

Culture differences essay sample

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Introduction about Culture

The word “ culture” could be defined in two ways. One way to define culture is simply describe it as the trends passed onto another generation. An online dictionary provides that culture is the “ totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human works and thoughts. “ Culture is also defined as the gifts invented by our ancestors, as culture is often referred to as the “ patterns, traits, and products considered as the expression of a particular period, community, or population.” Culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts.

Today, in the United States as in other countries populated largely by immigrants, the culture is influenced by the many groups of people that now make up the country. Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people. Culture is communication, communication is culture.

Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person’s learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning. A culture is a way of life of a group of people–the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept,

generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity is the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to monoculture, as in the global monoculture, or a homogenization of cultures, akin to cultural decay. The phrase cultural diversity can also refer to having different cultures respect each other's differences. The phrase "cultural diversity" is also sometimes used to mean the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region, or in the world as a whole. The culturally destructive action of globalization is often said to have a negative effect on the world's cultural diversity. In the past generations, most workers at least most American workers could spend their entire career without encountering people from different backgrounds. But those days are past. The world is entering a period in which cultural diversity is a fact of everyday life.

Consider the statistics, Today American born white males constitute only 45% of U. S. work force; over the next few years, that figure will decline to 39%. In the period from today until the year 2014, women minorities, and immigrants will constitute 84% of the new entrants into the American work place. By the turn of the century, minorities will make up 25% of the population of the United States of America. English will be the second Language for more than half of California's population. Sometime in the next century, whites will become the minority of the population in the United States. As these figures suggest, the culturally diverse workplace of the 1990s differs from that of earlier generations. Changing demographics means that more of us can expect to work with people who come from <https://assignbuster.com/culture-differences-essay-sample/>

different backgrounds and thus have different customs and attitudes. This growing cultural diversity has the potential for disaster or benefit. Cultural Communication

Communication is the sending and receiving of information and often is what trips up people. What people mean by “good communication” is very personal. Edward Hall (Culture Matters), the noted interculturalist maintains that culture is undergirded by communication. Thus, cultural-communication is a basic building block of leadership. When people from different ethnic groups are in a team, this is called intercultural communication. Many people expect challenges in these settings. However, miscommunication often happens even when people are from similar cultures. In the cross-cultural context, like everything else, communication is even more complex. It is almost impossible to send a message that does not have at least some cultural content whether it is in words, the way it is said, or in the nonverbal signals that accompany them. Even if it were possible to send a message without it having a cultural content, it would be impossible to receive without having a cultural content. Thus, good communication is in the ear of the receiver.

Intercultural miscommunication draws on the fact that all humans subconsciously reflect their cultural backgrounds in day to day communication. Culture does not just lie in the way one eats or dresses, but in the manner in which they present themselves as an entity to the outside world. Language is a huge proponent of communication, as well as a large representation of one’s cultural background. Cultural miscommunication often stems from different and conflicting styles of speech and messages. A <https://assignbuster.com/culture-differences-essay-sample/>

perfectly normal intonation pattern for a native German speaker may seem angry and aggressive to a foreign listener. Connotations of words, as well as meanings of slang phrases vary greatly across cultural lines, and a lack of tolerance and understanding of this fact often results in misinterpretations

The Nature of Culture

Culture is based on the uniquely human capacity to classify experiences, encode such classifications symbolically, and teach such abstractions to others. It is usually acquired through enculturation, the process through which an older generation induces and compels a younger generation to reproduce the established lifestyle; consequently, culture is embedded in a person's way of life. Culture is difficult to quantify, because it frequently exists at an unconscious level, or at least tends to be so pervasive that it escapes everyday thought. This is one reason that anthropologists tend to be skeptical of theorists who attempt to study their own culture. Anthropologists employ fieldwork and comparative, or cross-cultural, methods to study various cultures. Ethnographies may be produced from intensive study of another culture, usually involving protracted periods of living among a group.

Ethnographic fieldwork generally involves the investigator assuming the role of participant-observer: gathering data by conversing and interacting with people in a natural manner and by observing people's behavior unobtrusively. Ethnologies use specialized monographs in order to draw comparisons among various cultures.

Different Country Different Culture

The best way for anybody to become educated about the world around him

is to experience the world first hand; to see the different cultures and lifestyles up and close. This allows the person to step out of their box; out of their shelter that they know and have learned to be what life is and see a completely different world that might show them how different life can be and how different cultures value different things that might have a big impact on that person's life. A person is going to become more educated in the fact that they will have been exposed to different ideas and has learned to see the world through different eyes. They can assess a situation differently with the knowledge that it can be done differently. It can also change the types of decisions that they make, due to what they have learned while in a different country. In cases where people are trying to learn a second language the best thing to do, is to visit the country who's language they are studying and stay there for a month or so. This is the best way to learn a new language because they are exposed to this language all day every day for the next part of their life.

There are some differences between Australia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Germany, and Mexico.

Facts of Australia.

Location: Oceania, continent between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific

Ocean Capital: Canberra

Climate: Generally arid to semiarid; temperate in south and east; tropical in north

Population: 19, 913, 144 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Caucasian 92%, Asian 7%, aboriginal and other 1%

Religions: Anglican 26. 1%, Roman Catholic 26%, other Christian 24. 3%,

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non-Christian 11%, other 12. 6%

Government: democratic, federal-state system recognizing the British monarch as sovereign Languages in Australia

English is the primary language used in Australia. Yet their colourful vocabulary, accent, phonetics system and slang (' Strine') can take a lot of getting used to. In 1788, there were about 250 separate Aboriginal languages spoken in Australia, plus dialects. Today, only two thirds of these languages survive and only 20 of them (eight per cent of the original 250) are still strong enough to have chance of surviving well into the next century. In addition to these there are also the languages of immigrants from Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Facts of Saudi Arabia

Location: The Middle East, bordering Iraq 814 km, Jordan 744 km, Kuwait 222 km, Oman 676 km, Qatar 60 km, UAE 457 km, Yemen 1, 458 km Capital: Riyadh

Climate: harsh, dry desert with great temperature extremes

Population: 25, 795, 938 including 5, 576, 076 non-nationals (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Arab 90%, Afro-Asian 10%

Religions: Muslim 100%

Government: monarchy

Language in Saudi Arabia

Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia, but English is widely spoken. It is used in business and is a compulsory second language in schools. Among the non-Saudi population, many people speak Urdu, the official language of <https://assignbuster.com/culture-differences-essay-sample/>

Pakistan, and other Asian languages such as Farsi and Turkish. Arabic is spoken by almost 200 million people in more than 22 countries. It is the language of the Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam, and of Arab poetry and literature. While spoken Arabic varies from country to country, classical Arabic has remained unchanged for centuries. In Saudi, there are differences between the dialects spoken in urban areas and those spoken in rural areas.

Facts of Egypt

Location: North East Africa bordering Palestine (Gaza Strip) 11 km, Israel 266 km, Libya 1, 115 km, Sudan 1, 273 km Capital: Cairo

Climate: desert; hot, dry summers with moderate winters

Population: 76, 117, 421 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Eastern Hamitic stock (Egyptians, Bedouins, and Berbers) 99%, Greek, Nubian, Armenian, other European (primarily Italian and French) 1% Religions: Muslim(mostly Sunni) 94%, Coptic Christian and other 6%

Government: republic

Language in Egypt

For almost 13 centuries Arabic has been the written and spoken language of Egypt. Before the Arab invasion in AD 639, Coptic, the language descended from ancient Egyptian, was the language of both religious and everyday life for the mass of the population; by the 12th century, however, it had been totally replaced by Arabic, continuing only as a liturgical language for the Coptic Orthodox Church. Arabic has become the language of both the Egyptian Christian and Muslim. The written form of the Arabic language, in grammar and syntax, has remained substantially unchanged since the 7th century. In other ways, however, the written language has changed the <https://assignbuster.com/culture-differences-essay-sample/>

modern forms of style, word sequence, and phraseology are simpler and more flexible than in classical Arabic and are often directly derivative of English or French.

Facts of Germany

Location: Central Europe, bordering Austria 784 km, Belgium 167 km, Czech Republic 646 km, Denmark 68 km, France 451 km, Luxembourg 138 km, Netherlands 577 km, Poland 456 km, Switzerland 334 km

Capital: Berlin

Climate: temperate and marine; cool, cloudy, wet winters and summers; occasional warm mountain (foehn) wind

Population: 82, 424, 609 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: German 91. 5%, Turkish 2. 4%, other 6. 1% (made up largely of Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish)

Religions: Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3. 7%, unaffiliated or other 28. 3% Government: federal republic

Languages in Germany

The official language of Germany is German, with over 95% of the population speaking German as their first language. Minority languages include Sorbian, spoken by 0. 09% in the east of Germany; North and West Frisian, spoken around the Rhine estuary by around 10, 000 people, or 0. 01%, who also speak German. Danish is spoken by 0. 06%, mainly in the area along the Danish border. Romani, an indigenous language is spoken by around 0. 08%. Immigrant languages include Turkish, which is spoken by around 1. 8%, and Kurdish, by 0. 3%. Why not learn some useful German phrases or watch this video on the German language for translations.

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Facts of Mexico

Location: Middle America, bordering the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, between Belize and the US and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Guatemala and the US

Capital: Mexico City

Climate: varies from tropical to desert

Population: 104, 959, 594 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 60%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian 30%, white 9%, other 1%

Religions: nominally Roman Catholic 89%, Protestant 6%, other 5%

Government: federal republic

Language in Mexico

Spanish control of Mexico led to the dominance of Spanish, the official language. As many as 100 Native American languages are still spoken in Mexico, but no single alternative language prevails. Eighty percent of those Mexicans who speak an indigenous language also speak Spanish. The most important of the Native American languages is Nahuatl. It is the primary language of more than a million Mexicans and is spoken by nearly one-fourth of all Native Americans in the country. This is followed by Maya, used by 14 percent of Native Americans, and Mixteco and Zapoteco, each spoken by about seven percent of Native Americans. No other indigenous language is spoken by more than five percent of Mexico's Native Americans. Society and Cultural Difference

In Saudi Arabia

Islam

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Islam is practiced by all Saudis and governs their personal, political, economic and legal lives. Islam was born in Saudi Arabia and thus is visited by millions of Muslims every year. The Prophet Muhammad is seen as the last of God's emissaries (following in the footsteps of Jesus, Moses, Abraham, etc) to bring revelation to mankind. He was distinguished with bringing a message for the whole of mankind, rather than just to a certain peoples. As Moses brought the Torah and Jesus the Bible, Muhammad brought the last book, the Quran. The Quran and the actions of the Prophet (the Sunnah) are used as the basis for all guidance in the religion. Among certain obligations for Muslims are to pray five times a day – at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. The exact time is listed in the local newspaper each day. Friday is the Muslim holy day. Everything is closed. Many companies also close on Thursday, making the weekend Thursday and Friday.

During the holy month of Ramadan all Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk and are only permitted to work six hours per day. Fasting includes no eating, drinking, cigarette smoking, or gum chewing. Expatriates are not required to fast; however, they must not eat, drink, smoke, or chew gum in public.

Each night at sunset, families and friends gather together to celebrate the breaking of the fast (iftar). The festivities often continue well into the night. In general, things happen more slowly during Ramadan. Many businesses operate on a reduced schedule. Shops may be open and closed at unusual times.

Family Values

The family and tribe are the basis of the social structure. As is seen in their

naming conventions, Saudis are cognizant of their heritage, their clan, and their extended family, as well as their nuclear family. Saudis take their responsibilities to their family quite seriously. Families tend to be large and the extended family is quite close. The individual derives a social network and assistance in times of need from the family. Nepotism is considered a good thing, since it implies that employing people one knows and trusts is of primary importance.

In Egypt

Islam

Islam is practiced by the majority of Egyptians and governs their personal, political, economic and legal lives. Islam emanated from what is today Saudi Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad is seen as the last of God's emissaries (following in the footsteps of Jesus, Moses, Abraham, etc) to bring revelation to mankind. He was distinguished with bringing a message for the whole of mankind, rather than just to a certain peoples. As Moses brought the Torah and Jesus the Bible, Muhammad brought the last book, the Quran. The Quran and the actions of the Prophet (the Sunnah) are used as the basis for all guidance in the religion. Among certain obligations for Muslims are to pray five times a day – at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening. The exact time is listed in the local newspaper each day. Friday is the Muslim holy day. Everything is closed. Many companies also close on Thursday, making the weekend Thursday and Friday.

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Family Values

The family is the most significant unit of Egyptian society. Kinship plays an important role in all social relations.

The individual is always subordinate to the family, tribe or group. Nepotism is viewed positively, since it is patronage of one's family. The family consists of both the nuclear and the extended family.

In Germany

A Planning Culture

In many respects, Germans can be considered the masters of planning. This is a culture that prizes forward thinking and knowing what they will be doing at a specific time on a specific day. Careful planning, in one's business and personal life, provides a sense of security. Rules and regulations allow people to know what is expected and plan their life accordingly. Once the proper way to perform a task is discovered, there is no need to think of doing it any other way.

The German Home

Germans take great pride in their homes. They are kept neat and tidy at all times, with everything in its appointed place. In a culture where most

communication is rather formal, the home is the place where one can relax and allow your individualism to shine In Australia

The initial population of Australia was made up of Aborigines and people of British and Irish descent. After World War II there was heavy migration from Europe, especially from Greece, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Lebanon, and Turkey. This was in response to the Australian policy of proactively trying to attract immigrants to boost the population and work force. In the last thirty years, Australia has liberalized its immigration policy and opened its borders to South East Asia. This has caused a real shift in self-perception as Aussies begin to re-define themselves as a multi-cultural and multi-faith society rather than the old homogenous, white, Anglo- Saxon, Protestant nation

In Mexico

Outside of the major cosmopolitan cities, families are still generally large. The extended family is as important as the nuclear family since it provides a sense of stability. Mexicans consider it their duty and responsibility to help family members. For example, they will help find employment or finance a house or other large purchase. Mexicans emphasize hierarchical relationships.

People respect authority and look to those above them for guidance and decision-making. Rank is important, and those above you in rank must always be treated with respect.

Business Meeting Etiquette Difference

In Saudi Arabia

Appointments are necessary and should be made several weeks to one month in advance if at all possible. When meeting with government officials, a firm date will not be settled upon until you are physically in the country.

Try to schedule meetings in the morning.

You should arrive at meetings on time, although it is an accepted custom to keep foreigners waiting. It is not uncommon to have a meeting cancelled once you arrive.

In Egypt

Appointments are necessary and should be made in advance. Confirm the meeting one week in advance, either in writing or by telephone. Reconfirm again a day or two before the meeting.

In Germany

Appointments are mandatory and should be made 1 to 2 weeks in advance. Letters should be addressed to the top person in the functional area, including the person's name as well as their proper business title. If you write to schedule an appointment, the letter should be written in German. Meetings are generally formal.

In Australia

Appointments are necessary and relatively easy to schedule. They should be made with as much lead time as possible. Punctuality is important in business situations. It is better to arrive a few minutes early than to keep someone waiting. Meetings are generally relaxed; however, they are serious events.

In Mexico

Business appointments are required and should be made at least 2 weeks in advance. Reconfirm the appointment one week before the meeting.

Meetings may be postponed with little advance warning.

Initial meetings are formal. Have all written material available in both English and Spanish. Agendas are not common. If they are given, they are not always followed.

Gift Giving Etiquette Differences

In Saudi Arabia

Gifts are not the norm as in many other countries. If you are invited to a Saudi's house bring something small as a thank you. Flowers do not make good gifts from a man, although a woman could give them to her hostess. Never give alcohol unless you are positive they partake.

Gifts are not opened when received.

In Egypt

If you are invited to an Egyptian's home for dinner, bring good quality chocolates, sweets or pastries to the hostess. Do not give flowers, which are usually reserved for weddings or the ill, unless you know that the hosts would appreciate them. A small gift for the children shows affection.

Always give gifts with the right hand or both hands if the gift is heavy. Gifts are not opened when receive

In Germany

If you are invited to a German's house, bring a gift such as chocolates or

flowers. Yellow roses or tea roses are always well received.

Do not give red roses as they symbolize romantic intentions. Do not give carnations as they symbolize mourning.

Do not give lilies or chrysanthemums as they are used at funerals. Gifts are usually opened when received.

In Australia

Small gifts are commonly exchanged with family members, close friends, and neighbours on birthdays and Christmas. Trades people such as sanitation workers may be given a small amount of cash, or more likely, a bottle of wine or a six-pack of beer! If invited to someone's home for dinner, it is polite to bring a box of chocolates or flowers to the hostess. A good quality bottle of wine is always appreciated. Gifts are opened when received.

In Mexico

If invited to a Mexican's house, bring a gift such as flowers or sweets. Gift wrapping does not follow any particular protocol.

Do not give marigolds as they symbolize death.

Do not give red flowers as they have a negative connotation. White flowers are a good gift as they are considered uplifting.

Gifts are opened immediately.

If you receive a gift, open it and react enthusiastically.

Dining Etiquette Differences

In Saudi Arabia

Saudis socialize primarily in restaurants and international hotels when entertaining expatriates whom they do not know well. After some time you

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will be invited to the home. Entertainment will generally be same-sex only. If both sexes are included, they will be in separate rooms. If you are invited to a Saudi's house:

You would usually remove your shoes.

Dress conservatively.

Try to arrive at the invited time. Punctuality is appreciated but not crucial.

Show respect for the elders by greeting them first.

In Egypt

If you are invited into an Egyptian's house:

You would normally remove your shoes before entering.

Dress well and conservatively. Appearances are important to Egyptians.

Compliment the host on the house.

In Germany

If you are invited to a German's house:

Arrive on time as punctuality indicates proper planning. Never arrive early.

Never arrive more than 15 minutes later than invited without telephoning to explain you have been detained. Send a handwritten thank you note the following day to thank your hostess for her hospitality.

In Australia

Many invitations to an Aussie's home will be for a 'Barbie' (BBQ). Guests to a barbecue typically bring wine or beer for their personal consumption. In some cases, very informal barbecues may suggest that you bring your own meat! Arrive on time if invited to dinner; no more than 15 minutes late if invited to a barbecue or a large party. Contact the hostess ahead of time to

see if she would like you to bring a dish. Offer to help the hostess with the preparation or clearing up after a meal is served.

In Mexico

If you are invited to a Mexican's home:

Arrive 30 minutes late in most places (check with colleagues to see if you should arrive later than that). Arriving on time or early is considered inappropriate.

At a large party you may introduce yourself.

At a smaller gathering the host usually handles the introduction.

Dress Etiquette Differences

In Saudi Arabia

Most Saudis wear long white thobes. You would be expected to wear a suit.

Dress well if you want to make a good impression.

Business women should make certain that their collarbones and knees are covered and that their clothes are not form-fitting.

In Egypt

Business attire is formal and conservative. Dress well if you want to make a good impression. Men should wear dark colored, lightweight, conservative business suits, at least to the first meeting. Men should avoid wearing visible jewelry, especially around the face and neck. Women must be careful to cover themselves appropriately. Skirts and dresses should cover the knee and sleeves should cover most of the arm.

In Germany

Business dress is understated, formal and conservative.

Men should wear dark coloured, conservative business suits.

Women should wear either business suits or conservative dresses. Do not wear ostentatious jewellery or accessories.

In Australia

Business dress is conservative in Melbourne and Sydney.

Men should wear a dark coloured, conservative business suit. Women should wear a smart dress or a business suit.

In Brisbane or other tropical areas, depending on the job function and company culture, men may wear shirts, ties and Bermuda shorts.

In Mexico

Dress as you would in Europe.

Men should wear conservative, dark coloured suits.

Women should wear business suits or conservative dresses.

Business Cards Differences

In Saudi Arabia

Business cards are given to everyone you meet, although it may be an idea to be selective if you have few in your possession. Have one side of your card translated into Arabic. Be sure to check the translation carefully as there is often confusion with the order of western names.

In Egypt

Business cards are given without formal ritual.

Have one side of your card translated into Egyptian Arabic.

Always hand the card so the recipient may read it.

Make a point of studying any business card you receive before putting into your business card case.

In Germany

Business cards are exchanged after the initial introduction. Characters that are printed in gold ink since gold is an auspicious color. Your business card should include your title. If your company is the oldest or largest in your country, that fact should be on your card as well. Hold the card in both hands when offering it.

Examine a business card before putting it on the table next to you or in a business card case. Never write on someone's card unless so directed.

In Australia

Business cards are exchanged at the initial introduction without formal ritual. If you are not given a business card, it is not an insult; the person simply may not have one.

In Mexico

Business cards are exchanged during introductions with everyone at a meeting. It is advisable to have one side of your business card in Spanish. Business cards should contain both your professional and educational qualifications. Present your business card with the Spanish side facing the recipient.

Conclusion

Diversity has many dimensions: nationality, physical ability, language and ethnicity are a few. Diversity manifests itself in a great variety of norms and cultural values, such as high or low context, individualism versus collectivism, power, distance and degree of uncertainty avoidance.

Communication who succeed in a diverse workplace must educate themselves to different cultures and co-cultures. Viewing diversity as an opportunity instead of a problem is an important attitude. Treating people from different cultural backgrounds with respect is essential. Finally being willing to acknowledge and discuss cultural differences can help communication understand and appreciate one another.

Every organization and country has a distinct culture a relatively stable picture of the organization's personality shared by its members. Culture are usually shaped in organization's early days, often by its earliest leaders. Everyday customs and rituals both reflect the culture and continue to shape it. When evaluating an organization, a prospective employee ought to make sure that the culture is comfortable and positive.

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