

Eastern vs. Western Culture

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As we know, the differences between Eastern and Western cultures are numerous, because Eastern and Western people not only live in different environments but also are educated in distinctively different ways. The characteristics of each culture are shown in its people's behavior; their attitudes toward life and love, and their personalities. I guess this is why Eastern people usually encounter the so-called "culture shock" when traveling to the Western countries.

First of all, Eastern and Western people have different attitudes toward their life. Eastern people live in time, which means that they follow the natural order of time to do what they ought to do and work step by step. Eastern people don't like their schedules to be messed up and usually hate to change things once they decide the sequence. By contrast, Western people live in space. They prefer to follow their dreams and do what they want to do. Sometimes they are not as pragmatic as the Eastern people, but they often achieve great goals in their life.

Secondly, Eastern and Western people differ greatly in their personalities. Eastern people are often passive.

They tend to be submissive than to be aggressive. They think that being a leader is difficult, and they don't like to take heavy responsibilities. Also, they are contemplative. They think more and do less; on the contrary, Western people do more and think less. They are diligent and assertive; they love to be leaders and make decisions. Although these differences are not so arbitrary anymore, they are still obvious when we put Eastern and Western people together. Western people often lead the Eastern people, but not the opposite.

Finally, the attitudes toward love in the East and the West aren't the same. Eastern people think that love is mute. For example, when Chinese people love a person, they don't say, "I love you." They just show their love in actions. On the other hand, Western people think love is vocal. When they want to show how much they love a person, they would say it loudly and create romantic scenes such as buying a big bouquet of roses. In addition, Eastern people do not get married just for love. They would choose their marriage partner matchable to their educational, social and economic background. That is, they care more about the real things in real life than the romantic feelings in a marriage. Nevertheless, Western people rarely get married before they make sure if they are in love with each other. Perhaps we can say that romantic love is part of Western people's lives, and they cannot live without it. A Western woman can get married with a poor man but still feel satisfied and happy. Though it is not that Eastern people do not have this kind of examples, it happens less often because even if they want to get married with someone poor, their parents would not agree. Speaking of parents, we can see another apparent example that how Eastern and Western parents are showing their love toward their children. Parents in Eastern countries think they have the obligations to decide what is the best for their children; however, parents in the West think it is best for their children to make their own decisions.

In short, Eastern and Western people not only live in different lifestyles, but also think in distinctively different ways. Although some of the characteristics are not so arbitrary anymore nowadays, they still exist in our society. Understanding these characteristics would definitely benefit our appreciating and learning from each other's culture.

Some Unique Aspects of the American Culture

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Have you ever had such an experience that when you want to make friends with foreigners, you don't know how to approach them or talk to them? Constantly, we are always at a loss and do not know where to start to explore the Western cultures. In fact, it's not difficult to get along with foreigners or fit into their world as long as you are more involved in learning their life style and values for things.

The American culture may be a more popular one in Taiwan among many other Western cultures at present. Does the American culture often confuse you? The following is an introduction of some unique aspects of the American culture, such as their ideas about friendship, dating and raising pets, which I believe will be interesting and worthy of your attention.

Americans view friendship quite differently from the way we do. For most Americans, the word "friend" can be

used in a very broad sense. Americans are very kind to everyone they meet the first time. They call both casual acquaintances and intimate companions “friends.” They are often at ease when chatting with strangers. Therefore, Americans’ being friendly to everyone often makes people with different cultural backgrounds feel confused. They do not know that to Americans a friend can mean anyone they barely know to a very close or intimate friend. Therefore, next time, when Americans say warmly and friendly, “Let’s get together some time,” be careful and don’t immediately feel they treat you as a very special friend.

Do you know how differently Americans view “dating” from people of other cultures? In Taiwan, the concept of dating may still remain in a more conservative sense than the American one. In fact, most Taiwanese see dating as a formal, serious, and the first step of developing a love relationship. By contrast, dating is regarded as an opportunity to have fun and make friends in the American culture. As a result, it is common that Americans are likely to go out with different persons every week before they begin to develop a true love.

At last, raising pets for Americans is another special aspect of their culture. Sometimes, a foreigner may be very surprised at Americans’ great attention to their pets. In America, the pet food stores and dog hotels can be seen everywhere. Moreover, they can buy dog insurance policy and dog graves. Most Americans treat their dogs like their family members, which is a little different from the way we treat animals here in Taiwan. Obviously, pets have been a part of the American culture.

So far, how much do you know about the American culture? Learning how Americans make friends, go on a date and raise pets will help you enter the American world more easily and understand the American way even though you are not planning to go abroad.