visible or invisible dimension of culture. Tell trainees to place the number of anything that can be seen in that part of the iceberg above the waterline (as drawn in the workbook) and the number of anything that can’t be seen in the space below the waterline. Ask trainees to do this on their own (not in groups).

**Step 3**—After they have finished, go through the 25 items and ask individuals where they placed each one. As you get the answer (and everyone agrees), place the item (its number and the text) on your own iceberg drawing on the flipchart.

**Step 4**—Lead a short discussion of the exercise, using the following questions:

*Do you see any items below the waterline that might influence or determine any of those above the line? (Possible answers here are: religious beliefs influence holiday customs, painting, music, and styles of dress; notions of modesty influence styles of dress; concept of self could influence rules of social etiquette; and so on.)*

*What does this exercise suggest about the relationship between the visible and invisible aspects of culture? (Answer: There is in some respects a cause-and-effect relationship.)*

### **Potential Issues**

Trainers may encounter disagreement over whether an item belongs above or below the waterline. Generally, the rule should be that whatever is directly visible goes above the line and what can't be seen goes below. Someone might say, for example, that child-raising beliefs are visible and should go above the line. In fact, beliefs are invisible; only the practices or customs that come from those beliefs are visible. Don't argue too strongly with anyone if they insist; usually, other members of the group will do the arguing for you and you won't have to say anything.

### **Alternative Delivery**

Instead of having trainees write their answers in their books, you could write the 25 items on individual strips of paper and distribute them to trainees. Then ask trainees to come up and tape their item(s) on your iceberg on the flipchart, either above or below the line. Then you can go over each item as in Step 3 above.

## 1.5—Linking Values to Behavior

### Content Overview

This is one of the most important exercises in the entire workbook. It deals with a fundamental concept in intercultural communications and touches on one of the most common issues with which Volunteers struggle. The concept is the relationship between a person's behavior, the things a person says and does, and his/her underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions. The exercise demonstrates that people behave the way they do because of the things they believe in or value. If Volunteers can understand this essential relationship, then they can begin to accept that people who believe different things (different than an American) will, of course, behave very differently from an American. But that person's behavior will make as much sense to that person, it will be as logical to that person, as the Volunteer's behavior will be to him or her.

In other words, this exercise explains why a host country national in a particular situation can behave in a manner completely the opposite of what a Volunteer would do in that situation and think that he/she is acting perfectly normal. In fact, he or she would behave in a completely normal manner for that person's culture, that is, according to that culture's beliefs and values.

Once a Volunteer is able to grasp this concept, that what is abnormal behavior to an American can be perfectly normal to a host country national—it all depends on the norms—then the Volunteer will be able to accept that different behaviors, as frustrating as they may be, make sense in the local culture.

### Objectives

To demonstrate the relationship between values, beliefs, and assumptions on the one hand, and behavior on the other

To describe how different value systems will be reflected in different behaviors

### Time

30 minutes

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise, making use of the commentary given above.

**Step 2**—Ask trainees to complete the exercise according to the instructions in section 1.5.

**Step 3**—Go down the list of values or beliefs on the left and ask trainees with which behavior they matched them.

**Step 4**—Lead a short discussion of this concept, using the following questions:

*How will understanding this relationship between values/beliefs and behavior help you deal with some of the things host country nationals do and say?*

*(Answer: You will see that there is a logic to or reason behind these behaviors, that they make sense to host country nationals whether or not they make sense to you.)*

*What does this exercise teach you about judging or interpreting the behavior of the local people?*

*(Answer: You should be careful when you judge or interpret because you will be doing so from your own culture's value/belief system.)*

*Do any of you have examples of having wrongly judged host country nationals from your own cultural point of view?*

*Is this exercise saying that you have to like or accept all the things host country nationals do?*

*(Answer: No. Just because host country national behavior makes sense in the local culture, because it is the result of local values or beliefs, that doesn't mean you have to like or accept those values or beliefs. The only thing you have to accept is the fact that the local people [just like you] are going to behave according to their values.)*

## **Potential Issues**

The most likely difficulty with this exercise is that people will make a different match, between value and behavior, than the ones given in the answers. As long as the person can give a reasonable explanation for this match, you can accept it. The point is not so much that people make the right matches, but that they understand the fundamental concept: the cause and effect relationship between values or beliefs and behavior.

Another issue may be that trainees think they are being told they have to like everything host country nationals do because such behavior is logical and inevitable. (See the last question under Step 4 above.) This is NOT the point. Trainees should understand that the particular behavior in question is logical to host country nationals. Trainees may like the behavior or they may hate it, but they should try to understand it.

Trainees should also try to understand that host country nationals may be expecting this behavior from them (trainees) in similar situations. Trainees don't have to meet this expectation, of course (they don't have to perform the expected behavior), but they should be aware that it is expected.

## **Alternative Delivery**

Explain the relationship between values and behavior, using a few of the examples in the exercise (or referring to examples from the What Is Culture? exercise trainees did previously). Then send trainees out into the culture to find examples of host country national behaviors they can then try to link to a value or belief. Fix a time for the trainees to reconvene and present their own examples of this relationship.

Another alternative is to have host country national trainers conduct a session in which they identify some common cultural behaviors and then link these behaviors to values or beliefs in their culture. This session would be particularly useful if the local trainers include in their list some of those behaviors Americans find especially frustrating or even offensive.



## 1.6—Universal, Cultural, or Personal

### Content Overview

This exercise puts cultural behavior, the focus of Peace Corps cross-cultural training, into perspective and shows that cultural is just one category of behavior. It shows that there is an entire category of behavior that is universal, applying consistently to all cultures. It is important for Volunteers to understand that not everything about their host culture will be different from American culture. There will be many similarities and many things they will not have to worry about.

Volunteers need to understand universal behavior because Peace Corps training usually focuses on cultural differences as these are what cause the most problems and frustrations. However, this can leave Volunteers with the belief that there are *only* differences and no similarities between the U.S. and the host culture. If Volunteers believe everything is different, then they will think that nothing they have ever learned about human behavior is going to help them in the host country; that everything they do is wrong. It is this belief or fear that makes Volunteers doubt themselves and be so desperate to know all the do's and don'ts of the host culture. They should know about the key cultural differences, but they should also be aware that there are many universals that will apply in the host culture, just as they do in their own.

The other important concept this exercise introduces is the notion of personal behavior, that is behavior unique to the individual. In cross-cultural training, we have to make generalizations about the local culture: Moroccans are family-oriented; Russians are fatalistic, and so on. We make these statements to give Volunteers a general idea about the people and the culture, but we know such statements are not always going to be true of any particular individual. While many people in a culture share many of the same values and beliefs, no two people in the same culture will think exactly the same about or behave exactly the same way in a specific situation.

In other words, Volunteers must understand that whatever they learn about the host culture in general (in Peace Corps cross-cultural training) may not apply to or be true of any individual host country national. Once Volunteers understand this, they will then realize why something a trainer has said in a cross-cultural session turns out not to be at all true of a trainee's host mother, for example, or a Volunteer's boss or colleague—or at least not always true of those people.

### Objectives

To differentiate the concepts of universal behavior and personal behavior.

To describe the influence of personal behaviors, as compared to cultural behaviors, on a particular individual in a specific situation.

### Time

30 minutes

### Materials

flipchart paper, tape

## Preparation

Make three signs, with the word Universal on one, Cultural on the second, and Personal on the third. Tape these signs to the wall. Write the 15 items listed in section 1.6 of *Culture Matters* onto individual pieces of paper (or photocopy the list and cut strips of paper so that each strip contains one item). Put a piece of tape on each strip (or have 15 pieces of tape ready to hand out along with the strips of paper).

## Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise, highlighting the points made in the content overview and introductory text in section 1.6 of *Culture Matters*.

**Step 2**—Have trainees read the list of items. It is important they see the whole list before they are given their individual item from the list.

**Step 3**—Hand out all the strips of paper. Tell trainees to read their item, decide which category of behavior it is, and then tape it under the corresponding sign on the wall.

**Step 4**—Read out the items taped under each sign and ask the group if the items are in the right place. Alternatively, you can have trainees read out the items and facilitate the processing.

**Step 5**—Lead a discussion of the exercise, using the following questions:

*What is the importance of understanding the concept of universal behaviors? (Answer: So we realize that not everything about the local culture is going to be different. So we understand that much of what we already know about people and life will apply in this new culture.)*

*Why does Peace Corps training focus on the differences and not the similarities between cultures? (Answer: Because it is the differences that most often cause the problems.)*

*Why is it important to understand the personal dimension of behavior? (Answer: So we will understand why not every host country person is always going to behave in accordance with the generalizations we have made in training.)*

*Ask trainees to give an example of a behavior that reflects personal, not cultural norms.*

*What does the notion of personal behavior say about the validity of cultural do's and don'ts? (Answer: Do's and don'ts are general statements and therefore may not apply in individual situations. Do's and don'ts have limited usefulness.)*

## Potential Issues

The biggest difficulty with this exercise is that people will not agree on whether an item is universal, cultural, or personal. Trainees sometimes confuse what is meant by “personal,” thinking that if they personally do something, then that makes it personal. It must be clarified that a behavior is personal only if it is not generally done by other people in a culture.

## Alternative Delivery

This exercise can also be done as presented in *Culture Matters* with a group review of answers.

## 1.9—In the Mind of the Beholder

### Content Overview

This exercise makes the point that the same behavior seen by people from two different cultures can have two different meanings. It shows, therefore, that whenever you interpret something you see or hear in another culture, you should try to interpret it from that culture's point of view, not from your own.

Another way of saying this is that a particular instance of behavior, something a person says or does, does not have any particular meaning inherent in it (inside it) but only the meaning people attach to that behavior. For example, if a person arrives 10 minutes after the stated start time of a meeting, and arriving 10 minutes late is rude in that culture, then the meaning of rudeness has been attached to the behavior by the people in that culture. However, if a person comes from a culture where arriving 10 minutes after the stated start time is considered normal and polite, then that behavior is seen as normal by people in that culture.

In a cross-cultural situation, it often happens that the meaning one culture attaches to a particular behavior is quite different from the meaning the other culture attaches to it. When a Volunteer attaches an American meaning to something a host country national does, the Volunteer is interpreting the behavior from an American point of view, and this may not be what that behavior means in the local culture.

Hence, Volunteers need to learn more about the local culture in order to more accurately interpret behavior from the local point of view and not their own.

### Objectives

To demonstrate how the same behavior can be interpreted differently by people from two different cultures

To describe the value of culture-specific information in interpretation of behaviors from different cultural perspectives

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

At least one host country national.

### Preparation

Write the eight examples of behavior from the exercise on a flipchart, leaving space between each one (see Delivery Step 3 and Step 5 for how much space to leave.)

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the activity, drawing upon the points made above.

**Step 2**—Ask trainees to complete Part One of the exercise as instructed in *Culture Matters*.

**Step 3**—Review responses to Part One and write down on the flipchart one generally agreed-upon interpretation for each of the eight behaviors.

**Step 4**—Ask trainees to complete Part Two as instructed in the book.

**Step 5**—Solicit responses and write down one response for each “culture” under the behavior on the flipchart.

**Step 6**—For each of the eight behaviors, you will now have two, and in some cases three, different interpretations written on the flipchart. Lead a discussion, using the following questions:

*What does it mean that the same behavior can be interpreted in different ways? (Answer: That you should be sure you are interpreting the behavior in the same way the host country people are.)*

*What happens if you misinterpret the behavior of host country nationals? (Answer: You make conclusions about them that may be inaccurate. If you then act on the basis of those conclusions, you may make mistakes or otherwise cause problems for yourself or host country people.)*

*Is it likely that host country nationals are misinterpreting your behavior from time to time, judging it, that is, from their cultural point of view? (Answer: It is more than likely; it's certain.)*

*What can you do to keep from misinterpreting the behavior of host country nationals? (Answer: You will have to interpret their behavior from their point of view, not yours, which means you will need to learn what various behaviors mean in the local culture and judge them accordingly. Even then, you will still misinterpret people on occasion.)*

Ask trainees to think of examples of behaviors they may have misinterpreted since their arrival in country.

Ask trainees if they are aware of any of their own behaviors that host country nationals might have misinterpreted.

### **Alternative Delivery**

Trainees complete Parts One and Two on their own as instructed in the book. Then divide trainees into groups of four or five and have them complete Steps 5 and 6 above. The rest of the exercise consists of discussing their answers and debriefing the exercise using the questions above.

Another alternative, suggested by trainers in the Dominican Republic is to design and perform one or two short skits, which are then interpreted differently by trainees and by host country nationals. Two examples from the Dominican Republic are given below:

**Skit One:** Two people greet each other as they would in the United States and then introduce a third person. There is little touching and no kissing on the cheek. Americans interpret this scene as normal behavior, but Dominicans (who touch each other more often and kiss each other on the cheek in greeting) see the participants as somewhat cold and reserved.

**Skit Two:** Several host country people are playing a friendly game (dominoes is used in the Dominican Republic but it could also be cards). They are more animated and speaking in a louder tone of voice than Americans would use. Trainees think the participants are agitated or angry, whereas this is simply the normal level of enthusiasm for a game. It's important the players speak in their own language (so that trainees do not understand the words and must interpret based on the nonverbal behaviors).



# Fundamentals of Culture I—The Concept of the Self

## *Exercise I.2: Individualism and Collectivism*

### Content Overview

This exercise looks at how people define and think of themselves, whether primarily as individuals who choose or are obliged to enter into various associations with others (individualists), or primarily as members of a group who choose or are obliged to act independently on occasion (collectivists). How people answer this question affects all of their interactions with others.

This exercise introduces and describes the two poles (or opposite positions) of the concept of self discussed in Fundamentals of Culture I, and then lists 20 behaviors or characteristics that represent specific examples of how people who hold one view or the other would act in everyday interactions. These 20 items can be seen as the visible behaviors that reveal the underlying or invisible cultural value of individualism or collectivism. In this way, the concepts relate to Exercise 1.5, which you should present before doing this one.

### Objectives

To define the concept of self and present the two poles of individualism and collectivism

To differentiate between behavioral examples of individualism and collectivism

To describe how individualists and collectivists might view each other.

### Time

45 minutes

### Staff

Participation of a host country national and a Volunteer are recommended.

### Preparation

As background preparation for this exercise, the trainer is encouraged to complete the other exercises in Fundamentals of Culture I.

For ease of reference, prepare a flipchart with two columns, one for individualism and one for collectivism. List the main elements of each outlook. Use the following as a model:

**Individualism:** Identifies with self; self is smallest unit of survival; needs of individual come before needs of group; self-sufficient; self-reliant; independent; joining groups but not defined by group membership.

**Collectivism:** Identity is function of role in a group; needs of the group come before needs of individual; nuclear family is smallest unit of survival; interdependent; harmony-seeking.

## **Delivery**

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise.

**Step 2**—Ask trainees to complete the exercise as instructed in I.2.

**Step 3**—Review answers.

**Step 4**—Lead a short discussion of the concept, using the following questions:

*What might individualists think of collectivists?*

*What might collectivists think of individualists?*

*Have you seen any examples of individualist or collectivist behaviors in your host family?*

*How might individualist or collectivist differences affect your work as a Volunteer in country?*

## **Potential Issues**

Trainees may say that whether someone exhibits the 20 listed behaviors depends more on circumstances than on whether that person is an individualist or a collectivist; in other words, everything depends on the context and all of these behaviors are, of course, presented without any context. You can agree with this, and then add that even so, it can be useful to be aware of the general distinctions that are made in this exercise. You might wish to consider doing the alternative version of this exercise described below. Some trainers have found that this version leads to fewer complaints from trainees.

## **Alternative Delivery**

Instead of introducing this Fundamental with this exercise, use the Score Yourself exercise in Fundamentals I.3 of *Culture Matters*. Do NOT, however, use the instructions given on the workbook page; instead, ask trainees to read each pair of statements. In each case, one alternative is more consistent with an individualist outlook and the other with a collectivist outlook. Label each item in the pair with either a letter “I” (individualist) or “C” (collectivist). Then follow delivery steps 3 and 4 as described above.

## 2.2—The Things We Say

### Content Overview

Expressions commonly used in a culture often reflect the underlying values of that culture. Hence, looking closely at these expressions, and at the meaning behind the expressions, will reveal important information about how the people think and what they believe.

This session is an easy and uncontroversial way of introducing some basic American values and beliefs. Many trainees do not like to make generalizations about Americans, as they have to do in various exercises in the workbook (Fundamentals, continuum exercises, etc.). But trainees will not deny that many Americans do, in fact, use the expressions listed in this exercise, and they will have to admit that these statements do reflect the values or beliefs indicated.

### Objective

To identify American and host country cultural values reflected in common sayings or expressions

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

Participation of a host country national is recommended.

### Preparation

The trainer should prepare a list of common host country expressions to present during Part Two of the exercise and also be prepared to explain a cultural value or belief behind the expressions. The expressions should either be presented on a handout or written on a flipchart, with space underneath each one to write the value and belief.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise.

**Step 2**—Have trainees complete all of Part One, on their own or in small groups.

**Step 3**—Go over their answers to the 16 listed items. Then solicit and make a list (on the flipchart) of the expressions they added at the end of Part One.

**Step 4**—Now present the list of host country expressions you have prepared and ask the whole group to consider each one and identify the value or belief it reflects. Write these under each expression.

**Step 5**—Ask trainees to examine the American list and the host country list and identify similarities and differences.

### Potential Issues

Some trainees may say it is a waste of time looking at American culture: “We already know our culture. What we need is to learn about the host culture.” If they say this, show them that they will be looking at the host culture in Part Two of this exercise.

Another possible complication is that trainees may think of expressions that reflect a value or a belief that is the opposite of another expression already given. Then they will ask how people can have a certain value and also have the opposite value. Your answer here should be that people are not always consistent, that in certain circumstances we value a certain thing but that in other circumstances we can value something else. Cultures often hold conflicting values and beliefs.

**Alternative Delivery**

Photocopy Part One from the workbook and cut the pages into strips of paper with one set of sayings (1-3, 4-6, etc.) appearing on each strip. At the same time, write the values (found in Answers, Chapter 2, section 2.2) on strips of paper, one value per strip. Divide the trainees into two groups. Give each person in one group a set of expressions and each person in the other a set of answers. Then instruct trainees to find the person with the expressions or answer that matches what is on their paper. After everyone has found his or her “partner,” check to make sure they have paired up correctly.

## 2.3—Thirteen Cultural Categories

### Content Overview

This exercise (like all of Chapter 2 of *Culture Matters*) is founded on the principle that to be effective in a foreign culture, you must first understand your own. Since Volunteers may not see the point of studying American culture (see Potential Issues below) and may even resist having to do so, it is important for trainers to be able to describe the rationale.

Most problems in any kind of cross-cultural interaction are caused by differences between the two cultures. Awareness and understanding of differences is the key to successful intercultural interaction.

Only by comparing can you see differences (as well as similarities), and only by describing both cultures can you make a comparison. This then is the reason that in cross-cultural training, you need to describe both the target (i.e., host country or foreign) culture *and* your own.

### Objectives

To compare American cultural perspective and host country cultural perspectives on certain key topics

To describe the effect of significant cultural differences on people's points of view or actions

### Time

90 minutes

### Staff

One host country national per small group (see Step 3 below).

### Preparation

Host country national trainers will need to review the 13 categories and describe, in writing, the host country view of each topic, in the same way the American view has already been described. These descriptions should be written on a handout and photocopied for distribution.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise.

**Step 2**—Divide trainees into smaller groups and assign each group two or three of the categories to work on.

**Step 3**—In each group, have a host country national present the host culture's view of the category.

**Step 4**—Each group should then note similarities and differences between each culture's view. Where there are significant differences, trainees in the group should answer the following question: How will people who hold the American view on this topic see or judge those who hold the host country view? And vice versa?

**Step 5**—Someone from each small group briefly reports to the whole group on those categories for which there was a significant host country national or American cultural difference and describes how each side would see the other.

**Step 6**—Ask each group to try to think of at least one situation where one of their cultural differences would cause problems or otherwise affect their work as Volunteers.

**Step 7**—Someone from each group describes a situation discussed under Step 6.

### **Potential Issues**

Trainees often complain that it is a waste of time to study their own culture, that they know their own culture, and what they need to learn about is the local culture. Your response should be that they are right: they do indeed need to learn about the local culture. And one of the most important things they need to learn about it is how the local culture is different from American culture. So that is why we are looking at American culture.

In response to the statement that they already know their own culture, you should not argue with them (even though you may have your doubts). It is better to say that of course they know their culture but we are doing a quick review. You could also say (if you are a host country national) that you thought you knew your culture until you started working for the Peace Corps (or until you went abroad), and then you suddenly saw your culture through foreign eyes and learned a lot more about it. If you are a Volunteer, you could say that you too thought you knew U.S. culture when you went abroad, but you discovered a lot about American culture you were not aware of.

Another complication here is that some trainees may not agree with the description of the American position on some of these topics. If they don't agree, let them write their own description. The main point is to identify the host country position and then compare it with the American one, whatever the American one is (i.e., the one in the book or the one trainees create).

### **Alternative Delivery**

Continue through Step 3 as above. After the group has identified differences between the U.S. and host country national perspectives on a particular category, have group members construct and then present a short skit that illustrates the differences for others.

## 2.4—Thinking About My Job

<b>Content Overview</b>	This session should be done in conjunction with and only after doing the previous exercise (2.3). The main idea is to look at how the general and somewhat abstract cultural differences identified in 2.3 would affect Volunteers in specific situations on the job. Cultural differences are not just theoretical concepts to be discovered and analyzed; they also show up in people's behavior—where they often cause misunderstandings and frustrations such as those presented in this exercise.
<b>Objective</b>	To describe some work-related consequences of cultural differences and ways of dealing with them
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Staff</b>	One host country national for each small group of trainees. The participation of at least one Volunteer is also recommended.
<b>Preparation</b>	Review the five incidents presented in the exercise and decide whether these five situations would arise in the host culture. Choose only those incidents that relate to differences between American and the particular host country culture. Trainers may need to create additional incidents that are appropriate to the host country culture. Host country nationals should be ready to expand upon the cultural difference to help create the role play (see Step 3).
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the exercise.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Divide trainees into small groups and assign each group one of the incidents to discuss among themselves. Also assign one host country national to each group.</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Tell trainees that after they have discussed the incident, they should construct a brief role play that demonstrates the conflict or problem to the other groups. Specifically they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify the main points of difference.</li><li>• Determine what the Volunteer is going to say in the role play.</li><li>• Determine what the host country national is going to say.</li><li>• Select the players and rehearse the role play.</li></ul> <p><b>Step 4</b>—Each group presents its role play to the other groups.</p> <p><b>Step 5</b>—After each role play, lead a brief discussion using the following questions:</p> <p><i>How well do you think the Volunteer handled the situation?</i></p> <p><i>What might you do differently if you were in this situation?</i></p> <p><i>How would you feel if you experienced this situation?</i></p>



**Potential Issues**

Trainees might think the situations are unrealistic. It is important, therefore, to have at least one current or returned Volunteer present who can verify that these things do happen. Host country national trainers can also verify the truthfulness of the situations.

Trainees may have difficulty coming up with the actual dialogue for the role plays. Trainers should think about this in advance and be ready to offer suggestions if the group is stuck.

**Alternative Delivery**

The role plays can be left out of the session. Trainees can simply meet and discuss what they would do in each situation and then report out their suggestions to the whole group.

## 2.8—Now What? Diversity Critical Incidents

<b>Content Overview</b>	<p>A person's identity is more than just a product of his or her national culture. An American is American, but he/ or she is also a man or a woman, Black or white or Hispanic, straight or gay, Protestant or Jewish, 20 years old or 65 years old, someone with a disability, etc. Each of us has multiple parts to our personal identity, and depending on what these other parts are, we may have to deal with an additional set of adjustments when we live and work in another culture.</p> <p>This exercise identifies several of these aspects of identity and illustrates how they can sometimes pose problems for Volunteers.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To identify aspects of personal identity in addition to national culture</p> <p>To describe how other aspects of personal identity can sometimes create problems in another culture</p> <p>To prepare for dealing with some of these situations either in one's own experience or as a support to others</p>
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Staff</b>	At least one host country national; ideally, one or more Volunteers from a minority background.
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>Trainers will probably have to change some of the incidents to make them more relevant to the host country culture. African Americans, for example, may not face the particular issue raised in "Doubt," but they may face others. If changes will be necessary, or the trainer has other incidents to add, rewrite the incidents and have them ready to distribute as handouts.</p> <p>For Step 2 below, write on a flipchart a list of categories of personal identity, including: gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, generation, profession, a particular disability, regional upbringing (Northeast, South, Midwest), and so on.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the activity.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Before turning to the incidents, ask each individual to make a list, for his or her own use, of other parts of his or her personal identity, in addition to nationality, that are very important to that person. Show the list of possible categories you have made under Preparation above. Invite trainees to add to the list if they like. Trainees should only put an item on their list if it is a significant aspect of their identity. For example, most people belong to a religion, but to some people, their religion is part of how they define themselves (and should go on their list), while for others it is insignificant (and shouldn't go on the list).</p> <p>The point of this step of the exercise is to help trainees realize that everyone belongs to or identifies with one or more subcultures, which may have implications for their Peace Corps service. In this way, trainees who may not identify with any of the subcultures described in the incidents will still realize that they may face similar situations in-country.</p>

**Step 3**—Divide trainees into small groups and have them discuss two questions related to the incidents presented in the exercise: (1) What would you do if you were in this situation? And (2) What would you advise a fellow Volunteer to do in such a situation? This second question is important, for it helps trainees realize that whether or not they will personally encounter such a situation, they may still be able to support a fellow Volunteer who does.

**Step 4**—Reconvene the groups and discuss the incidents, listing suggestions on a flipchart (which trainees can copy in their workbook).

### **Potential Issues**

These incidents deal with sensitive and very personal issues, which may be uncomfortable for some trainees. Be sure not to pressure people into participating if they are not comfortable. At the same time, discussions of some of these issues can become quite heated, with people saying things that upset or offend other trainees. Monitor the discussion very closely and step in if necessary, especially to help address the aftermath of an offensive remark.

Another issue is that some trainees may say that they aren't gay or African American or whatever, so why do they need to do this exercise. You should answer that while the trainee may not personally have to deal with a particular situation, he/she may have Volunteer friends who may face that situation and turn to the trainee for advice or support.

### **Alternative Delivery**

Instead of using or adapting the incidents in the workbook, you can convene a panel of Volunteers of different backgrounds to describe some of their experiences in-country. Trainees can question the panel and can also be invited to tell any incidents of their own.

## Fundamentals of Culture II—Personal vs. Societal Obligations

### *Exercise II.3—Score Yourself: Universalist or Particularist*

#### Content Overview

This exercise examines how people handle their responsibilities to their family and very close friends (their in-group) on the one hand and to society (their out-group) on the other. In some cultures, called universalist, people believe you should try to treat everybody the same and not make sharp distinctions between in- and out-groups. In these cultures, to be fair is to treat everybody equally, regardless of who they are or the circumstances.

In other cultures, called particularist, people believe that how you treat someone depends on who that person is. Specifically, you treat members of your in-group as considerately as possible (and expect reciprocal treatment from them), and you have no special obligations toward people you don't know (and expect no consideration in return).

#### Objectives

To define the concepts of universalism and particularism

To identify examples of personal behavior related to universalism and particularism

To describe how particularists and universalists might view each other

#### Time

45 minutes

#### Staff

Participation of a host country national and a Volunteer is recommended.

#### Preparation

The trainer is encouraged to read and complete the other exercises in this Fundamental as background preparation for presenting this exercise.

For ease of reference, prepare a flipchart with two columns, one for Universalist and one for Particularist, and list the main elements of each outlook. Use the following:

**Universalist:** What's right is always right; circumstances shouldn't matter; exceptions to rules should be very few; fair is to treat everyone the same; we should try to make life fair.

**Particularist:** What's right depends on the circumstances; you make exceptions for in-group members; fair is to treat people according to who they are; life isn't fair.

#### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the session.

**Step 2**—Do not use the directions for exercise II.3. Instead, explain that the 10 pairs of statements present alternative behaviors for 10 situations. In each case, one alternative is more consistent with a universalist outlook on life and one with a particularist. Ask trainees to read the 10 pairs of statements and label each item in each pair with a U for universalist and a P for particularist.

**Step 3**—Go over each of the pairs and solicit trainee responses.

**Step 4**—Lead a brief discussion, using the following questions:

*What might universalists think of particularists?*

*What would particularists think of universalists?*

*What does it mean, in the context of this concept, that “Justice is blind” in the U.S. legal system? (Answer: This would be a universalist idea, that Justice should not take into account, not see, who the accused is, applying the law the same way in every case.)*

*How might universalist and particularist differences affect your work as a Volunteer in-country? In what specific situations? To what extent?*

## **Potential Issues**

See Potential Issues under Fundamental I, exercise I.2.

## 3.1—Dear Gavin

### Content Overview

This exercise is included in this *Trainer's Guide* for two reasons: 1) to demonstrate how to discuss an opening letter (there is one for each chapter) as a group exercise, and 2) for the cross-cultural content contained in the letter itself.

The cultural difference illustrated in this exercise involves the issue of communication styles. The way people communicate in different cultures—what they mean by the things they say and do not say—are deeply influenced by cultural values and beliefs. One of the great differences in this respect is between direct and indirect styles of communication. All cultures contain examples of both styles, but cultures generally tend to be more one way than the other. All of this is relative, of course; Americans, for example, are seen as very direct and even abrupt by Filipinos or Malawians. At the same time, Americans are considered somewhat indirect by the Germans and the Dutch. As far as most Peace Corps countries are concerned, however, Americans are generally more direct than people in most host cultures.

Not being especially indirect, Americans are not used to the various techniques indirect communicators use. As a consequence, they misunderstand and misinterpret many of the things such communicators say. This letter contains at least five examples of such techniques, which trainees are asked to try to identify.

### Objectives

To identify at least five techniques of indirect communication

To discuss how such techniques are misunderstood by many Americans

To convert needs for information from direct to indirect inquiries

### Time

45 minutes

### Staff

Participation of a host country national is recommended.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise explaining that cultural differences influence communication styles the same way they influence other aspects of behavior. [If the group will do other exercises from Chapter Three, the trainer need not give a lengthy introduction at this time.]

**Step 2**—Individually or in groups, ask trainees to read the letter and identify those places where there is a communication breakdown or a misunderstanding.

**Step 3**—Go over the letter paragraph by paragraph, identifying the various misunderstandings (using the analysis at the end of Chapter Three of *Culture Matters* as your guide). As you go along, list on the flipchart the various techniques of indirect communication used by the landlord.

**Step 4**—Several problems that occur in this letter are the result of Jan’s directness, of asking “uncomfortable” questions. The questions are uncomfortable because the answer is no, and the landlord does not want to have to say no to another person. Regarding the following three points, ask trainees to think of another, more indirect way that Jan could have found out what she needed to know without embarrassing the landlord:

*How could Jan have found out whether she could use the attic for storage without asking a direct question?*

*If we assume the landlord did not want Jan to take her meals at his place (and this is why his “answer” to her question about this is to change the subject), then how could Jan have found out about meals without asking him directly?*

*How else could Jan have handled the question of how much rent she was going to have to pay?*

### **Alternative Delivery**

Trainers in the Dominican Republic have used this exercise to review or summarize previous sessions on communication (rather than to introduce the topic).

### **Potential Issues**

Trainees may not see exactly the same misunderstandings or misinterpretations that are described in the analysis of Jan’s letter. Do not insist on these particular misunderstandings as long as the trainees come up with alternatives that are believable and supported by the text.

Some trainees may say they don’t think Jan is very believable, that they, the trainees, would never be as direct as she is, that even Americans would find Jan rude. Don’t argue with this, but if there is a host country national present, you could ask that person if he or she thinks Jan is believable.



## 3.2—Styles of Communication: Indirect and Direct

### Content Overview

This exercise defines key differences between direct and indirect ways of communicating. Generally Americans (though not every Volunteer) are more direct than the people in most Peace Corps host countries (though probably not all). Depending on the country, Americans may be much more direct, somewhat more direct, or only slightly more direct.

The two styles of communication are described in the workbook in the introduction to exercise 3.2. To this analysis, the following additional observations can be added:

**Indirect/High Context:** People in these cultures tend to infer, suggest, and imply rather than come out and say things. At least that is how they come across to people from more direct/low-context cultures—though not, of course, to each other. These cultures tend to be more collectivist, where harmony and saving face are the greatest goods; hence, there is a natural tendency toward indirectness and away from confrontation. In collectivist cultures, in-groups are well established and members have a greater instinctive, innate understanding of each other, in part because of more shared experiences. This means that, as a rule, people don't need to spell things out or say very much to get their message across. This innate understanding is known as context, and in high-context cultures messages often don't even need words to get expressed; nonverbal communication may be enough, or the message may be expressed in terms of what is not said or done. The goal of most communication exchanges is preserving and strengthening the relationship with the other person.

**Direct/Low Context:** Direct cultures tend to be less collectivist and more individualist, with less well-developed in-groups. People lead more independent lives and have fewer shared experiences; hence, there is less instinctive understanding of others. People need to spell things out and be more explicit; to say exactly what they mean rather than suggest or imply. There is less context, less that can be taken for granted and not explained. The spoken word carries most of the meaning; one should not read anything into what is not said or done. The goal of most communication exchanges is getting or giving information.

### Objectives

To define high-context and low-context cultures and the communication styles pertinent to each

To identify which communication style is common to the host culture and which is common to American culture

### Time

45 minutes

### Staff

At least one host country national and one Volunteer.

## Preparation

Make a chart, with Direct/Low Context on one side and Indirect/High Context on the other, and then list under each heading the qualities as described and in section 3.2 of the workbook. Refer to this chart as you introduce the session. Trainees can also refer to it later as they do the exercise. Sample qualities of each style appear below:

**Direct/Low:** heterogeneous cultures; more individualist; less innate or shared understanding; less can be assumed; rely on words; words interpreted literally; no reading between the lines; no meaning in what is not said and not done; must be explicit; goal is to give and get information.

**Indirect/High:** more homogeneous cultures; collectivist; more shared experience and understanding; tendency to infer, suggest, and imply; need to read between the lines; words should not be interpreted literally; what is not said and done may be the message; nonverbal cues important; goal is to maintain and strengthen relationship with other person.

## Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the session. Ask trainees to read the introduction to section 3.2. You can supplement this with additional observations from the overview above.

**Step 2**—Ask trainees to complete the exercise as described in section 3.2.

**Step 3**—Go over the exercise and solicit answers.

**Step 4**—Divide trainees into two groups and assign each group ten of the items from the list. For each item, the group must decide whether this characteristic is generally true of Americans and of host country nationals. They should write an A (for American) and/or an HC (for host country) next to each item that is valid for that group.

**Step 5**—Reconvene the two groups and ask them to give their results. Use the Volunteer and any host country national trainers to verify or disagree with the conclusions reached by trainees.

## Potential Issues

The 20 statements are all presented out of context. Trainees may say that whether a person behaves in a certain way depends more on the situation, not whether the person comes from a direct or indirect culture. This is true and you should not argue with this point. Instead, point out that in this exercise you are only trying to define the two extremes of the communication continuum and trying not to think of specific situations. Agree with the trainee that context or the specific situation make all the difference, and just note that you will look at context in other exercises in this chapter, after defining these two main categories.

## Alternative Delivery

Present the definitions of the two styles, using the chart you made in Preparation above. Then divide trainees into groups and ask them to discuss and list examples of either style of communication they have observed thus far in country. They should think both about what they have observed in host country nationals and in Americans. Then reconvene the groups and list their responses.

### 3.4—Culture and Communication Styles: American and Host Country Views Compared

#### Content Overview

This exercise asks trainees to consider four dimensions of communication and characterize American culture according to these four dimensions. Two of the dimensions, Degree of Directness and the Role of Context, have already been explained in some detail in the Content Overview section of exercise 3.2.

The other two, the Importance of Face and the Task or the Person, are described in the introduction to section 3.4 in the workbook. The following additional observations may be helpful to trainers:

**The Importance of Face:** The concept of face has important implications for how people communicate. “Face” refers to the dignity of the individual or the regard in which one person is held by others. In cultures where it is essential to always be perceived by others in a positive light, maintaining and saving face are deeply held values. All communication between people in such cultures has to be handled very delicately and carefully so that no one loses face. There can be no confrontations, no conflicts, and no apparent disagreements. This is one of the main reasons such cultures typically adopt indirect methods of communication, to be able to express potentially unpleasant or otherwise difficult messages in ways that will still allow people to publicly maintain their dignity and not be shamed.

**The Task or the Person:** Cultures differ in work-related interactions depending on whether the goal is primarily to get the job done or primarily to build and maintain strong interpersonal relationships, which in turn usually guarantees that the job gets done. The differences are of emphasis and degree; that is, the people in both kinds of cultures want to get the job done. However, cultures that focus on the person take more time to establish rapport and maintain good interpersonal relations and, sometimes sacrifice efficiency or even results for the sake of preserving the relationship. Task-oriented cultures, on the other hand, worry somewhat about keeping everyone happy, but the bottom line (what really matters) is getting the job done, whatever it takes.

#### Objectives

To define four aspects of communication: degree of directness, role of context, importance of face, and task vs. person orientation

To compare and contrast American and host country styles of communication

To describe the relationship between cultural differences and judgments made by members of one cultural group about another

#### Time

90 minutes

#### Staff

One host country national and one Volunteer

## Preparation

Ask host country national trainers to complete the exercise, putting both the United States and the host culture on each continuum (using the same instructions you give trainees below). Do this on a flipchart big enough for trainees to see. Save this flipchart for use during Step 5.

You will also need to prepare a flipchart (or an overhead) on which to record the results of the trainees' discussions. Draw the four continuums and write the two opposing alternatives (e.g., Direct Indirect, Low Context High Context) at either end (and large enough to be seen from the back of the room). You don't need to write the text that appears under these words.

## Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise, explaining that trainees will look at four dimensions of communication and think about American culture, the host culture, and the trainee's own personal view regarding these four issues.

**Step 2**—Divide trainees into groups and tell them that as a group they need to agree on where to put their mark on the continuum for American culture and for the host culture. At this time you should make the following points:

- Every culture has elements of both extremes of the continuum, but most cultures tend to be more one way than the other.
- Individuals within a culture can be anywhere along the continuum, of course, but they are more likely to be on the same side—if not in the same place—as their culture as a whole.
- Remember that everything depends on the situation: while a person from culture A might usually be on the left side of the continuum, in certain situations he/she could very well be far to the right.

Tell trainees to put themselves on the continuums after they have marked the United States and the host culture.

**Step 3**—Bring everyone back together and solicit their answers, placing the various marks on your flipchart (or overhead) at the front of the room. Before you write on the chart, ask each group where it put its group mark and then calculate an average of all the answers and put your mark at that spot on the chart. For example, if group 1 put the host country mark in the middle of a continuum, group 2 put it at the far left, and group 3 put it halfway between the far left and the middle, then the average position of the three groups would be between the far left and the middle.

**Step 4**—Lead a discussion, posing the following questions:

*What does the position of a mark mean? Answers:*

- The marks indicate how these people see the world.
- The marks indicate what the people in that culture think of as natural, normal, right, and good.

- The marks indicate how these people assume everyone thinks about these issues.
- The marks suggest the perspective from which these people interpret and judge the behavior of others.

*What does it mean if the U.S. mark is on one side of a continuum and the host country mark is on the other side? Answers:*

- It means people from these two cultures may see the world very differently.
- It means people from one side may think the behavior of people from the other side is very strange or even offensive.
- It means these people may not understand each other very well and may misinterpret each other's behavior.

*What will it take for these people to be able to work together effectively? Answer:*

- The Volunteer needs to understand how the host country people see the world (needs to know where the host country mark is) so that he/she realizes what their expectations are and how they will judge and interpret the Volunteer's behavior if it differs from their own.

**Step 5**—Now reveal the flipchart on which host country nationals have placed Americans and themselves (done under Preparation above), and compare. Wherever there is a big difference between the host country nationals' and trainees' assessments, ask each side to explain itself. You can use the following questions:

*What is it about Americans (or host country nationals) that makes you put them on that place on the continuum?*

*What behaviors have you noticed or heard about that lead you to make this decision?*

*Do you [one group] understand why [the other group] might put your culture in that place and why they might see you that way?*

**Step 6**—(Optional based on time constraints.) For any continuum that has the host country national and the American marks on opposite sides, assign that continuum to a small group of trainees and give them a few minutes to answer the following questions:

*How would the people on the right side of this continuum view or characterize the people on the left side? How would they come across to these people? And vice versa?*

**Step 7**—(Optional based on time constraints.) Bring the small groups back together and solicit their responses to the questions under Step 6 above. Conclude by pointing out (or having any Volunteers or host country nationals present) that these kinds of judgments or characterizations are quite common, and now you can see that they are at least in part based on legitimate cultural differences.

**Potential Issues**

Trainees may complain about having to make generalizations about Americans and about host country nationals. This is why it is important to make the observations listed under Step 2 above. You can add that you agree that generalizations are not terribly reliable but that in order to talk about a group of people, you have to generalize. Then say that it's acceptable to make generalizations as long as you use them very cautiously. [See Trainer's Guide Part Four: Additional Resources for Cross-Cultural Trainers, II for a more complete discussion of this issue.]

**Alternative Delivery**

Divide trainees into four pairs (or teams). Assign each member of a pair one side of one continuum and the other member the other side. Ask the two trainees (or two teams) to think of a specific situation in which the cultural difference described in this continuum would cause a problem, misunderstanding, or conflict. If they like, the pairs can then construct a brief role play or skit to illustrate this difference. Reconvene the whole group and have each pair present its skit/role play. If they have not prepared a skit, then have the pairs describe the situation they thought of in which this cultural difference would have an impact.

### 3.5—Nonverbal Communication: Gestures, Eye Contact, and Conversational Style

#### Content Overview

This exercise asks trainees to identify cultural differences in three categories of nonverbal communication. It is important for Volunteers to understand that much of what we call communication is not carried on through words but through nonverbal means. In fact, most studies show that more than 50 percent of communication is nonverbal.

Just as it is possible in any cross-cultural exchange to misinterpret verbal messages, so is it also easy to misunderstand and misinterpret nonverbal messages. What one person means by a particular instance of nonverbal behavior (such as a gesture) may not be what a person from another culture understands by that gesture. Therefore, for Volunteers to correctly interpret the nonverbal behavior of host country nationals—as well as to understand how host country nationals may interpret the Volunteers’ nonverbal behavior—they need to learn the meanings of various nonverbal behaviors in the local culture.

This exercise gives trainees a checklist of common nonverbal communication categories and asks them to try to discover the local norms for each. It begins with gestures, asking trainees to observe and try to figure out local gestures, so they can both understand these gestures when they see them and use them themselves to send nonverbal messages in the local culture. Trainees are then asked to observe local norms for maintaining eye contact, so that they can understand and successfully imitate local behavior in this regard. They also observe other aspects of what is called conversational style.

#### Objectives

To describe elements of nonverbal communication and the role nonverbal messages play in conveying meaning

To discuss how cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of nonverbal messages

To identify local cultural norms for at least three categories of nonverbal communication and articulate their meanings

#### Time

1 hour

#### Staff

One or more host country national

#### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the session using the points made in the overview above. Demonstrate how easy it is to misinterpret nonverbal behavior. Use an example of a gesture that means one thing in U.S. culture and something very different in the local culture. Explain that it is important to learn the meanings of nonverbal behaviors in order to correctly interpret what the local people are “saying” nonverbally, and in order to “say” things nonverbally in the local culture.

**Step 2**—Briefly review the three parts of the exercise and explain what Volunteers should be looking for.



**Step 3**—Divide the trainees into three groups and assign each group a category. Ask trainees to go out and make the necessary observations. Set a date and time for reconvening the group to present the results of their observations.

**Step 4**—When the group reconvenes, solicit their answers for the three sections. You can write these on a flipchart, and they can copy them into their copy of *Culture Matters*. (A special handout can also be used for this purpose.) Have a host country national available to comment as necessary and to demonstrate the various host country norms.

**Step 5**—Ask trainees if they have had any personal experiences with nonverbal communication problems thus far in-country.

### **Potential Issues**

In the beginning, trainees will not be able to see some types of nonverbal expression; that is, they will only be able to see things that are also forms of nonverbal communication in their own culture (whether or not they mean the same thing). A trainee will not be able to see a gesture, for example, or a facial expression that does not exist as meaningful behavior in U.S. culture.

## 3.6—Dialogues

### Content Overview

Dialogues are deliberately written in such a way that the reader sees no problem on the first reading, no misunderstanding or miscommunication. It is only after reading between the lines and studying the dialogue more closely that the reader sometimes sees a problem. The dialogues are written to simulate natural exchanges between two speakers in which both parties appear to understand each other. This is, after all, how two people from different cultures often think when they are having a conversation: each speaker is quite sure that he/she has understood the other person.

Sometimes this is true, of course, but in many cases both speakers, because of cultural differences, have misinterpreted each other and do not realize it. In most of these dialogues, the Volunteer has misinterpreted something he or she is describing to the other speaker.

Dialogues can be used to illustrate almost any kind of cultural difference, but in this exercise they are being used to illustrate differences in communication style between direct/low context speakers and indirect/high context speakers. The particular differences dramatized in this session have already been analyzed in the three preceding exercises in this *Trainer's Guide*.

### Objective

To detect various techniques of indirect communication

To assess the meaning of indirect communication in order to avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings

### Time

45 minutes

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the dialogues concept (if this is the first time you have done one of these exercises). Make the following points:

- Each dialogue illustrates a cultural “mistake,” that is, a misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or some other breakdown in communication rooted in one or more cultural differences between the two speakers (or between one speaker, usually the Volunteer, and a third party referred to in the conversation).
- The mistake will not be obvious, but it is there if you can find it.
- Cultural differences are not the only explanation for what goes wrong in the dialogue, but they are always a possible explanation.

**Step 2**—Read and discuss one of the dialogues together with the group as a model of how the dialogues contain examples of misunderstanding due to cross-cultural communication.

**Step 3**—Divide trainees into small groups and ask them to analyze the dialogues and find the mistake or misunderstanding.

**Step 4**—Reconvene the groups and discuss each dialogue. Always begin by assigning two people to read the lines of the two speakers. Then lead a discussion about what was going on in the dialogue. Possible discussion questions to use with these dialogues are given below:

Quick Trip: Why does the Volunteer think things went well? (Answer: Because they showed him or her the whole co-op and were probably polite and friendly.) What is the significance of the host country national saying, “That must have taken hours?” (Answer: He or she is saying what usually happens in these situations, what we have called “context” in this chapter of *Culture Matters*, which is the standard or norm by which to measure what has happened to the Volunteer.) What does it mean that the Volunteer was in and out in only 30 minutes? (Answer: That the people at the co-op were just being polite and were probably not interested.) What does it mean that the Volunteer was told that another person was coming at noon? (Answer: It may be the co-op people’s polite, indirect way of saying they are not so interested in the Volunteer.)

Committee Meeting: Why does the Volunteer think things went so well? (Answer: Because no one came out and said there was any problem, because people said “fine,” and because they moved on to the next item.) What does the Volunteer think lack of discussion means? (Answer: That there must not be a problem or people would say so at that point.) What does the Volunteer think it means when the group moves on to the next item? (Answer: That there is nothing more to say about or there is no objection to the issue of the equipment.) What does lack of a discussion and moving on to the next item sometimes mean in more high context cultures? (Answer: That people aren’t happy and don’t want to say so directly.)

We’ll Get Back To You: What does it mean that the Volunteer didn’t meet with the director? (Answer: It could be an indirect way of saying the clinic doesn’t need the Volunteer’s help.) What does the Volunteer think it means? (Answer: That the director is busy.) Why doesn’t the Volunteer realize that not meeting with the director, being asked few questions, and not being given another appointment are signals that the clinic is not interested? (Answer: Because these are not how you would communicate this message in the Volunteer’s culture.)

Explanations: Did Miss Chung understand how to use the machine? (Answer: No.). Then why did she say that she did? (Answer: Because she did not want to embarrass the Volunteer by implying that the Volunteer hadn’t given a very good explanation; she was worried the Volunteer might lose face.) What was the mistake the Volunteer made? (Answer: He/She interpreted yes to mean what it does in the Volunteer’s culture and not for what it means in Miss Chung’s culture.) Is Miss Chung hurt when the Volunteer says, “Let me explain it again”? (Answer: She is probably quite embarrassed.)

Transfer: Where is the first indication the Volunteer is not going to be transferred? (Answer: In the third line, when he or she says “Not much.” If the Volunteer asked for a transfer and the answer avoided the question, then the answer may very well be in the negative.) Where is the next hint that the Volunteer will not be transferred? (Answer: When the director says she understands the Volunteer’s problem. If she is saying this and not talking about the transfer, there must be a reason.) What does the director mean when she says she’s had a lot of complaints about Radu? (Answer: In this context, to be talking about all the complaints she’s had and to not be talking about what she might do about those complaints, probably means she sympathizes with the Volunteer but isn’t planning to do anything. In the entire reported conversation, note how the director has never once talked about any transfer; the message here is most likely in what she’s not saying.)

### **Potential Issues**

Be careful to qualify your remarks in this exercise. Don’t say, for example, that being shown the clinic (in *Quick Trip*) in only 30 minutes would always mean the Volunteer is not wanted. Say instead that this is often a way people in more indirect cultures would communicate such a message. Trainees may rebel if you insist that all the indirect techniques illustrated here always mean the same thing in every situation. After all, not meeting with the director (*We’ll Get Back To You*) might only mean that the director is busy even in an indirect culture. The point is that trainees need to see that sometimes these actions or statements do mean different things than they mean in the Volunteer’s culture.

### **Alternative Delivery**

You could add a step at the end of the exercise for trainees to write a dialogue or two of their own, or to they tell about a real-life “dialogue” they have been in.

## 3.8—Practicing Indirectness

<b>Content Overview</b>	This exercise reinforces concepts of Chapter Three and requires Volunteers to practice indirect communication. Because American communication style is generally direct, this can be challenging.
<b>Objective</b>	To rephrase direct statements in a more indirect manner  To discuss various problems that can result from the use of direct communication with indirect or high context communicators
<b>Time</b>	30 minutes
<b>Delivery</b>	<i>Step 1</i> —Briefly introduce the activity using the text in section 3.8. <i>Step 2</i> —Have trainees complete the activity on their own. <i>Step 3</i> —Solicit their answers. <i>Step 4</i> —For each of the seven items, ask trainees to explain why the direct language might cause problems among more indirect or high context communicators. Possible answers for the seven items are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Criticizing someone’s idea or suggestion could cause loss of face.</li><li>2. Saying that someone has not understood the point could be embarrassing to that person.</li><li>3. If you give your own opinion too strongly, no one will disagree with it for fear of upsetting you.</li><li>4. Asking someone what he or she thinks may be embarrassing if that person does not want to offer an opinion (perhaps because it is the opposite of someone else’s opinion).</li><li>5. This could embarrass the person who presented the figures.</li><li>6. This also risks loss of face.</li><li>7. This is very close to confrontation in some cultures.</li></ol>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Be sure to point out that the seven statements offered might very well be said by indirect communicators in certain situations, but they nevertheless would be considered too abrupt or even rude in many instances. Some trainees may say that even direct communicators would not be this blunt.

## Fundamentals of Culture III: The Concept of Time

### *Exercise III.3: Score Yourself—Monochronic and Polychronic*

#### Content Overview

This exercise examines how people conceive of time and how time affects the way people relate to each other. In polychronic cultures, time is subservient to the needs of people. There is always enough time to do what really matters, and people always make time for each other. If necessary, people do several things simultaneously. To be efficient in such cultures means to do things in such a way that other people do not feel neglected.

In monochronic cultures, time is in charge and people must keep up with time or else be left behind. In such cultures, you can run out of time, not have enough time, or be in desperate need of more time. In such cultures, to be efficient means to accomplish the tasks you have to do in the time you have to do them.

Fundamentals III, section III.2 of the workbook defines the two poles of this cultural dimension.

#### Objectives

To define monochronic and polychronic world views

To recognize behaviors typical of people from monochronic and polychronic cultures

To discuss at least three advantages and three disadvantages of both monochronic and polychronic world views

#### Time

1 hour

#### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the concepts of monochronic and polychronic, using the text above and the definitions given in section III.2.

**Step 2**—Have trainees complete exercise III.3 as follows: Explain that the 10 pairs of statements present alternative behaviors for 10 situations. In each case, one alternative (a. or b.) is more consistent with a monochronic world view and the other one is more consistent with a polychronic world view. Accordingly, trainees should label each item in each of the 10 pairs with either an M (monochronic) or a P (for polychronic).

**Step 3**—Go over the 10 pairs and solicit trainee answers.

**Step 4**—Divide trainees into two groups: the monochronic team and the polychronic team. Each team has to think of at least three positive aspects or advantages of its world view, and then think of three difficulties or disadvantages of its world view.

**Step 5**—Reconvene the two groups and solicit their lists of advantages and disadvantages.

**Potential Issues**

Some trainees may say that whether someone is monochronic or polychronic depends on the situation, not on their culture, that everyone is both mono- and polychronic in the right circumstances. This is true, of course; no one is always monochronic or always polychronic. But explain that it is still possible to say people from a particular culture tend generally to be more one way than the other. [See Part Four: Additional Resources for Cross-Cultural Trainers, II for more ideas on how to handle resistance to generalizing.]

**Alternative Delivery**

Ask trainees to do this exercise and also III.2 on their own, so they understand the basic concepts. Then tell them to look for examples of monochronic and polychronic behavior in the host culture and note them down. Bring everyone together and solicit the results of their observations.



## 4.2—Concept of Power and 4.4—Dialogues

### Content Overview

Exercises 4.2 and 4.4 should be conducted together. Exercise 4.4 Dialogues should be done as the second of this two-part session. These exercises deal with one of the key issues affecting Volunteers at the workplace. Power distance is a central element in how bosses and subordinates interact with and are expected to treat each other. Most Volunteers report to host country superiors of one sort or another and very often work in hierarchies in which there are people of lower rank or status than the Volunteer. Thus, Volunteers need to know how to behave with respect to people in both higher and lower positions, and what is expected of them as subordinates and as superiors (even though they do not supervise people of lower rank).

The roles of superiors and subordinates differ from culture to culture based in part on each culture's notion of how power should be exercised. The two poles of this notion, high and low power distance are described in detail in the introduction to exercise 4.2.

### Session Objectives

To describe the concept of power distance and the two poles or extremes

To recognize characteristic behaviors of people from high and low power distance cultures

To discuss how cultural differences concerning power distance can manifest in everyday situations

### Time

1 hour (to complete both exercises)

### Staff

Participation of at least one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.

### Preparation

Prepare a chart with High Power Distance written on one side and Low Power Distance on the other. List under each heading the qualities as described below and in the workbook introduction to exercise 4.2. A sample appears below:

**High Power Distance:** Unequal distribution of power acceptable; power not shared; subordinates do not take initiative, wait for specific instructions; subordinates defer to authority figures; more paternalistic or authoritarian management.

**Low Power Distance:** Power tends to be shared; subordinates take initiative and don't like to be micromanaged (very closely supervised); less deference to authority figures; bosses delegate responsibility; acceptable to disagree with the boss; more democratic management.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise referring to the prepared flipchart to aide in presenting the concepts of high and low power distance. Point out how important this topic is for understanding workplace dynamics.

**Step 2**—Have trainees complete exercise 4.2 as described in the workbook.

**Step 3**—Go over their answers.

**Step 4**—Begin Exercise 4.4 Dialogues. As your transition, explain that the group will now look at some examples of how cultural differences regarding power distance play out in everyday situations. Divide trainees into small groups and have them examine the four dialogues and find the “mistake” the Volunteer makes in each case. The mistake is usually a misinterpretation (caused by a cultural difference) of something that has happened or something the other speaker is saying. In these dialogues, the mistakes have to do with cultural differences concerning power distance.

**Step 5**—Reconvene the groups and discuss each dialogue. Always begin by assigning two people to read the lines of the two speakers. Then lead a discussion about what is going on in the dialogue. Possible discussion questions to use with these dialogues are given below:

*Bosses Have Their Reasons:* What will the headmistress think when the Volunteer goes and questions her? (Answer: She may think he is rude to be questioning her decision like this.) Why does the Volunteer seem to think it’s OK to question the headmistress’ decision? (Answer: He comes from a low power distance culture where it’s more acceptable for subordinates to question bosses if they think the boss’ decision is wrong.) What should you do in high power distance cultures if you think the boss has made a mistake? (Answer: Don’t confront the boss directly, at least not in public. Send a message through a third party, or go directly to the boss but phrase your criticism very delicately. In many cases, subordinates do nothing, letting the boss deal with the consequences.)

*A Surprise for the Chief:* What is the chief going to think of this surprise? (Answer: He may not be pleased that the Volunteer has taken action without first getting permission or approval.) Why will the chief be upset by what has happened? (Answer: He may interpret what the Volunteer has done as a challenge to his authority; if people do things on their own, without getting permission, they undermine the decision-making prerogatives of the boss.)

*The Golden Spoon:* Why does the Volunteer think the provincial representative might want to eat with the “little people?” (Answer: In the Volunteer’s culture, differences in rank and status are not so strictly observed; relations between authority figures and those they oversee are sometimes more casual and informal.) How might it look in the host culture if Mr. Kamini ate with the “commoners?” (Answer: For one thing, the other people of Mr. Kamini’s rank might be quite offended or insulted. For another, Mr. Kamini might undermine his authority with subordinates by suggesting he was one of them. Finally, the subordinates—except for the Volunteer—might feel very uncomfortable having lunch with such a dignitary.)

*A Lesson:* What is the mistake the Volunteer makes here? (Answer: Going around the chain of command.) What is the dean probably going to say if the Volunteer goes directly to him? (Answer: He will probably ask if the Volunteer has spoken to Mr. Biswas.) How is Mr. Biswas going to feel when he hears what has happened? (Answer: He's going to feel humiliated that he was bypassed.) What should the Volunteer do in this situation? (Answer: Begin by trying to work through Mr. Biswas, however hopeless he may be. If nothing happens, then go to the next level; it's acceptable to go above Mr. Biswas but not good to go around him.)

## **Potential Issues**

Trainees may find other mistakes and misunderstandings in the dialogues, mistakes that have nothing to do with power distance. Accept these other observations but be sure trainees see the power distance point also.

Trainees may say that these conversations could take place between two people from the same culture, between two Americans, for example. This is true, of course; simply point out that culture could be the explanation in this instance but it doesn't have to be.

Finally, trainees may say that even some Americans might find what the Volunteer does in the dialogues rude or offensive; that they would never act the way the Volunteer does. You can accept this and just say that some Americans think more like host country nationals on this subject. Or you can ask the host country national present whether he or she thinks the behavior of the Volunteer in the dialogues is believable.

## 4.8—The Source of Status: Achieved or Ascribed

### Content Overview

This exercise examines how people achieve their role or status in society and the obligations and responsibilities that go with status.

In some cultures, the regard you are held in by others is a result of what you have done or achieved in your life, both personally and professionally. In these cultures, you create your status and it can change depending on circumstances. It is easier in these cultures to move up the ladder of status. It is also important in these cultures for people of higher status not to act as if they are superior to or better than people of lesser status. Indeed, in these cultures to talk about, emphasize or pay a lot of attention to status is not common.

In other cultures, status comes with birth—a result of your social class, level of education, profession, and the reputation and wealth of your family. In these cultures, people are very aware of their status and should not act in ways that are either above or below what is expected of people in that status. It is also very difficult in these cultures to change your status, especially to move from a lower status to a higher one.

### Objectives

To describe the concepts of achieved and ascribed social status

To identify the influence of role and status in cross-cultural interactions

To discuss alternatives for resolving status-oriented cross-cultural problems and the consequences associated with those alternatives

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

Participation of one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.

### Preparation

Host country national staff will need to read the four incidents and decide if they are realistic for the host culture. If they are not realistic, trainers may either rewrite the incidents to make them culturally accurate, or create completely new incidents. If you do either, be sure to put the rewritten incidents on a handout and have copies for distribution. Naturally, if both the host culture and U.S. culture see status the same way, then you will not do this exercise.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the concept, using the overview above and the introduction to exercise 4.8 in the workbook.

**Step 2**—Divide trainees into groups and have each group read the four incidents and discuss what they would do in each situation.

**Step 3**—Reconvene the groups and lead a discussion of each incident. Here are some questions you could use:

Upstanding Students: Why are the other teachers upset? (Answer: Because deference is expected of higher-ranking people in their culture.) Why does the Volunteer not want his/her students to stand?

(Answer: Americans are uncomfortable with the idea of rank, especially that higher ranking people should get special treatment, as if they were somehow superior to lower ranking people.) Why are Americans uncomfortable with deference to authority or rank? (Answer: Because of our strong belief in egalitarianism, that everyone is inherently equal.)

Respect: Why are the professionals upset at the Volunteer's behavior? (Answer: Because they have had to work hard to achieve their status and feel they have earned the right to be distinguished from those who have not reached such a status.) Why does the Volunteer see nothing wrong with sitting with the laborers? (Answer: Because in U.S. culture it is okay for people of different ranks and status to intermingle with each other.)

In the Matter of Mr. Kodo: Do you think the chairman made the right decision? Why? Do you see why it was apparently the wrong decision for this culture? What do you do when "the right thing" in your host country culture is not right in your culture?

Considering the Source: What would happen if you spoke up and objected to this treatment by your boss? How does a Volunteer decide what to do in situations like these, where what is apparently "right" in the local culture may be personally offensive to the Volunteer?

### **Potential Issues**

Trainees may react quite strongly to some of these situations and/or become emotional. Some of these situations strike at the heart of a very important American value—egalitarianism—about which Americans feel very strongly. Some trainees may say they can't or won't do the culturally expected thing in these situations, which, of course, may upset them, when they realize it is not as easy as they thought to be culturally sensitive. Try to reassure them that this happens to all Volunteers and that the decision to stand on personal principle is not wrong or bad—as long as it is made very carefully and in a way that minimizes the unpleasant consequences.

### **Alternative Delivery**

Instead of using the incidents from the book, bring in a panel of Volunteers to discuss their own personal incidents. Interview prospective panelists ahead of time to make sure their story is in fact related to the role and status issue. When Volunteers tell their stories, have them stop before revealing how they resolved their situation, and then ask trainees what they think the Volunteer should have done.

## 4.9—Workplace Values and Norms: Comparing American and Host Country Views

### Content Overview

This exercise asks trainees to compare and contrast American and host country views of eight important workplace concepts. The first three continuums—Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Source of Status—have already been presented at length in separate exercises in Chapter Four of *Culture Matters*. The following concepts are described in exercise 4.9 and are summarized below.

**Concept of Work:** Work as part of identity vs. work as functional necessity—The attitudes people have toward work differ from culture to culture (and also according to one's work and level of education). The difference examined on this continuum has to do with the degree to which people identify with their work, and the part it plays in their self-concept. In some cultures, work is a part of individual identity; people often feel fulfilled and satisfied through their work (though not exclusively). In other cultures work does not usually play a part in personal fulfillment nor does it have to be especially satisfying. It's just a job.

**Personal and Professional:** Personal and professional separated vs. Personal and professional intertwined—This concept examines the degree to which people can or should separate their personal and family life from their work and professional life. Some cultures believe one can't compartmentalize things so neatly, that the personal and professional automatically overlap—because the same person is involved in both. Any separation is artificial and unhealthy. Other cultures believe that to be a professional means leaving your personal and family problems at home and not letting them interfere at the workplace, except in the case of emergencies (which are defined in a rather limited manner). People from the first kind of culture often see people from the second as unfeeling and rigid; people from the second type see people from the first as unprofessional and not serious about work.

**Motivation:** Professional opportunity vs. comfortable work environment—What workers want out of their jobs differs from culture to culture. Some want their jobs to be the means to increased wealth, responsibility, and professional standing. Others want work to be a pleasant, supportive atmosphere where people look after each other and where one feels secure and appreciated.

**The Key to Productivity:** Results vs. harmony—Some cultures believe if the workers are happy, they will be productive. Others believe if workers are producing, they will be happy.

**The Ideal Worker:** Technical skills vs. people skills—Is the ideal worker the most productive and efficient, or the one who gets along with everyone and can always be trusted? In hiring a worker, do you want proven professional competence or the certainty this worker has good interpersonal skills? Are loyalty, dedication, and commitment important or education and technical training?

<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To define eight aspects of workplace values: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, source of status, concept of work, personal and professional, motivation, productivity, and the ideal worker</p> <p>To compare and contrast American and host country workplace values</p> <p>To describe the relationship between cultural differences and judgments made by members of one cultural group about another</p>
<b>Time</b>	90 minutes
<b>Staff</b>	Participation of at least one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>Ask host country national trainers to complete the exercise in advance, putting both America and the host culture responses on each continuum (according to the instructions in Step 2 below). Do this on a flipchart big enough for trainees to see. Have this flipchart ready for use during Step 5.</p> <p>You will also need to prepare a flipchart (or an overhead) on which to record the results of the trainees' discussions. Draw the eight continuums (use at least two pieces of flipchart paper, with four continuums per page) with the two opposing alternatives (e.g., Low Power Distance and High Power Distance, Low Uncertainty Avoidance and High Uncertainty Avoidance) written at either end (and large enough to be seen from the back of the room). You don't need to write the text that appears under these words.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the exercise, explaining that trainees will look at eight important workplace issues and think about American culture, the host culture, and the trainee's own personal view regarding these issues.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Divide trainees into groups and tell them that as a group they need to agree on where to put their marks on each continuum: for American culture in general and for the host culture in general. At this point you should make the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every culture has elements of both extremes of the continuum, but most cultures tend to be more one way than the other.</li> <li>• Individuals within a culture can be anywhere along the continuum, of course, but they are more likely to be on the same side—if not in the same place—as their culture.</li> <li>• Remember that everything depends on the situation: while a person from culture A might usually be on the left side of the continuum, in certain situations he or she could very well be far to the right.</li> </ul> <p>Tell trainees to put themselves on the continuums after they have put America and the host culture.</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Bring everyone back together and solicit their answers, placing the various marks on your flipchart (or overhead) at the front of the room. Before you write anything on the chart, ask each group where</p>



it put its mark and then calculate an average of all the groups and put your mark at that spot on the chart. For example, if group 1 put the host country mark in the middle of a continuum, group 2 put it at the far left, and group 3 put it halfway between the far left and the middle, then the average position of the three groups would be between the far left and the middle.

**Step 4**—Lead a discussion, posing the following questions:

*What does the position of a mark mean? Answers:*

- The marks indicate how these people see the world.
- The marks indicate what the people in that culture think of as natural, normal, right, and good.
- The marks indicate how these people assume everyone thinks about these issues.
- The marks suggest the perspective from which these people interpret and judge the behavior of others.

*What does it mean if the U.S. mark is on one side of a continuum and the host country mark is on the other side? Answers:*

- It means people from these two cultures may see these issues very differently.
- It means people from one side may think the behavior of people from the other side is very strange or even offensive.
- It means these people may not understand each other very well and may misinterpret each other's behavior.

*What will it take for these people to be able to work together effectively? Answer:*

- The Volunteer needs to understand how the host country people see the world (needs to know where the host country mark is) so that he/she realizes what their expectations are and how they will judge and interpret the Volunteer's behavior if it differs from their own.

**Step 5**—Now reveal the flipchart (prepared in advance) on which host country nationals have placed Americans and themselves and compare those responses to the work of the trainees. Wherever there is a big difference between the place where trainees have put Americans or host country nationals and the place where host country nationals have put Americans or themselves, ask each side to explain itself. You can use the following questions:

*What is it about Americans (or host country nationals) that makes you put them on that place on the continuum?*



*What behaviors have you noticed or heard about that lead you to make this decision?*

*Do you understand why [the other group] might put your culture in that place and why they might see you that way?*

**Step 6**—(Optional depending on time constraints.) For any continuum where the host country national and the American marks are on opposite sides, assign that continuum to a small group of trainees and give them a few minutes to answer the following questions:

*How would the people who are on the right side of this continuum view or characterize the people who are on the left side? How would they come across to these people? And vice versa?*

**Step 7**—(Optional depending on time constraints.) Bring the small groups back together and solicit their responses to the questions in Step 6 above. Close by pointing out (or having any Volunteers and host country nationals point out) that these kinds of judgments or characterizations are in fact quite common, and are at least in part based on legitimate cultural differences.

### **Potential Issues**

Trainees may have concerns about making generalizations. To respond, refer to Trainer's Guide Part Four: Additional Resources for Cross-Cultural Trainers, II.

Because this exercise is about workplace situations, and most trainees haven't been in such situations in the host country, they may not see the relevance of or need for this exercise. They may not believe they are going to face difficulties in these areas. For a more complete discussion of how to handle this issue, see Part Four: Additional Resources for Cross-Cultural Trainers, I. Using Volunteers in this session can be very helpful, as they can verify that such workplace issues are indeed quite real.

### **Alternative Delivery**

Divide trainees into eight pairs (or teams). Assign each member of a pair to one side of one continuum and the other member to the other side. Ask the two trainees (or two teams) to think of a specific situation where the cultural difference described in this continuum would cause a problem, misunderstanding, or conflict. If they like, the pairs can then construct a brief role play or skit to illustrate this difference. Reconvene the whole group and have each pair present its skit or role play. If they have not prepared a skit, then have the pairs describe the situation they thought of where this cultural difference would have an impact.

## 4.11—You Americans

### Content Overview

This exercise examines some of the most common ways Americans are different from host country nationals in many Peace Corps countries. Because of these differences, Americans are often accused of the eight things listed in this exercise. Volunteers will hear these things said about them and should try to understand why they are seen this way. These eight statements, of course, identify important characteristics of American culture; to do this exercise, then, is to look more closely at these characteristics.

### Objective

To explain how Americans are perceived by host country people and identify the source of those perceptions

### Time

30 minutes

### Staff

Participation of at least one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.

### Preparation

For delivery Step 4, prepare a handout (or a flipchart) that lists positive statements host country nationals make about Americans. Or you will have to ask two or three host country nationals to attend the session and ask them to be ready to present these observations as part of that step.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the exercise, as suggested above.

**Step 2**—Divide trainees into groups, assign each group several of the eight statements, and have them try to answer this question: What makes Americans the way they are described in these statements?

**Step 3**—Reconvene the groups and have trainees report on their discussions. Trainers may refer to the points below and to the workbook Answers, Chapter Four, section 4.11 for notes on the eight statements.

1. The pace of life is faster in the United States compared with that in many developing countries. The fact is that things do happen faster in America (because of instant communications, efficient transportation networks, and so on), and this is the pace Volunteers may be used to accomplishing things. To host country nationals, however, this pace may be too quick. Furthermore, since a Peace Corps tour is only two years, there is some urgency built into the experience.
2. Americans are extremely uncomfortable with inequality of any kind. We don't believe all people are the same, but we do believe no one is inherently superior to anyone else. Treating everyone the same is our way of showing we believe everyone is equal.
3. It's devious to think one thing and say another; such behavior is dishonest and misleads people. Americans believe it is important not to hide their feelings or thoughts from others.

4. Americans think things can always be improved, so they are not satisfied for very long with leaving something the way it is.
5. Americans believe people must earn by their actions whatever regard or respect they are given. Merely attaining a certain age or holding a certain position does not in itself signify any achievement.
6. U.S. history has seen constant improvement in the quality of life. Things have almost always gotten better, and Americans assume this will continue.
7. Americans define themselves first as individuals and second as members of groups.
8. Americans see time as finite and limited, so they are eager to make the best use of it. Volunteers have the added pressure of being in country only for two years, which is not very long to accomplish something.

**Step 4**—The general tone of the eight statements in the exercise is somewhat negative. Trainers might want to lead a brief discussion about some of the positive things host country nationals say about Americans. You can either make up a list (which you should have ready on a handout or a flipchart) or have some host country nationals present some of these characterizations at this point.

#### **Potential Issues**

Some trainees may complain that these characterizations are not fair or that they are inaccurate stereotypes. You can agree, but the point is still the same: whether fair or accurate, these statements show how some host country nationals perceive Volunteers, and trainees should be aware of these perceptions.

If trainees complain that the statements are all negative, then you should be ready to do Step 4 above.

#### **Alternative Delivery**

Instead of using the eight statements given in the exercise, ask trainees to interview host country nationals and come up with their own list of characterizations. Questions they might ask to elicit these kinds of observations are:

*What bothers you (or other people in your country) the most about Americans?*

*What American quality is the most difficult for people in your country to understand?*

*What would local people say is the most frustrating thing about working with Americans?*

*What is the biggest mistake Americans make working in your country?*

After trainees have done their interviews, bring them together to do this session. Begin by making a list of the observations on Americans they have come up with. Then continue the exercise as described above.

Another alternative would be to bring together a panel of Volunteers and have them discuss the impressions host country nationals have of Americans.

## 4.13—Turning the Tables

### Content Overview

This exercise asks trainees to imagine what it is like for their host country colleagues and counterparts to have an American Volunteer suddenly working in their workplace. If Volunteers can understand how they come across to their host country national co-workers, they should then be able to understand many of the behaviors and attitudes host country nationals often exhibit in working with Americans.

The mechanism in this exercise is for trainees to imagine that the roles were reversed, to imagine that they (the trainees) were host country nationals (in this case, Americans) working in their own country (the United States) and a foreigner suddenly came to work in their workplace. Trainees are asked how they would react to this person, what they would think of this person, and how they would behave toward this person. Again, the idea is that how they would react to a foreigner working among them is probably similar to how host country nationals react to a Volunteer working in their midst.

### Objectives

To develop an appreciation for the initial perceptions and reactions host country co-workers may have toward Volunteers

To develop a collection of strategies for establishing credibility, and gaining trust and acceptance in the workplace

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

Participation of one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce and explain the purpose of the exercise.

**Step 2**—Ask trainees to complete Part One of the exercise on their own, as explained in the workbook.

**Step 3**—Go over the 15 items and solicit trainee answers.

**Step 4**—Ask both the Volunteer and the host country national if, in their experience, the answer to most of the 15 questions would be Yes.

**Step 5**—Divide trainees into groups and ask each group to come up with suggestions on how they can establish credibility at the workplace and how they can gain the trust and acceptance of co-workers. At the same time, ask the Volunteer and host country national to come up with their own answers to these questions.

**Step 6**—Reconvene the groups and list their suggestions on a flipchart. Ask the Volunteer and host country national to also give their suggestions.

**Step 7**—Conclude by going over the list of positive factors at the end of Part Two.

**Potential Issues**

Try to ensure that trainees do not become discouraged by this exercise. While it may be true that Volunteers won't have much credibility in the beginning of their tour, that will eventually change as they become known and accepted. The point of the exercise is not to show how hard it is to become accepted, but that acceptance will come gradually and not be automatic.

Point out that the same is true when you start a new job in your own culture, that this transition is a normal process (which may take longer than usual, however, because you are from another country).

**Alternative Delivery**

Trainees can do Part One of this exercise on their own and then interview host country nationals and Volunteers about how you win acceptance and credibility on the job. Trainees then come together for this exercise and present a list of the suggestions they gathered through their interviews.

Another possibility: Ask trainees to close their eyes while a trainer reads aloud the text under Part One ("Imagine you work...."), until the beginning of the Yes or No questions. Then have the group open their eyes and quickly answer the 15 questions.

## Fundamentals of Culture IV: The Locus of Control

### *Exercise IV.2: Activism and Fatalism*

#### Content Overview

This exercise examines the question of to what extent people are in control of—and therefore ultimately responsible for—their lives. In activist cultures (internal locus of control), people believe they are responsible for what happens to them in life, that they shape their own destiny, and that human intervention can always be successful in changing an unacceptable situation. There are no limits to what you can do if you are willing to make the effort.

In fatalist cultures (external locus of control), people believe they are only in part responsible for their lives. Some things lie outside of and do not respond to human intervention, and therefore, have to be accepted. There are limits to what people can do no matter how much effort they are willing to make.

Fundamentals IV, section IV.2 of *Culture Matters* contains the definition of the two outlooks. The trainer is encouraged to complete the other exercises in this Fundamental before presenting this exercise.

#### Objectives

To define activist and fatalist world views

To recognize behaviors typical of people from activist and fatalist cultures

To describe how activists and fatalists might view each other

#### Time

45 minutes

#### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the concept of internal and external locus of control.

**Step 2**—Ask trainees to complete the exercise as instructed in section IV.2.

**Step 3**—Go over the exercise, checking their answers.

**Step 4**—Lead a discussion of this concept, using the following questions:

*What might activists think of fatalists?*

*What would fatalists think of activists?*

*Have you seen any examples of activist/fatalist behaviors in your host family?*

*How might activist/fatalist differences affect your work as a Volunteer in-country?*

#### Potential Issues

See discussion under previous Fundamentals.

## 5.1—Dear Jan

<b>Content Overview</b>	The Dear Jan letter introduces several important points concerning how people in different cultures view various social relationships, especially friendship (but also family relations in one instance). Most of the cultural differences involved can be traced to different attitudes towards two of the Fundamentals presented in <i>Culture Matters</i> : The Concept of the Self and Personal vs. Societal Obligations.
<b>Objectives</b>	To discuss cultural differences related to social relationships, especially friendship  To identify local cultural expectations of friends and friendship
<b>Time</b>	30 minutes
<b>Preparation</b>	Trainers should be familiar with the Fundamentals dealing with The Concept of the Self and Personal vs. Societal Obligations before doing the exercises in this chapter. Trainers should also be familiar with the “unit of survival” concept, which is discussed in the Content Overview for exercise 5.2.
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the exercise briefly, as suggested above.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Give trainees a few minutes to read the letter and identify any place where Gavin has apparently encountered a cultural difference concerning relationships. There are four main differences illustrated in the letter (see the analysis of Dear Jan at the end of workbook Chapter Five).</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Lead a discussion of the incidents as trainees identify each one (using the following questions if you wish):</p> <p><i>Paragraph 2: Why is Gavin offended that his friend asks him to lie? (Answer: Because friends don't normally do this in Gavin's culture.) Do you think Gavin's friend thinks his request of Gavin is unusual or will be difficult for Gavin to agree to? (Answer: Probably not.) Why not? (Answer: Because friends apparently do this for friends in this culture.) What does this tell you about the expectations of friendship in different cultures?</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 3: Why didn't Gavin tell his friend about the death of his grandmother? (Answer: Perhaps because in Gavin's culture members of the extended family don't play such an important role in the life of the nuclear family.) Why is his friend hurt? (Answer: Because perhaps in the friend's culture, members of the extended family are just like members of the nuclear family, playing key roles in everyday life.)</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 4: Why do you think the woman was gone for four days? (Answer: Because cousins and other members of the extended family may be very close to each other in more collectivist cultures.)</i></p>



*Paragraph 5: What is the mistake Gavin makes in analyzing this relationship? (Answer: He interprets his girlfriend's behavior according to what it would mean in his culture, not hers.)*

### **Potential Issues**

Some trainees may identify more closely with the host country national behavior than with Gavin's. If they do, you can just say that Gavin may not be like all Americans, but he is certainly like some.

## 5.2—The Circle of Relations

### Content Overview

This exercise examines cultural differences in the hierarchy of familial, social, and professional relationships that people establish in their lives. Depending on where various types of people fit into your hierarchy, you will treat them differently; that is, you will feel certain duties and responsibilities toward such people and expect reciprocal treatment from them.

In this regard, trainers should be aware of the concept known as the smallest unit of survival. Where various individuals fit into the hierarchy of relationships in a culture, from very distant to very close, depends in part on what the smallest unit of survival is in that culture. In some cultures, the smallest unit of survival is the self; the individual can survive on his or her own (after reaching maturity) and need not depend on anyone else. In such cultures, people choose to develop relations outside the self, but they are not necessarily compelled to by circumstances.

In other cultures, the nuclear family is the smallest unit of survival; parents and their children form a unit outside of which it is not possible for individual members to survive for any extended period. In still other cultures, the extended family is the smallest unit; in these cases, even the nuclear family is not a viable entity that can entirely support itself without additional help, such as from grandparents or aunts and uncles. Finally, there may even be societies in which the clan, a collection of extended families, is the smallest unit, though such cultures would be very rare.

Using these four categories can be helpful in understanding cultural differences in the circle of relations.

### Objectives

To identify cultural differences in how Americans and host country nationals think about their relations with various people in their lives

To discuss implications of these differences for Volunteers living and working in the host country

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

Participation of one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.

### Preparation

The trainer will need to meet with a few host country nationals to discuss (as a group) and complete the circle of relations diagram from the host country perspective. Present this diagram on a flipchart in Step 4 below.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the activity. Briefly summarize the smallest unit of survival concept and the four categories described above.

**Step 2**—Divide trainees into two or three groups and ask each group to discuss the categories of people and decide where to place them in the circles. Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and ask them to record their conclusions in a circle of relations on the paper.

**Step 3**—Reconvene the groups and have each group present their circle. Where there are differences between the groups, ask for explanations.

**Step 4**—Now reveal the circle drawn by host country nationals under Preparation above. Note any differences and lead a discussion using the following questions:

*Why do American and host country nationals put (type of person) closer to or further from the center?*

*What does it mean that Americans put (type of person) further away from the center than host country nationals?*

*What does it mean for a Volunteer if a host country national friend or colleague puts him or her closer to the center than that Volunteer puts that host country national?*

*What does it mean for a host country national if he or she puts a Volunteer friend or colleague closer to the center than that Volunteer puts the host country national?*

### **Potential Issues**

Trainees may have trouble agreeing in their groups where to put the various categories of people. Some trainees, for example, might put their grandparents closer to the center than other Volunteers. Encourage the groups to reach consensus on as many of the types of people as possible, but where they cannot agree, they can put that type of person in more than one circle. If there is general disagreement, then let trainees make their own, individual circles, and compare them to the host country national circle presented in Step 4.

### **Alternative Delivery**

Have every trainee make his/her own individual circle and then compare it with the generic host country national circle made by the trainers.

## 5.3—Rules of the House: Interacting with a Host Country Family

<b>Content Overview</b>	This session that identifies several important cultural do's and don'ts for living with a host family.
<b>Objectives</b>	To formulate clear guidelines for host culture family etiquette To reduce the potential for making culturally offensive mistakes in the home
<b>Time</b>	90 minutes
<b>Staff</b>	Participation of at least one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>A few days before conducting this session, bring trainees together, divide them into five groups, and assign each group one of the five Etiquette sections of this exercise. Explain to the groups that between that day and whenever you schedule the session, they should try to find the answers to the questions asked in that section. Before they begin, however, or at least before they come together to present their findings, ask them to also try to think of any additional do's and don'ts concerning their Etiquette area that they should find out about. (See the question at the end of each Etiquette list.)</p> <p>Meanwhile, prepare a handout that contains all the questions from all five Etiquette sections. Leave room beneath each question for trainees to copy down the answers they will get when the groups reconvene (under Step 2 below).</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Be sure you have assigned the tasks described in Preparation above before starting this session.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Distribute the handout you have prepared and then ask each group to report its findings. Trainees should copy the answers onto their handouts. (You can also record the answers on a flipchart.)</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Be sure to ask for any additional questions each group may have added to its list.</p> <p><b>Step 4</b>—Ask any host country nationals and Volunteers present what bothers or intrigues host country nationals the most about what American or trainee guests do in their host families.</p>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Be sure to monitor the pace during this session. There are many questions, and the session could become too long if you don't keep it moving. Some families or host country nationals will have different rules of the house than others, so be sure to allow room for variations in these do's and don'ts. Also be sure to make the point that these do not apply in all situations; much depends on the context and circumstances. Finally, point out that some host

families have become so used to some of the odd things Americans do that they no longer react to them or find them objectionable. Remind trainees that host country nationals who are used to Americans may forgive more behaviors than will more typical host country nationals who have not had such experiences.

## 5.5—What Would You Do?

### Content Overview

This exercise illustrates how cultural differences regarding friendship can lead to unexpected and difficult situations for Volunteers. If Volunteers consider some of these issues ahead of time, they will be better prepared to deal with them when they occur or even to prevent them from arising in the first place.

In most of these incidents, the cultural difference has to do with the Universalist and Particularist dichotomy that is presented as Fundamental II of *Culture Matters*, which trainers should read before doing this exercise. The most relevant point in each of these incidents is that the host country national behaves like a particularist, treating the Volunteer as if he or she is a member of the host country national's in-group. In particularist cultures, you are expected to give special, preferential treatment to members of your in-group—and you expect similar treatment from in-group members. In-group members often ask things of friends that friends would never ask of each other in more universalist cultures. This behavior is the dilemma the Volunteer faces in most of these incidents.

### Objectives

To describe the relationship between cultural values and responsibilities of friendship

To identify possible resolutions to cross-cultural challenges between American and host country friends

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

At least one host country national and one Volunteer are required for Step 4 below.

### Preparation

The host country national and Volunteer must be prepared to answer the question in Step 4.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Introduce the session.

**Step 2**—Divide trainees into two or three groups. Have each group discuss the five incidents and come up with suggestions for what they would and should do in such situations.

**Step 3**—Reconvene the groups and solicit their suggestions (which trainees should copy down for future reference). You can use the following questions to lead a discussion of these incidents:

Visa Problems: Do you think the host country national is embarrassed to ask the Volunteer for help? (Answer: Probably not, if she feels she is part of his/her in-group.) Would you ask someone for this kind of help if the circumstances were reversed? If not, why not? How would you feel if someone asked you this favor? Would you think you were being used?

Going Away: How would you feel being asked to do this? What does it say about your relationship that the family has asked you to do this? What do you do in these situations when there is no graceful way to refuse?

*A Parental Visit:* Why is your friend hurt? (Answer: Perhaps because coming from a more particularist and collectivist culture, she has misinterpreted your behavior as being rude, which it is not in your culture.) Why would many Americans not consider what you have done to be rude? (Answer: Friendships in America are between the two individuals involved, not necessarily the two in-groups involved.)

*Loan Star:* Do you think the two host country nationals think they are using their Volunteer friend? Why not? Would you think you were being used in this situation? Why? What cultural difference is being illustrated here? (Answer: The universalist/particularist dichotomy, especially the in-group/out-group aspect.)

*Missing Funds:* What do you do in situations when what is apparently the culturally sensitive thing to do goes against your own principles of right and wrong?

**Step 4**—Ask the Volunteer and host country national you have selected for this session to discuss an incident or difficult situation that arose because of different cultural concepts of what is expected of a friend. You can also ask trainees if they have had such experiences yet.

#### **Potential Issues**

Some trainees may say they would have acted as the host country nationals do in some of these situations, not the way the Volunteers do. In other words, some of these situations would not pose a problem for some trainees. If trainees say this, then ask why they think the Volunteer acted the way he or she did in the situation, why it was apparently a problem for that person? You could also ask the host country national present whether he or she has seen or heard of Volunteers acting in the manner depicted in the incident.

#### **Alternative Delivery**

Instead of using the incidents provided in the exercise, convene a panel of Volunteers and host country nationals who have a friendship critical incident they can describe to the group. For each incident, lead a brief discussion, asking the host country national (or Volunteer) questions such as: Why do you think the American (or the host country national) in your story behaved that way? Why were you surprised or offended by the other person's behavior? What is the cultural difference that led to this incident? You can also ask the trainees what they would do if they were in these situations.

## Fundamentals of Culture

### *Comparing American and Host Country Views*

<b>Content Overview</b>	<p>The four previous Fundamentals sections of <i>Culture Matters</i> have defined the concept or dimension of culture under analysis and presented the two extremes or poles. In addition, examples of behaviors typical of people from each of the two poles have been presented. However, trainees have not specifically been asked to identify which type of culture—individualist or collectivist, universalist or particularist, monochronic or polychronic, activist or fatalist—they believe America and the host country to be.</p> <p>In this exercise, trainees are to read the descriptions on opposite ends of these eight continuums and then place America and the host culture somewhere along each continuum.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To compare and contrast American and host country cultures on eight important topics</p> <p>To discuss implications of any significant U.S. and host culture differences on the work of Volunteers</p>
<b>Time</b>	90 minutes
<b>Staff</b>	Participation of at least one host country national and one Volunteer is recommended.
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>Ask host country national trainers to complete the exercise in advance according to the instructions in Step 2 below. Record the continuum on a flipchart big enough for trainees to see and have this flipchart ready for use during Step 5.</p> <p>Prepare a flipchart (or an overhead) on which to record the results of the trainees' discussions. Draw the eight large, easy-to-read continuums with the two opposing alternatives (e.g., Self Identification and Group Identification, etc.) written at either end. The text describing the poles of each continuum does not need to appear.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the exercise, explaining that trainees are to look at eight dimensions of culture and think about American culture, the host culture, and the trainee's own personal view regarding these eight issues.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Divide trainees into groups and tell them that each group needs to agree on where to put its mark on the continuum for American culture in general and for the host culture in general. At this time you should make the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Every culture has elements of both extremes of the continuum, but most cultures tend to be more one way than the other.</li></ul>



- Individuals within a culture can be anywhere along the continuum, but they are more likely to be on the same side—if not in the same place—as their culture as a whole.
- Remember that everything depends on the situation: while a person from culture A might usually be on the left side of the continuum, in certain situations he or she could very well be far to the right.

Tell trainees to put themselves on the continuums after they have put America and the host culture.

**Step 3**—Bring everyone back together and solicit their answers, placing the various marks on your flipchart (or overhead) at the front of the room. Before you write on the chart, ask each group where they put their mark and then calculate an average and put your mark at that spot on the chart. For example, if group one put the host country mark in the middle of a continuum, group two put it at the far left, and group three put it halfway between the far left and the middle, then the average position of the three groups would be between the far left and the middle.

**Step 4**—Lead a discussion, posing the following questions:

*What does the position of a mark mean? Answers:*

- The marks indicate how these people see the world.
- The marks indicate what the people in that culture think of as natural, normal, right, and good.
- The marks indicate how these people assume everyone thinks about these issues.
- The marks suggest the perspective from which these people interpret and judge the behavior of others.

*What does it mean if the U.S. mark is on one side of a continuum and the host country mark is on the other side? Answers:*

- It means people from these two cultures may see the world very differently.
- It means people from one side may think the behavior of people from the other side is very strange or even offensive.
- It means these people may not understand each other very well and may misinterpret each other's behavior.

*What will it take for these people to be able to work together effectively? Answer:*

*The Volunteer needs to understand how the host country people see the world (needs to know where the host country mark is) so that he/she realizes what their expectations are and how they will judge and interpret the Volunteer's behavior if it differs from their own.*

**Step 5**—Now reveal the prepared flipchart on which host country nationals have placed Americans and themselves and compare it to the trainees’ responses. Wherever there is a big difference, ask each side to explain itself. You can use the following questions:

*What is it about Americans (or host country nationals) that makes you put them on that place on the continuum?*

*What behaviors have you noticed or heard about that lead you to make this decision?*

*Do you [one group] understand why the other group might put your culture in that place and why they might see you that way?*

**Step 6**—For any continuum where the host country national and the American marks are on opposite sides, assign that continuum to a small group of trainees and give them a few minutes to answer the following questions:

*How would the people who are on the right side of this continuum view or characterize the people who are on the left side? How would they come across to these people? (Note: If trainees have already answered this question, when they did Step 4 of Exercise I.2, II. 3, and IV.3, you don’t need to do this again here.)*

*And vice versa?*

**Step 7**—Bring the small groups back together and solicit their responses to the questions under Step 6 above. Close by pointing out (or by having any Volunteers and host country nationals present point out) that these kinds of judgments or characterizations are quite common, and now trainees can see that they are at least in part based on legitimate cultural differences.

## **Potential Issues**

Trainees may object to making generalizations. [See Trainer’s Guide Part Four: Additional Resources for Cross-Cultural Trainers, II for advice on how to respond.]

## **Alternative Delivery**

Divide trainees into eight pairs (or teams). Assign each member of a pair one side of one continuum and the other member the other side. Ask the two trainees (or two teams) to think of a specific situation in which the cultural difference described in this continuum would cause a problem, misunderstanding, or conflict. If they like, the pairs can then construct a brief role play or skit to illustrate this difference. Reconvene the group and have each pair present its skit/role play. If they have not prepared a skit, then have the pairs describe the situation they thought of in which this cultural difference would have an impact.

## 6.3—The Cycle of Adjustment

<b>Content Overview</b>	This exercise describes the phases or stages many trainees and Volunteers go through in adjusting to the host country. It is important for trainees to see that there is a sequence of events and emotional states they will go through and that the process takes time. Knowing about these states, knowing the various psychological, emotional, and attitudinal characteristics of each stage of adjustment, helps trainees understand what they are experiencing and be prepared for it.
<b>Objectives</b>	To describe the stages of cultural adjustment To identify behaviors and statements typical of each stage of adjustment
<b>Time</b>	45 minutes
<b>Staff</b>	The participation of one or more Volunteers is recommended.
<b>Delivery</b>	<i>Step 1</i> —Introduce the exercise. <i>Step 2</i> —Review the five stages of adjustment with the trainees, as presented in the workbook. Make sure they understand what distinguishes one stage from the next. Ask why they think there will be both an initial and a further culture shock and adjustment phase. Ask them if they can think of ways in which life as a trainee will be different from life as a Volunteer. Ask the Volunteer present to talk about and verify some of these differences from his/her own experience. <i>Step 3</i> —Have trainees complete the exercise by identifying the stage of adjustment that corresponds to the statement about the host country. <i>Step 4</i> —Go through the items and discuss their answers.
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Trainees may not like to hear that they are going to have adjustments to make after pre-service training. They may think (hope) that they have already adjusted to the host country and culture and, therefore, resist the idea that there will be additional and significant adjustments still to come. It is important, therefore, to have a Volunteer talk about the settling-in period and other stages of adjustment. (Restrict discussion of settling in if trainees will also do exercise 6.4.)  Trainees may also resist the idea that the cycle of adjustment is the same for everyone. You should be sympathetic to this point and acknowledge that adjustment is very personal and not the same for any two individuals. Explain that this is just a model to help people think about the experience and not a description or prediction of what everyone will go through.
<b>Alternative Delivery</b>	Instead of using the 18 statements in the exercise, divide trainees into five groups and assign each group one of the five stages in the cycle. Then have the group develop its own set of statements appropriate to that stage. Then ask each group to read out its statements while the other groups guess which stage is being described.

## 6.4—Settling In

### Content Overview

This exercise makes the important point that even though a trainee has been in-country for two or more months, he or she still has a great deal of cultural adjustment to go through after pre-service training. During pre-service training a trainee neither encounters—nor, therefore, adjusts to—whole aspects of the local culture. This will happen only after a trainee becomes a Volunteer.

Furthermore, trainees do adjust to many things during pre-service training that are not true of life later on. So the newly trained Volunteer not only has the new culture to adjust to, he or she also has to adjust to all the things that are no longer true once pre-service training has ended.

This exercise highlights the ways in which pre-service training can make settling in more difficult. It is important for trainees to understand this phenomenon; otherwise, they will be confused about why they are having such a difficult time during the settling-in period.

### Objectives

To describe the conditions of pre-service training that make it different from the conditions of Volunteers in their host communities

To discuss the implications of those differences on adjustment to the host culture

To develop strategies for adjusting to the host culture based in part on the experience and advice of other Volunteers

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

Participation of one or more Volunteers is recommended.

### Delivery

**Step 1**—Ask trainees to individually answer the 10 items in exercise 6.4.

**Step 2**—Go over the 10 items and solicit trainee responses. All items are true to some extent for almost every pre-service training (though some may be less true for community-based training).

**Step 3**—Divide the trainees into five small groups and assign two of the 10 items to each group. Then ask each group to discuss the significance (the implications and/or consequences) of this item for a Volunteer who is just settling in. What kind of change or adjustment does this mean the new Volunteer is likely to have to get used to?

**Step 4**—Reconvene the groups and have them report on their discussions.

**Step 5**—Ask the group what suggestions it has for coping with the adjustments of the settling-in period. Ask the Volunteer what he/she did to get through this period. List any suggestions on a flipchart.

### Potential Issues

Trainees may not answer yes to some of the 10 items. If the group generally agrees that a certain item is not true of its pre-service training, go on to the next item (and don't assign this item under Step 3). Remember that the exercise does not deal with all of the issues of settling-in, only those that are made more difficult by the nature of pre-service training.

**Alternative Delivery**

Convene a panel of Volunteers to discuss the settling-in period and their personal experiences. Use the items in the exercise to provoke discussion or questions, but let Volunteers talk about whatever issues they want or that trainees ask about.

## 6.7—Attitudes Toward Cultural Difference: From Ethnocentrism to Ethnorelativism

### Content Overview

This exercise describes the stages people go through in their attitudes toward and acceptance of cultural difference. People go through the process at different paces and may be in one stage with regard to certain cultural phenomena and at another stage with regard to others. The stages are described in some detail in section 6.7 of *Culture Matters*. This exercise also makes use of the Dear Friends letter in exercise 6.1.

The purpose of this session is help trainees understand that their attitudes toward and reactions to the cultural differences they encounter will evolve and change over time. The changes are the result of increased exposure to the culture, as well as increased familiarity and understanding of it. This knowledge should help trainees and Volunteers understand why they feel the way they do about the culture as they go through the process of living in and adjusting to it.

The model presented here describes the progress from ethnocentrism to ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism describes the state in which people are only aware of and only believe in their own culture; they do not accept the reality of other cultures and assume there is only one right culture. Ethnorelativism describes that state in which people have accepted the reality and legitimacy of other cultures and believe that there are many, equally right answers to life's questions. To become more ethnocentric makes it easier to live and work effectively outside one's own culture.

### Objectives

To define the five stages of ethnocentrism that reflect attitudes toward cultural difference

To identify attitudes characteristic of each stage as reflected in statements and behaviors

### Time

90 minutes

### Staff

Participation of at least one Volunteer is recommended.

### Preparation

Prepare a chart of the five stages of ethnocentrism on a flipchart for easy reference during the session. List the stages and the defining elements of each, so trainees can tell at a glance what distinguishes one stage from the others. Use the sample offered below as a model.

1. Denial: no acceptance of cultural difference; others are wrong or don't know any better; not threatened by difference (because they don't believe in it).
2. Defense: acceptance of difference; different seen as inferior; no desire for contact with different people; threatened by difference and must defend against it; hostile attitude toward difference.
3. Minimization: different is not bad but also not very important; differences are quaint, interesting, but not deep; different is not inferior, only different; difference is a nuisance.

4. Acceptance: true acceptance of difference; difference is real and deep; tolerance of difference; neutral attitude toward difference.
5. Adaptation and Integration: embracing difference; taking on attitudes and behaviors of other cultures; adjusting own behaviors to be sensitive to other cultures; positive attitude toward difference.

## **Delivery**

**Step 1**—Introduce the session, using the above commentary.

**Step 2**—Present the stages of the model the prepared flipchart.

**Step 3**—Divide trainees into small groups and ask them to read the Dear Friends letter in exercise 6.1. As they read the letter, they will see the writer (Jan) moving through the stages from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. For each stage, they should underline the sentence(s) that indicates she is in that stage.

**Step 4**—Reconvene the groups and discuss the letter. Below are the sentences trainees should have underlined:

- Stage 1 (Denial)—Paragraph 4:

*“The people were the friendliest on earth and nothing we did seemed to faze them.” Also paragraph 6: “...I thought I knew how to do things better than the local people, that if they would just listen, they would see the light and come around.”*

- Stage 2 (Defense)—Paragraph 4:

*“After a while that changed, of course, and it began to dawn on us that....” Also paragraph 7: “Once I realized I wasn’t getting through....”*

- Stage 3 (Minimization)—Paragraph 8:

*I realize now that while I had accepted...*

- Stage 4 (Acceptance)—Paragraph 10:

*First two sentences.*

- Stage 5 (Adaptation and Integration)—Paragraph 10:

*Last sentence.*

**Step 5**—Ask (or have trainees ask) the Volunteer to describe his or her own experiences or recollection of these stages.

## **Potential Issues**

Trainees may select different sentences than the ones indicated above. This is fine as long as they can defend their selection and relate it to the stage involved.

## **Alternative Delivery**

Instead of using the Dear Friends letter, have a panel of Volunteers discuss these stages. Trainees can ask questions, and the Volunteers can relate their experiences about moving from one stage to another, getting stuck at a stage, getting unstuck.

## 6.10—Can I Still Be Me?

### Content Overview

This exercise deals with one of the most fundamental and common issues Volunteers face: what to do when being culturally sensitive conflicts with the Volunteers' own personal values or sense of self esteem. In other words, what happens when the culturally appropriate behavior in a particular situation offends or goes against the beliefs and principles of the Volunteer? Does the Volunteer perform the behavior and violate his/her principles? Or does the Volunteer refuse to perform the behavior and risk offending people in the local culture?

This dilemma occurs in the incidents in this exercise. In many cases, the choice is not quite so extreme, where selecting one option automatically rules out or excludes the other. Volunteers should always look for a third alternative, a compromise that lets them live with themselves and also does not offend the local people. Sometimes they will not be able to find a compromise and may have to choose between mutually exclusive alternatives, and face the consequences.

This exercise invites trainees to consider how these decisions should be made and what factors they should take into account. For a fuller discussion of this matter, trainers should obtain a copy of the Peace Corps publication *A Few Minor Adjustments* and read pages 38-40.

### Objectives

To analyze situations in which a value difference has produced a serious dilemma for members of different cultures

To formulate ways of resolving dilemmas that result from value differences

### Time

1 hour

### Staff

Participation of at least one Volunteer is recommended.

### Preparation

On a flipchart, write the following questions for trainees to use as a guide in discussing the incidents:

1. Is this a real dilemma, with mutually exclusive alternatives, or is there a way to get around this problem?
2. Is this battle worth fighting?
3. Is this battle worth fighting now?
4. If I can wait, is there any chance the problem will go away or resolve itself?
5. Do I have to solve this problem myself or can I turn it over to someone else?
6. Do I know what host country nationals would do in this situation?



7. After I have made my decision, are there alternative ways of carrying it out? If there are, how will I decide which is the best alternative?

**Delivery**

*Step 1*—Introduce the session, using the overview above and the introductory text in section 6.10 of *Culture Matters*.

*Step 2*—Divide trainees into groups and have them analyze the six incidents. Present the discussion questions on your flipchart. Ask trainees to be prepared to offer concrete suggestions as to what they would do in each situation.

*Step 3*—Reconvene the groups and discuss each incident. List their suggestions on a flipchart.

**Potential Issues**

Some of the incidents may not pose a problem for some trainees; they might not find it difficult to do what is asked of the Volunteer in the incident. If most of the group thinks this way, then go on to the next incident.

**Alternative Delivery**

Instead of using these prepared incidents, invite a panel of Volunteers to discuss situations that illustrate the topic of this exercise. Interview prospective panelists ahead of time to make sure their stories reflect the dilemma examined in this exercise. When Volunteers tell their story, ask them to before they reveal what they did in the particular situation. Then ask trainees what they think the Volunteer should have done.

## PART THREE: SUPPLEMENTAL EXERCISES

This part of the *Trainer's Guide* consists of a collection of 13 activities designed to supplement the exercises in the workbook. There is one exercise here for each chapter of the book (6), for each fundamental (4), and for the review of the fundamentals (1).

These exercises do not appear in *Culture Matters*—they are new activities designed specifically for this guide—but they are based on the concepts in the workbook and are intended to reinforce the key lessons of each chapter or fundamental. These exercises take trainees deeper into the issues discussed in the relevant section of the workbook.

Each exercise is numbered for the chapter or fundamental to which it refers.

### For Chapter 1: Observation or Interpretation?

#### Content overview

This session deals with the difference between an observation and an interpretation and explains the significance of that distinction for people living in another culture. Observations, as defined here, are mere statements of fact; they record what the observer sees, but they do not contain any explanation of or assign any meaning to what is observed. As such, they do not—or at least should not—involve any interpretation.

Interpretations assign meaning to the facts; they involve conclusions and judgments. Interpretations inevitably come from the observer's experience of what the observed phenomena means in his or her culture. If the person doing the behavior is from another culture, however, then that behavior may very well have a different meaning in that culture than what the observer interprets it to mean. This dynamic is at the core of many cross-cultural misunderstandings.

#### Objectives

To differentiate between an observation and an interpretation

To describe the consequences of interpretation in a cross-cultural setting

#### Time

20 minutes

#### Materials

One copy per participant of the trainee handout "Observation or Interpretation."

#### Delivery

**Step 1**—Distribute the handout and ask trainees what they think the difference is between an observation and an interpretation. Then ask them which is the safer thing to do in a cross-cultural situation—observe or interpret?

**Step 2**—Ask trainees to complete the handout.

**Step 3**—Solicit their answers to the paired items.

**Step 4**—Lead a brief discussion of this topic, using the following questions:

*Is it possible to function without interpreting or judging?*  
(Answer: No.)

*If we have to judge, and we may misjudge in a cross-cultural setting, then what can we do?* (Answer: At least realize that you may be making a mistake, and try to get your interpretation verified by someone who knows the culture.)

*Can you think of examples of things you have misjudged since you arrived in-country?*

*Do you think host country nationals sometimes misjudge what you do and say?*

*What can you do about the fact that host country nationals are misinterpreting some of your words and deeds?*

### Potential issues

It is very important, as part of this discussion, that trainees understand that judging or interpreting is essential to functioning in daily life. That is, we have to interpret or make sense of the things we see and hear; we have to decide what they mean. So we are not saying in this exercise that you shouldn't interpret what's going on around you, but only that when you interpret across cultures, you may sometimes be wrong. The message of this activity is not that you shouldn't interpret other people's behavior but that you shouldn't be so sure of your interpretations—at least not until you understand the host culture better.

### Answers

- |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. I | 4. O | 7. O | 10. I |
| 1. O | 4. I | 7. I | 10. O |
| 2. I | 5. I | 8. I | 11. I |
| 2. O | 5. O | 8. O | 11. O |
| 3. O | 6. I | 9. I |       |
| 3. I | 6. O | 9. O |       |

## ***Observation or Interpretation?***

### **Trainee Handout**

Below you will find 11 pairs of statements. In each case, one of the statements is an observation, a mere description of the facts or behavior you are witnessing, and the other is an interpretation, an explanation or opinion of what those facts or that behavior means. Put an O next to each observation and an I next to the interpretations.

1. \_\_\_\_ That man is very angry.
1. \_\_\_\_ That man is talking quite loud.
  
2. \_\_\_\_ My boss doesn't trust his subordinates.
2. \_\_\_\_ My boss doesn't delegate responsibility.
  
3. \_\_\_\_ That woman always wears a veil when she goes out in public.
3. \_\_\_\_ That woman is quite conservative.
  
4. \_\_\_\_ That woman stands three feet away when she speaks to me.
4. \_\_\_\_ That woman is cold and reserved.
  
5. \_\_\_\_ That man is afraid of his boss.
5. \_\_\_\_ That man never contradicts his boss in public.
  
6. \_\_\_\_ She doesn't have strong opinions.
6. \_\_\_\_ She never speaks up in meetings.
  
7. \_\_\_\_ That worker never does anything until he is told.
7. \_\_\_\_ That worker is lazy.
  
8. \_\_\_\_ He lied to me.
8. \_\_\_\_ He said yes when the real answer to my question was no.
  
9. \_\_\_\_ She wasn't listening to me.
9. \_\_\_\_ She didn't look me in the eye when I was talking to her.
  
10. \_\_\_\_ He stood very close and talked loud.
10. \_\_\_\_ He's very aggressive.
  
11. \_\_\_\_ She's insecure and power hungry.
11. \_\_\_\_ She doesn't share information with her subordinates.

## For Chapter 2: The American Way

<b>Content overview</b>	<p>The exercise requires trainees to apply their understanding of American culture in the development of a skit. The skit should be a dramatization of behaviors and actions that reflect American values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The trainer assigns the task at least one week prior to the enactment of the skit.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	To demonstrate some key features of American culture as reflected in common behaviors
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	One copy of the handout “The American Way” per trainee; a prize to be awarded to the group that designs the best skit (optional)
<b>Staff</b>	A panel of host country national staff to serve as judges of the skits (optional)
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><i>Step 1</i>—Divide trainees into no more than four or five groups, or ask trainees to form 4 or 5 groups of their own choosing. Each group will design and deliver a skit of approximately 10 minutes (therefore the total time of the session will be roughly one hour). Distribute the handout and explain the activity at least one week before the skits will be performed.</p> <p><i>Step 2</i>—Trainers may choose to introduce an element of competition into this exercise by announcing that there will be a prize for the best skit.</p> <p><i>Step 3</i>—Have each group present its skit.</p> <p><i>Step 4</i>—Award the prize (optional).</p>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Be sure to give trainees, who are usually quite busy, enough time to devise (and rehearse) their skits before the day they are scheduled to present.

## ***The American Way***

### **Trainee Handout**

Now that you have spent some time examining American culture, you are being asked to devise and present a skit, called *The American Way*, which brings American culture to life. In conceiving this skit, your task is to portray as many American values and cultural characteristics as you can, while at the same time keeping the skit interesting and internally consistent. That is, the skit should be some kind of a story or vignette, set in a real setting, with real characters, interacting in a natural way. The skit should be no more than 10 minutes in length, and may be less.

Your first step will be to get together with your group and come up with a list of characteristics that you want your skit to demonstrate or dramatize. Then you will need to create the incident or story around these characteristics. Finally, you should practice the skit a few times before presenting it in front of your training group.

## For Chapter 3: Critical Incidents

<b>Content overview</b>	<p>This exercise is a brief simulation that will provoke an emotional response or reaction in trainees. The simulation presents various norms of nonverbal communication which may be different from that of most Americans.</p> <p>This exercise actually involves a “trick.” Trainees believe the exercise is a simple analysis of critical incidents situations. In fact, it is a simulation wherein half the members of the group will be subjected to some unusual nonverbal behavior, which they will probably find uncomfortable or at least strange. Their reactions to these nonverbal behaviors and the implications thereof are the real focus of this exercise.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	To describe typical emotional reactions produced by differences in nonverbal communication styles
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	Copy the three handouts as follows: half the copies should be the simple handout (with no explanation about the trick); one quarter should be one of the two trick handouts; the other quarter should be of the second trick handout. Notice that these three handouts are not labeled in any way (such as 1, 2, 3 or A, B, C) as this might make trainees suspicious. Trainers may want to label them with some kind of stray mark in order to tell them apart.
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the activity as a short critical incident exercise in which trainees will be separated into pairs to discuss how they would handle two common communication problems.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Divide trainees into pairs and give one person in each pair the “simple” handout (without the explanation of the trick) and the other person one of the other two handouts (which explain the trick). Be sure to distribute these handouts in a very natural manner, doing nothing to suggest you’re being careful to give one person one type of handout and the other person a different type. Also be sure to distribute the two versions of the trick handouts to an equal number of participants.</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Ask trainees to read the first incident and be ready to discuss it. Give those who receive the trick handouts a little longer, to read the additional introductory material.</p> <p><b>Step 4</b>—Instruct trainees to stand and begin discussing the first incident.</p> <p><b>Step 5</b>—Cough rather loudly and clearly at two or three minute intervals, three times in all, as the signal to those practicing the personal space concept.</p>

**Step 6**—Let the discussions proceed long enough for the unknowing partner to feel the nonverbal differences, probably not much longer than five minutes. You may or may not have to go on to the second incident.

**Step 7**—Stop the simulation and ask the unknowing partners if they noticed or felt anything unusual during the discussion. Then reveal the trick of the exercise.

**Step 8**—Lead a discussion of the simulation, using the following questions if you wish:

*How did you feel during the conversation?*

*Did you find that differences in nonverbal communication affected how you felt about the other person?*

*How did you interpret the unusual nonverbal behavior?*

*Which made a greater impact on you: what your partner was saying or how he or she was acting?*

*Did you find the nonverbal behavior distracting?*

*What are the implications of this experience for you as an American in this country?*

## **Potential Issues**

Some trainees may experience discomfort and the negative feelings this may arouse. Watch the trainees closely and be sure no one is getting too upset or intimidated. If anyone does, quietly step in and ask that pair to stop (but don't do this in a way that allows other pairs to hear you).

Be sure to distribute the handouts correctly—and in a natural manner that does not arouse any suspicion.

Finally, make sure the participants who know the trick continue to discuss the critical incident even as they manifest their unusual nonverbal behavior.



## ***Critical Incidents***

### **Trainee Handout**

With your partner, read the following two critical incidents, each based on a communication problem, and decide what you would do in the situation.

1.

You teach in a secondary school. While your colleagues were initially quite friendly towards you, there has been a noticeable cooling off lately. You know you must have done something to offend them, but you have no idea what it is. This is a host culture where direct questions, especially about something that is probably quite delicate, are never asked. How are you going to find out what the problem is?

2.

You work in an irrigation project where you supervise four manual laborers. Recently, one of them has been arriving at work late, didn't show up on two days altogether, and generally is not working out. You have to fire him, but you have to do so in a way that he won't lose face. How do you do it?

## ***Critical Incidents***

### **Trainee Handout**

This is NOT the handout that has just been given to the other person in your pair. Please hold this handout so that your partner cannot see the writing on it.

This is also NOT the exercise that has just been explained to you by your trainer. While you will indeed be discussing one or both of the critical incidents given below, the “real” exercise here is for you to subject your partner to some unconventional nonverbal communication.

When the trainer tells you to stand up and start discussing the first incident:

1. Stand a comfortable, “normal” distance from your partner (and begin your discussion).
2. Every time your trainer coughs (a total of three times during this exercise), move slightly closer to your partner.
3. Throughout the exercise, touch your partner more than is common for two Americans.

Try to make all this seem as natural as possible.

Now read the first incident (below) and be ready to discuss it. Remember to listen for when your trainer coughs.

### **THIS IS THE HANDOUT YOUR PARTNER RECEIVED:**

With your partner, read the following critical incidents, each based on a communications problem, and decide what you would do in these situations.

1.

You teach in a secondary school. While your colleagues were initially quite friendly towards you, there has been a noticeable cooling off lately. You know you must have done something to offend them, but you have no idea what it is. Yours is a host culture where direct questions, especially about something that is probably quite delicate, are never asked. How are you going to find out what the problem is?

2.

You work in an irrigation project where you supervise four manual laborers. Recently, one of them has been arriving at work late, didn't show up on two days altogether, and generally is not working out. You have to fire him, but you have to do so in a way that he won't lose face. How do you do it?

## ***Critical Incidents***

### **Trainee Handout**

This is NOT the handout that has just been given to the other person in your pair. Please hold this handout so that your partner cannot see the writing on it.

This is also NOT the exercise that has just been explained to you by your trainer. While you will indeed be discussing one or both of the critical incidents given below, the “real” exercise here is for you to subject your partner to some unconventional nonverbal communication.

When the trainer tells you to, start discussing the first incident:

1. When you are talking, maintain very limited, “darting” eye contact with your partner, much less than we would in the United States.
2. When you are listening, maintain almost no eye contact.
3. Throughout the exercise, talk in a slightly softer voice than you normally would.
4. When it is your “turn” to speak, wait two to three times as long as you normally would before responding, long enough so you (and hopefully your partner) feel a little uncomfortable. Your partner may in fact rush to fill these silences and give you very little chance to speak.

Try to make all this seem as natural as possible.

Now read the first incident and be ready to discuss it.

### **THIS IS THE HANDOUT YOUR PARTNER RECEIVED:**

With your partner, read the following critical incidents, each based on a communications problem, and decide what you would do in these situations.

1.

You teach in a secondary school. While your colleagues were initially quite friendly towards you, there has been a noticeable cooling off lately. You know you must have done something to offend them, but you have no idea what it is. Yours is a host culture where direct questions, especially about something that is probably quite delicate, are never asked. How are you going to find out what the problem is?

2.

You work in an irrigation project where you supervise four manual laborers. Recently, one of them has been arriving at work late, didn’t show up on two days altogether, and generally is not working out. You have to fire him, but you have to do so in a way that he won’t lose face. How do you do it?

## For Chapter 4: What Would You Do?

<b>Content overview</b>	In this session trainees will continue to explore various work-related cultural differences using critical incidents.
<b>Objectives</b>	To analyze common work-related cultural differences To discuss possible ways of resolving these differences
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	One copy per trainee of the handout “What Would You Do?”
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the exercise as a chance to review and deepen understanding of the themes presented in Chapter Four.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Divide trainees into groups to read and discuss each incident and come up with suggestions for a solution. Each group can either discuss all the incidents or the trainer may assign three per group.</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Bring the groups back together and go over each incident separately, noting suggestions on a flip chart. Encourage trainees to copy suggestions onto their handout so they can use this information for future reference. Add your own suggestions to theirs where appropriate or necessary.</p>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Some trainees might think certain incidents are unrealistic. Participation of a serving Volunteer or host country trainer can help to lend credence to the incidents. It is also appropriate to explain that while the specifics might not apply in a particular host country, the cultural difference itself is valid.

## ***What Would You Do?***

### **Trainee Handout**

Read the following incidents, all set in the workplace, and decide how you would handle each situation. In making your decision, take into account the cultural difference that is at the heart of each incident.

#### **I. Fast Learner**

You need an assistant to help you in your job, which has grown considerably since you started working here one year ago. The selection will be made by your boss, but you have your eye on a woman who works down the hall in another division of this agency. She is a fast learner, well educated, and has the necessary technical expertise. You propose her to your boss, who agrees that she is quite competent, and then reveals that he is planning to hire the nephew of his sister-in-law. When you ask what the young man's qualifications are, your boss says the candidate is dependable and will be very loyal to him and the agency. He does not, however, have any of the necessary skills or experience. When you point this out to your boss, he says you can train the young man since he is a fast learner and it shouldn't take you very long.

#### **II. On the Job**

It happens that one of the sons of the family you live with works in the carpet factory where you are posted as a small business advisor. This man is a safety inspector, and it is his job to check certain machines every hour to make sure they are working properly. Yesterday afternoon, you met him coming back to the plant 30 minutes late from his break. During this half hour, two workers were injured in an accident. There is to be an investigation, and this man has asked you to testify that he was on the job at the time of the accident.

#### **III. Critique**

You are at dinner with another Volunteer (who does not work with you) and your host country counterpart. During the meal, you relate some stories that are critical of your boss, a man who is widely disliked in your organization. On the way home, your counterpart asks you how you could criticize your boss and your agency in front of an outsider.

#### **IV. A Little Something**

You have come to the Ministry to pick up the equipment that has been assigned to your water system project. You have just signed the appropriate papers in the office of the disbursing official and are now ready to load the equipment into your Jeep. As you enter the room where the pipes and other supplies are kept, the official bars the door, smiles broadly, winks at you, and says, "Do you have anything for me?" You realize he is used to being bribed as a condition of releasing materials. "I'm afraid I don't," you reply. "In that case," he says, "I will have to check your paperwork again."

V. Honor Bound

You have just reached an agreement with a wholesaler for some books you will purchase for the library you are starting at your school. You have agreed on price, delivery dates, and returns policy, and have shaken hands on the deal. You now begin to fill in some blanks on a contract you have brought with you, which puts in writing the terms you have agreed to. (This contract is required by the international aid organization that has donated the money for the books.) When you turn to the wholesaler for his signature, he becomes agitated and offended. “I beg your pardon,” he says. “I am an honorable man. I keep my word.”

VI. Teacher

You have been assigned as an economics instructor at a provincial campus of the national university. It is your second week of teaching, and you have decided to introduce a case study. You make copies of the case, distribute it to your students, and explain that they must read and discuss the case in groups and then decide what they would do in this situation. There are some surprised looks, but the students do as they are told. After half an hour, you call the class to order and ask the first group what they decided. “We don’t know about these things,” the spokesperson replies. “You are the teacher. You are supposed to tell us. If you don’t teach us, how can we learn?”

## For Chapter 5: Interacting With The Family

<b>Content overview</b>	In this session trainees will continue to explore common interpersonal and social relationship issues that occur in cross-cultural settings.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To analyze common cultural differences in social relationships and interpersonal interactions</p> <p>To discuss possible ways of resolving these differences</p>
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	One copy per trainee of the handout “Interacting with the Family”
<b>Preparation</b>	More incidents have been provided here than you should use in this session. Before the session, read the nine incidents and select four or five that are especially appropriate for your country. Assign these incidents in Step 2 below.
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><i><b>Step 1</b></i>—Introduce the exercise as a chance to review and deepen understanding of cross-cultural differences in interpersonal and social relationships.</p> <p><i><b>Step 2</b></i>—Divide trainees into groups to read and discuss the selected incidents and come up with suggestions for a solution.</p> <p><i><b>Step 3</b></i>—Bring the groups back together and go over each incident separately, noting suggestions on a flip chart. Encourage trainees to copy suggestions onto their handout so they can use this information for future reference. Add your own suggestions to theirs where appropriate or necessary.</p>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Some trainees might think certain incidents are unrealistic. Participation of a serving Volunteer or host country trainer can help to lend credence to the incidents. It is also appropriate to explain that while the specifics might not apply in a particular host country, the cultural difference itself is valid.

## ***Interacting With The Family***

### **Trainee Handout**

#### **I. Laptop Blues**

The son in the family is in love with computers and computer technology. Whenever you go out, he “borrows” your laptop and uses it for hours. Often the battery is dead when you return and you have to spend several hours recharging it. You’re not happy about this, but there is no lock on your bedroom door, so it’s hard to keep him out? What can you do?

#### **II. Bottomless Pockets**

The family you eat your meals with has a very modest income, supplemented now by the money you give them for food. A few weeks ago, the father asked you to help them buy a refrigerator, pointing out that because you ate meals at his house they now need to buy more food and they would like a place to store it. You were reluctant to get involved, but you decided it couldn’t hurt to help out this once. Then, a week after that, the mother asked for money for a bus ticket to visit her ailing sister in the capital. Again, you gave in. Now, yesterday, the father asked for money for a new pair of shoes. You are beginning to realize that there will be no end to this if you don’t draw the line. How do you proceed?

#### **III. Personal Matters**

The family you live with is always asking you what you think of as personal questions. Things like how much something cost, how much money you get from the Peace Corps every month, what you do when you go away on weekends or even just go out for the night. You are dating a host country national and they always want to know what you do when you go out. You do not feel these things are any of their business (though you know these questions are appropriate in their culture), and you want to put an end to this before you get any angrier than you already are. How do you handle this situation?

#### **IV. I Want To Be Alone**

You need some time alone every day, to unwind after work (or training) and to write letters or in your journal in the evening. But family members are always coming in and out of your room. When you shut the door, they just knock and open it. Yesterday, you locked your door, and the family was quite upset. In the host country culture, people think it is rude to leave other people alone, especially guests, and they do not in fact like to be alone. When you locked your door, they took it to mean you didn’t enjoy their company. How are you going to get the quiet time you need without offending these people?



V. Clothes Horse

The daughter in the family you live with is quite taken with some of your clothes. She is always asking you if she can wear something or other of yours the next day. You don't mind lending clothes once in a while, but you want the clothes you brought to last for the two years you will be here. At this rate, being worn regularly by two people, they're not going to hold out very long. You've hinted once that you will need to buy new clothes soon, and her response was that you're so lucky to have enough money to buy new clothes whenever you want. What can you do?

VI. Stiff Drink

In the host culture, people drink alcohol at every meal and at all social events. You can barely tolerate alcohol in the best of circumstances, and certainly not three times a day. Because you are often asked to have a drink at work (for a birthday celebration, national holiday, birth of a child, etc.), you survive only by not drinking at meals at home. The bottom line is you just can't drink as much as is expected in the local culture and still feel well and function effectively. The time has come to tell your host family, who you suspect will not understand. How do you handle this situation?

VII. Helping Out

In the host culture, guests, especially men, are not supposed to help out with meals or in general do very much around the house. You are uncomfortable with being waited on all the time, but the one or two times you helped carry the dishes in from the table, the host father and mother got quite agitated. What can you do?

VIII. No Vacancy

The daughter in your host family graduated a year ago from a secretarial school, but has been unable to find a job. Recently, her father has been pressuring you to help her find a job at the Peace Corps office in the capital. You did in fact check with the Peace Corps, but there are no vacancies. The father, however, doesn't think you are trying hard enough and continues to pester you about this at least once a week, pointing out (albeit subtly) all the family has done for you. You're getting sick of this pressure and would like to end it. What do you do?

IX. Tomas

You're completing your service and returning to the United States in six months. You have grown very close to your host family during these last 18 months, and they to you. Today, the father in the family came into your room and started reminiscing about old times and how you were now part of their family. He concluded his remarks by formally asking you to marry his son and return with him to America. "After a few months," he continued, "he will get a good job and be able to send us money." You reply that you have become very fond of Tomas, but you do not love him. He says that love will come later, that he never even met his wife before he married her. Now what?

## For Chapter 6: Common Adjustment Issues

<b>Content overview</b>	In this session trainees will continue to explore and deepen their understanding of common cross-cultural adjustment issues, not only on a general level but on a personal one as well.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To predict which adjustment issues trainees expect to be most challenging for them personally</p> <p>To develop strategies for resolving challenging adjustment problems</p>
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	One copy per trainee of the handout “Common Adjustment Issues”
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><i>Step 1</i>—Introduce the purpose, as given above, and distribute the handout.</p> <p><i>Step 2</i>—Ask trainees to complete the handout individually. Tell them they will be asked to share with the group the problem they ranked as number one.</p> <p><i>Step 3</i>—When everyone has finished, go down through the list of nine items and for each item ask people to raise their hand if this problem was number one on their list. People with the same number one problem should then get together and share suggestions for coping with this problem.</p> <p><i>Alternative Step 3</i>—Another way to process the exercise: When people have finished, determine which are the four or five most common number one items (by going through the list, asking for a show of hands, and counting). List these problems on a flipchart and then ask for and list people’s suggestions. Encourage trainees to write down the suggestions for future reference.</p>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Trainees may say they can’t know at this stage of their experience what they are going to find difficult about life as a Volunteer. Acknowledge that this is true, and then ask them to try anyway, for the sake of the useful discussion that can come out of this. Or you can ask them what they have heard other Volunteers say is the most difficult about adjusting.

## ***Common Adjustment Issues***

### **Trainee Handout**

In general, Volunteers tend to agree on what they find the hardest about serving in the Peace Corps. Below is a list of the most common complaints, in no particular order. Read the list and then check the three items you think you will find (or have already found) especially difficult.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Loneliness and/or isolation
- \_\_\_\_\_ The role or treatment of women in-country
- \_\_\_\_\_ Health conditions or getting sick
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unsatisfactory housing situation
- \_\_\_\_\_ How long it takes to get things done in-country
- \_\_\_\_\_ Safety concerns
- \_\_\_\_\_ Feeling of being on display, lack of privacy or anonymity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unsatisfactory work situation\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Aspects of local culture you find offensive or frustrating\*

\*If you select a work- or culture-related issue, try to specify what particular aspect of the job or the culture that bothers you.

After you have selected your three items, rank them in the order of difficulty and then write them in the three spaces below.

Now it's time to think about what you would do to deal with these issues. For each item on your list, try to think of two or three specific actions you could take or attitudes you could adopt to cope effectively with this problem. Two tips:

1. If you have already encountered this problem in-country, what have you done to address it?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Think about times in the past when you had a similar problem: what did you do then?

ISSUE ONE:

What I can do 1.

2.

3.

ISSUE TWO:

What I can do 1.

2.

3.

ISSUE THREE:

What I can do 1.

2.

3.

# Fundamentals of Culture I: Concept of the Self

<b>Content Overview</b>	This exercise allows trainees to deepen their understanding of the concept of self and ways in which it manifests in real situations.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To describe how the concept of self might manifest in real situations</p> <p>To discuss possible reactions to challenges that differing concepts of self can pose in the work of Volunteers</p>
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	Copies of the trainee handouts “Fundamentals of Culture I: Concept of Self,” Role Plays One and Two
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>Copy the two handouts and then cut the copies in half for distribution to the two partners in each role play.</p> <p>If possible, distribute the roles to the two partners a day or so before the actual session, so they can practice what they are going to say. Make sure that each partner gets to do one role play as the Volunteer and the second role play as the host country national. Partners should not be allowed to read each other’s role, only the ones they are given by the trainer.</p> <p>Tell Volunteers to read the roles and prepare what they are going to say when the time comes. They should try to represent the individualist or collectivist point of view as much as they can, but they don’t have to feel completely boxed in in that regard. They do not necessarily have to come to a resolution of the problem. Also, tell them they will be doing the role plays one-on-one, with each other, and not in front of the class</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—On the day of the exercise, have each pair do Role Play One. Allow from 5 to 10 minutes, and then terminate the playing.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Lead a discussion by asking how things went and have various pairs relate how the play unfolded. Use the following debrief questions:</p> <p><i>Who got his or her way in the play?</i></p> <p><i>Why did that person prevail?</i></p> <p><i>Was it hard playing the host country role?</i></p> <p><i>How did you feel as this was unfolding?</i></p> <p><i>What did you learn from this experience?</i></p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Introduce Role Play Two asking trainees do the second role play, changing parts.</p> <p><b>Step 4</b>—Debrief Role Play Two using the questions above and the following additional question.</p> <p><i>Now that you have played both the Volunteer role and the host country role, which was harder? Why?</i></p>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Some trainees may not feel very comfortable doing role plays. This is why you should hand out the roles ahead of time. You should also emphasize that they will not perform the role plays in front of an audience; only with their partner.

## ***Fundamentals of Culture I: Concept of the Self***

### **Trainee Handout**

#### **ROLE PLAY ONE: HELPING A FRIEND**

##### **Role 1: The Volunteer**

You are a teacher in a high school. Today was the day of an important exam which you gave to your class. During the course of the exam, you noticed one student whispering to the student sitting nearby. This happened repeatedly and you were able to establish beyond any doubt that the one student, Gola, was giving answers to the other. You had warned your students about this before, and now you have taken the action you said you would: you confiscated the papers of both students, sent them out of the class, and will give them both a zero for this exam. It is now the end of class, and Gola has come to see you.

##### **Role 2: The Student**

You are a student in the class of Volunteer Smith. During an important exam today, you were helping your friend, when the teacher suddenly took your exams away from both of you and sent you out of the class, explaining that you would both be given a zero for this exam. This means you will probably not earn a high enough grade in this class to qualify for the trade school you are planning to attend. You were helping your friend because he is weak in this subject and would probably not have passed this exam without your help, and if he didn't pass he would be very embarrassed to tell his parents. The two of you, who are best friends, have always helped each other like this, and in your culture you consider it selfish and shameful to withhold information or any kind of help from a friend if you are able to offer that help.

You think your teacher has been very unfair to treat this situation in such a severe manner, and you have come back after the class to discuss the matter and ask for a more favorable resolution. Your future livelihood may be at stake here, and even if it isn't, you believe you have been penalized for what is only proper behavior in your culture. If the teacher had wanted to guard against cheating, then he should have done what all teachers do: put questions on the test that no one has studied or can answer.

## **ROLE PLAY TWO: A NEW COMPUTER**

### **Role 1: Volunteer Jack Gordon**

You are assigned to the local health clinic where you work as an accountant and assistant to the administrator. The clinic is run by a board of overseers who meet once a month to discuss policies and approve major expenses. You have thought ever since you arrived that the clinic needed a second computer to handle the increasingly complicated accounting needs of the organization. You have contacted an organization in the capital that is willing to donate half the cost of a computer to the clinic, provided the board agrees to pay the other half.

You know that two of the senior, longest-serving board members are against spending money on a computer. “We’ve gotten by very well with one computer,” they say, and they feel that typewriters can do the rest of the work. You also know that the rest of the board, the six other overseers, support buying the new computer. You have therefore just asked the administrator to bring the matter up at the next monthly meeting, which is this Friday. You know if there is a vote, you will win. And, by the way, if you don’t buy the computer within the next three weeks, the donating organization will withdraw its offer. A final motivating factor is a certain attachment you have to being able to say that you were responsible for getting the clinic a second computer.

### **Role 2: The Administrator**

You are the administrator of the health clinic where Volunteer Jack Gordon works as your assistant and keeps the clinic’s books. Jack has been saying for some time that the clinic needs a second computer to handle its increasingly complicated accounting needs, and you agree. Now Jack has found an organization in the capital that is willing to donate half the cost of the computer if the board of overseers which runs the clinic will agree to pay the other half. This offer is only good for the next three weeks, after which it will be withdrawn. Jack has just asked you to bring the matter up for a vote at the next monthly meeting, this Friday.

You know that while a majority of the overseers on the board is in favor of the purchase, the two most senior, longest-serving members are against it. They believe that the clinic has managed very well with one computer and can continue to do so. You respect these two figures immensely; they have made the clinic into the success it is today, and one of them even helped you get your present position. You do not want to risk offending them and therefore do not want to bring this matter to a vote until you can bring them around to the majority view. You know, however, that that will take longer than the three-week window of opportunity that has been made available to you. Even so, you feel strongly that in the end harmony on the board is of much greater value to the clinic than a second computer.

## Fundamentals of Culture II: Personal vs. Societal Obligations

<b>Content Overview</b>	This exercise allows trainees to deepen their understanding of the concept of personal vs. societal obligations, and how this concept can manifest in real situations.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To describe how the concept of personal vs. societal obligations might manifest in real situations</p> <p>To discuss possible reactions to challenges that differing concepts of personal and societal obligations can pose in the work of Volunteers</p>
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	Copies of the trainee handouts “Fundamentals of Culture II: Personal vs. Societal Obligations,” Role Plays One and Two.
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>Copy the two handouts and then cut the copies in half for distribution to the two partners in each role play.</p> <p>If possible, distribute the roles to the two partners a day or so before they will enact them. Make sure that each partner performs one role play as the Volunteer and the second role play as the host country national. Partners should not be allowed to read each other’s role, only the ones they are given by the trainer.</p> <p>Tell Volunteers to read the roles and prepare what they are going to do when the time comes. They should try to represent the universalist or particularist point of view as much as they can, but they don’t have to feel completely boxed in in that regard. They do not necessarily have to come to a resolution of the problem. Also, tell them they will be doing the role plays one-on-one, with each other, and not in front of the class</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—On the day of the exercise, have each pair do Role Play One. Allow from 5 to 10 minutes, and then terminate the playing.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Lead a discussion by asking how things went and have various pairs relate how the play unfolded. Use the following debrief questions:</p> <p><i>Who got his or her way in the play?</i></p> <p><i>Why did that person prevail?</i></p> <p><i>Was it hard playing the host country role?</i></p> <p><i>How did you feel as this was unfolding?</i></p> <p><i>What did you learn from this experience?</i></p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Ask trainees to perform Role Play Two, changing parts.</p> <p><b>Step 4</b>—Follow this with a second discussion, using the questions in Step 2 above, and adding the following question:</p> <p>Now that you have played both the Volunteer role and the host country role, which was harder? Why?</p>



**Potential Issues**

Some trainees may not feel very comfortable doing role plays. This is why you should hand out the roles ahead of time. You should also emphasize that they will perform the role plays in front of an audience; only with their partner.

## ***Fundamentals of Culture II: Personal vs. Societal Obligations***

### **Trainee Handout**

#### **ROLE PLAY ONE: THE HEALTH SURVEY**

##### **Role 1: The Volunteer**

As a Volunteer, you are working on a health education project in your village. The project is about to conduct an important health survey in your region, and you are in charge of hiring a number of survey takers for three months' worth of work. These individuals need to speak a certain local dialect and will have to provide their own transportation, which will be a bicycle in most cases.

Tonight at dinner, the mother in the family you live with has just asked you to hire her son for this project. The son does not speak the language and the family does not own a bicycle. Moreover, the son has an alcohol problem and was recently let go from his job in a local canning factory. These events have upset the family considerably, and they are looking for a way to rehabilitate their reputation and to help their son turn his life around. You are grateful to this family for all they have done for you, but you know if you start hiring "friends," there are many more where this boy came from. Moreover, you fear this boy could jeopardize the success of this survey, something you have spent the last year of your service preparing for.

##### **Role 2: The Host Mother**

You are the mother in the family where the local Volunteer lives. She is working on a health education project in your village, and she is about to hire several survey takers for a three-month health survey to be conducted in this region. At dinner tonight, you are about to ask the Volunteer to select your son for one of these temporary positions. You understand that your son needs to speak a certain local dialect and have a bicycle to qualify for this position. While he does not speak the dialect very well, he could learn (or take a friend along who can translate for him), and you are sure he can somehow manage without a bicycle.

You are also a little worried about your son, who has an alcohol problem and recently lost his job at the canning factory. These events have brought shame upon your family, and you need to restore the family's reputation. If your son got one of these jobs, it would go a long way to ease the family's embarrassment. You have been very kind and helpful to this Volunteer, and you believe that as your "daughter" she should be willing to return some of your kindness by helping you in this difficult situation. After all, what is the meaning of friendship if not to help others out when you are in a position to do so? You would certainly give her son a job if the tables were turned.

## **ROLE PLAY TWO: A GRANT FROM PEACE CORPS**

### **Role 1: Volunteer Julie Thomas**

You are one of two Volunteers in your town. You teach at a local school and the other Volunteer works at the orphanage, where you sometimes volunteer on the weekends. Several months ago the other Volunteer (Cyndy) applied for a grant from the Peace Corps to buy much needed mattresses and bedding for the orphanage. In the meantime, while the grant was being processed, Cyndy became ill and had to return to America. Now the grant money has come through and you are being asked to handle the purchase.

Just now you have been called into the principal's office at the school where you teach. The principal knows about the grant money and has asked you if the money could be used to buy books for the school library. He points out that the collection in the library is very inadequate and has appealed to your sense of loyalty to the school and to your dedication to your students. You feel obligated to follow through on the original plan and, moreover, you feel the need is greater at the orphanage than at the school.

### **Role 2: The High School Principal**

You are the principal at the school where Volunteer Julie Thomas teaches. Julie's friend, Cyndy, is a Volunteer at the local orphanage, where Julie herself sometimes volunteers on the weekends. Several months ago Cyndy applied for a grant from the Peace Corps to purchase much-needed mattresses and bedding for the orphanage. While the grant was being processed, Cyndy became ill and had to return to America. Now the grant money has arrived and Julie is in charge of administering it. You would like to see the money used to improve the library in your school, and you have called Julie into your office to discuss the matter.

You plan to appeal to her sense of loyalty to the school, her students, and her colleagues. Moreover, as circumstances have changed since the grant was applied for, there is no longer any expectation or moral obligation to use the money for the original purpose. Indeed, Julie works for the school, not the orphanage, and to give the money to an organization she does not belong to will be seen by some as a slight to the school. Incidentally, if Julie says the money must legally go to the orphanage or be returned to the Peace Corps, you can reply that no one would ever know where the money went or that you're sure she can work out a little detail like that. In addition, you may, if you wish, tell Julie that you have talked to the head of the orphanage who said she does not expect the grant money now that Cyndy has left.

## Fundamentals of Culture III: The Concept of Time

<b>Content overview</b>	This session will allow trainees to deepen their understanding of the concepts of monochronic and polychronic concepts of time.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To describe how monochronic and polychronic concepts of time might manifest in real situations</p> <p>To discuss possible reactions to challenges that differing concepts of time can pose in the work of Volunteers</p>
<b>Time</b>	30 minutes
<b>Materials</b>	One copy per trainee of the handout “Fundamentals of Culture III: The Concept of Time.”
<b>Staff</b>	Participation of one Volunteer is recommended.
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Introduce the session as described above and distribute the handout.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Divide trainees into several groups and have each group read and respond to the six situations (or assign three situations to each group).</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Bring the groups back together and have participants list the suggestions or tactics they came up with for each situation. Ask trainees if any of them have already been in such situations; have them explain what they did.</p> <p><b>Step 4</b>—Ask the Volunteer present what he or she did when confronted with monochronic or polychronic frustrations.</p>
<b>Potential Issues</b>	Trainees may not have had any experiences with this cultural difference and may wonder if it really poses problems. They may also think these problems are minor and very easy to deal with. If a Volunteer is present, that person can lend credibility to the exercise, pointing out that these differences are real and can be frustrating.

### *Fundamentals of Culture III: The Concept of Time*

# Trainee Handout

Below you will find a description of six common frustrations monochronic people often have to deal with in polychronic cultures. What would you do if you were faced with these situations?

1. People do not line up in situations where you are used to a line. Instead, there is just a group of people pressing on each other, everyone trying to be waited on at once. You find this frustrating and very inefficient.
2. In meetings, people do not stick to the agenda.
3. In one-on-one meetings, people take telephone calls and talk with other people who happen to drop by, causing meetings to go on much longer than you expected. The result is you never get as much done as you would like to on any given day.

4. People never stick to the schedule. You often waste an hour or more waiting to see someone, even though you had an appointment.
5. People don't respect deadlines. They tell you they will have some equipment ready by a certain time or that a task will be finished by a certain time, but when you show up, things aren't ready. This is especially frustrating because sometimes you can't do task B until someone else has completed task A, which they promised would be done by a certain time.
6. People get very upset with you because you're sometimes too busy to see them. They feel this is rude, because you should always have time for your close friends. After all, they point out, they always have time for you.

## Fundamentals of Culture IV: The Locus of Control

<b>Content Overview</b>	This session will allow trainees to deepen their understanding of the concepts of internal vs. external locus of control and the ways in which it can manifest in real situations.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To describe how internal vs. external concepts of the locus of control might manifest in real situations</p> <p>To discuss possible reactions to challenges that differing views of the locus of control can pose in the work of Volunteers</p>
<b>Time</b>	1 hour
<b>Materials</b>	Copies of the trainee handouts “Fundamentals of Culture IV: The Locus of Control,” Role Plays One and Two
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>Copy the two handouts and then cut the copies in half for distribution to the two partners in each role play.</p> <p>If possible, distribute the roles to the two partners a day or so before the actual session, so they can practice what they are going to say. Make sure that each partner gets to do one role play as the Volunteer and the second role play as the host country national. Partners should not be allowed to read each other’s role, only the ones they are given by the trainer.</p> <p>Instruct Volunteers to read the roles and prepare what they are going to say when the time comes. They should try to represent the activist or fatalist point of view as much as they can, but they don’t have to feel completely boxed in in that regard. They do not necessarily have to come to a resolution of the problem. Also, tell them they will be doing the role plays one-on-one, with each other, and not in front of the class.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—On the day of the exercise, have each pair begin with Role Play One. Allow from 5 to 10 minutes, and then terminate the playing.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Lead a discussion by asking how things went and have various pairs relate how the play unfolded. Use the following questions:</p> <p><i>Who got his or her way in the role play?</i></p> <p><i>Why did that person prevail?</i></p> <p><i>Was it hard playing the host country role?</i></p> <p><i>How did you feel as this was unfolding?</i></p> <p><i>What did you learn from this experience?</i></p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—Instruct trainees to do Role Play Two, changing parts.</p> <p><b>Step 4</b>—Follow this with a second discussion, using the questions under Step 2 above, and adding the following question:</p> <p><i>Now that you have played both the Volunteer role and the host country role, which was harder? Why?</i></p>

**Potential Issues**

Some trainees may not feel very comfortable doing role plays. This is why you should hand out the roles ahead of time. You should also emphasize that they will not perform the role play in front of an audience; only with their partner.



## ***Fundamentals of Culture IV: The Locus of Control***

### **Trainee Handout**

#### **ROLE PLAY ONE: THE BROKEN BRIDGE**

##### **Role 1: The Volunteer**

You are a Volunteer in an agricultural extension project in a small rural village in your country. A piece of land has been donated by the community to be used for the experimental crop which your project is introducing into this region. The local farmers are enthusiastic about the project—there is money to be made selling the crop to a regional distributor—and now the time has come to plant. You have the seeds and the manpower, but there is a problem in the form of a bridge that leads from the side of town where most of the farmers live to the side where the plot is located. This bridge, built and maintained by the provincial government, was damaged in a flood two months ago and has not been repaired. Until it is repaired, your farmers will not be able to get to the plot.

You have actually collected the materials that will be needed for the repairs, and the expertise exists in the village to fix the bridge. You have approached Mr. Singh, one of the headmen in the village, to ask his help in recruiting volunteers to fix the bridge. As everyone knows, if the crop is not planted in the next three weeks, it will be too late to plant until next year (and you will have completed your service in the meantime). If Mr. Singh will organize the farmers, the job can be done in one or two days.

##### **Role 2: Mr. Singh, The Village Headman**

You are the headman of a group of villagers in a small rural village in your country. Recently, a Volunteer agricultural extension agent has been sent to your village to start a growing project. This crop, which is to be planted on a piece of land donated by the province, will make money for you and the local farmers, who will be able to sell it to a regional distributor. For very little work, you and your fellow villagers stand to make some much-needed extra cash. The Volunteer has procured the seeds, and it is now time to plant the crop, but a problem has arisen: the bridge that connects the village to the piece of land given by the province was damaged in a recent flood and has to be repaired. Until it is repaired, no one can get to the plot. This bridge was built and is owned by the provincial government. The Volunteer has actually collected the materials to fix the bridge, and has now approached you to ask for help in making the repairs.

You do not feel any responsibility for this bridge or for what has happened here, however. You do not see that the repairing of the bridge—or even inquiring of the province as to when the bridge might be repaired—has anything to do with you, any more than if it happens to be cloudy one day, you can or should do something to bring out the sun. Indeed, you feel that if you fix the bridge, the provincial government might expect you to maintain it from now on, and your village does not have the money to do so. Your view is that these things happen, and until they are resolved, all one can do is be patient. And if they never are resolved, well then that's that. Meanwhile, if you miss the planting season this year, there is always next year. You've gotten by without this crop for generations; it won't hurt to have to wait another 12 months.

## **ROLE PLAY TWO: DRINKING WATER**

### **Role 1: The Volunteer**

You are a Volunteer working in a water sanitation program. One of your projects is to determine the cause of pollution in the drinking water in the district center of your province. The government has provided the project with funds, but they have all been used up and there is still no clear indication of the source of the pollution. You can get more money from the national government for further studies this year, but the request will have to be approved by the local water authorities. You are quite confident that if you can conduct these additional studies. After all, six have been done over the last two years; four by the previous Volunteer and two by you. You will eventually identify the cause, mainly because there are only nine widely known pollutants in this area and the previous studies have eliminated six of these. If you could identify the pollutant, it could be controlled and the people in this area would at last be able to stop spending their hard-earned money on bottled drinking water.

You have just approached the director of the local sanitation board to ask him to send a letter to the capital.

### **Role 2: Director of Sanitation**

You are the director of the local sanitation board in your district. For more than three years now, Volunteers have been assigned to you as part of a program to identify the source of drinking water pollution in the district center. There are nine known pollutants in this area, and so far efforts by the previous Volunteer (who did tests for four of these pollutants) and the present Volunteer (who has done tests for two others) have failed to identify the one that is contaminating your water. All funds for testing for this year have now been used up, but if you sign off on a request for funds for further studies, it will probably be approved. Just today, the Volunteer has come to ask you to approve such a request.

Frankly you are skeptical that more testing is going to find the pollutant. The Volunteers insist that it's merely a process of elimination, but you do not have as much faith in the scientific method as they do. Anything can pollute a river, and what's polluting it today may not be what's polluting it next month. There are so many variables that you can't possibly control for them all. And even if you do identify the contaminant and eliminate it, what's to say something else won't start polluting the water next year? It is your belief that having made a gallant effort (six tests) and finding nothing, it's time to admit defeat and go to work on other pressing problems that hold out the promise of being solved much more easily. And you are frankly worried that if you ask for additional money for this project for this fiscal year, it will just be taken out of funds earmarked for some other line item for your province for next year.

## Fundamentals of Culture Review: The Minister of Culture

<b>Content Overview</b>	This session allows trainees to deepen their understanding of eight key concepts of culture by having to adopt one of the concepts as their own perspective and defend their point of view.
<b>Objectives</b>	To articulate the value of each of the opposing poles related to four dimensions of culture: the concept of self, personal vs. societal obligations, the concept of time, and the locus of control
<b>Time</b>	At least 15 minutes to introduce the exercise in advance; 2 hours for the exercise
<b>Materials</b>	One copy per trainee of the handout “Fundamentals of Culture Review: The Minister of Culture.”
<b>Preparation</b>	<p>Trainees will need to prepare for this session in advance. Distribute the handout at least one day before the session and ask trainees to read it. At the same time, choose one person to play the Minister. This person will have to make up questions for each dimension, decide the winner for each dimension, and explain why he/she chose that winner.</p> <p>Divide the trainees into eight teams and assign each team one of the eight positions to be represented: individualist, collectivist, universalist, particularist, monochronic, polychronic, activist, and fatalist. Trainers may also allow teams decide among themselves which position they want to represent, ensuring that all eight possibilities are chosen.</p> <p>Explain that each of the eight teams will have ten minutes to make their case and that they should select a speaker or speakers.</p>
<b>Delivery</b>	<p><b>Step 1</b>—Invite the team representing one side of the first Fundamental to make its case to the Minister. Be sure to time the presentation and remind trainees they will be stopped after 10 minutes.</p> <p><b>Step 2</b>—Allow the Minister five minutes to question the team.</p> <p><b>Step 3</b>—The team representing the other dimension of the concept now has 10 minutes to present its case, followed by five minutes of questions and answers.</p> <p><b>Step 4</b>—The Minister makes his or her decision or asks the audience to vote.</p> <p><b>Step 5</b>—The remaining three teams present their cases and a vote is taken (or decision is made) at the end of each.</p>

## ***Fundamentals of Culture Review: The Minister of Culture***

### **Trainee Handout**

You are being invited to take part in an unusual experiment. A group of influential individuals from around the world—The Founders—have formed an organization and purchased an uninhabited tract of land the size of the state of Maryland. They intend to create a new country on this land, which is located at the same latitude and has the same weather, topography, and natural resources as the Mid-Atlantic states of the USA. Because this is a new country, it can have whatever culture The Founders decide upon.

This afternoon, you will have an audience with the person who has been selected to be the Minister of Culture for this country. This person has asked you to make recommendations for the new culture in four major areas:

1. Should the culture be individualist or collectivist? (Fundamentals of Culture I of *Culture Matters*)
2. Should the culture be universalist or particularist? (Fundamentals of Culture II of *Culture Matters*)
3. Should the culture be monochronic or polychronic? (Fundamentals of Culture III of *Culture Matters*)
4. Should the culture be activist or fatalist? (Fundamentals of Culture IV of *Culture Matters*)

You or your team have been assigned (or selected) one side or the other of one of these dimensions, and you are being asked to prepare a brief presentation to the Minister making a case for why he/she should select your alternative. Your presentation should extol the strengths and advantages of your side of the dimension and point out the weaknesses and disadvantages of the other side. You should also be prepared to answer any questions the Minister may ask.

You will have approximately ten minutes for your presentation, plus time to answer questions the Minister may put to you. Your presentation will be immediately preceded or followed by the presentation of those representing the opposite view of your dimension. If you are part of a team, you should select a speaker(s) who will actually make the presentation. Your goal is to present your case in such a way that the Minister chooses your side of the argument. Feel free to make any visual aids you want, to call expert witnesses, or to do anything else which might strengthen your case. Good luck.

## **PART FOUR: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINERS**

### **Common Complaints About Cross-Cultural Training— and How to Handle Them**

There are several common concerns that most Peace Corps cross-cultural trainers have to deal with, usually in the form of complaints of one kind or another from trainees and Volunteers. The most common complaints have been listed below, along with suggestions on how trainers can handle or respond to these issues.

#### **I. Because of their very limited experience in-country, trainees cannot identify with or do not believe they will experience many of the problems discussed in the cross-cultural component.**

This is one of the most difficult problems trainers will face: the fact that trainees, who have not yet lived or worked in the culture, do not see the immediate relevance of cross-cultural training. Whereas trainees know (from experience) that they need language training and can imagine (also from experience) that they need good technical training, they neither know nor can yet imagine they will need cross-cultural skills. In a training program that is already loaded with many essential topics, it's no wonder trainees reject topics they consider nonessential.

The challenge for trainers, then, is to convince trainees that cross-cultural skills and knowledge are necessary. One way to do this is to regularly use host country nationals and Volunteers in cross-cultural sessions, people who can verify that these cultural topics do cause real problems for Volunteers and need to be examined. Volunteers who tell stories about their cross-cultural experiences can be very convincing.

Trainers may choose to do a brief session early in training to look at the most common causes of Volunteer frustration and early termination in-country. To prepare for this type of session, survey Peace Corps staff, host country national trainers, and serving Volunteers, asking them which of the three components of training—language, technical, and cross-cultural—is most often linked to early termination. Ask respondents to rank these three components from one to three in order of cause of early terminations (one equals most common cause). In most countries, the cross-cultural component will rank as the most common cause. Present your data to trainees: number of people surveyed and number of people that ranked cross-cultural as the number one problem. Discuss why so many people chose this component. Doing so should help illustrate how important cross-cultural issues are for Volunteers.

#### **II. Trainees do not like making generalizations about the host country or about their own country.**

This is one of the most common complaints trainees make about cross-cultural sessions. Trainees object strongly to generalizations because they tend to minimize personal differences. You should agree with trainees about generalizations, that they are not always accurate or reliable and that they should be taken with a grain of salt. At the same time, you should note that to talk about culture you have to talk about people in groups, and that it is not possible to talk about groups of people without generalizing.

Making generalizations, then, is essential to conducting cross-cultural training; we just have to be aware of the limitations of generalizations, apply them carefully, and regard them somewhat skeptically. Trainers should repeat this caution about generalizations every chance they get. This issue is also addressed at some length in *Culture Matters* under the heading “A Couple of Caveats” which trainers should encourage trainees to read.

### **III. Trainees just want lists of do’s and don’ts.**

Trainees are nervous and don’t want to make mistakes, so it is only natural for them to want to know do’s and don’ts. They think that if they know what to do and what not to do in most common settings, they will get along fine with host country nationals. To reduce trainee anxiety, trainers should provide do’s and don’ts where possible and appropriate.

At the same time, trainers should gently point out the limitations of this approach to culture. Do’s and don’ts are nothing more than generalizations and are usually taken out of context. Every action, such as “don’t pass anything with your left hand,” actually takes place in a very specific context. In short, do’s and don’ts have limited usefulness and do not apply in many situations.

### **IV. Trainees think the content of the training is “just common sense.”**

If cross-cultural skills and knowledge were common sense, then we would not have all the classic stories of cultural mistakes that have come down to us through the years, from the Peace Corps and numerous other organizations and companies. Think of all the stories Volunteers tell of the mistakes they made, of the times they offended people without meaning to or even knowing they had done so. At the heart of these stories is usually some kind of cultural misunderstanding or misinterpretation. This complaint about training is usually not made after the first week or two of the pre-service training, especially if trainees are living with host families.

### **V. Trainees complain that their host mother or some other host country national they know does not think or behave the way the trainer has described the actions and ideas of people in the host country.**

This issue is a variation of the generalization problem discussed just above. Explain to trainees that they are going to meet many people who do not fit the description of the typical or generic host country person referred to in cross-cultural training sessions. The generic host country national does not exist. And while individual host country nationals may be like the generic host country national in some respects, they will be quite different in many others. This doesn’t mean cross-cultural trainers are incorrect about core cultural differences in the host culture, but only that such facts have limits.

### **VI. Trainees think they don’t need cross-cultural training because they are living in the country, perhaps even with a host family.**

Point out that in-country training is an invaluable opportunity for experiencing the culture first-hand and not just talking about it. Then point out that simply having cross-cultural experiences is not the same as understanding them. To put it another way, mere contact with people from another culture does not necessarily lead to understanding, and understanding is the goal of cross-cultural training. Trainees should try to think of their cross-cultural experiences as opportunities to gain insight, but they should not confuse the experience with insight.

**VII. Trainees believe that on the surface people may be different but that underneath human beings are all alike.**

This belief begins to lose its hold on trainees when they realize that surface behaviors reflect beneath-the-surface values and beliefs. Hence, if people are different on the surface, then they have to be different “underneath.” It is true, of course, that people from different cultures are indeed both different from and similar to each other—different because of cultural behaviors and similar because of universal ones—but these differences and similarities are both external and internal.

**VIII. Trainees feel that the cross-cultural component prescribes their behavior and resent being told how they must act if they want to be effective.**

It is true that if Volunteers want to be effective, they will have to be culturally aware and sensitive. While trainees understand this, they may still resent being told what they can and cannot do. This need not be a problem for cross-cultural trainers, who can present this component without telling Volunteers how to behave. The message of cross-cultural training can be that this is how people behave in this country and how they will expect you to behave. Whether trainees are able or willing to behave in this manner is entirely up to them, but there may be consequences if they do not.

**IX. Trainees react to cross-cultural training because it suggests that they will have to change some of their behaviors and become someone they are not.**

Sometimes, in order to be culturally sensitive and more effective, Volunteers have to stop doing things they are used to doing (or saying) and start doing things they have never done before and may not feel comfortable doing. Some of these changes in behavior annoy Volunteers and may even conflict with certain core values, with their sense of who they are. Because the reasons for making these changes are usually related to cultural differences, cross-cultural training may be blamed for forcing trainees to change their personalities. This is a legitimate and sensitive issue. Once again, the best response for trainers is to point out that neither they nor the Peace Corps asks anyone to change his or her personality. Trainees only need to understand what may be expected of them in this culture under certain circumstances and what the consequences may be if they are unable or unwilling to comply with host country expectations. This topic is the subject of Exercise 6.10 Can I Still Be Me? in the workbook and is also discussed at some length on pages 38-40 of the 2nd edition (1998) of the Peace Corps publication *A Few Minor Adjustments*.

**X. Trainees have different levels of cross-cultural experience and sophistication.**

Among Peace Corps trainees, the amount of exposure to other cultures ranges from trainees with no experience outside the United States to those who have traveled extensively and may have lived for a time in another country. For some trainees, then, the content of cross-cultural training may seem simplistic, whereas for others it may be challenging. You don’t have many options here, apart from asking more experienced trainees to be patient with their less-experienced colleagues. You might want to check, though, to see if the better-traveled trainees have really learned from their experiences. For these trainees, Peace Corps cross-cultural training may be the first time they have actually examined what happened to them on previous sojourns.



## **Pre-Service Training Cross-Cultural Training Design Based on *Culture Matters***

The following design is for the benefit of trainers who plan to use *Culture Matters* as a foundation for the cross-cultural component of pre-service training. The design combines content from the workbook with other, country-specific topics usually covered in pre-service training. The country-specific content is taken from a list of cross-cultural training topics compiled from pre-service trainings around the world, which immediately follows this sample design. The idea of this design is to offer countries a template to start introducing content from *Culture Matters* into their cross-cultural program while they continue to address various country-specific topics (history, renting a house, bargaining, cultural ceremonies, etc.) not covered in the workbook. The numbered items in parentheses refer to sessions in *Culture Matters* which address a particular topic.

### **Weeks 1 and 2—Basic Cultural Concepts and Community Entry**

#### *Objectives*

- To introduce basic survival skills for living overseas and living with host families
- To present country-specific area studies information
- To introduce the basic concepts of the intercultural field
- To begin comparing American and host country values, beliefs, and world views

#### *Topics and Possible Sessions*

- The definition of culture (1.3, 1.10)
- The concept of values (1.5)
- Cultural conditioning (1.8)
- Putting culture in context (1.7, 1.6)
- The role of culture in interpreting behavior (1.8)
- American and host country cultural values (2.2, 2.3)
- Sources of American culture (2.5)
- Social etiquette (5.7, see also Social Etiquette in the *Trainer's Guide* list of Cross-Cultural Training Topics, C. Social Etiquette—Do's and Don'ts)\*
- Area studies (see *Trainer's Guide* list of Cross-Cultural Training Topics, A. Area Studies)\*

### **Weeks 3 and 4—Communication and Culture Shock**

#### *Objectives*

- To identify the varieties of American diversity and related adjustment issues
- To examine the concept of culture shock and the cycle of cultural adjustment
- To identify cultural differences in communication styles and modes of nonverbal communication
- To present further area studies information



### *Topics and Possible Sessions*

- American diversity (2.8)
- Styles of communication (3.2, 3.4, 3.6, 3.8, 3.9)
- Nonverbal communication (3.5, 3.7)
- The concept of face (3.10)
- Culture shock and cultural adjustment (6.3)
- Fundamentals of Culture I: The concept of the self
- Additional area studies (see *Trainer's Guide* list of Cross-Cultural Training Topics, A. Area Studies)\*

### **Weeks 5 and 6—Volunteer Life and Relationships**

#### *Objectives*

- To introduce the concept of social interaction in the host country
- To examine social relationships in the host country (distinguish between friendships and romantic relationships with host country nationals)
- To develop strategies for building social relationships

### *Topics and Possible Sessions*

- Building informal relationships with host country nationals
- Social roles of Volunteers in the host country
- Gender and development
- Eating and drinking customs
- Dress customs
- Bathing and personal hygiene
- Being a guest
- Gift giving and receiving
- Touching, gestures, and body language

### **Weeks 7 and 8—Cross-cultural Training in the Workplace**

#### *Objectives*

- To examine the influence of culture on workplace values, beliefs, and norms
- To identify cultural differences in attitudes toward rank and status
- To examine American and host country differences in the manager and subordinate relationship
- To identify obstacles to and strategies for building Volunteer credibility on the job

### *Topics and Possible Sessions*

- Manager and subordinate relationships (4.2, 4.4)
- Attitudes toward rank and status (4.8)
- Workplace norms and values (4.9)

- Building credibility on the job and in the community (4.13)
- Fundamental III: The concept of time
- Fundamental IV: The locus of control

*\*Topics with an asterisk can either be covered in a formal training session or, to conserve training time, through readings distributed on handouts.*

## **Weeks 9 and 10—Cultural Adjustment and the Transition to Volunteerism**

### *Objectives*

- To identify the stages in the development of cultural awareness and sensitivity
- To examine the transition from being a trainee to being a Volunteer and related adjustments
- To identify strategies for coping with adjusting to living and working in another culture
- To present important practical information related to settling in at site

### *Topics and Possible Sessions*

- The stages of cultural awareness and attitudes toward cultural difference (6.6, 6.7)
- The transition to Volunteerism (6.4)
- Coping strategies for cultural adjustment (6.9)
- Settling-in (see *Trainer's Guide* list of Cross-Cultural Training Topics, D. Practical Matters)

## Cross-Cultural Training Topics

Trainers may be curious about what their colleagues in other countries cover in their cross-cultural training. The following list captures the range of topics covered in pre-service trainings around the world; some of these topics are addressed in formal training sessions, while others are covered in readings or handouts. You might want to use this outline as a checklist in designing the cross-cultural component of pre-service training.

### **A. Area Studies**

1. History
2. Politics and structure of the government
3. Economic overview
4. Demographics and geography
5. Religion
6. Educational system
7. The arts and culture
8. Rituals and celebrations: birthdays, weddings, funerals, rites of passage
9. Holidays and festivals
10. Country-specific issues (bargaining, etc.)

### **B. Cross-Cultural Topics**

1. Concept of the self
2. Concept of time
3. The family: roles, structure, etc.
4. Roles of men and women and gender and development
5. Friendship
6. Male and female relations
7. Cultural adjustment
8. Diversity issues
9. Workplace-related cultural issues

### **C. Social Etiquette—Do's and Don'ts**

1. Greetings
2. Eating and drinking customs
3. Dress customs
4. Bathing and personal hygiene
5. Being a guest
6. Gift giving and receiving
7. Touching
8. Gestures and body language

### **D. Practical Matters**

1. Food (shopping, restaurant)
2. Transportation
3. Communication (telephone, post office)
4. Clothing (shopping)
5. Renting a house
6. Money (opening a bank account, currency)
7. Health issues
8. Other country-specific matters

## Discussion Questions for Processing Cross-Cultural Activities

Trainees benefit from discussing their cross-cultural experiences with other members of their group. The focus of the experiential learning model is on both content and process. Participants explore their own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors by examining their responses to what is happening. Much of this goes on informally; it can also be encouraged as part of processing cross-cultural sessions, especially role plays, critical incidents, and field experiences. The task for the trainer is to initiate and sustain a discussion with probing questions and follow-up questions. The following questions may help get trainees talking and thinking.

### Questions in Three Stages

#### 1. Stage One: *What happened?*

Trainees are engaged in an activity designed to generate data. The data is not actually processed in this stage, but because participants may be resistant to beginning or completing an activity, questions may be needed to facilitate this stage. Once participants have completed the experience, questions are directed toward generating data.

- Who will volunteer to share reactions? Who else?
- What happened?
- How did you feel about the situation? Who else had the same experience?
- Who had a different experience?
- Were there any surprises or puzzlements?
- How many of you felt the same way? How many felt differently?
- What did you observe?
- What were you aware of?

#### 2. Stage Two: *So what?*

Once participants have data, questions are directed toward making sense of that data and promoting generalizations for the individuals and the group.

- What does that mean to you?
- Why do you think this situation arose?
- How might that have been different?
- What bothers you most about this situation?
- Do you think you're missing anything here?
- How would you ever know if you were missing anything?
- What does that suggest to you about yourself or the group?
- What do you understand better about yourself or the group?
- What did you learn or relearn?
- Does that remind you of anything?
- What is the real issue in this situation?
- What does that help to explain?
- What cultural issues are coming up in this situation?

### 3. Stage Three: *Now what?*

Participants are concerned with using what they have learned in real-world situations. Questions are aimed at applying the general knowledge they have gained to their personal and/or professional lives.

- How can you apply or transfer that?
- What would you like to do with that?
- How could you repeat this again?
- What are the options?
- What might you do to help or hinder yourself?
- How could you make it better?
- What would be the consequences of doing or not doing it yourself?
- What modifications can you make work for you?
- What can you imagine about that?
- Would you be able or willing to change your behavior to the extent that the situation would never happen?
- What are the consequences for you of adjusting or not adjusting your behavior to suit host country norms?
- Do you feel comfortable adopting host country behaviors? Why or why not? Which ones?
- Is adopting host country behaviors the best way to be effective? The only way?
- How does this relate to other experiences?

#### **Additional Questions**

It is obvious that many of these questions focus on the same topic and will elicit similar responses, that is, they overlap in content and meaning. However these variations on the same themes offer more than one road by which to arrive at the same destination.

These questions can be used at any stage in the cycle to aid the group in moving either more deeply into the stage at hand or to another stage.

- What do you need to know to \_\_\_\_?
- Would you be willing to try?
- Can you be more specific?
- Could you offer a suggestion?
- What would you prefer?
- What are your concerns?
- If you could guess at the answer, what would it be?
- Can you say that in another way?
- What is worst/best thing that could happen?
- What else? And?
- Would you please say more about that?

## A List of Training Methodologies

Cross-cultural training topics can be presented in a variety of ways. Here is a list of different adult learning methodologies, gathered from Peace Corps trainers around the world.

**Role Play:** Interaction between two or more people, simulating real-life behavior on the basis of prescribed situations; allows for improvised script

**Dialogues:** A written, pre-planned simple discussion between two or more people that opens up opportunity for discussion

**Critical Incidents:** Oral or written account of a problematic cross-cultural encounter, in which participants are asked to come up with solutions

**Coaching:** One-on-one learning through demonstration, practice, immediate feedback, and correction

**Simulation:** Representation of real-life situations or experience in classroom; allows participants to react and perform in controlled, “safe” environment; may have scripts

**Simulation Game:** Structured competition added to the above

**Situational Exercise:** Simulated cross-cultural encounter in which participant plays role with person from another culture or composite of cultures; unlike role play, participant not required to behave a certain way

**Cultural Assimilator:** Programmed approach to learning in which participant selects alternative and receives evaluative feedback on response

**Case Study:** Oral or written account of event, incident, situation, usually followed by discussion questions to develop critical thinking skills and to gain new perceptions

**Self-Awareness Instrument/Inventory:** Form of self-testing, enabling participants to develop profile of strengths and weaknesses, to assess progress made during and as a result of training program

**Demonstration:** Showing clearly how to do something, for example appropriate gestures in the target culture

**Drama:** Trainees or facilitators develop a small drama presentation around a theme or situation that can be presented to the rest of the group. May be serious, funny, nonverbal.

The following are more adult learning methodologies

Site Visits/Field Trips	Guided Group Discussions	Journal/Reflective Writing
Assigned Readings	Songs	Panels
Games	Interviews	Videos/Films
Guest Speakers	Reports	Quizzes
Story Telling	Drama/Skits	Workbook
Observations	Self-Instruction	Presentation/Lecturette

## An Index to *Culture Matters* by Type of Activity

Cross-Cultural Activity (page #)	Jan's Letters	Continuums	Readings	Journal Exercise	Observational Activity	Dialogue	Critical Incident	Score Yourself	Reflective Exercise	Practice	Application
Introducing Jan (6)	o										
Between the Line (8)										o	
What is Culture (10)											o
A Tough Moment (12)									o		
Linking Values (13)										o	
"Batteries" Reading (14)			o								
Universal/Cultural/Personal (15)					o			o			
Cultural Conditioning (18)											o
Mind of the Beholder (20)											o
Defining Culture (25)											o
Journal Entry 1 (28)				o							
Sharing the Rewards (30)										o	
Individualism vs Collectivism (31)										o	
"The Electrician" (33)			o								
Individualist or Collectivist (34)								o			
Pleased to Meet You (36)									o		
Dear Todd (38)	o										
Things We Say (41)											o
American vs Host Country Views (44)										o	
Thinking About My Job (51)										o	
Sources of American Culture (54)										o	
How Non-Americans see Americans (56)											
Learning About America (58)									o		
Now What? Critical Incidents (59)							o				
On Being Different (62)									o		
Parting Advice (63)											o
Interview With a PCV (64)						o					
Journal Entry 2 (66)				o							
An Accident (67)										o	
Personal and Societal Obligations (68)										o	

Cross-Cultural Activity (page #)	Jan's Letters	Continuums	Readings	Journal Exercise	Observational Activity	Dialogue	Critical Incident	Score Yourself	Reflective Exercise	Practice	Application
"Ernie" (70)			o								
Universalist vs Particularist (71)								o			
Thinking it Through (73)									o		
Dear Gavin (76)	o										
Styles of Communication (78)										o	
Clash of Styles (80)									o		
Culture and Communication Styles (81)		o									
Nonverbal Communication (84)					o						
Dialogues (88)						o					
Nonverbal Communication (91)					o						
Practicing Indirectness (96)										o	
Decoding Indirectness (97)											o
"Neighbors" (98)			o								
Harmony and Saving Face (99)							o				
Journal Entry 3 (102)				o							
Service With a Smile (103)										o	
Monochronic vs Polychronic Time (104)										o	
"Time Trials" (106)			o								
Monochronic & Polychronic (107)								o			
Indications (108)									o		
Jan's Journal (110)	o										
Concept of Power (112)										o	
Trust (114)											
Dialogues (115)						o					
Cross-Cultural Dialogue (117)						o					
Uncertainty and The Unknown (118)										o	
Dialogues (120)						o					
No Legs (122)											
The Source of Status (123)							o		o		
Workplace Values and Norms (127)		o									



Cross-Cultural Activity (page #)	Jan's Letters	Continuums	Readings	Journal Exercise	Observational Activity	Dialogue	Critical Incident	Score Yourself	Reflective Exercise	Practice	Application
Observing the Workplace (131)					o						
You Americans (134)										o	
Pacing (136)									o		
Turning the Tables (137)										o	o
Journal Entry 4 (142)				o							
Who's in Charge Here (143)										o	
Activism & Fatalism (144)										o	
"Where There's a Will" (146)			o								
Activism & Fatalism (147)								o			
Doing (148)									o		
Dear Jan (150)	o										
The Circle of Relations (152)											o
Rules of the House (156)										o	
The Limits of Friendship (161)										o	
What Would You Do? (163)							o				
Family Life (166)									o		
Romantic Relationships (167)											o
Men and Women (171)							o				
"Mother Wants to See You" (176)"			o								
Journal Entry 5 (178)				o							
Fundamentals of Culture (179)		o									
Dear Friends (184)	o										
Transitions (187)											o
The Cycle of Adjustment (191)										o	
"The Ugliest Man" (195)			o								
Settling In (196)										o	
The Little Things (198)									o		
4 Levels of Cultural Awareness (199)										o	
Attitudes Toward Cultural Diff (201)											o
The Toughest Part (208)									o		

Cross-Cultural Activity (page #)	Jan's Letters	Continuums	Readings	Journal Exercise	Observational Activity	Dialogue	Critical Incident	Score Yourself	Reflective Exercise	Practice	Application
Coping Strategies (209)										o	
Can I Still Be Me? (213)							o				
Journal Entry 6 (217)				o							o
Using Cultural Informants (220)											o
Joining In (222)											
Keeping a Journal (224)				o							
Learning From Media and Arts (226)											o
Critical Incidents (229)							o				
Studying an Institution (230)											o

## Suggestions for Integrating *Culture Matters'* Content into Other Components

Cross-Cultural Activity (page #)	Language Classes	Technical Sessions	Medical, Safety, Security	Host Family	Counterpart Conf/In-Service Training	ToT for Pre-Service Training
Between the Line (8)		o			o	
What is Culture (10)				o	o	o
A Tough Moment (12)	o					
Linking Values (13)				o	o	o
Universal/Cultural/Personal (15)				o	o	o
Mind of the Beholder (20)				o		o
Defining Culture (25)					o	o
Fundamentals of Culture (29)	o	o		o	o	o
Things We Say (41)					o	
American vs. Host Country (44)	o				o	o
Thinking About My Job (51)					o	
Sources of American Culture (54)						o
How Non-Americans see Americans (56)				o	o	o
Now What? Critical Incidents (59)			o			
Fundamentals of Culture II (67)		o			o	o
Styles of Communication (78)				o		o
Culture and Communication Styles (81)	o	o			o	o
Nonverbal Communication (84)	o				o	
Dialogues (88)		o			o	
Nonverbal Communication (91)	o			o		
Practicing Indirectness (96)	o					
Decoding Indirectness (97)	o				o	o
Harmony and Saving Face (99)		o			o	
Fundamentals of Culture III (103)		o		o	o	o
Concept of Power (112)		o			o	o
Dialogues (115)		o			o	
Uncertainty and The Unknown (118)		o			o	

Cross-Cultural Activity (page #)	Language Classes	Technical Sessions	Medical, Safety, Security	Host Family	Counterpart Conf/In-Service Training	ToT for Pre-Service Training
Dialogues (120)		o			o	
The Source of Status (123)		o				o
Workplace Values and Norms (127)		o			o	o
Observing the Workplace (131)	o	o			o	o
You Americans (134)					o	o
Pacing (136)		o			o	
Turning the Tables (137)		o				
Fundamentals of Culture IV (143)		o			o	o
The Circle of Relations (152)	o					
Rules of the House (156)	o		o	o		
The Limits of Friendship (161)			o			
What Would You Do? (163)		o	o			
Family Life (166)	o			o		
Romantic Relationships (167)			o			
Men and Women (171)			o			
Fundamentals of Culture (179)		o			o	o
Transitions (187)			o			
The Cycle of Adjustment (191)				o	o	o
Settling In (196)			o			
4 Levels of Cultural Awareness (199)					o	o
The Toughest Part (208)			o			
Coping Strategies (209)	o		o			
Can I Still Be Me? (213)		o				
Using Cultural Informants (220)	o					
Joining In (222)	o					
Keeping a Journal (224)	o					
Learning From Media and Arts (226)	o					
Studying an Institution (230)		o				

# Development of the Field of Intercultural Communication in the United States

## *Historical Implications*

Intercultural relations began when people from different cultures came in contact with each other. We can surmise that this took place at a very early point in human history, but any examination of how this contact was managed went unrecorded. Intercultural contact is not a new phenomenon, but as the world has become more complex, so have relationships between nations and peoples. The consequences of failed interactions, in turn, have become more dangerous. The field of intercultural communication as an identified area of education, research and, ultimately, training was developed more recently. It evolved in response to specific needs that emerged when the flow of people who were going abroad to study, work, and live mushroomed in the post-World War II era.

The societal needs of that time were fairly explicit:

- (1) To prepare Americans to function more effectively in overseas assignments and to adapt successfully to other cultures
- (2) To assist the adaptation of international students, scholars, and professionals as they functioned in universities and other institutions (business came later) in the United States
- (3) To help Americans relate successfully to and learn from these international sojourners
- (4) To build positive relationships among the racially and ethnically different peoples of the United States

## *Contexts and Players in the Intercultural Field*

Since the issues addressed by intercultural communication emerged in many places at once, the field has developed in multiple contexts. In the context of the U.S. government, foreign service personnel and people in development agencies were called upon to implement the Marshall Plan, the Agency for International Development was created in 1961, and the U.S. Information Agency brought foreign visitors to the United States. In the education context, international educational exchange grew dramatically. The Institute of International Education (IIE) had existed since 1922 and The Experiment in International Living since 1936, but their work took on greater importance as the influx of students increased. In the 1940s and 1950s many exchange programs emerged: The Council for International Education (CIEE) and the American Field Service (AFS) in 1947, 4-H Youth Exchange in 1948, Youth For Understanding (YFU) in 1951, and the East-West Center at the University of Hawaii in 1960. Another major event that occurred was the creation of the Peace Corps in 1961. Thousands of young people were being sent around the world to work with the communities and to be part of cultures and communities that were virtually unknown to them. All of these organizations, over time, provided opportunities for thousands of individuals and required that methods of orientation and training be created.

Edward T. Hall stands out as one of the earliest “interculturalists.” The United States Indian Service assigned Hall to a project that involved working with the Navaho and Hopi peoples during the 1930s. It quickly became apparent that this work would involve analysis of how these two peoples interacted not only with each other but also with members of Hispanic and Anglo cultures. Although he wrote about this experience much later in *West of the Thirties* (1994), it began a process of thinking that influenced his perspective as an anthropologist and

which led ultimately to the publication of *The Silent Language* (1959), a book that is considered to be the first real intercultural text. Here Hall used the term “intercultural communication” for the first time and explored frameworks for understanding culture and the interaction among people from different cultures. Although Hall was not alone in providing a foundation for the field, he is often identified as the father of intercultural communication. His books are still read widely and continue to be important to the field.

In 1955, Hall joined the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in Washington, DC and created training programs for Foreign Service officers, who serve overseas as American diplomats, that included the concept of implicit culture and focused on the intersection of culture and communication. They explored the effects of space, time, and other nonverbal behavior on human interaction and developed the process of experiential training. Hall was the first to realize that lectures, reading, and language training alone failed to prepare people for work in foreign cultures. The FSI trainees generally had field experience but were lacking in theory and skills that would assist them in comprehending and responding appropriately to new situations. The training he conceptualized was more immediately applicable to the overseas assignment.

Because E. T. Hall was an anthropologist, much of the early work in intercultural relations was done within the field of anthropology. However, the focus on interactive, intercultural relations was an inherently interdisciplinary one, depending on major contributions from all areas of social science. For this reason, in the late 1960s the academic home for the field became speech communication. At that time, “communication” was being distinguished from “speech” and the former area was defined as a broadly interdisciplinary, social science focus on the process of constructing and maintaining human face-to-face relationships. Hall added the concept of culture to this focus when he stated, “Culture is communication and communication is culture” (Hall, *The Silent Language*, 1959, p. 186).

## ***Government, International Education and Business Contexts***

### **Government**

It was in the two contexts of government and international education that the foundations of the intercultural field were laid. By putting theory into practice and addressing the demands of sojourners, intercultural professionals began contributing to the growing field. Thus, from the beginning, intercultural communication did not grow exclusively from abstract intellectual inquiry but emerged from both theory and experience.

As earlier mentioned, the Agency for International Development (AID) was created to carry out United States development assistance programs abroad while the U.S. Information Agency brought foreign visitors to the United States. With the creation of the Peace Corps in 1961 by J.F. Kennedy, thousands of young people were being sent around the world to be part of international communities. Just as new methods for preparing American diplomats to work abroad had been necessary, so were new ways of preparing these volunteers. Early preparation emphasized area studies and was conducted on college campuses, giving rise to the term “university model” for lecture and country information based programs. When this proved to be rather ineffective, the Peace Corps adopted an experiential training approach (1965). Materials were gathered, processes tested, and the first manual, *Guidelines for Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Training*, was produced in 1970 by Albert Wight and Mary Anne Hammons. Peace Corps training techniques were refined at The Center for Research and Education (CRE) in Denver, which became a focal point for early efforts of cross-cultural trainers to define themselves as professionals. The early years of the Peace Corps were an intensive learning time for Volunteers and cross-cultural trainers and provided a strong impetus for creating and refining training techniques. Many of those who had their first cross-cultural experience in the Peace Corps or were involved in training volunteers became leaders in the intercultural field.

## International Education:

In the 70s, courses in “intercultural communication” began to be taught in the United States. Resources were meager but academics drew on authors such as David Berlo, Gordon Allport, Melville J. Herskovits, Clyde Kluckhohn, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, J. Watson, and R. Lippsitt, and especially Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodbeck. In addition, a paper-and-pencil technique called the *cultural assimilator* was developed by Fred Fiedler, Lawrence M. Stoloron, and Harry Triandis at the University of Illinois. The instrument allowed trainees to respond in a variety of culturally appropriate or inappropriate ways to “critical incidents” derived from specific other cultures.

Meanwhile, the impact of cross-cultural mobility on sojourners became apparent. Anthropologist Cora DuBois first spoke of “culture shock” to educational exchange groups in 1951 and Kalvero Oberg wrote about it in 1953 after observing the reactions of Americans working in Brazil. In 1955, Sverre Lysgaard first observed the “U-curve” of adjustment that people experience as they enter a new culture. This was later expanded by John and Jeanne Gullahorn into a “W-curve,” taking reentry into account.

Sociologist Ruth Useem was engaged in studying children, mostly children of missionaries who were enrolled in overseas schools. While employed at the Institute for International Studies and Education in the U.S. Department of Education, she became concerned that teachers for international schools were not being prepared for the unique demands of the overseas context. She demonstrated that students in those schools were quite different, based on her research of the experiences of children who spent most of their lives living outside their home culture. She referred to these children as “third culture kids” (TCKs). This term did not denote a new culture but the subcultures (intentionally plural) that the children experienced as they lived on the margin of two cultures. She would eventually conduct research and analysis on 900 Americans between the ages of 25 and 85 who had spent some of their childhood abroad and the implications.

There was also concern about the impact of Americans on the population in the host country. *The Ugly American* (Eugene Burdick and William Lederer, 1958) was not only a popular book but became a common phrase in everyday discourse. The book’s hero was Homer Atkins, a skilled technician committed to helping at a grassroots level by building water pumps, digging roads, and building bridges. He was called the “ugly American” only because of his grotesque physical appearance. He lived and worked with the local people and, by the end of the novel, was beloved and admired by them. The bitter message of the novel, however, was that American diplomats were, by and large, neither competent nor effective; and the implication was that the more the United States relied on them, the more its influence would wane. The book was so influential that in later paperback editions its blurb claimed that “President Kennedy’s Peace Corps is the answer to the problem raised in this book. The author’s summed up in a factual epilogue what should be done: Whatever the reasons, our overseas services attract far too few of our brightest and best qualified college graduates ... What we need is a small force of well-trained, well-chosen, hard-working and dedicated professionals. They must be willing to risk their comforts and—in some lands—their health. They must go equipped to apply a positive policy promulgated by a clear-thinking government. They must speak the language of the land of their assignment and they must be more expert in its problems than are the natives.” These ideas led to the creation of the Peace Corps in 1961. Another influential publication was *The Overseas American* (1960) by Harlan Cleveland, Gerald Mangone, and John Adams, which reviewed research on the performance of Americans abroad.

As the study of intercultural communication was taking root in academic departments of communication, relationships between international students and their American hosts were being explored. A cluster of scholars, students, and program officers began to observe and investigate how those cross-cultural relationships actually worked. The Regional Council for International Education and the Intercultural Network sponsored a series of intercultural communication workshops (ICW’s) that provided a multicultural laboratory in which to explore the process. A significant grant from National Association of Foreign Student Affairs



(NAFSA) which later became NAFSA: Association of International Educators and Institute of International Education (IIE) allowed this exploration to continue over a ten-year period, culminating in the first Institute for Intercultural Communication, which was held at Stanford University in 1976. This funding created opportunities to train an expanding network of intercultural facilitators and specialists within NAFSA. The ICW continued and evolved and it was occasionally conducted at other colleges and universities. The ICW is now rarely found in its original form, but it was a critical step in testing intercultural relations concepts and the strategies practiced in cross-cultural training.

There were other developments in the field in the early 70s, as well. The Culture Learning Institute was established at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii, in 1969 and became a site for new research; Richard Brislin published *Cross Cultural Training Methods* in 1973. The Intercultural Relations Project created by the U.S. Navy developed teams to train ship crews for overseas deployment. As part of this effort, the navy supported the development of the first intercultural simulation, Bafa Bafa, in 1972, and it became a classic among intercultural training techniques. Alfred J. Kraemer wrote *Development of a Cultural Self-Awareness Approach to Instruction In Intercultural Communication* at the Human Resources Research Organization (HUMRRO), which established cultural self-awareness as an essential prerequisite to intercultural competence.

## **Business**

The third context of intercultural communication, the corporate world, would not fully engage until after the forerunner of the American Graduate School of International Management (Thunderbird) was established in 1946. The Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), created in 1958 to promote interaction between government and the private sector, was an early participant in the growing attention to the cross-cultural dimensions of business and training in corporations. Multinational corporations were eager to address the negative attitudes that were building toward them around the world and to decrease the high cost of employee turnover in overseas assignments. The earliest publication that addressed these issues from an intercultural perspective, *Managing Cultural Differences* by Philip R. Harris and Robert T. Moran, appeared in 1979. This book was quickly followed by *Survival Kit for Overseas Living* by L. Robert Kohls, which stressed the cultural self-awareness necessary for expatriate U.S. executives. In the mid-eighties, *Going International* was created as the first major video product directed toward corporate personnel. Once again, practical needs were driving the field. Training organizations emerged to provide pre-departure training and intercultural management programs for the corporate world. Some of the groups of trainers that were organized to conduct particular corporate programs grew into large training organizations, but many others remained as small-group or individual consulting operations.

## ***Organizations and Publications in the Intercultural Field***

### **Organizations**

During the 70s the field of intercultural communication was growing dramatically. The International Communication Association established a Division of Intercultural Communication in 1970 and began publishing *The International and Intercultural Annual* in 1974. The Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) was founded in 1974 and spawned regional and local organizations. George Renwick conducted the State of the Art Study between 1974-77 out of which came three publications as proof that the field was vibrant and growing. The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) has, especially in recent years, been more attentive to intercultural issues and produced publications on intercultural relations and diversity issues in business. Professional training programs for people from all walks of the field—education, business, counseling, consulting, training, and management—were developed and grew in sophistication and size. From the Stanford Institute of Intercultural Communication, which ended in 1986, grew the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (SIIC), beginning in



1987, under the auspices of the Intercultural Communication Institute (ICI) in Portland, Oregon. Other institutes have sprung up around the U.S. Some, such as the Multicultural Institute in Washington, DC, focus exclusively on domestic diversity issues, while others deal very specifically with curriculum design, international educational exchange, or other clearly defined areas of interest.

## **Publications**

Publications also burgeoned during the 70s. In 1976, CRE (Center for Research and Education) produced the first periodical in the field (other than a newsletter), *The Bridge*, a modest quarterly, which by 1979 had become a glossy magazine. It faded in 1983, however, a victim of the inability of the field to identify and draw a large enough audience to support such an enterprise. *The International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (IJIR), a professional journal for articles on research and training, was begun in 1977 by Dan Landis and became associated with SIETAR. It is now associated with the International Academy of Intercultural Research (IAIR) and continues to be the primary journal in the field. Brigham Young University began producing the *Culturegrams* in 1976. However, people in the field still struggled to get their work in print and in book stores. This need was met with the advent of Intercultural Press Inc., (IPI) which began its work in 1977 and became a formal publishing house in 1980. IPI continues to be the largest publishing house of intercultural books in the world. Through IPI and the growing interest of publishers who either produced the occasional title or created specialized lines of intercultural books, publishing in the field has blossomed in the last two decades. Other publishers who carry intercultural books include Greenwood Press, Sage Publications, Pergamon Press, Gulf Publishing, and Wadsworth.

At the turn of the millennium, intercultural researchers and scholars are delving more deeply into issues of adaptation, identity, the dimensions of cultural characteristics in groups, transnational management, and the development of intercultural sensitivity. Intercultural educators continue to explore how the theory and skills of the field can be more effectively imbued in the next generation of intercultural scholars and practitioners, as well as how general curricula should include an intercultural dimension. And intercultural trainers pursue increasingly sophisticated designs and techniques for addressing the practical concerns of teachers, businesspersons, and social service providers.

In summary, the professional field of intercultural communication is new, dating its genesis to the post World War II era when international exchange. The intercultural field has progressed through several stages:

- (1) The growth of a body of theory and research literature,
- (2) The emergence of a felt need for culture learning and for skill building in intercultural relations,
- (3) The formulation of organizations to collect, synthesize, publish and distribute theory and research findings,
- (4) The growth of courses in intercultural communication in colleges and universities,
- (5) The emergence of private and public organizations and corporations which developed increasingly sophisticated training programs and new resources, and
- (6) The growing awareness in the general public that the interaction of people who are culturally different presents challenges that are significant and have a profound impact on every endeavor in which humans engage. In these efforts, individuals from a variety of disciplines from anthropology to linguistics, psychology, speech communication, government, management and beyond, have been engaged in the study of “cultures interacting” and the practice of intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication is a relatively new field that has grown out of the urgent need to function effectively in the global neighborhood and to live more cooperatively within the societies that exist in the world. It has come a long way in its short history, but there is clearly much left to do in the study of interaction between people of different cultures and in the application of what is learned to the reality of living together. The concept of the world as a “global village” is becoming more and more of a reality with technology communications, mega international corporations and the imperative demand for international understanding as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Adapted by Margaret D. Pusch, 1998 (Associate Director, Intercultural Communication Institute, Portland, Oregon) from Hoopes, David S., “Intercultural Communication Concepts and the Psychology of Intercultural Experience,” in Pusch, M.D., ed. *Multicultural Education: A Cross-Cultural Training Approach*. LaGrange Park, IL: Intercultural Network, Inc., 1979, and King, Nancy, “Intercultural Communication: An Overview of the Field,” unpublished, 1979.

## Glossary of Cross-Cultural Terms Used in Culture Matters

<b>Achieved status</b> .....	The belief that people should be respected for their personal and professional accomplishments; status is earned not inherited.
<b>Activism</b> .....	The belief that the locus of control is largely internal, within the individual and that there are very few circumstances that cannot be changed by the individual.
<b>Ascribed status</b> .....	The belief that a certain amount of status is built into the person and it is automatic and difficult to lose; family, social class, affiliations, education and seniority are highly valued.
<b>Behavior</b> .....	The actions or reactions of people under specified circumstances.
<b>Collectivism</b> .....	The belief that one's identity is in large part a function of one's membership and role in a group; interdependence and harmony of group members are valued.
<b>Culture</b> .....	The fundamental values, belief, attitudes, and patterns of thinking that are embedded in a society's or region's view of how the world works and of how individuals and groups can and should operate in the world. Culture includes the resulting behaviors of these individuals.
<b>Direct communication</b> .....	Relying more on words and literal interpretation; getting or giving information is the goal of direct communication exchanges.
<b>Ethnocentrism</b> .....	A belief in the inherent superiority and naturalness of one's own culture.
<b>Ethnorelativism</b> .....	A belief that differences in value systems and behavioral norms are legitimate, tolerable, and non-threatening.
<b>Fatalism</b> .....	The belief that the locus of control is largely external and that many aspects of life are predetermined and cannot be changed.
<b>High power distance</b> .....	The belief that inequalities in power and status are natural or existential in a culture; those in power tend to emphasize it and subordinates are closely supervised.
<b>High uncertainty avoidance</b> .....	The belief in a culture that the inherent uncertainty in life is threatening and must therefore be controlled as much as possible; an emphasis is placed on laws, conformity, and structure.
<b>Indirect communication</b> .....	Relying less on words or literal interpretation and more on what is not said or done and on nonverbal communication; maintaining harmony and saving face are the goals of indirect communication exchanges.
<b>Individualism</b> .....	The belief that the needs of the individual be satisfied before those of the group; independence and self-reliance are valued.

<b>Informant</b> .....	One who furnishes linguistic or cultural information to a researcher, foreigner, etc.
<b>Low power distance</b> .....	The belief that inequalities in power and status, while often convenient, are largely artificial; those in power tend to de-emphasize it and encourage subordinates to take initiative.
<b>Low uncertainty avoidance</b> .....	The belief in a culture that uncertainty is not so daunting and there is no need to limit or control it; an emphasis is placed on human interaction, tolerance, and less structure.
<b>Monochronic</b> .....	The concept that time is a given and people are the variable; the needs of people are adjusted to suit the demands of time.
<b>Particularism</b> .....	The belief that how you behave in a given situation depends on the circumstances; exclusive adherence to one's own group is valued—outsiders can take care of themselves.
<b>Polychronic</b> .....	The concept that time is the servant and tool of the people and time is adjusted to suit the needs of people; more time is always available.
<b>Universalism</b> .....	The belief that certain absolutes apply across the board, regardless of circumstances or particular situations and that all should be treated alike, without exception.
<b>Values</b> .....	The basis upon which people decide what is desirable, good, and right (and the opposite) in their culture.