Overview:

This lesson plan will challenge participants to respond to being treated as a “stereotypical” representative of the USA (or their non-US home country) and fit in more in their new host culture. They will also gain practice in forming testable hypotheses, an analytic skill applicable to many careers.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Respond to being treated as a “stereotypical” representative of their home country.
2. Adapt to their new host culture.
3. Form testable hypotheses.

Background Information:

This activity was created by Katherine N. Yngve, Daniel C. Jones, and Kris Acheson-Clair for Purdue’s Engineering 397 (Intercultural Mentoring) course. It can be used in any study abroad context.

Time:

1 hour

Group Size:

Entire group

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

Curiosity:

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.
Other Skills:
Teamwork, Diversity & Inclusion

Activity instructions:

Part 1:
1. Ask participants to read and reflect on the following two short articles (both located in Downloads):
   - “Effects of Stereotyping on the Brain”
   - “Working with Stereotypes or The Rich American”
2. The facilitator may then ask participants to record their responses to this reading on a virtual discussion board or through a journal/blog.

Part 2:
1. Ask participants to read at least one item from two different groups (group a, b, or c) below (all are located in Downloads):
   b. Research: “How Europe Sees Americans”; What Google-Users Think about Asia”
2. Participants should then fill out the Changing Stereotypes & Hypotheses Worksheet (in Downloads).
   
   Note: The facilitator may ask participants to share their results with each other.

Part 3:
1. Ask participants to research and write down some stereotypes that they commonly encounter when telling people about where they are from and/or where they attend school (and then change them into testable hypotheses).
2. Participants should then interview at least one host-country national using the following guidelines:
   • Ask about stereotypes of U.S. citizens which are commonly held or expressed in the media of that country and ask what they think the source is.
   • Ask them what “acting like a local” means in their country’s context and whether it differs from place to place within the country.
3. Next, participants should write a three-paragraph essay using the following guidelines:

- Report on your interview with locals and note some generalizations or hypotheses about their values or behaviors.
- Critically examine stereotypes about U.S. citizens held by people where you are studying. Are they correct or incorrect? What are they based upon?
- Reflect on stereotypes locals have about people like you (by describing your background) and how it is changing your behavior and/or perspectives.

Note: Facilitators may ask participants to share their essays with each other.

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Changing Stereotypes into Generalizations and Hypotheses](#)
- [GCC: Stereotypes & Cultural Generalizations](#)
- [Responding to Stereotypes About You](#)