



Bringing the
learning *home*

Stereotypes



A *resource* for studying abroad

Australian Learning & Teaching Council

Produced by Greg Downey,
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Stereotypes

Program goals

- Teach students the difference between understanding cultural difference and engaging in stereotyping behaviour.
- Alert students to the images of Australians that they may encounter while sojourning overseas.

Rationale

Based on our research, students often have strong stereotyped ideas about their host communities prior to departure for a sojourn abroad. Stereotypes, although a recognition of cultural difference, are an unsophisticated way of understanding human variation which can have a tendency to block deeper learning and cross-cultural development. Through the materials in this module, we seek to alert students to the problem of stereotypes so that they are likely to re-evaluate and shed them more quickly and to move to other forms of cultural understanding that recognise both within-group variation and behavioural and interactive patterns that defy simplistic description. Research on stereotyping has shown that contact alone is sometimes not sufficient to dispel stereotypes, but with conscious reflection, especially alongside encouragement to have greater and more intimate contact with residents in the host country, international exchange can be an effective antidote to stereotyping.

Some approaches to cross-cultural training suggest that essentialist understandings of cultural difference are a useful strategy for developing students' ability to navigate inter-cultural situations and communication (see also the discussion in Cultural Relativism). The Bringing the Learning Home team has found, in our experience, that these approaches to teaching cross-cultural awareness run the risk of promoting stereotypical thinking, in terms of the portrait students develop of their hosts, but also in the sense that students may be inadvertently encouraged to reinforce a stereotyped and over-homogeneous sense of their own identity ('Australians are all...'). Although, as Fisher (2011) argues, essentialist and stereotyped understandings of different groups may be an advance over no awareness of cultural difference at all, neither tendency really encourages sensitivity to cultural variation or promotes intercultural competence.

Mode of delivery

The stereotypes module is delivered primarily prior to departure, with components to follow up in country and a reflective exercise that may prove useful on return if your program has an extensive re-entry program. The goals of the stereotypes module mesh especially with the Exploration, Reflection, Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism, and Cultural Relativism and Analysis modules, so re-entry components in those modules, especially in Cultural Relativism and Globalisation programs, should also help students to achieve many of the re-entry goals in the Stereotypes materials.

Pre-departure

Conceptual material, discussion of students' impressions of their prospective host, and some reading about stereotypes and the effects of stereotyping are encouraged in pre-departure. The slide show that accompanies this module is designed for use in pre-departure programming.

In country

In-country, students can be encouraged to think about how they encounter stereotypes and to understand why stereotypes may persist with shallow encounters. If your program is using online discussion, in-country reflection, or such interactive tools as student blogging, consider using the exercises provided in the in-country materials, especially if students bring up stereotyping or seem to be engaged in excessively essentialist discussions of their host country. Students living with other international students can tend to reinforce each others' stereotypes of the host country, so be especially vigilant in these situations.

Re-entry

If pre-departure and in-country programming has included reflection on and discussion of stereotypes, re-entry follow-up can help students to share and concretize their learning. Peer modelling and discussion can even help students who have maintained stereotyping strategies throughout their sojourn to recognise the complexity of their host culture, including internal variety. They may also come to understand 'consensual stereotypes' better, and how groups can interact, even positively, on the basis of simplistic understandings of each other.

This module is supported by:

- ☐ Reflection
- ☐ Exploration

The content of this module supports or feeds into:

- ☐ Globalisation
- ☐ Cultural Relativism



Contents of this module

This **instructor's guide** includes a discussion of the module's goals, rationale and strategies, a thorough presenter's guide, additional resources and readings, and references.

Slides (in [Prezi](#), Apple Keynote and Microsoft Powerpoint) are provided for a pre-departure workshop on stereotypes.

Student handbook includes handouts and copies of the texts for the predeparture workshop. All materials are available from [the BTLH website](#).

If you are preparing your own reader to accompany study abroad, the student guide materials are all made available under a Creative Commons licence. You are free to incorporate the materials into your own reader or course package as long as you clearly attribute the origin of the work (see Creative Commons licence). The creators also include in the licence the option of using the work for commercial gain, although we respectfully ask that the material not be republished and sold (we hope that the workshop materials will be useful to both university-based and commercial providers).

Contents

Instructor's orientation

Oliver Stallybrass (1977: 601) defines a stereotype as 'an over-simplified mental image of (usually) some category of person, institution or event which is shared, in essential features, by large numbers of people... Stereotypes are commonly but not necessarily, accompanied by prejudice, i.e. by a favorable or unfavorable predisposition toward any member of the category in question.'

Stereotypes are simplified ways to understand cultural difference, sometimes, but not always, supporting bias or prejudice. This module seeks to explore students' expectations about people in their host countries before they depart; to consider how Australians are viewed overseas; and to think about how to acknowledge cultural distinctiveness in ways that do not over-simplify group identity or impede gaining a fuller, more mature understanding of the host country. In particular, the BTLH team believes it is crucial to provide students with an understanding of how stereotypes arise and why they are a step toward, yet fall short of being a fully matured understanding of cultural differences and variation between groups. A robust pre-departure discussion of the differences between stereotypes and cultural awareness can help students both to get more out of their study abroad experience and to achieve our broader learning goals upon their return.

As the predeparture slides seek to explain (see below), stereotypes are based upon perfectly natural cognitive shortcuts, especially when encountering unfamiliar groups of people (see Devine 1989; Lepore and Brown 1997; Tajfel 1969). But stereotypes may tend to over-generalise (assume everyone in the other group is alike), to focus disproportionately on differences in behaviour, or interpret those differences from an ethnocentric perspective, and may cut off the prospect of greater communication that could lead to better understanding. That is, stereotypes can short-circuit greater exploration and cultural understanding. This can be the case even when stereotypes are favourable, or where the stereotyped group itself is complicit in supporting the stereotype.

Stereotypes are social products; individuals don't come up with stereotypes on their own (see also Tajfel 1977). Stereotypes often have long histories in a society, with a wake of negative associations and deep resentments behind them. This is one reason why playing or joking with stereotypes can, sometimes, provoke intense and hostile reactions. That is, stereotypes may appear to be superficial or trivial, but they may have played a role in deeply entrenched inequality or oppression. Thus, stereotypes can serve both cognitive and social functions:

although they may make particular types of thinking easier in particular settings, they can also reinforce prejudice and inequality.

For this reason, and because of anthropologists' long and uncomfortable relationship with ethnic essentialism, we disagree with Fischer (2011), who advocates essentialising as an educational strategy to work toward greater intercultural understanding. Although Fischer argues that essentialist beliefs do not necessarily lead to stereotypes, and his argument is quite subtle (see especially pp. 770-771), we believe that most Australian students are already aware of cultural differences between groups of people. The initial step in developing intercultural awareness – becoming aware of the existence of cultural variation – is one that most Australian university students have already made. We therefore believe they stand to gain less from an essentialising educational strategy.

A person's effectiveness in intercultural settings can be undermined by stereotyping as stereotypes can lead students to simply avoid contact with local people in settings like group-based work at university (see Montgomery 2009). The fact that stereotypes might stand in the way of students on exchange engaging with host country nationals is especially important because one of the chief ways that people overcome stereotypes is through extensive social contact.

Aversion and contact

Psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) argued that, given the right conditions, contact between people of different groups was the best antidote to derogatory stereotypes. However, he observed that interaction alone was not sufficient; in fact, some kinds of intergroup contact could actually lead to confirmation of prejudice and reinforced attitudes towards other groups.

Specifically, contact was most likely to reduce prejudice if groups meet in situations of equal status, share goals, have opportunities to get acquainted especially outside their roles as group representatives, and are supported by an over-arching authority, such as legal or customary structure. Because prejudice was the result, Allport argued, of insufficient knowledge and over-generalisation, intimate knowledge and personalisation of individuals from other groups could help individuals to better appreciate other people's perspectives, as long as the groups were not vying over resources or unable to meet on common ground. Brewer and Brown (1998) consider Allport's argument, now referred to as the 'Contact Hypothesis' or the 'Intergroup Contact Theory', one of the most successful in social psychology, helping to reinforce the importance of desegregation and day-to-day contact in breaking down discrimination.

The 'Contact Hypothesis' is still controversial, however, especially because research on the subject is difficult and because some groups that have been in long-term contact still hold

deeply entrenched prejudice (see Dixon et al. 2005 for a review). Brewer (1996), for example, in a discussion of the re-emergence of ethnic conflict in multicultural states, has pointed out that an individual's or group's social identity can be built on in-group/out-group distinctions, making it harder to overcome prejudice. That is, individuals can bond more tightly as a social group, ignoring their own heterogeneity and negative traits, if they oppose themselves conceptually to another group.

In Australia, the periodic upswelling of a celebratory and excessively homogenous understanding of national identity can be linked to strong prejudice against those seen as outsiders or 'un-Australian.' For the Bringing the Learning Home team, the seduction of this kind of exaggerated 'Us-vs-Them' categorical thinking brings a whole series of dangers, including negative stereotyping, prejudice, jingoism, and an intolerance of in-group dissenters, including 'invisible' minorities like gays and lesbians or those who do not sufficiently toe the exclusionist line.

While many individuals, especially in Generation Y, do not have 'old racist' attitudes, such as a belief in white supremacy or particularly demeaning stereotypes, they may have more subtle forms of bias, such as beliefs in stereotypes more generally, or aversion to interacting with people that they perceive to be different (see Gaertner and Dovidio 1986). Moreover, they may not recognise the difference between 'culture' and stereotypes, mistaking superficial and often problematic images of other groups, often gained from the media, for actual knowledge of another culture. One of the surprising findings of our student survey was that, even though students perceived Australia to be multicultural, their own immediate circle of friends was generally relatively homogeneous (Otten 2003 and Dixon et al. 2005 both discuss similar findings in other settings). That is, social interaction among current university students may not produce the kind of one-on-one contact with members of minority groups, in the context of shared goals, that Allport (1954) argues will help to decrease stereotyping.

For this reason, some discussion of stereotypes and intentional reflection on experiences of contact with other groups of people may be necessary for students to realise the potential learning from study abroad.

The point of a stereotype is that it obscures variability. As Stangor and colleagues (1996) point out, one key is to help students to gain a greater awareness of variability in the host culture and to recognise that both negative and positive stereotypes may apply to individual incidents or individuals.

Paradoxically, students also need to be encouraged to 'generalise' from their encounters with representatives of other groups, if stereotypes are to be overcome (see Allport 1954; Hewstone 1996). That is, a student's friends or acquaintances in the host culture cannot be thought of as 'exceptions' to a general rule that the group corresponds closely to the stereotype (see Rothbart and John 1985).

In some cases, individuals that the student meets on exchange will also engage in stereotyping their own group. For example, in one case, a host country student from a very educated group shared derogatory stereotypes of her fellow countrymen, in part because these stereotypes were one way that the elite group could justify its own status. This student said that most people in her country were 'Indians,' and that the indigenous people 'were like animals'; one can imagine how this type of local contact might not assist in helping a student to outgrow a national stereotype.

In addition, not all stereotypes are negative; in some cases, students may have very strong positive stereotypes of the host culture prior to their arrivals. In our surveys of students preparing to depart, for example, the students often listed very positive words that they associated with their host culture: polite, well-educated, advanced, patient, happy, even 'paradise.' For some students, the contact that Allport advocated can actually lead to a decrease in their favourable impression of the host country, perhaps to something resembling a more accurate and balanced appraisal if their expectations were too high.

Overall, the BTLH team does not believe that the Stereotypes workshops by itself will necessarily decrease students' likelihood of holding stereotypes. In fact, programs designed to reduce prejudice and stereotypes can be extremely difficult to evaluate, and may not be effective, especially if the target audience's social environment reinforces prejudice (see Hill and Augoustinos 2001). Instead, we hope that by priming students to the dangers of stereotypes, we can alert them to potential interactional problems (such as presuming too much 'cultural intimacy'), decrease the effects of confirmation bias (see 'Key Concepts' below), and encourage them to develop more mature representations of cultural difference. The Stereotypes module, then, is a metacognitive curriculum, designed to help students become more aware of their own thought processes and the effects of stereotyping. This discussion is further developed in the Education and Culture module, including an exploration of what it might be like to be on the receiving end of stereotyped categories.



Key concepts

The workshop includes an introduction to four key concepts that students may find helpful for thinking about stereotypes:

Confirmation bias:

A tendency of people to notice and recall information or examples that confirm their beliefs, while disregarding information that might challenge their already-existing understandings. The more emotionally charged and deeply entrenched a belief, the more likely we are to experience bias in our perceptions. We can assume that instances where our beliefs are inaccurate are 'exceptions' even though they should undermine our assumptions. On the whole, confirmation bias can make it difficult to disprove ideas that are inadequate because any evidence that might support the idea is given great weight and troublesome evidence is disregarded or discounted. For example, if a person holds strong views about the distinctive roles of men and women, he or she may focus excessively on individuals who adhere to these roles and disregard exceptions to the rule as deviants or strange.

Positive stereotype:

Not all stereotypes are negative. Some stereotypes can appear, especially to outsiders, as being extremely positive. Often, tourist industries promote particular stereotypes that are viewed positive internationally to attract foreign visitors, but people in these countries can find the images stereotypical, simplified, inaccurate, or even insulting. For example, some countries promote traditional cultures or a laid-back, party-focused identity that students, business people, and others from these countries may find cause a sort of 'cultural cringe': an image of themselves that makes them uncomfortable.

Some analysts argue that Australian celebrities (like Paul Hogan as 'Crocodile Dundee' or Steve Irwin) have promoted a 'positive stereotype' of Australians as loveable, larrikin frontiersmen. However, many Australians then feel that international expectations of what Australians should be like are unduly shaped by these allegedly 'positive stereotypes'; beloved, but one-dimensional representations of the national identity.

Consensual stereotype:

In some situations, especially multicultural contexts, individuals will consent, either explicitly or tacitly, to having stereotypes applied to them. Individuals can become complicit

in the process of stereotyping their own group. Sometimes the group believes the stereotype is a positive portrait, and they may have internalised the stereotype over time as, in fact, their legitimate group identity.

A consensual stereotype can make it especially hard for individuals who do not live up to the stereotype, because member of their own group may invest heavily in that stereotype, believing that it is the way for the group to become accepted. For example, some 'model minorities' strongly support positive stereotypes of their group as hard-working or industrious, as being especially talented at mathematics or possessing some other positive trait. The consequence for individuals who do not live up to this stereotype is that members of their own group can become hostile, disappointed, or rejecting, believing that the individual's failure to conform to the stereotype undermines the whole group's positive identity.

'Cultural intimacy'

Anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (2005) pointed out the paradox that some of the parts of national identity that cause the most embarrassment externally, when other people point them out, also can provide a significant foundation for unity. That is, some of the traits that are most stereotypical and even negative are, nevertheless, a point of reference for group identity. Herzfeld calls 'cultural intimacy' the 'self-stereotypes that insiders express ostensibly at their own collective expense' (ibid.: 3).

As Herzfeld goes on to point out, some of these stereotypes only become obvious over long-term contact, as an observer increases 'social intimacy' with his or her hosts. A person who has just arrived, in some sense, may not have either the knowledge or the social licence to participate in 'cultural intimacy.' Only with some degree of longer-term residency can a visitor safely use these negative self-stereotypes without provoking negative reaction. That said, jokes on the basis of identity can actually soothe intergroup tension, 'bringing cultures together, using shared human failings as a common denominator' (Lowe 1986: 442). One of the best ways to demonstrate to students the perils of using identity in this intimate way is to use examples from their own home culture.

Arguably, some of the most 'bogan' traits of Australia have the quality of cultural intimacy. Although it may be embarrassing for Australians to see themselves through others' eyes,

Key concepts

especially when people elsewhere think that Australians are 'dumb, drunk and racist' (in the words of a recent ABC documentary series exploring the issue), at the same time, when we joke amongst ourselves about what makes Australians truly distinct, these traits are often included (see the 'Australian Citizenship Test' below for an example).

One of the reason we highlight 'cultural intimacy' is that Australian popular culture can often encourage a kind of recklessness with stereotypes that is not acceptable elsewhere. Taken out of context, for example, Australian humour can appear racist, aggressive, insulting, and provocative. The irony is that this type of humour, amongst Australians, is often a sign of growing intimacy and warmth, so it can occur in intercultural settings when relationships can be vulnerable and alienate Australians from people of different cultures precisely when the Australians think they are becoming closer friends with member of another group.

In addition, especially in the case of African-American popular culture, Australians can believe that they have great cultural, even natural intimacy, but discover that they are treated as outsiders in the United States. That is, because of the pervasiveness in global popular culture of hip hop and other expressions of African-American culture, some Australian youth believe that they are part of a 'cultural intimacy' whereas insiders in that group might reject their assertion of membership. For example, Australian students may use slang borrowed from hip hop culture, but find that African Americans think the practice strange and overly familiar, even wondering if the Australians are trying to make fun of African-American culture.

Similarly, Prince Harry found himself in a public relations dust up when he was caught on video referring to fellow soldier Ahmed Raza Khan as 'our little Paki friend' (see Harrison and Swaine 2009). Although other former soldiers said that it was common to refer to each other by ethnic terms (one Welshman, for example, pointed out that he was called 'Taffy' while a soldier in the British military), and the name may have been an affectionate nickname within Harry's unit, the term became a flashpoint without the social intimacy that may have buffered its use, making it acceptable.



Sample exercises

Pre-departure

1. Expectations and impressions
2. Snap stereotype: How well can a simple portrait capture a group?
3. Trying a stereotype on: How does it fit?
4. The Australian 'citizenship test.'

In-country

5. Contending with stereotypes: Being Australian abroad

Re-entry

6. Replacing stereotypes with understanding.

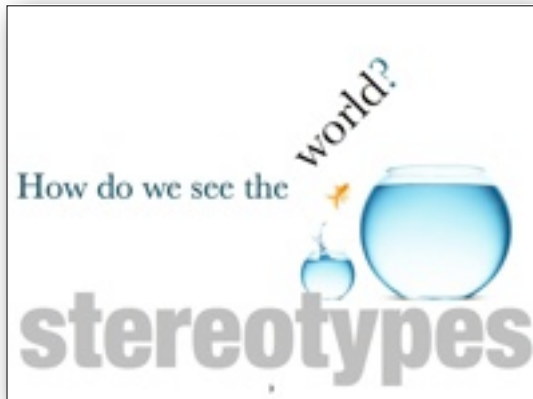
Please note that student worksheets are available for many of these exercises; samples are in this Instructor's Guide, and the student versions are in the Workbook. Especially if the group is engaged in in-country reflection, journalling, blogging or discussion, the texts provided may be replaced or compared to some of their own work.

The first four exercises are described below in the context of the pre-departure workshop slides. The exercises can be used separately from the workshop.

Pre-departure

Slide 3: Stereotypes

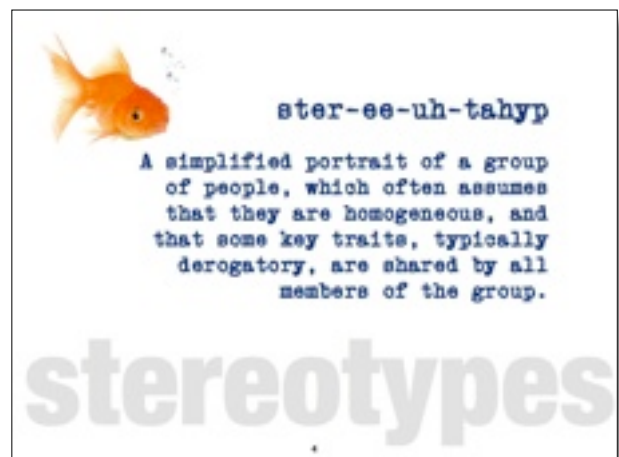
During the predeparture workshop on Stereotypes, we suggest keeping the tone relatively informal and allowing students to freely express their preconceptions about their destinations. The slides are intentionally designed to use humour in a way to unlock discussion, and to encourage students to share their thoughts, even if they are strong stereotypes about their future host cultures. Students may initially be guarded, but they will often find that they have some of the same impressions, and that their preconceptions have been shaped by a range of sources in popular culture.



Slide 4: Stereotypes 2

As you discuss the definition of 'stereotypes' with students in the workshop, emphasise the key points:

- Stereotyping is normal, but it is not a sophisticated way of understanding cultural differences.
- People often play with stereotypes when they joke or engage with each other informally, but, just like any other sort of joking, it can be profoundly inappropriate in the wrong circumstances.
- Some stereotypes have complicated and painful histories, as they may have been a tool for oppressing a group.



In spite of these complicating factors, we want students to talk about stereotypes prior to their departure so that they are more conscious of their own stereotypes (both positive and negative) and have thought about the consequences of relying on stereotypes too much as a way of understanding or interpreting their host cultures.

Slides 5, 6 & 7: Stereotype maps 1-3

One option is to use the maps of national stereotypes created by Yanko Tsvetkov.. We have included low resolution versions of Tsvetkov's maps of American, British and French views of Europe. One of the points, aside from helping to spark some discussion, is that stereotypes themselves vary; because stereotypes of other groups are part of different national identities, the same countries can be seen quite differently depending upon whose stereotypes we are discussing. If your students themselves have diverse backgrounds, they may have been exposed to diverse stereotypes of the same countries.

You might consider sparking discussion by asking students which among them are either a) bound for a European country, or b) bound for one of the countries whose perspective on Europe Tsvetkov's maps claim to capture. They might compare their own impressions, especially if they haven't already visited their host country, to one of the national stereotypes.

Highlight for students that stereotypes can be both positive and negative, a point which we return to below, and that first-time exposure to a place can confirm our stereotypes, especially because of 'confirmation bias,' or the tendency to ignore evidence that contradicts our impressions. The longer we are in contact, as long as that contact is direct face-to-face engagement with individual members of the host culture, the harder it is to maintain shallow or homogeneous impressions of a group of people.

Merchandise with a range of national stereotypes maps and other map-based graphic project by Yanko Tsvetkov are available at: <http://alphadesigner.com/project-mapping-stereotypes.html>.



Slide 8: Stereotypes map Oz

Slide 8 carries an image that is currently circulating in relation to a short series on ABC2, *Dumb, Drunk and Racist*. The series explores stereotypes in Australia while it simultaneously highlights stereotypes of Australians, including the way that Australians' attitudes towards foreigners influence the way that other countries perceive us.

The series itself may be an excellent resource to use to inspire a deeper discussion of the

Website for the ABC2 series, *Dumb, Drunk & Racist*: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/dumbdrunkracist/>. Video clips are available, as well as supplementary materials.



way that stereotypes affect all parties involved. For example, the stereotypes that Australians hold, indirectly or directly, affect the way that the Indian people brought to Australia in the series understand the country and national character. One of the key points is that students will be subject to the effects of stereotyping when they travel, as they are also likely to be targets of stereotyping.

Slide 9: Stereotypes issues

Slide 9 is a summary and transition slide before the first real exercise for the pre-departure Stereotypes workshop. The slide seeks to highlight that stereotypes are 1) normal; 2) a resource that we come to use for everything from humour to communicating quickly (if not always entirely accurately); but that 3) being unable to move beyond stereotypes can block deeper understanding of the host culture. Stereotypes can halt deeper understanding from both sides; if students are subject to stereotyping, they may feel that they cannot communicate fully, and if they hold firmly to stereotypes, they may avoid the kinds of interaction that produce real intercultural exchange and learning.



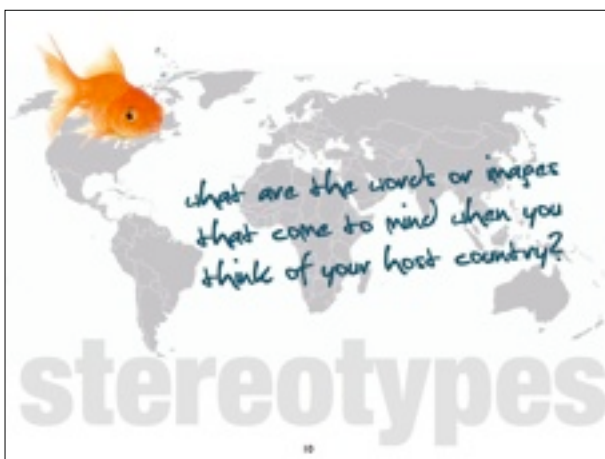
Exercise One

Expectations and impressions

Getting stereotypes out in the open prior to departure may be a helpful way of making students more conscious about their preconceptions. In our pilot project, we surveyed over one hundred students, asking them what sorts of impressions they had of their host countries prior to departure. Our slides show a few of their ideas (for some regions, we had many more words than we had space on our slide).

One way to analyse expectations in pre-departure is to identify which ones are based on stereotypes, and to explore where these stereotypes might come from, and how they may affect students' experiences of going overseas.

Slides 10 & 11: Stereotypes map Oz 2 & 3



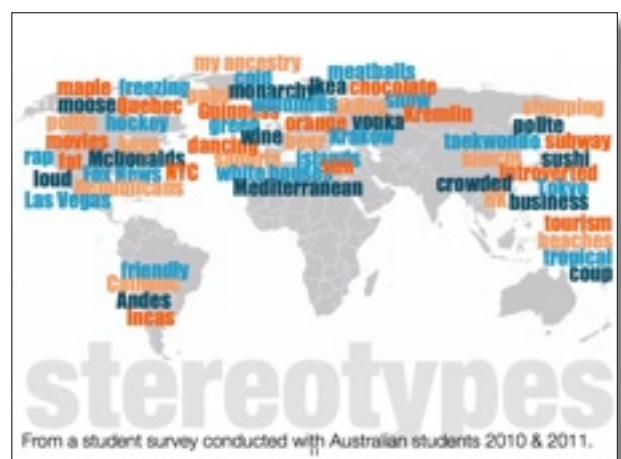
As an exercise, you might ask students individually to write down the first five or six words that come to them when they think of their destination or host country. We provide Slide 10 as a background, but you will likely need a whiteboard or other surface to conduct an interactive discussion.

If they write these down in advance, you can then assemble these on a whiteboard or some other format for public discussion. If you have time, you might ask students in the audience to

see if they can guess what individual students have put down about their own destinations.

That is, have students heading to other countries volunteer their impressions of other students' host countries and see which ones are shared or salient to more people. The goal is to see what images or qualities show up repeatedly, if any.

We also provide a map (Slide 11) with some of the words that students in our pilot project provided in a pre-departure survey to describe their destinations, with the words placed roughly over their destination. In some cases,



we had many more, but these stand out as a good variety of impressions, based upon second-hand experience and images in the media.

Note: On re-entry, if you would like to use Exercise Six, Replacing Stereotypes with Understanding, with the same cohort of students, you should try to preserve the results of the discussion above so that you can prepare your own map for the re-entry activity.

Slide 12: Stereotypes issues 2

Once you have a list of associations for a range of destinations (though too many destinations can make the discussion unwieldy), you can ask students a series of discussion questions that highlight which impressions are pervasive, which are idiosyncratic or personal, and to consider how these images may or may not be stereotypes:

- Where do the students think that they got particular ideas about their destinations? Media? Other travellers? Tourism?
- How widely shared are particular impressions of destination countries? Are they personal, derived from a particular event in a student's life or face-to-face interaction, or is an image more from a mass media or secondary source?



That is, we seek to highlight how much of an impression of a place or people is based on actual experience and how much is based on popular images, movies, children's books, or other media. (Social stereotypes, sources)

- Do you think a particular image is positive or negative? Which images make a place an attractive destination for exchange? Which make you worry or might put you off travelling to a destination? Does this vary within the group? (Positive stereotypes)
- Do you think that the people from that country would embrace that image or would it be an association that they might deny? Does the tourist industry from that country use an image to promote the country? Do other representatives from a country (TV shows, singers, athletes) seem to offer a particular image of that country? (Consensual stereotypes)

Slide 13: Stereotypes positive-negative

After exercise one, or a similar discussion, one of the key points to make is that stereotypes are not necessarily negative, racist, or discriminatory. Some of the stereotypes that students have of their host countries may be extremely optimistic. In our survey, for example, some students put down words that they associated with their destinations that were extraordinarily positive: 'paradise,' 'partying,' 'exciting,' 'patient,' 'beautiful women,' 'happy,' and the like. Although we want students to look forward to their time abroad, some of these positive stereotypes may be as superficial and one-dimensional as negative or pejorative stereotypes.



Research with our students, and in other published sources, suggests that those students who opt for study abroad may disproportionately have positive stereotypes of countries where they intend to sojourn. Although these stereotypes undoubtedly help motivate students to undertake exchange, this fact may cause an unintentional effect. Some studies show that, the longer a student stays overseas, the less stereotyped his or her impression of the host country becomes, but the less positive that view may be.

Although students may find this deflation of overly-optimistic views irritating, or even a little distressing, a more balanced, realistic, and varied understanding of the host country is a more mature form of intercultural knowledge.



Exercise Two

Snap stereotype: how well can a simple portrait capture a group?

One way to prompt students to think and talk about stereotypes is to provide examples of stereotyped portraits of Australians from the media, films or videos, and ask students to discuss how well these stereotypes fit, both in the sense of capturing a general sense of national identity, and in expressing something about themselves. In the discussion, several ideas need to be highlighted:

- **Stereotypes rely on ‘typified’ individuals**, that is, stripped of many of their distinguishing or idiosyncratic traits. With each portrait, how is the ‘typical’ Australian chosen? Why this particular choice? Are there particular shared traits that form the core of the stereotype?
- **Stereotypes often need to exclude whole sections of the population or exceptions to the stereotype.** Do the students feel that the stereotype applies to them? Who gets excluded from portrayals of Australians in stereotypes?
- **Some stereotypes are consensual**, in some circumstances; others may be rejected by the target of the stereotype, even if the person who holds the image thinks that it is a positive one. Is the portrait of Australians consensual? Is it a stereotype Australians like? Does that mean it’s accurate?

Although you could do this exercise with any number of stimuli, many good examples can be found in video clips. Some of these are good examples of stereotypes which are quite popular with many of the stereotyped group, and with our potential hosts, but can cause other group members discomfort or embarrassment.

Australian national stereotypes are good examples of this, as many Australians respond with embarrassment to the portrayal of their countries offered by Paul Hogan as ‘Crocodile Dundee’ or by Steve Irwin. In both cases, these portrayals are extraordinarily popular in countries like the United States. Similarly, some overseas Australians note that news from their home country can often seem like ‘comic relief’ during the international news. Whereas other parts of the world feature in serious news stories about conflict or disasters, Australia often appears in stories about crocodiles, surfing dogs, or people being stopped by police for driving while having a slab of beer strapped into a child safety seat, their son or daughter left to fend for themselves.

Videos

Please note: for this section of the workshop, we do not provide many slides. Please consider using one or more of the video clips in the list below, allow your students to nominate a video clip, or other point of departure for your discussion.

The following clips are of actors or public figures who have become almost archetypal, international symbols of Australian identity. These examples might help to spark a discussion of the role of mass media, the reasons that simplified portraits of national character become so salient internationally, and how stereotypical images can exaggerate differences by fixating on particular, signature traits. At the same time, people can become complicit in their own stereotypes, especially when these stereotypes prove useful for generating unity or piquing international interest, including for tourism.

Crocodile Dundee: 'That's a knife' film clip:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vW54lAtldI

Enough Rope with Andrew Denton: Steve Irwin

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hGUWBMoX98>

Kenny (2006 movie with Shane Jacobson)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8MnU6Sg0d4&feature=related>

Kath and Kim, Kath tans the wrong arm

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnB9DdYoic>

Also available for discussion are video clips made by individuals and uploaded to YouTube that focus on more narrow stereotypes, for example, of young men from Melbourne, Australian girls, 'bogans,' and other subcultures. The following group also includes a couple of clips by the 'Bondi Hipsters,' who specifically satirise the foibles of Gen Y individuals living in Sydney's eastern beaches suburb.

Sh@# Crazy Aussie Girls Say, by Mckenzi Scott with Allison Brooks

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnB9DdYoic>

Bondi Hipsters: On Bondi Beach

<http://www.youtube.com/show/bondihipsters?s=1>

The Bondi Exercise Routine

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPZbjcDw2Co>

The use of stereotypes in humour can often be a precarious exercise. Although the portrayals may seem funny to some, they can also cause offence, create confusion, or suggest that the author is racist or insensitive. In recent Australian popular culture, we have a number of examples of stereotypes back-firing or provoking intense reaction. Although playing with a stereotype might itself be seen as a stereotypical Australian trait – a 'larrirkin' sense of

humour – to be effective, these jokes require that the audience understands well. We offer the following three examples:

Clair Werbeloff, a Sydney woman, who gave an interview after a shooting near King's Cross, in which she used a broad, 'bogan' accent and ethnic stereotypes; the video of the interview went viral and eventually came back to haunt Clair. The following are the original clip of the interview, and a follow-up interview where she distances herself from her earlier statements:

Chick Chick Boom Girl

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MZffvS0yDo>

Clair Werbeloff, on *A Current Affair*, discussing her 'Chk chk boom' interview.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKOrF5kV0eY&feature=related>

The second example of a stereotype that goes awry is from the show, *Hey, Hey, It's Saturday*. The show features a talent competition, and in a recent revival, a group did a 'blackface' portrayal of the Jackson Five, with the late Michael Jackson represented by a performer in 'whiteface' make-up. American guest judge, Harry Connick, Jr., reacted very badly to the act, explaining that he never would have agreed to be on the show if he had known in advance that performers would do a 'blackface' act. The clip shows a discussion of the event, including American impressions of racism in Australia, on the show, *The View*.

'The View' sees Australia's blackface Jackson 5 as demeaning

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPNiEKcka_w&feature=related

The final set of examples is from the controversial television series, *Housos*, a series that aired on SBS that was written, directed and produced by controversial comedian and satirist Paul Fenech. *Housos* followed four friends – Shazza, Dazza, Franky and Kylie – who lived in Sunnyvale Housing Commission, battling with neighbours, police, and Centrelink. As the website for the show states:

From the creator of **Fat Pizza** and **Swift & Shift Couriers**, Pauly Fenech, the assassin of political correctness, does to bogans what Kath and Kim did to lower, middle-class Australia. *Housos* is a fashion statement from Australia's dodgiest suburbs; thongs, hoodies and Ugg boots will transport you to a world where self-medicating, poorly educated stooges are not only the norm, they're a fact of life. They may be trashy but they are literally as thick as thieves. With the best of the **Fat Pizza** and **Swift & Shift Couriers** ensemble *Housos* brings the real face of Australia's suburban underbelly to life.

A number of clips are available on the shows website: <http://www.sbs.com.au/shows/housos>. Or, some are available on YouTube, such as a segment with 'Kev the Maori':

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiZRgve18SQ>

Many editorials and other commentators have criticised Housos for its portrayal of suburban, underclass Australians, but one discussion occurred on the morning show, *Sunrise*.

Housos debated on Sunrise

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkIcNbdYiJM&feature=related>

Exercise Three

Trying a stereotype on: How does it fit?

If you cannot use video in your discussion, or do not want to use some of the previous resources, you may also consider using one of the following stories, drawn from Australian newspapers and a satire website, as points of departure for discussions of stereotypes. In some cases, students may be too swept up in the humour of the stereotypes, even enjoying the videos, and not be inclined to have a critical discussion of how people are being portrayed. In that case, the following two news stories tend to work better because they specifically highlight the drawbacks of stereotypical portrayals.

Both news stories directly address the impression that people outside Australia have of Australian national culture. Unlike some of the video clips, which are arguably Australian self-portraits, or expressions of youth culture, these stories specifically consider the damage that might be done by the international stereotypes of Australia held by non-Australians, in particular to the tourist industry and to international education.

Have you heard the one about the dumb Australian?

Josh Gordon, *The Age*.

23 August 2009

Humour is being used to undermine Australia's reputation in the region.

YOU know you are in real trouble when you become the butt of jokes on the internet.

Take this one doing the rounds in India: A Muslim was seated next to an Australian on a flight from London to Melbourne and when drink orders were taken, the Aussie asked for a rum and Coke, which was placed before him.

The attendant then asked the Muslim if he would like a drink. He replied in disgust, 'I'd rather be savagely raped by a dozen whores than let liquor touch my lips.'

The Aussie handed back his drink and said: 'Me too. I didn't know we had a choice.'

I did chuckle momentarily before considering what such jokes say about us. There are many, and a common theme is that Australians (often Melburnians) are stupid and morally vacuous. And we drink too much.

There is nothing particularly new or unusual about the use of cultural stereotypes in humour. But it does say something interesting about the way Australia is perceived in the region.

Readers' comments on the websites of English-language newspapers such as *The Times of India* also make for depressing reading. A common set of assertions is that Australians are crass, poorly educated and genetically predisposed to be stupid, racist and dishonest because of our convict heritage.

According to one reader, only ex-convicts from Indian jails should be sent here to study.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/have-you-heard-the-one-about-the-dumb-australian-20090822-eugj.html>

Accessed on 15 June 2012

North of the Himalaya, comments posted on the website of the state-controlled *China Daily* are equally vitriolic....

Australia has a serious PR problem....

In the case of both India and China, there is much at stake. Last year, Australia exported \$37.2 billion worth of goods and services to China and \$16.5 billion worth to India.

Australia world's 'dumb blonde'

Dan Harrison, *The Age*.

14 October 2010

AUSTRALIA is viewed as the 'dumb blonde' of the world, attractive but shallow and unintelligent, according to a visiting British branding expert.

Simon Anholt, who has advised the governments of more than 40 countries on national identity and reputation, said Australia's one-dimensional image meant that events such as attacks on Indian students could do greater damage here than in countries with which people were more familiar.

'A well-rounded national reputation is an insurance policy against that kind of thing,' Mr Anholt told *The Age*. ...

Australia's international education industry, which is worth more than \$18 billion annually, is facing a significant decline in enrolments as a result of a number of factors, including the strong Australian dollar, changes to migration rules and the fallout from several attacks on Indian students. ...



'The damage to Australia's reputation in India is quite severe,' Mr Anholt said.

In 2008, the Indian panel of respondents ranked Australia seventh in the world for promoting equality within society. In 2010, Australia's rank on this measure dropped to 34th.

Overall, the survey of 39,000 people in 26 countries ranked Australia the ninth-most admired country in the world.

Mr Anholt said Australia was ranked best in the world for natural beauty and as a place to visit if money was no object. But he said the success of Australia's tourism promotion campaigns had produced an 'unbalanced' view of the country.

'What you have is an image of a country that is considered to be very decorative, but not very useful,' he said.

...

Mr Anholt said Australia was unusual among developed nations in not having an organisation devoted to the promotion of culture, such as Germany's Goethe Institute or France's Alliance Francaise.

Mr Anholt said the US did not have such an organisation, but arguably did not need one because of the global reach of its entertainment industry. 'But Australia has Les Patterson, and I don't think that's enough.' ...

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/travel/travel-news/australia-worlds-dumb-blonde-20101013-16k09.html>

Accessed on 15 June, 2012

Discussion

- On what factual information is the portrait of Australia held overseas based? Is there some accurate basis to the impressions that other people are said to hold about Australia? What evidence do they cite, if any?
- Is there some factual information or image that Australians are offering that you think is being mis-interpreted? That is, is there a factual basis, but the facts are being skewed or viewed through a biased lens?
- Are Australians complicit in producing these stereotypes? Intentionally or unintentionally? What might Australians be doing that might be helping to produce the stereotypes?
- How do you feel when you read about these impressions of Australia?

If there are international students in the group, preparing for a sojourn abroad with the Australians, their perspectives can be extremely useful for the rest of the group. If possible, ask them what they knew about Australia before they arrived here; and what images in their home country shaped public perceptions of Australian identity? Although this is a delicate subject and discussion requires some adept handling, Australian students might find it very interesting to hear what international students thought prior to arriving, and discuss how these stereotyped interpretations arise.

You may need to help the student to articulate these impressions in a way that does not force the student to defend these impressions. That is, make sure that students recognise that stereotypes are social products; an individual who is able to communicate about the stereotype doesn't necessarily agree to the simplified image.

Impressions of Australians overseas

Slides 14, 15 & 16: misperceptions 1-3



Students may find it helpful to be aware of the stereotypes that they are likely to encounter when sojourning abroad. Especially if you do not read the longer articles above in Exercise Two, you may find slides 14, 15 and 16 helpful for thinking about how well a stereotype fits. All provide short excerpts from longer comments by students on our project weblog about their own experience

Australia Day in Miami

The 26th fell on a Wednesday in the States so a few of the other Aussie guys and I decided to go to the pub. We wore some Australian gear and set out to drink beer, (which Americans are terrible at brewing). We met some cool guys that loved Australians (like all other Americans) so we gave them some Aussie Tattoos and they cheers and partied with us! It was a really good night and they learned about Australian culture and we exchanged stories and gained memories. My first Australia day in the States! Sahil S, 1.3.11

Additional comment: One of my favourite things about America are the different reactions people have when they find out I am from Australia. At parties it's so funny when we talk and people ask if we are Australian and we say yes they go crazy. I think America and Australia have good relations and because of the recent Oprah visit they love Australia more. Almost all of them say "I always wanted to go to Australia". The stereotypes about Australia are so apparent when people start asking you questions like do you have Kangaroos in your backyard and other silly stuff like that. Americans are very gullible and believe anything you tell them which can be funny at times.

3.3.2011



encountering stereotypes of Australians (especially while living in the United States). These excerpts highlight many of the key issues: how stereotypes disregard heterogeneity, can be positive or ambivalent, and how the targets may be complicit in promoting the stereotypes.

(See also page 16-18 of the Exploration module for additional discussion of these materials.)

In particular, you may want to highlight that the stereotype of Australia can leave out many Australians, who might feel like Emily G. that they don't 'exactly represent the quintessential Australian.' Students may find it ironic that they pride themselves on their country's progress, including its diversity, but people overseas want to celebrate a stereotyped image of Australia that may be frozen in time.



Students hardly need to travel abroad to recognise that national identities leave people out, just as they include others, but for some students, it may be the first time that they come face-to-face with people who do not think that they are sufficiently 'Australian.' Especially if this issue has come up in your discussions, please consider reading the following excerpt authored by Alice Pung, a blog post that derived from her unpublished introduction to the anthology, *Growing Up Asian in Australia*.

The original introduction to “Growing Up Asian in Australia”

In 1770, Captain Cook stuck his flag up next to a pile of rocks, conveniently forgetting about the indigenous population, and claimed the land for the British Empire. This early act of property theft was depicted with much triumph in many of the illustrated history books I read in primary school. Usually, the Aboriginal population was drawn as a small and bewildered huddle, eclipsed by the shadow of the great ships. Similarly, history has not been too kind to our ethnic entrepreneurs and Polynesian coolies, who arrived in Australia less than a century after Cook.



History books tell us that Australia's sense of national identity began in 1901 with Federation; that was also the year the Restrictive Immigration Act came into force, giving legal effect to the White Australia Policy. The joining up of all our states to form a Commonwealth was a cause for much rejoicing – but mainly for white, male landowners, because that wealth was rarely common or shared with indigenous Australians or ethnic minorities. Slogans such as 'Australia for the White Man' (part of the *Bulletin* magazine's masthead until 1961) reflected collective racist sentiment

against the 'Yellow Peril,' the newly arrived Chinese who hoped to strike it lucky on the goldfields.

So what was it like for a yellow or brown person growing up in a country where 'Advance Australia Fair' was taken literally to mean 'advance, pale-faced patriots,' while those of a different colour should be effaced? In secondary school, the only representations I saw of our early Asian settlers – people with faces like my relatives – were in illustrations as pigtailed caricatured demons or hanging dead from trees in the goldfields; even though the early pre-mining-boom Chinese were known to be carpenters, merchants and free-settler farmers.

From Alice Pung, 2009. Peril: Asian-Australian Arts and Culture weblog
<http://www.peril.com.au/2008-2009/edition8/the-original-introduction-to-growing-up-asian-in-australia/>
 Accessed on 15 June 2012.

Students may not have considered how stereotypes of national identity can be damaging, not just to the individuals who are held up as 'stereotypical,' but to the people who are left out of the picture. For every Crocodile Dundee-like frontiersman who helped to create Australia, there were also many other people who don't match this image, whether because their ethnic background was different, because they were women, or because they did not participate in the stereotypical culture for a host of reasons. In addition, the stereotypes, although loveable to some, may also undermine legitimate calls for change.

Slide 17: Stereotypes – satire

Our final example for the 'Trying a stereotype on' that you may choose to use is a light-hearted one, drawn from the website, SatireWire.com.

Australia Gets Drunk, Wakes Up in North Atlantic

Tired of Being Isolated and Ignored, Continent Isn't Bloody Moving

Sydney, 800 miles S. of Nova Scotia (SatireWire.com) – After what witnesses described as an all night blinder during which it kept droning on about how it was always being bloody ignored by the whole bloody world and would bloody well stand to do something about it, Australia this morning woke up to find itself in the middle of the North Atlantic.

“Good Lord, that was a booze up,” said a bleary-eyed Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, speaking from his residence at Kirribilli House, approximately 600 nautical miles east of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

According to Australians and residents of several countries destroyed or lewdly insulted during the continent's nearly 7,000-mile saltwater stagger, the binge began just after noon yesterday at a pub in Brisbane, where several patrons were discussing Australia Day and the nation's general lack of respect from abroad.

“It started off same as always; coupla fossils saying how our Banjo Patterson was a better poet than Walt Whitman, how Con the Fruiterer is funnier than Seinfeld, only they're Aussies so no one knows about 'em,” recalled witness Kevin Porter. “Then this bloke Martin pipes up and says Australia's main problem is that it's stuck in Australia, and everybody says ‘Too right!’”

“Well, it made sense at the time,” Porter added.

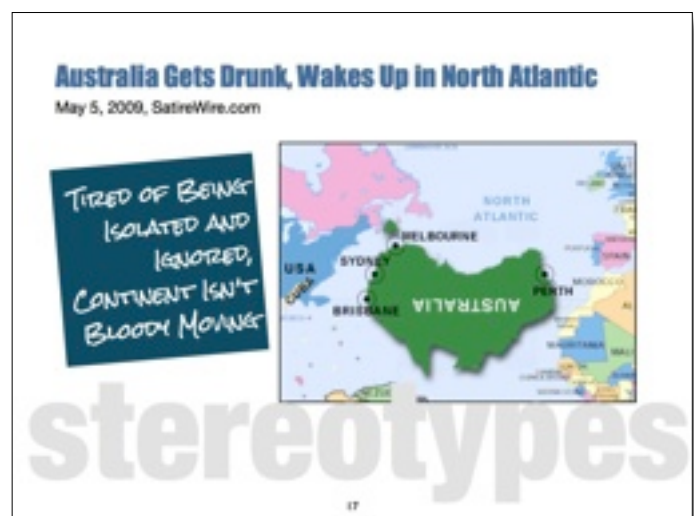
By 2 a.m., powered by national pride and alcohol, the 3-million-square-mile land mass was barging eastward through the Coral Sea and crossing into the central Pacific, leaving a trail of beer cans and Chinese take-away in its wake.

When dawn broke over the Northern Hemisphere, the continent suddenly found itself, not only upside down, but smack in the middle of the Atlantic, and according to most of its 19 million inhabitants, that's the way it's going to stay.

“We sent troops to Afghanistan. You never hear about it. We have huge government scandals. You never hear about it. It's all ‘America did this,’ and ‘Europe says that,’” exclaimed Perth resident Paul Watson. “Well, we're right in the thick of things now, so let's just see if you can you ignore us.”

Officials on both sides of the Atlantic conceded that would be difficult. “They broke Florida,” said U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher. “And most of Latin America is missing.”

Meanwhile, victims of what's already been dubbed the “Australian Crawl” are still shaking off the event.



"Australia bumped into us at about midnight local time," said Hawaii governor Ben Cayetano. "They were very friendly – they always seem friendly – but they refused to go around unless we answered their questions. But the questions were impossible. 'Who is Ian Thorpe? Do you have any Tim Tams? What day is Australia Day?'"

"Fortunately, somebody here had an Unimportant World Dates calendar and we aced the last one," Cayetano added.

Panama, however, was not so lucky.

"Australia came through here screaming curses at us to let them through," said Ernesto Carnal, who guards the locks at the entrance to the Panama Canal. "We said they would not fit, so they demanded to speak with a manager. When I go to find Mr. Caballos, they sneak the whole continent through."

When Caballos shouted to the fleeing country that it had not paid, Australia "accidentally" backed up and took out every nation in the region, as well as the northern third of Venezuela. They then made up a cheery song about it.

By late morning today, however, not everyone in Australia was quite so blithe. "We've still got part of Jamaica stuck to Queensland," said Australian army commander Lt. Gen. Peter Cosgrove. "I think we might have declared war on it. I don't bloody remember. Maybe it's time to go home."



Cosgrove, however, is not in the majority, and at press time, U.S., African, and European leaders were still desperately trying to negotiate for Australia's withdrawal. ... In a two-hour meeting at midday, Australian representatives listed their demands: immediate inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a permanent CNN presence in all 6 Australian states, a worldwide ban on hiring Paul Hogan, a primetime U.S. television contract for Australian Rules Football, and a 4,500-mile-long bridge between Sydney and Los Angeles.

U.S. negotiators immediately walked out, calling the Australian Rules Football request "absurd."

Excerpted from: <http://www.satirewire.com/content1/?p=173>

Accessed on 16 June 2012

Exercise Four

The Australian 'citizenship test'

The last pre-departure exercise is designed to highlight the idea of 'cultural intimacy' and the way that 'culturally intimate' self-stereotypes can themselves be ways of covering over differences within a group. Under what circumstances do individuals traffic in stereotypes about themselves that might not be acceptable in other circumstances? And when people tell these jokes, and use self-stereotypes as a way of forging a shared identity, is it possible that people get left out?

Students often have the incorrect impression that they are always able to 'take a joke' and that they are always expressing themselves authentically, refusing to tailor what they say to their audience. That is, an Australian ideology of honesty and informality can persuade students that only other cultural groups are touchy about stereotypes or prone to take offence.

One way to highlight that audiences matter is to point out to students how insults that might be playful in some circumstances can be very painful or aggressive in others. For example, if a teacher or a parent called the student some of the same things that his or her friends might routinely call them, the relationship would make the behaviour inappropriate. Or, depending on who said it and in what contexts, even a positive statement like a compliment on how a person looked or 'I love you' might have a very different significance.

The point is that cultures, too, have insides and outsides, and varying degrees of familiarity. A person can earn the right, over time, to make jokes with us or point out our failings, but someone who has just been introduced cannot.

The following comes from an email that 'went viral' back around 2007, especially as the country debated the legitimacy of a test for citizenship. Arguably, the citizenship test itself was an attempt to identify a core of cultural values or knowledge that was particularly 'Australian,' a difficult challenge given the diversity of the country and the rapid changes in the national culture. (More cynical observers suggested that the test was merely an indirect way of testing someone's English ability or the overall education.)



16 super-imposed sketch maps of Australia made by people attending an England v. Australia cricket test at Regents' Park.
By Adrian Acediscovery

One of the most interesting dimensions of the test, however, is the way that the jokes themselves were affected by the age of the audience. Certain stereotypical 'Aussie' traits, even ones that were a source of humour or mirth to some Australians, were less familiar to young Australians, or were associated with particular groups and not the whole of the country.

AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP TEST



G'DAY clobber, had a gutful of the hullabaloo over the new citizenship test? Here's a dinky-di quiz for all prospective Aussies. It's bloody tops.

1. Do you understand the meaning, but are unable to explain the origin of, the term 'died in the arse'?
2. What is a 'bloody little beauty'?
3. Are these terms related: chuck a sickie; chuck a spaz; chuck a U-ey?
4. Explain the following passage: 'In the arvo last Chrissy the rels rocked up for a barbie, some bevvies and a few snags. After a bit of a Bex and a lie down we opened the pressies, scoffed all the chockies, bickies and lollies. Then we drained a few tinnies and Mum did her block after Dad and Steve had a barney and a bit of biff.'
5. Macca, Chooka and Wanger are driving to Surfers in their Torana. If they are travelling at 100 km/h while listening to Barnsey, Farnsey and Acca Dacca, how many slabs will each person on average consume between flashing a brown eye and having a slash?
6. Complete the following sentences:
 - a) 'If the van's rockin' don't bother ?
 - b) You're going home in the back of a ?
 - c) Fair crack of the ?
7. 'I've had a gutful, and I can't be fagged.' Discuss
8. Have you ever been on the giving or receiving end of a wedgie?
9. Do you have a friend or relative who has a car in their front yard 'up on blocks'? Is his name Bruce and does he have a wife called Cheryl?
10. Does your family regularly eat a dish involving mincemeat, cabbage, curry powder and a packet of chicken noodle soup called either 'chow mein', 'chop suey' or 'kai see ming'?
11. What are the ingredients in a rissole?

12. Demonstrate the correct procedure for eating a Tim Tam.
13. Do you have an Auntie Irene who smokes 30 cigarettes a day and sounds like a bloke?
14. In any two-hour period have you ever eaten three-bean salad, a chop and two serves of pav washed down with someone else's beer that has been flogged from a bath full of ice?
15. When you go to a bring- your-own-meat barbie, can you eat other people's meat, or are you only allowed to eat your own?
16. What purple root vegetable beginning with the letter 'b' is required by law to be included in a hamburger with the lot?
17. Do you own or have you ever owned a lawn mower, a pair of thongs, an Esky or Ugg boots?
18. Is it possible to 'prang a car' while doing 'circle work'?
19. Who would you like to crack on to?
20. Who is the most Australian: Kevin 'Bloody' Wilson, John 'True Blue' Williamson, Kylie Minogue or Warchie?
21. Is there someone you are only mates with because they own a trailer or have a pool?
22. What does 'sinkin piss at a mates joint' and 'getten para' mean?
23. How far would you wear your mockies?

Inside only?

Back yard only?

To the letter box?

To the milk bar for a packed of winni blues?

To the movies?

To shoppo? (large shopping centre)

To the pub?

The 'Australian Citizenship Test' circulated widely and was intended to mock any pretentiousness about Australian culture. At the same time, as a form of 'cultural intimacy,' the 'Citizenship Test' clearly focused on a narrow range of the variety found in Australia. In some circumstances, this focus on 'Aussie culture' can, intentionally or unintentionally, be a way of leaving out recent immigrants, Aboriginal people, Asians, even highly educated or urban groups. Populist politics, for example, can use the image of the 'true Australian,' not just against asylum-seekers or international students, but even against other Australian communities.

Slides 18-21: Conceptual wrap-up

After whichever predeparture exercises you use, a short summary of the main points of the pre-departure workshop is helpful. The last four slides (18-21) review the key points and attempt to lay the foundations for moving beyond stereotypes during students' sojourns.

Slide 18: Stereotypes & culture

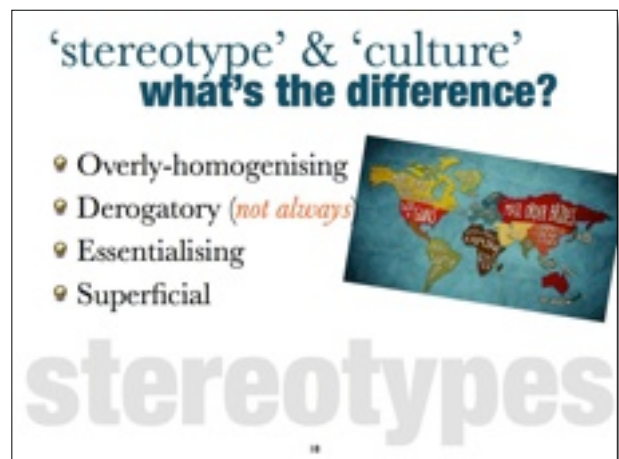
The chief differences between appreciating cultural differences and holding stereotypes are the following:

Overly-homogenising: Stereotypes tend to assume that every member of a culture is the same, at least for all practical purposes. In fact, every culture has dissenters, deviants, rebels, abstainers, grumblers, and all other sorts of resisters. Variety is a normal, even necessary part of cultural vitality.

Derogatory (not always): Stereotypes are often derogatory, unfairly judging other cultures by ethnocentric standards. But stereotypes are not always negative or demeaning; stereotypes can be celebratory or positive, yet still equally simplistic and homogenising.

Essentialising: Stereotypes tend to assume that whatever behaviour or customs people engage in arise from some essential nature, their ethnic-ness or cultural identity. A more sophisticated understanding recognises that many of the things we do are responses to contexts. Cultures are systems and social structures; they are not little factories cranking out identical individuals. People get disciplined, respond to incentives, and are capable of change.

Superficial: Finally, stereotypes tend to be superficial or shallow, focusing on surface details and immediate impressions. Cultural explanations, as we discuss in the Cultural Relativism and Analysis module, seek to find a much fuller context, including a group's history, an awareness of culture change, and deeper causes for the observable traits of a group.



Slide 19: Consensual stereotypes

Because we are often conditioned to assume that stereotypes are negative, and that people will fight against being labeled, students may be surprised in the discussion of stereotypes when they realise how frequently people consent to being stereotyped, celebrate their own stereotypes, and generally engage in self-stereotyping.

As we wrap up the predeparture workshop, we highlight the reasons that might motivate a person to agree to a consensual stereotype.

First, they may have a **vested interest** in the stereotype, or something to gain from the stereotype. For example, they may use the stereotype in their work or rely upon it to excuse their behaviour or explain their own failings.

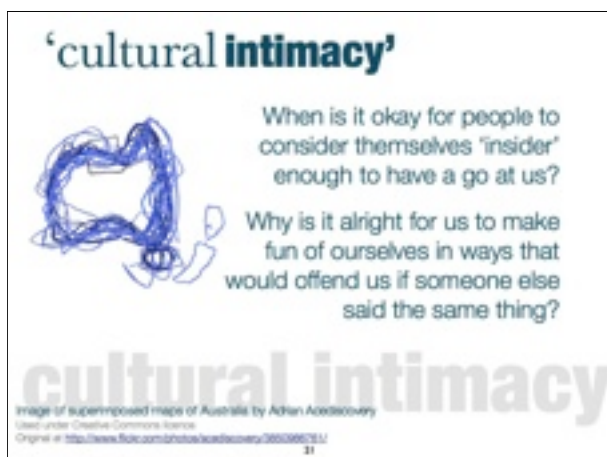
Second, a stereotype may imply that the individual has the right of **representation**. That is, the stereotype may imply that the individual him- or herself is the legitimate representative of a group, that his or her interests are the group's interests as a whole.

Finally, over time, some individuals simply **internalise** a stereotype, taking it on board and coming to believe that what others think is, in fact, the truth about his or her group.



Slides 20 & 21: Cultural intimacy (1 & 2)

The conclusion to the Stereotypes workshop is to highlight the concept of 'cultural intimacy,' as described by anthropologist Michael Herzfeld. Herzfeld highlights that groups will sometimes hold stereotypes that are manifestly negative, derogatory, and even damaging, but that these will be used in a context of intimacy. Cultural 'insiders' will be able to use the stereotype with other 'insiders,' but the same stereotype, used by a person without the same intimacy, will cause conflict and resentment.



The final slide simply asks students to reflect on the nature of stereotypes about their own identities, such as those in Exercises 2, 3 & 4. The reflection is meant to sensitise students to the ways in which intimacy will change their relationship to group criticisms and alert them to the possibility that consensual stereotypes may even be a mark of acceptance.

In-country

Exercise Five

Contending with stereotypes: being Australian abroad

One of the best ways to persuade students to reflect on stereotypes and come to a recognition of their limitations as a way of understanding cultural difference is to encourage students to document and reflect upon stereotypes of Australians that they encounter while abroad. That is, ask students to think about how they experience being on the receiving end of stereotypes while sojourning abroad in order to have a discussion about stereotypes on re-entry or while in country.

In some places, these stereotypes of Australians may be extremely negative, or they may be positive, but in ways that cause a kind of cultural embarrassment: although students recognise where the stereotype comes from, even some of its validity, they still cringe or feel uncomfortable when it is brought into play. The exercise is helpful because it can show that, even if a stereotype is 'positive' or complimentary, it still assumes individuals are

'Americans'

I've found that to most Americans, Australia is seen as a great holiday destination with strange animals and friendly people. This is a very good reputation to have but unfortunately, it is these topics which make up the bulk of the conversations I happen to have with Americans.

The kangaroo usually comes up first in conversation which I don't really mind. In fact I enjoy talking about what is unique about Australia; although **I am starting to suspect that Americans are not really interested in my version of Australia. They are more interested in simplified caricatures and national symbols, that offer them a more comfortable albeit conventionalised version of Australia.** I suppose this is something that I've found difficult to understand, because **I am aware that I don't exactly represent the quintessential Australian, but I offer some diversity that could potentially educate Americans about Australia, and relieve some of the simplistic views they might have of us. I think that a country is more than just the image it projects, but sometimes the image is all people care to consider.** It is not bothering me so much right now, but it is starting to dawn on me. I do miss my family, but I love being here. I don't miss my life back home as much, because I definitely think I am having way more fun where I am. [Emily G. USA]

homogeneous, blocks deeper knowledge of people, and attributes traits to an essential national character, shared by all members of the group.

In both the Reflection and Communication modules, the Bringing the Learning Home team has tried to assemble questions to aid in in-country discussions, especially using a blog or internet-based forum. A number of these questions will no doubt cause students to reflect upon stereotypes, or to struggle themselves with stereotypes, including those of some of their hosts.

If the subject arises, some reflection questions specifically addressing dimensions of stereotype formation are included in Exercise Six after an example of a student reflection on the subject.

If a student brings up the ‘accuracy’ of a stereotype (‘My God, all Americans are religious nutcases!’ ‘I can’t believe the way everything closes for siesta; it’s so lazy!’ ‘Everything is just so efficient in Germany!’), the instructor has a number of ways to deal with the assertion.

First, one strategy is to look for ‘disconfirming information,’ evidence of an exception to a stereotype (Hewstone 1996). If you are using a blog for in-country reflection, you may quickly scan student posts’ from the same country to see if there are any examples that spring to your attention, and ask the student about the relation between the different posts. Or ask the student if the same stereotype applies to all fellow students from the host country, as university students are often diverse.

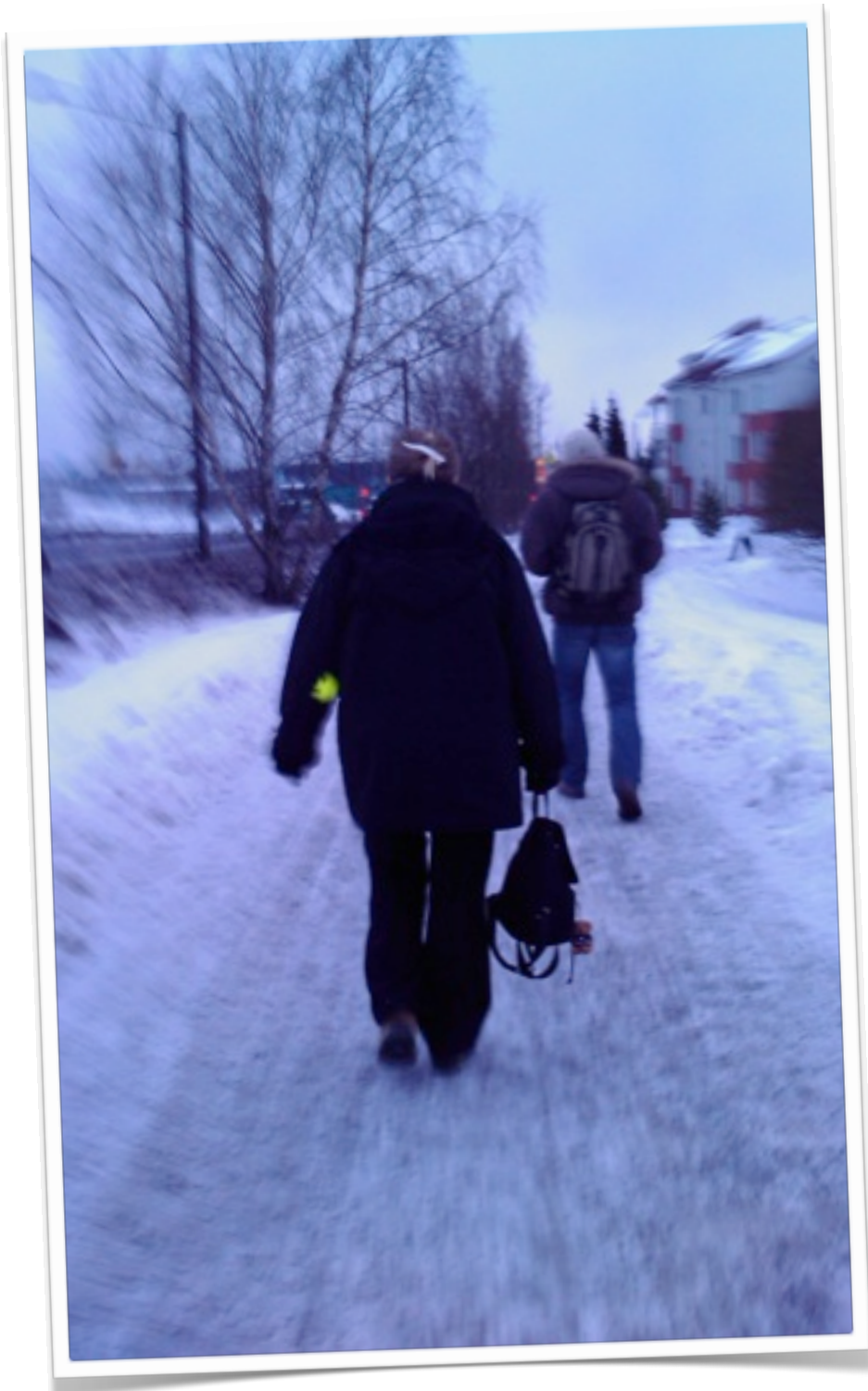
Second, you may ask the student to use some of the methods from the Cultural Relativism and Analysis module, especially the ‘D.I.V.E.’ cycle for analysing cultural difference. Often, a stereotype is a tentative interpretation of some observation; a deeper consideration of other, alternative interpretations, and the process of seeking verification with local people, or comparing the stereotype to other cultural practices, might lead to a more complex understanding of a trait, even if that trait is part of a consensual stereotype.

For example, a student might notice how a characteristic is not just a ‘natural’ part of the national character, but is actually a highly valued trait that is steadfastly pursued and trained into individuals in a society, with dissenters punished in various ways. Encouraging students to focus on socialising processes, rather than treating the end result as something inherent in individuals – a kind of ‘essentialising’ that can border on racism – will help students to see cultures as dynamic and social.

Or you might find that trying to ‘stand against the tide,’ if other people behave in a particular way, becomes impossible. For example, refusing to conform to local standards for punctuality, including the possibility that no one familiar with local culture expects an event to start ‘on time,’ can be maddening. A student can begin to understand how patterns of

culture are imposed on people, or encounter a local person who, like the student, finds a pattern annoying or difficult to follow.

Third, even if a student insists that a particular stereotype is ‘true,’ the discussion can shift to the consequences of that pattern or to the broader cultural fabric in which it exists. This discussion can include a consideration of who in a society benefits from a particular pattern, which will encourage students to see that culture is a social structure, with winners and losers, and not just an essential trait of people.



Re-entry

Exercise Six: Replacing stereotypes with understanding.

We do not necessarily suggest that the Stereotypes module be a major ingredient in re-entry education. Many of the themes that are raised in this module will carry through into the Cultural Relativism and Analysis and the Globalisation and Cosmopolitanism materials. However, if you have engaged in the pre-departure exercises, especially Exercise One, Expectations and Impressions, you may want to return to the initial impressions students had prior to their exchange experience. A series of reflection questions might help them to discuss how these stereotypes arise, why they persist, and what might lead them to change.

Consider making a map with the terms students used to describe their destination superimposed (like Slide 11). Ask the students first to write short responses to the following questions, and then to discuss them, either in small groups, or as a whole workshop:

- Did your initial impressions hold up? Would you still choose the same images or words to describe your host country that you chose before departure?
- Looking back, do you think that these impressions were pretty uniform, or did those initial images focus on a smaller part of your host country or culture?
- What were the things you observed or experienced that, given your initial impressions prior to travelling, most surprised you about your host country? Why do you think you weren't prepared for these facts?
- Do you feel that your hosts sought to promote a stereotype or simplified view of who they were, either to you or more broadly (such as in tourist literature)? Why?
- Does any group in your host country in particular benefit from any strong stereotype of the country? Are any particular groups ignored? Whose interest might this focus serve?
- At any point, did you feel like you were 'included' in a discussion of the host country's own sense of self? That is, did you gain sufficient rapport with someone to the point that they were willing to criticise their own culture? (Note: In some cultures, participants are quite willing to be self critical; in others, they are much less prone to this type of introspection.)

Supplementary material

‘BaFa BaFa’

In some of our previous experience working with pre-departure orientation, the game ‘BaFa BaFa’ worked extraordinarily well, especially to alert students to the emotional dynamics of encountering cultural differences in motivation and interactional expectations. ‘BaFa BaFa’ (Shirts 1997) was created as a simulation exercise to demonstrate to participants the profound difficulties of interacting with another group, engaging in social interactions based on their own rules, and understanding what others are seeking to accomplish.

Fischer (2011: 773-774) argues that BaFa BaFa is especially good at highlighting for students the challenges of intercultural interaction. Although the game may not prepare them specifically for their host culture, the simulation can at least alert them to the possibility that they will not be competent cultural actors in the new context, offering a kind of ‘reality check’ to the difficulties of intercultural adaptation. Given that many of our Australian students, judging from survey results, may overestimate the degree to which their lives are ‘multi-cultural,’ this exercise may be especially helpful to move students toward a more accurate appraisal of their abilities.

‘Australian Stereotypes & Cultural Identity’

Discussion held in Sydney during the Festival of Dangerous Ideas. Panel by Len Ang, Larissa Behrendt, Robyn Archer, and Bridget Kendall. Three women, with their own very distinctive backgrounds, discuss the profile and effect of stereotypes of Australia, and how they affect Australian cultural identity. From the program description:

From outback heroes to Anzac legends, from Aussie battlers to noble savages - these are familiar figures in the Australian story - but is it really possible to distil identity into stereotypes? An all-women panel takes up this debate at the recent Festival of Dangerous Ideas and present a sweeping discussion on issues that concern our national psyche.

The forum is available, to watch or as an audio, through the website: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/bigideas/stories/2009/10/23/2722574.htm>

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