

time that she is a woman, yet the introductions still seemed strained. She planned to get straight down to business, so when the client company's CEO handed her his business card, she put it in her pocket without a glance, and did not give him her card. Again she noticed some shock and embarrassment all around. (She found out much later that a business card is very important to a Japanese businessman because it conveys all his accomplishments and position without having to say it himself.) Flustered, she tried to make light of the situation, patted him on the back, and asked him what his first name was, saying, rather loudly, that hers' was Kelly. He went quiet again, backed away from her, and, with his head bowed, whispered "Michio." He glanced around at his Japanese colleagues rather nervously.

After a period of silence, Michio pointed to the table of refreshments, and indicated that they sit and eat; however, Kelly was anxious to present her power-point slides and went to the end of the table where the equipment was and asked Peter to set up the slides. As she proceeded to go through the proposal, telling them what her company could do for them, she paused and asked for questions. However, when Michio and his two colleagues asked questions, they directed them to Peter, not to her. In fact, they made little eye contact with her at all. She tried to remain cool, but insisted on answering the questions herself. In the end, she sat down and asked Michio what he thought of the proposal. He bowed politely and said "very good" and that he would discuss it with his colleagues and get back to her. However, Kelly did not hear from them, and after a couple of weeks she asked Peter to follow up with them. He did that, but reported that they were not going to pursue the contract. Frustrated, she said, "Well, why did Michio say that it looked very good, then?" She knew that it was a very competitive proposal and felt that something other than the proposed contract was to blame for the loss of the contract.

Disillusioned, but determined not to give up without success in the assignment, Kelly took a cab to go home and think about it, but the driver misunderstood her and went the wrong way and got stuck in traffic. She felt discouraged and wished that she had some female American friends to whom she could confide her problems.

When Kelly got home, Peter was angrily trying to fix dinner, complaining about the small appliances and not being able to understand the food packages or how to prepare the food. He said he needed something else to do, but that there did not seem to be a job on the horizon for him. He was also concerned about continuing to live in such a high-cost city on only one salary.

Kelly went to the other room to see the children; they were fighting and complaining that they had nothing to do and wanted to go home. Kelly felt that the three months that they had been there was not a fair trial, and was wondering what to do. She wished she had had more time to prepare for this assignment, and whenever she contacted the home office no one seemed able to advise her.

Case Questions

1. Explain the clashes in culture, customs, and expectations that occurred in this situation.
2. What stage of culture shock is Kelly's family experiencing?
3. Turn back the clock to when Kelly was offered the position in Tokyo. What, if anything, should have been done differently, and by whom?
4. You are Kelly. What should you do now?