

Why Would You???????????? - An Examination of Our Culture

We have discussed how Sociologists like to study culture because culture explains behavior. What might seem odd to us seems very normal to others.... What may seem normal to us is just plain weird to some other cultures.

Activity One

Let's say you meet two new neighbors who have only spent only one month in the United States - and boy, do they have questions! Without looking it up on the internet, explain the following to your new neighbors. What is the tradition? Why do you think we do it? How does our culture explain this behavior? (It's ok if you guess...)

lighting candles on a birthday cake (even for one year olds!)



trick or treating

Now go to <https://www.rd.com/culture/origin-of-birthday-cake/> and <http://www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-trick-or-treating> and check your responses. Go back to your answers and correct them in a different color ink as if you were the teacher....

Activity Two

There are many acts Americans do out of politeness and kindness that would be considered offensive in other countries. Choose any four of the following list. State why we think it's acceptable behavior and hypothesize why others may not. See the example.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tipping | Giving Thumbs Up | Sitting in the Back of a Taxi |
| Laughing with Mouth Open | Being on Time | Having one hand in your pants pocket |
| Opening a Present Immediately | Finishing Your Entire Meal | Using Your Left Hand for Anything |
| Showing the Soles of Your Feet | Men Showing Skin | Telling a Guest to "Help Themselves" |

Example:

Tradition / Cultural Norm - **Finishing Your Entire Meal**

Why we think it's acceptable behavior - **We feel it is showing appreciation for the cook's efforts as well as being an effort not to waste food.**

Why others may not find it acceptable - **Many cultures feel that you are questioning your host's generosity. When you finish your plate you are implying the hosts did not give you enough to eat.**

Tradition / Cultural Norm -

Why we think it's acceptable behavior -

Why others may not find it acceptable -

Tradition / Cultural Norm -

Why we think it's acceptable behavior -

Why others may not find it acceptable -

Tradition / Cultural Norm -

Why we think it's acceptable behavior -

Why others may not find it acceptable -

Tradition / Cultural Norm -

Why we think it's acceptable behavior -

Why others may not find it acceptable -

Now, go to <http://www.businessinsider.com/american-behaviors-that-are-offensive-abroad-2015-8> and check your responses. Go back to your answers and correct them in a different color ink as if you were the teacher....