

UNIT 4

The Essence of Culture

A peek at Hispanics-Latinos Culture

Background:

Terminology and History

The term Hispanic was developed by the US Census Bureau to identify all Spanish speaking people regardless of their country of origin. The acceptance of this term varies in the diverse people who are categorically considered Hispanic in the United States today.

Latinos come from 20 different countries but share a common ancestry of language. Due to this diversity, self-identification is important. Latinos may refer to themselves as Latino, Chicano, Hispano, Hispanic, La Raza or their country of origin. Some individuals with Spanish surnames may have German, Asian or Philipino ancestry or may prefer to be referred to by nationality; e.g. Mexicano, Chilean, Cuban. Others may prefer that no reference be made to nationality or ancestry.

Latino is not a race but a complex group of Spanish-speaking language heritage, Native American, European, African descendants.

People:

Population

As of 2002, the US Census Bureau report indicates that one in eight people in the United States are of Hispanic origin. 37.4 million Latinos live in the civilian noninstitutional population of the US. Among the Hispanic populations, 66.9 percent were of Mexican origin, 14.3 percent were Central and South American, 8.6 percent were Puerto Rican, 3.7 percent were Cuban, and the remaining 6.5 percent were of other Hispanic origin.

Language

Though Latinos originate from a variety of cultures, they share the common ancestry of the Spanish language. Spanish is the second most common language in the United States and the language of over half of the nation's non-English speakers. A majority of the Hispanics in the United States are bilingual and likely to retain their Spanish language skills. Although only 31.5% of Hispanics were born outside of the United States, 77 % report Spanish as their primary language and the language they speak at home. Within the communities that speak Spanish, there are cultural, dialectal and regional differences in how the language is spoken and understood.

Religion

In addition to sharing common ancestry of language, a majority of Latinos share a heritage to Catholicism. 77 percent of Latinos in the US are Catholic. The church continues to play a central role in the spiritual life, socialization and dispersement of information throughout Latino communities. Though many families have converted to other religions after immigration to the United States, Catholicism continues to be a cultural influence and plays a central role in the family belief system. Other indigenous Latino groups share a belief in a type of voodoo mysticism that is based in fatalism.

Customs and Courtesies

Greetings

“Bueno” which literally translates as the word, “good” is the typical greeting used when answering the phone. When greeting someone in person, It is customary in professional and personal settings to greet someone with a kiss on the cheek. Latinos tend to greet others with “Buenos Dias” meaning Good Day or Good Morning and Buenas Tardes meaning Good Afternoon when passing somewhere in public.

Gestures/Nuances

Latinos tend to stress the importance of personalismo-personal rather than institutional relationships. The tradition of relating to others on a warm and personal basis. It is focuses on the inner importance of the person and centers attention on the inner qualities of the individual, which constitutes his uniqueness, his goodness, his worth. This form of individualism contrasts with Anglo individualism which values the person in terms of his ability to compete alone for higher social and economic status.

Though personal contact is the norm, the use of eye contact is very gender specific. In traditional terms, a good woman was defined as one that averted her eyes away from other males. Eye contact made by a woman can be perceived as promiscuous. The same is not true for eye contact made by males.

Lifestyle

Family

The family unit is the single most important unit in the Latino culture. It influences the perception and behavior of its members as to how they see the outside world. US 2002 Census data reports that Hispanics live in family households that tend to be larger than those of non-Hispanic whites. Among Hispanic family households, Mexican family households were most likely to have five or more people. Cuban family households were most likely to have only two people. Usually the term "family" is interpreted to mean both immediate and extended family which includes grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins and other adopted close friends. Family relationships are dictated by a definite authority structure of age, sex and role. i.e. Elder over younger, men over women, father over family. The family tends to be very child-oriented and provides children with much warmth, nurturing and support. The Latino child is permitted a great deal of permissiveness when he is very young. The time passage for adulthood is visibly marked (puberty for boys; 15 years for girls). The rights and responsibilities of adulthood are given all at one time.

After puberty, children are taught their respective sexual roles through explicit and implicit teaching by the entire family. Boys are taught that the woman's domain is the kitchen and the man's domain is the outside world. Boys are taught to look after and protect their sisters. They are taught to behave like men, to have adventures, to experiment and to experience life directly. Girls are taught to keep house, help mother, and watch over brothers and sisters. They are taught to be feminine and encouraged to be like mother. They are discouraged from experimenting like their brothers.

Holidays

January 6: Three Kings day; Feb.24: Mexican Flag Day; May 8: Cinco de Mayo; September 15-16: Mexican Independence Day; December 12: Virgen de Guadalupe; December 24: Noche Buena

Recreation

Sunday is day that is reserved as a day of rest and recreation. Families attend mass, gather for meals, social activities and clubs. Many young men gather together to play soccer. Young men and women will gather in segregated gender groups to walk around the village plaza while the older community members will sit on the side and talk. As families acculturate in the United States, new definitions of recreation arise for Latino families however family gatherings and soccer still play a central role.

Society

Space/Proxemics

Latinos desire for closeness is more than the content of verbal exchange, it also has to do with physical space. When interacting with others, Hispanics prefer being closer to each other in space than non-Hispanic whites do. Overall, Hispanics tend to be highly attuned to non-verbal messages and may perceive physical distance as uninterested and detached.

Values

The emphasis on personalismo means that the person is valued over other things. It is more important to give your attention to the person or task at hand than it is to arrive some where at a scheduled time. Latino culture values cooperation, sharing and working together for the good of the group. Familismo and Collectivismo are core values shared amongst Latino groups.

Familismo is placing the needs of the family above the needs of the individual. Collectivismo applies to the Latino's view of community, their role in the community and their preference to belong and work in groups. Latino communities tend to be tightly knit and members rely on one another in much the same way that Anglo Americans regard their extended family.

Another Latino cultural value is that of "respeto." The value of respeto places great social worth and bestows ultimate decision-making power on authority figures such as parents, teachers, leaders, elders and government officials. Out of a sense of respeto, many Hispanics tend to avoid disagreeing or expressing doubts to a person in authority. Associated with this is a cultural taboo against expressing negative feelings directly. This taboo may manifest itself in a person withholding information, not following orders or terminating medical care.

Education

More than two in five Hispanics aged 25 and older have not graduated from high school. More than one-quarter of Hispanics had less than a ninth-grade education (27.0 percent) compared with only 4.0 percent of non-Hispanic whites. The proportion with a bachelor's degree or more was much lower for Hispanics (11.1 percent) than for non-Hispanic white. (29.4 percent)

Among Latinos 25 years or older, other Hispanics, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Central and South Americans were more likely to have at least graduated from high school than were Mexicans.

Health&Medicine

Hispanics tend to view health from a more synergistic point of view. This view is expressed as the continuum of body, mind and espiritu(spirit).

Therefore physical and mental health problems tend to be manifested more psychosomatically. For example, Latinos suffering with depression might experience leg pain that they define as cancer.

There is extensive practice of traditional medicine carried out by curanderas, espiritistas or healers within the Hispanic community. In urbanized barrios, this tradition has been carried out by Hispanic pharmacists familiar with both traditional treatments along with the use of modern prescription medicines. Treatment of health and illness in the Latino community must consider the whole person.

Resources-

For further information on Latino lifestyle and culture, check out these websites.

www.latinoweb.com

www.hispaniconline.com

www.soyunica.gov

www.arte-sana.com

www.nclr.com

Or contact one of these National Latino Organizations:

League of Latin American Citizens(LULAC)

State National Plaza

1809 Hillside

West Delmains, IA 50265

(515)225-6865

MANA National Latina Organization

1725 K Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

(202)833-0060

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UNIT 4

The Essence of Culture

A peek at American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Background:

Terminology and History

As of 2000, there were 557 federally recognized tribes according to the Indian Health Service. While some similarities exist among these groups, there is also significant variation as evidenced by many distinct cultural areas and more than 200 currently spoken American Indian languages. Persons defined as American Indians may also differ greatly by degree of Indian ancestry with 25 percent American Indian blood the most commonly accepted minimum threshold for tribal membership. Tribal groups had specific names for themselves, as well as, linguistic-specific names for other tribes. Within their own language, the names of tribes such as Lakota, Cheyenne, Navajo and Hopi mean “human beings” or “the people.” Within tribes, bands such as “those with burned thighs” or “Eagle” were given specific names that referred to some idiosyncratic or spiritual characteristic. In addition, tribes such as the Lakota referred to other tribes according to stereotyped physical features: the Cheyenne were referred to as Sihiyena (people with a shrill voice), and the Navaho as Sna-hde-hde-ha (those with striped blankets.)

The Federal Government, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), found it necessary to develop the legal definition of an American Indian. The BIA currently defines an American Indian as a person who American Indian blood quantum is at least one-fourth, and/or who is a registered member with one of the 557 federally recognized tribes. The criteria established by the BIA eliminated many people of American Indian background who affiliated with one of some 60 federally nonrecognized tribes, ones that in many cases never signed formal treaties with the Government. Some recognized tribes do not agree with BIA criteria and have developed their own specifications.

People:

Population

Although traditional values permeate the lives of many Natives, they are not a homogeneous group. Natives differ greatly in their commitment to tribal customs and traditional values and in the diversity of their customs, languages, and types of family structure.

As of 2000, the US Census Bureau report indicates that 4.1 million or 1.5 percent of the population report only American Indian or Alaska Native. This number included the 2.5 million people or 0.9 percent, who reported only American Indian and Alaska Native in addition to 1.6 million people, or 0.6 percent, who reported American Indian and Alaska Native as well as one or more other races. Hispanics who reported their race as American Indian and Alaska Native, either alone or in combination with one or more races, are included in the number of American Indians.

Language

There are more than 200 currently spoken American Indian languages.
Many Native American Indians do not speak their Native language.

Religion

Though each tribe varies in terms of their own particular set of beliefs. Native American religion is much better defined in terms of spirituality. Native American Indians look on all things as having life, as having spiritual energy and importance. A fundamental belief is that all things are connected. The universe consists of a balance among all of these things and a continuous flow or cycling of this energy. Native American Indians believe that we have a sacred relationship with the universe that is to be honored. All things are connected, all things have life and all things are worthy of respect.

Spirituality focuses on the harmony that comes from our connection with all parts of the universe in which everything has the purpose and value exemplary of "personhood" including plants, animals, rocks and minerals, the land, the wind, "Father Sky", "Grandfather Sun", "Grandmother Moon" Within this view lies the truest sense of belonging and respect for "all of our relations." Spiritual being essentially requires only that we seek our place in the universe; everything else will follow in good time. Because everyone and everything was created with a specific purpose to fulfill, no one should have the power to interfere or to impose on others the best path to follow.

Customs and Courtesies

Vision Quest

A four day ceremony in which an individual prays for guidance and instruction from the spirits. The details of the quest vary by tribe but they all share a direct faith in which individuals establish through dreams and visions, a personal link with the spirit world. The individual will go off by themselves for four days without food or water seeking their purpose or answers to their prayers after first being prepared through the sweat lodge ritual.

Sweat Lodge

A sweat ritual is required for spiritual and physical purification. The sweat ritual is also used before important ceremonies such as vision quest, as well as, therapy for a variety of ailments. The sweat lodge is also an important time of socialization as participants prepare for the ritual.

Sacreds

Tobacco is regarded as sacred and is a customary gift given to Elders before a ceremony. Tobacco is offered in ceremonies as a prayer of blessings when smoked in the form of a cigarette or in a peace pipe. A pinch of tobacco is tied into a small cloth prayer sack and offered during times of ceremony. A pinch of tobacco can also be scattered on the ground during a prayer ritual.

Sage is considered to be another sacred herb. Sage is lit and the smoke is offered as a blessing during times of prayers, ceremonies and funerals. Other herbs and particular feathers are also regarded as sacred in various tribes.

Lifestyle

Family

One of the most important sources of connection and intrinsic worth is the family. Because Native American Indian Culture is one in which survival of the individual is synonymous with that of the community, the family holds a prominent place in the lives of Native American Indians. Family relationships include much more than the biological connections of the nuclear family. Non-blood relatives are commonly accepted as kin. Also, it is not unusual for a Native American child to live with various relatives throughout the course of their life. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, uncles and community members are all responsible for rearing the children.

In addition to the family, Native Americans experience a unique relationship between the tribe and themselves. The extended family (at least three generations) and tribal group take precedence over all else. Among tribal members, a strong sense of belonging relies on cultural values, social relationships, as well as a sacred sense of connection with one's ancestry and tribal history.

Holidays

There is not one Native American religion rather there are many, each with its own holidays. All, however, are grounded in nature and its rhythms. Only a few of the various holiday celebrations are listed here.

June 20-21: Feast of the Great Spirit/Great Mystery-that encompasses Mother Earth and Father Sky.(Iroquois, Cherokee, Lakota and Zuni)

June 20-23: Lakota/Plains Tribes' Sundance-Festival of Prayer

July 3: Cherokee/Southeastern Tribes' Green Corn Dance-Festival of Thanksgiving

August 20: Birth of the White Buffalo, signaling the return of White Buffalo Woman(Lakota)

September 17-20: Iroquois Squash Ceremony

Communication Style

Native American Indians emphasize a nonverbal communication style. Moderation in speech and avoidance of direct eye contact are nonverbal communicators of respect by the listener, especially for respected elders or authority figures. Traditional Native American Indian people are not rewarded for asking questions or verbally analyzing situations. Rather they are expected to learn through patience and observation. Native Americans usually speak softly and take ample time to reflect before responding. Direct confrontation is avoided because it disrupts the harmony and balance that are essential to being.

Balance and Harmony

The circle, as a sacred symbol, reminds us that what we often see as progression or growth is, indeed cyclical in nature. The entire universe moves and works in circles. Nature progresses only as long as the many ongoing and contingent cycles the permit the process of life continue in such an extraordinary and intricately balanced fashion.

At the very heart of Native American community is the Medicine Wheel representing spirit, nature, body and mind; and constitute the Four Directions represented in the wheel. The Medicine Wheel symbolizes the many circles that surround us, that exist within us and of which we all are a part. It shows us the sacred relationship we have to all living things.

Medicine refers to a way of life. We each have our own Medicine or way of life wherein we choose which of the Four Directions to focus most of our energy and how we seek balance. The Medicine Wheel symbolizes the way things are represented in the Four Directions. Each stands for one aspect of living. East for spiritual, South for natural, West for physical and North for mental. In seeking our Medicine, we are seeking a balance between these Four Directions, between ourselves and the universe. Being in harmony means being in step with the universe; being in disharmony means being out of step with the universe.

Values

Traditional Native cultures reflect values that differ vastly from mainstream Euro-American, middle-class values. Native values include sharing, cooperation, the group and extended family, non-interference, "being", a time orientation toward the present, harmony with nature, preference for explanation of natural phenomena according to the supernatural, and a deep respect for elders. Native value orientation is founded on collectivism, which affirms the value of preserving and enhancing the well-being of the group as the main principle guiding action. The collective orientation emphasizes unification, integration, and fusion. The emphasis is on preserving and strengthening the interdependence of the family, clan and tribes rather than on personal gain or wealth

Education

Traditional Native education encourages the child to observe, followed by mentoring by other youths and adults. The child is then encouraged to perform or demonstrate an understanding. Several traditional activities illustrate this philosophy.

The Talking Circle

Elders emphasize the importance of the "talking circle" approach in educating as the circle is a sacred teaching method. Students can refer to the circle as being similar to the family, the clan and the tribal way, instead of focusing on individual achievement. Youths are expected to understand the value of being modest and not displaying or showing assertiveness. In this activity, individuals form a circle and take turns talking about the "problem" in a nonassertive manner.

The Talking Stick

Understanding and using the idea of the "talking stick" to teach group cooperation and humility is another value that would encourage the humanistic growth of Native youth. The Native youth must be holding the talking stick before he or she is allowed to speak. The talking stick is passed from one to another until closure is reached.

Giveaway

Elders emphasize the need to focus on the Native spiritual way, with the value being an emphasis on "being." This activity includes giving thanks each day for all things and the idea of "giveaway"-to give to others and to teach sharing.

Storytelling

Another traditional Native custom of teaching is through storytelling. A simple story can contain many values of traditional Natives and can be used to teach Native students the cultural expectations for their attitudes and behavior.

Health&Medicine

Most American Indian cultures have a close tie between religious and health beliefs. Healing cannot be separated from culture or religion. Native American beliefs are that humans are made up of body, mind and spirit. Native Americans often view physical or mental health ailments as a symptom of a greater spiritual problem. Treating the spirit often involves understanding why the wound or illness occurred and changing whatever aspect that was out of harmony. Native Americans use Native Medicine Healers and ceremonies regularly in treating ailments. The sweat lodge is frequently used for the treatment of alcoholism, AIDS and other physical ailments.

Resources

For further information about working within the Native American Community, check out these website:

www.manyrivers.bravepages.com

www.nativeweb.org

www.nativeculture.com

Bureau of Indian Affairs at:

www.doi.gov/bia.aitoday/aitody.html

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UNIT 4

The Essence of Culture

A peek at Asian-American Culture

Background:

Terminology and History

The term Asian-American refers to people living in the US whose ancestors were native inhabitants of the Far East, Southeast Asia, India subcontinent and the Pacific Islands. For example, those people from China, India, Japan, Philippine Islands, Hawaii, and Guam. Asian-Americans encompass a diverse group of people from diverse parts of the world and as such, have no common defining features.

There are 32 different nationalities, 43 different ethnic subgroups, and nearly 500 languages and dialects within the Asian-American population.

Large-scale Asian immigration to the US began in the 19th century, when the Immigration Act of 1965 was passed and the national origins quotas systems ended. There had been prior immigration to Hawaii for work on sugar and pineapple plantations. This immigration became a stepping stone for many Asians to the American mainland.

People:

Population

Census 2000 reports that 11.9 million, or 4.2%, of the US population described themselves Asian alone or Asian in combination with one or more other races. 49% of Asian Americans live in the West, 20% in the Northeast, 19% in the South, and 12% in the Midwest. California and Hawaii has the highest Asian-American populations.

Chinese is the largest detailed Asian, followed closely by Filipinos and Asian-Indians.

Language

Within the Asian-American population over 500 languages and dialects are spoken. The only common language amongst most Asian-Americans is English as a second-language. There are 7.0 million who speak an Asian or Pacific island language at home. The most common languages spoken are Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Korean. Chinese is the third most common language spoken at home. Other languages includes Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Thai; the Dravidian languages of India, such as Telegu, Tamil, and Malayalam; and other languages of Asia and the Pacific, including the Philippine, Polynesian, and Micronesian languages. Within the Asian communities, there are cultural, dialectal, and regional differences in how language is spoken and understood.

Religion

The main religions practiced in the Asian-American community are Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism and Shintoism.

Within these religions is much diversity. Hinduism and Shintoism are polytheist religions characterized by the belief in and worship of many gods, whereas Islam and Christianity are monotheist religions. Confucianism is a belief system that does not believe in a god, but mainly outlines principles of life.

Different groups vary in how religious they are. On the whole, the Japanese aren't very religious, though they do honor old teachings and social tradition. Religion on the other hand is very important for Asian Indians. China and Vietnam are both officially atheist countries.

Customs and Courtesies

Greetings

Asians, in general, would prefer not to interact with strangers so they commonly use a "go-between". When making a first contact, try to use established relationships or a mutual friend. When meeting someone for the first time, Asians prefer to be formally introduced. Because Asians are taught not to show excessive emotion or affection, to Americans they may seem to be unfriendly. Always stand up when being introduced and remain standing throughout the introductions. The most common and accepted form of greeting is a handshake. Some Chinese may nod or bow slightly. Chinese bow from the shoulders and Japanese bow from the waist. Some Indians may place their hands together in prayer form as a greeting and say "Namaste", meaning hello.

Gestures/Nuances

To find commonalities, many Asians see no problem asking personal questions regarding age, children, marital status, and income. While this seems very inappropriate to Westerners, Asians do not consider this line of questioning rude. On the other hand, while Westerners commonly touch a new acquaintance by patting them on the back or putting an arm around their shoulder, this is very uncomfortable for Asians. Asians also prefer to stick with formal names rather than nicknames or shortened versions of names. Asian custom considers accepting and giving praise poor etiquette, so compliments are not generally graciously accepted as they are with Americans and Westerners.

It is also customary in most Asian cultures to remove one's shoes when entering the home. When visiting homes, guests bring gifts of flowers or wine or candy.

Lifestyle

Family

Family is very important in Asian American culture. When speaking of family, the term often extends to include extended family, even if all members live in different locations. There is a strong sense of duty and concern for the family, before one's self. A person's actions reflect on the family, both positively and negatively. Family business is kept

within the family showing that there is a familial sense of privacy and closeness. However, as far as affection and personal closeness, most Asian-American families tend to have more distance than American families. Love and affection are not as overtly expressed in the Asian culture as they are in the Western culture.

Family relationships often operate according to traditional roles and patriarchy. Elders have more authority than younger, men over women, and the father over the family. Divorce and single-parenthood are rare.

Holidays

Of course each religion and each nation has many of its own unique holidays and celebrations. All Asian people celebrate the New Year; however they may have different names for the holiday. For example, the Japanese celebrate shogatsu, the Vietnamese call the holiday Tet, and in China it is simply referred to as the Chinese New Year. Ramadan is an Islamic holiday characterized by fasting. Increasingly, Asian people are celebrating Western holidays such as Valentines Day and Christmas. In Hawaii and many of the Pacific Islands, nearly every holiday celebrated has a Western origin. Amongst Hindus in India, Diwali is very significant holiday, meaning the "Festival of Lights".

Recreation

Martial arts are a common past time in Asian countries. Badminton and table tennis are also common sports in Asia. Of course, many of the sports common in Western nations are also common in Asian nations. Asians are active participants in many Olympic sports. Also, cricket is very common in India. Asians also enjoy board games such as chess and checkers and card games, in particular, this associated with the zodiac or horoscopes. The movie industry in India is huge. Indians go to movies about 3 billion times a year, nearly twice as much as Americans. Comics are a favorite past time of Japan as about 3 quarters of Japanese kids read them.

Society

Space/Proxemics

The Asian comfort zone regarding personal distance or "personal space," like most cultures, is much closer than that of the Americans. For this reason, when stepped away from, Asians tend to step in closer. However, Asians do not like to be touched, especially by strangers or new acquaintances. Asians do not form lines when in public places and are not particularly courteous to strangers. Westerners should not be offended if they are pushed or shoved in a line, as this is not common practice among Asians. As a gesture of friendship, it is not uncommon to see people of the same sex holding hands while walking on the street. There are some gestures that Westerners use that are offending to Asians. These include: pointing or motioning for someone with the index finger, snapping fingers, and whistling. Some gestures used by Asians are not common or accepted in Western nations. These include: belching or spitting in public places, smoking in unacceptable places, slurping while eating and talking with food in their mouths.

Values

Asian-American traditions emphasize family solidarity, discipline, hard work and schooling. They value educational achievement, responsibility for relatives, and respect for authority. Along with respect for authority, there is also a strong sense of respect for the elderly. Grandparents are cared after and looked up to and often live in the same households as the immediate families. Self-effacement, self-control, and deferred gratification are also strong values embedded in the Asian-American culture.

Asian-Americans also tend to not dwell on upsetting thoughts—reticence or avoidance is thought better than outward expression. Asian-American children are socialized to listen more than speak, speak in soft voices, and assume modesty in dress and behavior.

Key Concepts in East Asia

Guanxi - Throughout much of Chinese history, the fundamental glue that has held society together is the concept of *guanxi*, relationships between people.

Mianxi - Face - Losing face, saving face and giving face is very important and should be taken into consideration at all times.

Li - Originally *li* meant to sacrifice, but today it is translated as the art of being polite and courteous. Proper etiquette preserves harmony and face.

Keqi - *Ke* means guest and *qi* means behavior. It not only means considerate, polite, and well mannered, but also represents humbleness and modesty.

Education

In 2000, 44% of Asian-American adults have a college or professional degree compared to 28% of white Americans. Of this group, 58% were South Asian Americans (from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka). The average literacy rate in Asia is 74.21% with Japan leading at 99%. Asian-American children of high school age generally outscore other students on the SATs and their overall grades are higher. They also make up a disproportionately large portion of the populations at prominent colleges and universities.

This reflects more on the value of hard work and discipline emphasized in academics placed on by the Asian-American culture, than an innate ability that Asian-Americans are "naturally smarter".

Unlike American culture, much less emphasis or value is placed on athletics as academics is seen as more beneficial and esteemed.

Health & Medicine

Asian-Americans tend to place a higher emphasis on suppression of affect and generally rely on themselves to cope with distress, rather than seek medical attention. Shame and stigma are believed to figure in the lower utilization rates of medical resources.

Southeast Asians in general, and Hmong in particular, typically seek treatment only as a last resort after their indigenous practices have proved unsuccessful. Southeast Asians are often adamant in refusing to undergo surgery, hospitalization, or common Western medical procedures.

Teas, especially green teas, are popular in Asia and often connected with their general good health. Asians have lower incidents of obesity, cancer and heart disease as compared to Americans.

HERBAL REMEDIES ARE COMMONLY USED IN THE ASIAN CULTURE. YOGA AND VEGETARIANISM ARE PARTICULARLY STRESSED IN INDIA.

Resources-

Ramadam, The Month of Fasting. 5/3/04. [http://www.islam-australia.com.au/revert/information ram adam.htm](http://www.islam-australia.com.au/revert/information%20ram%20adam.htm)

Holidays of the Vietnamese. 5/3/04.
http://www.askasia.org/Vietnam_Challenge/cumc/middle/20.htm

China: Dim Sum: A Connection to Chinese-American Culture. "Celebrations, Holidays, and Customs. 5/3/04. [http://www.newton.mec.edu/Angier/Dim Sum/china dim sum celebratio.html](http://www.newton.mec.edu/Angier/Dim%20Sum/china%20dim%20sum_celebratio.html)

Etiquette and Protocol. Protocol Professionals. 5/3/04.
http://www.protocolprofessionals.com/articles_china.htm

<http://www.census.gov>

Cultural, race, and ethnicity: Fact sheets.
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre/fact2.asp>

<http://www.nationmaster.com>

UNIT 4

The Essence of Culture

A peek at European-American Culture

Background:

Terminology and History

According to www.census.gov the term “white” refers to people having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who reported “white” or wrote in entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Near Easterner, Arab, or Polish. European Americans are an eclectic mix of people, originating from all over Europe. Data on race has been collected since the first U.S. decennial census in 1790. Whites have been specified in every census.

European Americans do not come from one specific country but are based on European immigrants’ experience in the United States. Therefore, as you can see European Americans are a complex group of people.

The U.S. is and always has been considered a country of religious, personal and political freedoms because of this many people facing persecution in Europe and other countries have sought out the U.S. as a place of freedom. Along with persecution in Europe many immigrants from the 1900’s came from countries facing famine and even political unrest. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, immigration boomed.

People:

Population

The 2000 Census showed that the United States population on April 1, 2000 was 281.4 million and of that 77.1% reported white. This number includes 75.1% who reported only white in addition to 1.9% who reported white as well as one or more other races. The census asked separate questions on race and Hispanic or Latino origin. Hispanics, who reported their race as white, either alone or in combination with one or more other races, are included in the numbers for whites.

The population of the U.S. is the third largest in the world and continually growing.

Language

English is the predominant language of the U.S. and is spoken by most people. It is often referred to as American English because of the spelling and pronunciation variations from British English. Spoken English is flexible, while written English is more standardized. Many, first, second, and third generation immigrants also speak their native tongue.

Though European Americans are descendants of many different European countries the common language in the U.S. is Standard English. However, statistics from the 2000 census suggests that perhaps many people that choose "white" and are considered European American may speak any number of different languages or different dialects of English. Most European Americans have continued a written tradition of communication but currently that tradition is changing to a more visual communication.

Religion

European Americans share a common belief if not a common religion. Christianity is the most commonly accepted belief in the U.S. History shows that the country was founded on religious freedom, however, Christianity is the social norm and to deviate from this is not looked highly upon by many of the people in the U.S. Though there is a new trend that has been publicized about celebrities taking up new and different religions.

Early European settlers were primarily Christian, and the Constitution and Bill of Rights are based, in part, on Christian values and principles. There are also substantial numbers of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and other non-Christians. Approximately 40 and 50 percent of Americans attend religious services weekly. About 10 percent have no religious affiliation.

Customs and Courtesies

Greetings

Men and women usually smile and shake hands when greeting. Good friends and relatives generally embrace when meeting after a long absence. In casual situations people may wave. Americans may greet strangers in the street with a hello or good morning. Friends in passing often ask *how are you?* and respond *fine, thanks*. Americans generally do not expect any further answer to the question.

Gestures/ Nuances

European Americans have a strict and rigid adherence to time. Their lives are ruled by the clock, and very routine. For European Americans time is viewed as a commodity not to be wasted. Along with this comes a very protestant work ethic that working hard brings success.

European Americans have a personal space limit. There is limited physical contact among this group. Personal space is very important. Some other nuances include beauty in the European American world. In this group women's beauty is based but is not limited to blonde, blue-eyed, thin, and young. Men's attractiveness is based on athletic ability, power, and economic status. European Americans are progress and future oriented. They plan for the future and have goals. Often because of this there is delayed gratification and European Americans have come to expect delayed gratification. They value continual improvement and progress.

Lifestyle

Family

The American family is the basic unit of society but has been changing. A generation ago a family consisted of a mother, father and 2.5 children, and this nuclear family often maintained important ties to extended family. However, only about one-fourth of all households consist of a mother, father, and one or two children. More common families consist of single parent families and unmarried couples with or without children. One-third of all children are born out of wedlock in the U.S. Traditionally a generation ago the men were the money makers, however now nearly half of working Americans are women. Most men are playing more of a role in the household chores in the family, however, women still expected to perform most of the domestic duties. The American family is mobile often moving from one region of the country to another.

Holidays

Holidays are based on the Christian religion and also based on white history and male leaders. January 1: New Year's Day; January 6: Epiphany; February 2: Groundhog's Day; February 14: Valentine's Day; March 17: St. Patrick's Day; April: Good Friday; April: Easter; May 1: May Day; August 15: Feast of the Assumption; October 31: Halloween; November 1: All Saints Day; December 8: Immaculate Conception; December 25: Christmas; December 26: Boxing Day

Recreation

Sundays in the past were days of rest and recreation, but in recent times have changed. Sundays tend to be a day for work, whether it is at a job or working around the house. For fun, they do any number of activities. It could range from watching a movie with family and friends to playing a game of football. They tend to enjoy social events whether it is with family or with friends.

Society:

Values

There are a multitude of values for European-Americans, but there are a specific few at the core. A major value is individual freedom. The individual is the primary unit and values himself as the primary responsibility. This is a value that has developed because of the type of government in the United States. It is a human right to have freedom, and they believe in this right. Independence and autonomy are highly valued and rewarded. Another major value is the right to an education. From the time of childhood, all Americans are guaranteed the opportunity to get an education through high school. Three in every four European-Americans graduate from high school. Since many students are encouraged to study outside of the classroom as well, lifelong learning is valued as well. From the Protestant heritage they believe they have the responsibility to improve themselves, be all that they can be to develop their talents and to help their neighbors. They believe that working hard brings about successes even if the gratification is delayed. They believe in a plan for the future and value continual improvements and progress. Another aspect of the European-American values is the family. The nuclear family is a very important entity. The purpose of the family is to make each member of the family happy. The family members value love and respect for each other member of the family. This allows the each member to disagree with the other members, giving each member the right to individual happiness. The biggest honor a guest can have is to be treated like a member of the family.

Communication

European-Americans communicate with the Standard English language. They believe that direct eye contact is very important and the lack of direct eye contact is considered rude. They limit physical contact and control their emotions.

Health & Medicine

European-Americans value their health and the healthcare systems. More than 240 million people in America have health insurance. Many of the people in America who lack health insurance are in certain demographics and few that lack it are European-Americans. Health care and health are very important and have grown in importance in recent years due to the growing knowledge of health.

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- www.cbo.gov

UNIT 4

The Essence of Culture

A peek at Middle-Eastern Culture

Background:

Terminology and History

The Middle East is the region of the world which is made up of all Arab countries on the Asian continent, and Iran. All people who come from these countries are considered Middle-Eastern.

There are a total of 12 different Arab countries in the region: Oman, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. Iran is the only country in the region which is not Arab.

Arabs mostly originated in the very region of the world which they live in as desert-faring Bedouins and very few of them have other origins, such as African or in the case of Lebanon, European origin. The Iranians, otherwise known as the Persians, are from the Aryan race and have a direct ancestral relationship to the Germans.

People:

Population

As of 2000, the US Census Bureau report indicates that there are 1,202,871 people of Arab origin in the US, approximately 1 million of those are of Middle-Eastern origin. Among those Arabs, 36% are Lebanese, 12% are Iraqi, 12% are Syrian, 6% are Palestinian, and 3% are Jordanian, with the rest being of other Middle-Eastern or non-Middle-Eastern origin. There are also 338,266 Iranians in the US.

Language

All Arabs, regardless of which country they are from, speak a common language called Arabic. There are very minor differences in the grammar and uses of words (much like differences between British and American uses of English). Iranians also speak a common language called Farsi (a.k.a. Persian, Iranian). Farsi has a significant amount of

influence from the Arabic language and many Arabic words can be found in the language. Most Iranians, unlike Arabs, also have a second language depending on the region of the country they live in. The most common second languages are Turkish in the North West and Arabic in the West and South of the country.

The majority of Arab-Americans and Iranian-Americans retain use of their mother tongue at home but unfortunately, the languages are forgotten several generations later.

Religion

The predominant religion in the Middle-East is Islam. The percentage of the population in each country that practices Islam varies from country to country. This percentage is also different for different sects, the 2 most common being Sunni and Shi'a (Iran, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon). The distribution is as follows: Saudi Arabia 100%, Bahrain 100%, Iran 99%, Yemen 99%, Oman 99%, Iraq 97%, UAE 96%, Qatar 95%, Jordan 94%, Syria 90%, Kuwait 85%, Lebanon 70%, and Palestine (West Bank 75%, Gaza Strip 98.7%). In almost all of the Middle-Eastern countries, religion and government are integrated. Many of the laws which are present follow the guiding of Islam. Furthermore, Islam continues to be a cultural influence and plays a central role in the belief system. The next major religion in the Middle-East is Christianity followed by Judaism. The other religious groups present include the Zoroastrians.

Customs and Courtesies

Greetings

“Asalam wa alaikum”, “Salam wa alaikum”, and “Salam” are 3 typical greetings which all have the same origin. They all come from the word “Islam”, which means “Peace”. Other greetings include “Sabah e-kheir” in Arabic or “Sobh bekheir” in Farsi, which mean “Good Morning” and “Messa' e-kheir” and “Shab bekheir”, which mean “Good Evening”. It is customary for men to greet men and for women to greet women with kisses on both cheeks. Physical contact between men and women (who are not 1st degree family) is forbidden in Islam so any of the 3 greetings mentioned are considered sufficient.

Gestures/Nuances

Middle-Eastern culture stresses the importance of personal relationships. This is the way of Islam. It is very important to know a person well and to value him for what he is. Inner

qualities and values are representative of a person. This was the way of the prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him). The prophet lived the most simple of lives even though he had the wealth of a nation in his reach. This is unlike the western view that life accomplishments are what identify a person.

Eye contact in Middle-Eastern culture is also very important. People of the same sex generally make direct eye contact though, unless one person is significantly older in which case the younger person generally looks down as a sign of respect. Men and women tend to avert eye contact with each other and so it is common to see a man and woman speaking to each other whilst looking in different directions. Direct eye contact between men and women may be perceived as promiscuous by either gender.

Lifestyle

Family

Families are the most important groups in Middle-Eastern culture. This greatly influences the way individuals view the world because they tend to view it in a way which will benefit the whole as opposed to the individual. Middle-Eastern families tend to be very large compared to families from other regions in the world although the number of members per family is decreasing in lieu of the progressive westernization of the culture. The number of members per household has decreased from around 12 to around 6 in the past decade or so and continues to decrease from generation to generation. The reason for large families is because polygamy is encouraged in Islam due to women outnumbering men in old times. Polygamy is rarely practiced in the Middle-East anymore and many countries have made it illegal.

One difference in families of the Middle-East and other parts of the world is the use of the word itself. In most western countries, family is used to refer to parents, siblings and children only. In the Middle-East, the word family refers to the immediate family as well as more distant family, as far as 2nd or 3rd cousins. This signifies the importance of the role of family in the culture.

Holidays

March 21: (Farvardin 1): Norooz (New day, pronounced: No Rooz), Iranian new year;
April 1: (Farvardin 12) Islamic Republic Day; Shawwal 1: (Nov. 25 2003) Eid Al Fitr (End of fasting month of Ramadan); Dhu al-Hijjah 10: (Feb. 1 2004) Eid Al Adha;
Muharram 1: (Feb. 22 2004) Islamic New Year.

Recreation

Friday is the day reserved in Islam for attending prayers at the Mosque. It is equivalent to Sundays in the Western world. On this day, after attending Friday prayers, families gather at one sibling's house each week and usually have lunch or go out together for a picnic or a trip somewhere. It is rare for couples to go out alone on Fridays unless they have no immediate family living with them. During these family gatherings, everyone gets together by age group and has their own activity. If it is a picnic, the younger ones play soccer, the elders sit around to talk and maybe smoke "shisha"¹. Even for those Middle-Easterners living in the US, these gatherings are still common and are one of the parts of the culture that is retained throughout the generations.

Society

Space/Proxemics

The amount of space between you and the person you are talking to can say a great deal in the Middle-East. It is common to sit very close to the person you are talking to. Not doing so may show that you are uninterested in the conversation and may offend the other person. When speaking to elders, it is tradition to sit either directly across from, or directly next to the person. When speaking to peers or younger people, it is common to sit closer than in the Western world.

Values

The emphasis on personal relationships in Islam and the Middle-East mean that the person is valued greatly for whom he is and for what he does for the benefit of the whole, be it family or society. This means that in order to be regarded highly, a Middle-Eastern person must be active in providing support for first his family, and then for the community and the society. Personal wealth and riches have no place in determining the amount of respect a person gets. Someone who has an average income, but spends much of it to help society gets more respect than someone who is extremely rich, but keeps it all to himself.

As for respect, it is given almost without question to elders. This means that if an elder has a belief or makes a decision, it is not regarded as polite to disagree with that belief or

decision. An elder has more experience and thus knows what he or she is doing. It is also taboo to express negative feelings to any person directly and publicly. Disagreements must be solved in the most discreet and quiet manner possible. Nobody will be shown his or her faults in public. Instead, they will be taken aside and informed of their mistakes at a later time.

Education

The average rate of literacy in the Middle-East is about 75%. The highest rate belongs to Jordan, at 91.3%, and the lowest to Iraq, at 40.4%. Amongst the High-School graduates in the Middle-East, an average of around 18% enrolls in post-secondary institutions such as universities. The highest rate belongs to Lebanon, at 42.3%, and the lowest to Syria, at 6.1%².

Health & Medicine

The use of traditional cures for diseases and illnesses is extremely common in the Middle-East. The majority of these cures have been proven to be effective. These treatments are carried out by elders, notably grandmothers and there are many shops that can be found that exclusively sell herbal medicines. Modern medicine is also used extensively and is becoming more and more common as more effective cures are discovered for certain diseases.

Resources:

For further information on Middle-Eastern lifestyle and culture, check out these websites:

<http://www.persianweb.com>

http://www.daftar.org/Eng/aboutiran_eng.asp?lang=eng

<http://www.cal.org/projects/webtest/ArabicWebsites.html>

<http://www.arabinfoseek.com/>

² These rates reflect the percentages that attend post-secondary institutions in the country itself. Many students attend university or college in countries such as (but not restricted to) the USA, Canada, or the UK.

Or contact one of these national organizations:

American Iranian Council
20 Nassau Street, Suite 111
Princeton, NJ 08542 USA
Phone: ++1.609.252.9099
Fax: ++1.609.252.9698
Email: aic@american-iranian.org

Arab American Institute
1600 K Street NW, Suite 601
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 429-9210
Fax: (202) 429-9214

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