

COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

A New Global Citizen's Guide

THE NGC GLOBAL NETWORK



The NGC Global Network is a forum for teams and Global Projects to learn from each other's cultures and experiences in addressing solutions to the worlds' greatest challenges.

It's a digital community representing a movement of young people, partners and grassroots project organizations. And, it's unlike any other social networking group you've likely ever joined.

A NEW GLOBAL CITIZEN

To take action for global change, a New Global Citizen must have awareness and skill in key areas of communication across cultures.



The most exciting feature of the NGC Global Network is the opportunity you gain in developing this skill and awareness as a member of a **culturally diverse digital community!**

GET EDUCATED



This brief training provides you the knowledge to understand culture in order to effectively:

- Define culture and cultural diversity.
- Recognize how culture influences the way people communicate.
- Develop skills to communicate across cultures both on the NGC Global Network and beyond.

Think of the word **CULTURE** . . .

What images, words or personal examples come to mind?

You may wish to jot your thoughts down on a separate piece of paper. If you are viewing this training with others, try to create a list together in a group of 2-3 people.

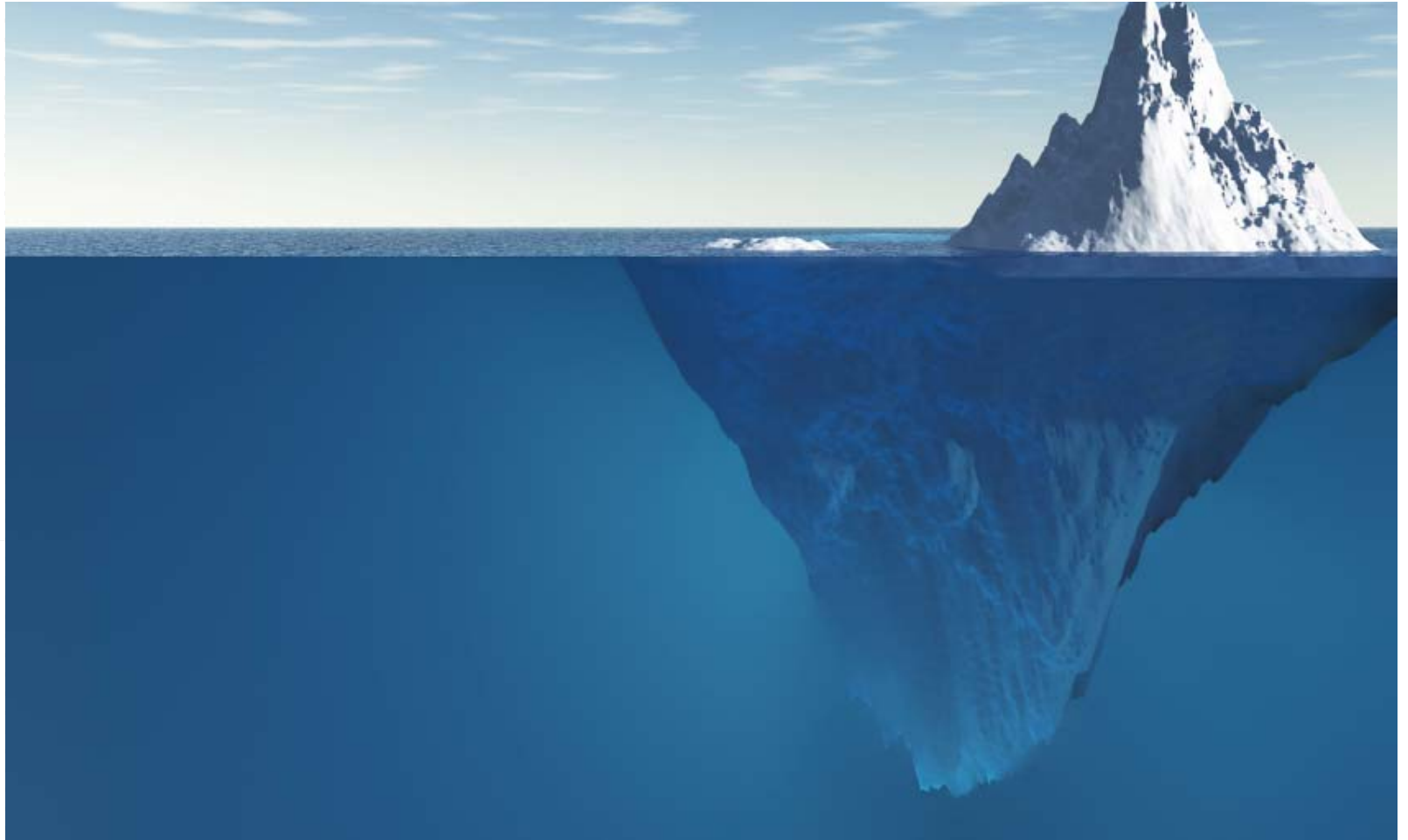


CULTURE DEFINED



Culture is commonly defined as . . .

A diverse pattern of knowledge, behavior, attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms that is learned, accepted, and expected by a group of people.



CULTURE IS LIKE AN ICEBERG...

Some aspects of culture are visible above the surface.

Yet a significant portion remains hidden and not clearly recognized.

CONSIDER THIS LIST...

Think of the
Iceberg.

What
features are
visible and
what
features are
invisible?

- Greetings
- Concept of fairness
- Nature of friendship
- Gestures and facial expressions
- Styles of dress
- Work ethic
- Religious beliefs
- Religious rituals
- Concept of self
- Rules of polite behavior
- Attitude towards age
- Gender
- Role of family
- World view

GESTURES

GREETINGS

DRESS

RITUALS

**CONCEPT OF
FAIRNESS**

GENDER

BELIEFS

SELF

WORLD VIEW

**WORK
ETHIC**

**ATTITUDE
TOWARDS AGE**

**ROLE OF
FAMILY**

**NATURE OF
FRIENDSHIP**

**RULES OF
POLITE BEHAVIOR**

CULTURE IS COMPLEX

Everyone has a culture and because of **the inherent complexity and diversity of cultural experience**, communication across cultures comes with likely challenges and common barriers.

A predominant barrier to effective communication across cultures is an over reliance in seeking and **assuming similarities** just as much as over **assuming difference**.

Consider the challenges or “cultural collisions” that likely occur if a person over emphasizes similarities or differences between one’s self and the other.

MEET BEN AND PAKEEZA



Age 16
NGC Team Member Since 2007

“I want to help make the world a better place by focusing on the major challenges trapping people in a life of poverty and hunger.”



Age 15
AIL Student Since 2007

“My life goal is to be the captain of an Afghani women’s soccer team and compete in the Olympics. I want to WIN the gold medal!”

- Ben and Pakeeza are members of the NGC Global Network.
- Ben's NGC Team has chosen Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) as their Global Project.
- Pakeeza is an AIL student in Afghanistan.
- Both have lots of questions about each others' cultures and experiences . . .

CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS

Ben's Message to Pakeeza:

Hey, it's Ben from NGC Phoenix High School. I will be going to college in a year which is around the same time I think you might be getting married and starting a family. I am really excited to be able to have contact with you especially since I'm probably one of the first guys outside of your family you've been able to communicate with. I can't imagine what it would be like for my female classmates to have to wear burkas all the time. So, I'd love to hear about your experience with wearing one. I hope through our communication you will feel empowered to speak up about your situation like the young women here in my country are able.

Pakeeza's Message to Ben:

How are you? It is Friday today. Friday in Afghanistan is just like your Sunday when you all go to church. I just wanted to thank you for your generosity in supporting AIL. We are not all bad people here in Afghanistan. We like America and the American people. You and your friends must have a lot of fun, going to the cinema and playing sports. I heard football is popular in America, I am looking forward to the FIFA Cup in South Africa. I will be praying for either Brazil or America to take the World Cup. People in Afghanistan are very proud. We value family and culture. We eat our meals together as a family and we share everything. I look forward to sharing my cultural and family values with you. I know Americans are very busy people. It must be hard not having a lot of time for family and traditions.

CULTURAL COLLISIONS

- **Stereotypes** are both over generalized and simplified thoughts or beliefs about groups of people, often derived from previous experiences or sources of information whether or not they are accurate or fit the circumstances.
- **Ethnocentric thinking** is the belief that one's own cultural traditions and assumptions are superior to those of others.

- What evidence of stereotypes and ethnocentrism did you observe in Ben and Pakeeza's online interaction?
- How could this lead to further cross cultural misunderstanding?
- What strategies would you recommend to alleviate misunderstanding?

Jot down your thoughts on a separate piece of paper. After you've written down at least one example for each question, share with another team member if viewing this training together.

MISUNDERSTANDING HAPPENS

From a limited online interaction both Ben and Pakeeza made some immediate **assumptions** about the society, culture, and life of the other.

- Gender roles
- Role of family
- Importance of self vs. tradition
- Styles of dress

What other examples did you think of???

BIG IDEAS

- People really do see the world in fundamentally different ways: their own distinct **world view**.
- People behave as they do because of the things they experience, believe, and value.
- And all people's experiences, beliefs and values are **valid and uniquely different**, yet share potential commonalities with other peoples.

DEVELOP SKILLS

To develop your cultural communication skills and keep from misinterpreting the behavior and responses of others it's important to:

- Assess your own cultural assumptions.
- Ask more questions before relying on your immediate observations.
- Attempt to interpret from their point of view, not your own.
- Continue to learn about other cultures and experiences.

To assist you, we have included a number of quick activities to **download** from the NGC website. We encourage you to try these activities:

- After this training
- With your team at an upcoming meeting
- For a community education event in support of your Global Project

RESOURCES

Additionally, we have included a cultural resource list including films, books, and websites.

Get a sneak peak at two of these NGC recommended resources.



REMEMBER

- Increased understanding leads to greater respect, tolerance, and acceptance. Sometimes it leads just to enhanced awareness.
- Such awareness is essential to participate on the NGC Global Network.

Our hope is this multi-cultural, digital community contributes to your development as informed, life-long New Global Citizens.

Get started today!

www.wiserearth.org/group/newglobalcitizens