Borboa & Partners

Román Borboa Ph.D.

Multicultural Integration

Culture is so very much interwoven in the fabric of everyday life that we cannot step outside and see how our beliefs, values, and behaviors create a distinct cultural group. (Katz, 1985)

So long as humans inhabit earth, **culture** will exist. It is amalgamated in everyday life's matrix.

The concept of **Human Culture** has been formulated as the understanding of the world from a personal point of view, a "world view". This implies an agreement that one must first **develop awareness** of one's own culture. The reason being that the way in which people **perceive** their relationship to nature, institutions, other people and things, is created by ourselves. Tacitly, if we are to know and understand something outside ourselves, there must be some "cultural calibration" on the data-gathering instrument: ourselves.

The **main function** of culture is to provide the individual with the **conviction** that one is of primary value in a world of meaningful action. Culture provides individuals with the possibility for choice between options weighted according to degrees of rightness and wrongness. The extent to which one's choices are in harmony with the cultural context directly affects one's feelings of **self-esteem**. Self-esteem is the core of human adaptation because it buffers us against anxiety - a state that is inimical to effective, adaptive action. One's culture, then, is the basis of self-esteem.

Any culture must then represent **"reality"** to its members. E. Becker (1971) says that the **artificiality** of the delicately **constructed fictions**, which frame our culture, must be denied, for to reveal the fictional nature of culture deprives life of its **heroic meaning** and we become creatures like any other. Culture helps us avoid confrontation with competing versions of **reality**. It acts as an invisible veil that prevents us from being aware of the cultural filters through which we view the world. Awareness of an invisible filter, a **cultural barrier**, is necessary before one can examine and modify its effects. Some of those barriers are:

The Uses of Nonsense

This barrier can hardly be overstated. Zukab (1979) stated that the more clearly we experience something as 'nonsense', the more clearly we are experiencing the boundaries of our own self-imposed cognitive structures. 'Nonsense' is that which does not fit into the pre-arranged patterns, which we have superimposed on **reality**. When we encounter something that does not fit within our frame of reference, our cultural predisposition is to place it outside our **reality** by calling it nonsense. When we say "that's crazy", or "that's ridiculous", or "that's bizarre", we are saying "I am inadequately comprehending what I am sensing". Such attitudes also can serve to indicate that one must seek further if one is to find a

Borboa & Partners

Román Borboa Ph.D.
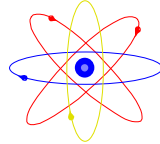
Having "understood" something as nonsense indicates we have given up other ways of conceiving experience, and communication ceases with our understanding unchanged and our world view secured, and our self-esteem intact.

Language Related Barriers

An obvious cultural barrier exists when people have different mother tongues. Other less obvious problematic aspect of language is its function as a system representing experience and its determining of social behavior. Language has been described as a **behavioral map** and as such, including our habits of language usage, directly influences the way we perceive, construe, and think about others, our world, and ourselves.

Stereotyping

It seems as if we had a need to stereotype, to lump, to perceive, think, and talk about things in-groups rather than to attend to individual instances. We seem to have a need to perceive the similarities among things rather than their unique aspects, and a preference for dealing with the categories that result. It is talking about things, people, events, that are different as if they were data. Stereotyping brings distortion to experience and has distancing effects among people.

Selective Perception

This barrier is the result from the rhetoric of the beliefs and expectations we bring to our relationships, which sensitizes us to attend to particular aspects of human behavior.

The words we bring to our human encounters **create** how we come to know and respond to others. **Believing is seeing.**

Implicit Evaluation

These are tacit judgments encoded in the rhetoric we use in our daily life. Words are value laden. We describe others as resistant, reticent, unresponsive and act as if we have said nothing thereby about ourselves. Somehow it escapes us that such "descriptors" are judgments of the beholder. We live in a **value matrix**.

Polarization

This habit leads toward the tendency to dichotomize, to polarize issues by our manner of speaking. Given the declarative nature of language, things are, or are not. "This soup is cold" or "that child is lazy". Notice that opinion and eternal truth are presented in the same form, which seems to set up adversarial responses and the hardening of positions.

We seem to have a tendency to address the object rather than the author of an assertion. We forget that **reality** exists in the world of the beholder, the author of the statement. This is the reason why is better to enter a new culture with a beginner's mind and a beginner's eyes.

Dr. Román Borboa, N.C.C.

Oberdorfstrasse 29
CH-8953 Dietikon
Tel. (01) 740 96 02

Email: info@borboa.ch