**Having Two Different Cultures**

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Culture is like an iceberg. Have you ever seen an iceberg before? An iceberg looks huge, right?  But if you could see the ice under the surface, you would be surprised because 90% of the ice is there. So really you can only see 10% of an iceberg. Let’s compare this to culture. The 10% is the visible culture. For example, different hair styles, languages and clothes. The 90% which is under the surface is invisible culture, such as attitudes, values and confidence. It is easy to see the 10%, but it is much harder to see the other 90% because it is hidden. However, if we are able to understand the hidden parts of culture, we can become global citizens who are wise, resourceful and have strong leadership qualities.

Let’s think about the visible and invisible aspects of do it yourself, or DIY, culture in NZ. One day my host family’s dishwasher broke. A lot of water leaked from it, so I went to my host father and told him “You should call the repairman.”  He said, “Why do I need to do that? I will fix it later, so just leave it.” I was shocked by his attitude. I also wondered; “Could he fix it by himself? He is not repairman.” Within a few days, he dismantled the dishwasher and found the problem. Then, he ordered some parts and completely fixed it. Back in Japan when my family’s air conditioner broke, no one tried to fix it. My father said “Don’t touch it.  I will call a repairman.” I realized that many Japanese people hardly ever try to fix something by themselves. Instead, they often rely on experts.

Each country has different attitudes and these are part of the invisible 90%. Many New Zealanders like to fix or reuse something, so DIY is common there. It’s a good chance to learn how to repair things and can be cheaper than calling an expert. However calling a repairman when appliances or furniture break is more reliable than doing it by yourself and is much more convenient. In this way, Japanese people have a cautious attitude. I want to be a flexible person. If I have a DIY attitude like New Zealanders and a cautious attitude like Japanese people, I can have the wisdom to choose the best option depending on the situation.

I was also surprised by how common changing jobs is in NZ. Many New Zealanders often change jobs throughout their lifetime. On the other hand, the majority of Japanese people hardly ever change their job. For example, my father has been working at the same company for 28 years. He has good perseverance and will probably continue to work there until he reaches retirement age.

Many New Zealanders value having a variety of experiences and the flexibility to change. In addition, if people want to get higher paying jobs or promotions in NZ, they need to change their job and diversify their work skills. The reason for this comes from New Zealanders and Japanese people having different values. If I can join the values of perseverance and experience, I can be resourceful and have patience to deal with challenges.

One final cultural difference that surprised me was that many New Zealanders have strong self-confidence. I first learned about it during a conversation at church. I was surprised how confidently my church brothers and sisters stated their opinions to the audience.  But when I was asked to share my opinions, my voice was quiet and shaky and my listeners could hardly understand my opinions. Compared to New Zealanders, many Japanese people are not so good at expressing self-confidence. Back in Japan, I learned about Japanese cooperation during my mechanics class. Our teacher asked about ideas for future robots, but none of us answered. Then our teacher asked us to get into groups and try to make many ideas as a team. We started a discussion together and we had lots of good ideas, even though when the teacher had asked us before, we said nothing.   I realized that if we worked together we can benefit from different perspectives and gain the confidence to say our ideas.

These different aspects of confidence and cooperation are, again, invisible. Many New Zealanders have strong self-confidence. So, they are confident when doing DIY projects, working and speaking.  Most Japanese people like to follow others. They hardly trust their own ability but they can trust other people and other opinions. This is very important for teamwork, and they support each other to achieve their team’s goals.  I think that I can be a great leader if I have both strong self-confidence and the ability to cooperate with other people.

I’ve talked about differences between attitudes, values, confidence, and cooperation. Now let me ask one question: which is better? DIY or being cautious? New experiences or perseverance? Confidence or cooperation? I hope you can understand my idea that having both is best because if we do we can become international citizens who gained wisdom, who are resourceful and who can be great leaders.