

Stereotypes vs. Generalizations

Stereotypes

- › Are ways we attempt to bring order to a large, diverse group based on information and perceptions
- › Are based on some level of reality, although we may not have had any personal experience of the characteristic/persons
- › Are very persistent even when we want to get rid of them
- › Are typically simplistic
- › Imply that how a particular group of people are [believed to be and behave] is predictable and the same for all members of the group
- › Lead to judgments that can have negative consequences. Can create negative or hostile feelings of being attacked. "I know that Swedes..."

Generalizations

- › Allow that there is variation among people from a given culture – not all persons will act or believe the same
- › Give a loose framework in which to analyze what is going on. For example, "In general, Euro-Americans are very uneasy with silence in a group." "In general Swedes appreciate silence in a group."
- › Leads to trying to learn more, both about the culture generally and about people as individuals
- › Appreciates differences within the culture as well as between the cultures

Conclusion

Culture [and individuals within cultures] is like an onion – there are many layers. Keep peeling the layers away so you understand more and more.
Do not let stereotypes rule your thinking!