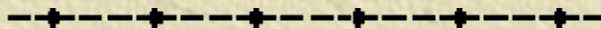


*University of Louisville
Human Resources &
International Programs*

**Communicating Effectively Across
Cultures**

Presenter: Ryan Larsen



Training Objectives

“A closed mind is like a closed book, just a block of wood.” (Chinese proverb)

- ✦ Differences make us unique
- ✦ Cultural awareness leads to sensitivity
- ✦ Apply practices of cultural sensitivity to your profession and day-to-day life
- ✦ Meeting halfway



Ethnocentrism



“What you see in yourself, you see in the world.” (Afghan proverb)

- ✦ Universal tendency of human beings to feel that their ways of thinking, acting, and believing are the only right, proper, and natural ways

Cultural Sensitivity

- ✦ Being aware of cultural differences without assigning value (i.e., better or worse, right or wrong) to those differences
- ✦ Awareness of differences creates sensitivity



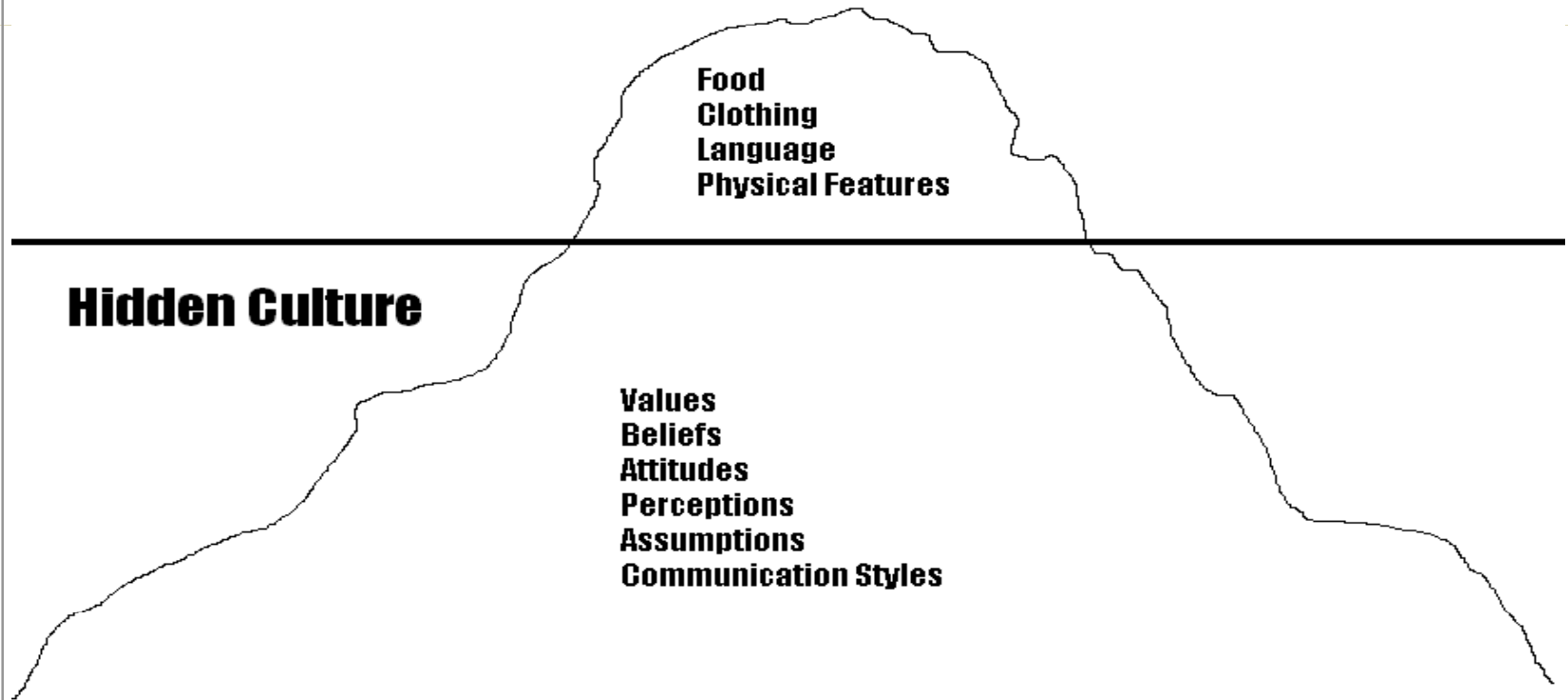
The Iceberg Effect

Surface Culture

**Food
Clothing
Language
Physical Features**

Hidden Culture

**Values
Beliefs
Attitudes
Perceptions
Assumptions
Communication Styles**



Understanding Cultures

- ✦ Social Relationships
- ✦ Social Framework
- ✦ Time



Social Relationships

Individual vs. Collective

- ✧ *“If you want something done well, ...” (US American proverb)*
- ✧ **Individual Cultures**
 - Individual takes initiative
 - Is responsible for one’s own actions
 - Employees/children are expected to act without being told
 - *Example Cultures: US, Northern & Western Europe, Australia, & New Zealand*



Social Relationships

Individual vs. Collective

✦ *“When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.” (Ethiopian proverb)*

✦ *Collective Cultures*

- Devotion to the unit (family, extended family, religion, business organization) in exchange for life-long loyalty
- Group decisions instead of individual decisions
 - *Example Cultures: Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, & the Pacific Islands*

Social Framework

Low vs. High Context

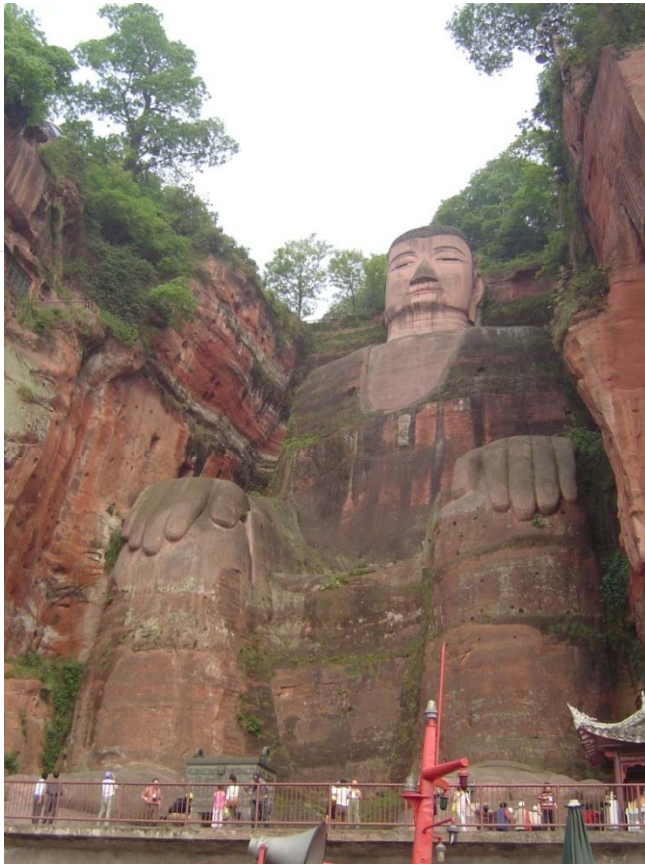
✦ “*Say what you mean, and...*” (*US American proverb*)

✦ *Low Context Cultures*

- This type of culture values explicit/literal communication; emphasizes verbal communication
- Values empirical data (facts, statistics, & details)
- Values and adheres to contracts
 - *Example Cultures*: *United States, Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia*

Social Framework

Low vs. High Context



- ✧ “A silent man is the best one to listen to” (Japanese proverb)
- ✧ High Context Cultures
 - Values implicit/indirect communication; emphasizes non-verbal communication
 - Goal of communication is to preserve and strengthen the relationship
 - Relies less on contracts and more on understanding; contracts less binding
 - Example Cultures:
Asian, Middle Eastern, Eastern Europe, Latin Am., Mediterranean

Time

Linear, Flexible and Circular

✧ “Time is...” (US American proverb)

✧ Linear Time:

- Respect schedules
- Respect appointments
- Target the short term
- Plan for the future



- *Example Cultures: France, Germany, Northern Europe, United States*

Time

Linear, Flexible & Circular

✦ *“Death is the reaper who doesn’t take a midday nap” (Spanish proverb)*

✦ **Flexible Time:**

- Family comes before business
- Give a window of time for meetings
- Avoid strict deadlines when possible
 - *Example Cultures: Eastern Europe, Latin America, Mediterranean, Mongolia, Philippines*

Time

Linear, Flexible & Circular

✦ “*Wise men are never in a hurry*” (*Chinese proverb*)

✦ **Circular Time:**

- Time manages life; humans must adjust to time
- Will reflect and contemplate links between facts and relationships before making decisions
 - *Example cultures: African, Asian, Native American*

Practical Tips

- ✦ Verbal Communication
- ✦ Nonverbal Communication
- ✦ Culturally Sensitive Behavior
- ✦ Misconceptions
- ✦ Societal Programming



Verbal Communication



- ✦ Speak slowly and enunciate; must be conscious of speech
- ✦ Don't talk down
- ✦ Speaking louder does not help
- ✦ Do not use idioms, slang, jargon, or buzzwords
- ✦ Use simple, concrete, specific words
- ✦ Use most common meaning of word



Verbal Communication cont.

- ✦ Jokes rarely translate
- ✦ Just because they are nodding does not mean they understand, so pay close attention
 - “Please let me know if I communicated clearly...”
 - “Please correct me if I misinterpret what you have said...”
- ✦ Try explaining point in different way
- ✦ Be polite and formal
- ✦ Develop patience and good listening skills



Nonverbal Communication

- ✦ 85% of communication nonverbal
- ✦ Includes eye contact, facial expression, hand gestures, the use of physical space, and silence
 - Pay attention and keep gestures to a minimum
- ✦ Be aware that all of the above can communicate different meanings in different cultures

Culturally Sensitive Behavior

- ✦ Ask and learn how to pronounce names correctly
- ✦ Have respect for their situation: how would I feel if I was in their shoes?
- ✦ Take time to listen and be patient: how well would you fare speaking their language in their country?
- ✦ Most importantly: How would I like to be treated?

Misconceptions

✦ Developing nations are not as poor, backward, and/or uneducated as US Americans tend to think

- Education
- Economy
- Contributions in History
 - Chinese
 - Arabic
 - Mesoamerican
 - African



Societal Influence

✦ Resist with all your might thoughts that stem from societal prejudice/bias; treat people kindly and with respect

– Entertainment

- German → Russian → Arab

– Insiders

- Oklahoma City
- Columbine
- Unabomber
- DC Snipers
- Anthrax in Henderson

– Extremists/radicals the problem, not _____

Conclusion

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.” ~ Audre Lorde

- ✦ Awareness creates sensitivity
- ✦ How you feel versus how you behave
- ✦ Word of mouth a powerful form of marketing
- ✦ Too many taboos to know them all
- ✦ Treating people with respect is basis for cultural sensitivity

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