Cultural Awareness

THE ICEBERG THEORY OF CULTURE

Culture is Multifaceted

Many people question what culture is. How can it be defined? What analogies can be used to describe it? Whether they draw a tree, cauldron, plate of food or a tapestry they are all valid as culture means different things to different people. In essence what they are trying to describe is something that is multifaceted.

One Model of Culture: Iceberg

There is one model of culture that most agree sums up the concept best; and that is the iceberg. The iceberg perhaps lends itself best to this as it so graphically demonstrates the idea of having both a visible and invisible structure. The fate of the Titanic, whose crew failed to appreciate the true size of the unseen part of the iceberg, adds another dimension to realizing what can happen when the iceberg is ignored.

So why the Iceberg Model?

The iceberg has the visible tip. These are the areas of culture that we can see manifest in the physical sense. More often than not these are the elements that we come into contact with first when diving into a new country or culture. Such "visible" elements include things such as music, dress, dance, architecture, language, food, gestures, greetings, behaviors, devotional practices, art and more. In addition it can also relate to behaviors such as seeing people ignoring red traffic lights, spitting on the floor, smoking in public or queuing for a bus. All, depending on your own culture, may come across as weird, strange, rude, ignorant or simply silly.

None of the visible elements can make real sense without understanding the drivers behind them; and these are hidden on the bottom side of the iceberg, the invisible side. It is these invisible elements that are the underlying causes of what manifest on the visible side. So, when thinking about culture, the bottom side of the iceberg will include things such as religious beliefs, worldviews, rules of relationships, approach to the family, motivations, tolerance for change, attitudes to rules, communication styles, modes of thinking, comfort with risk, the difference between public and private, gender differences and more.

From: © Kwintessential Ltd http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/intercultural-iceberg-model.html

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Like an iceberg, the vast majority of culture is below the surface.

SURFACE CULTURE
Above sea level
Known and Seen

- Concepts of Beauty
- Known and Seen
- Ideals of Governing
- Known and Seen
- Rules of Descent
- Known and Seen
- Cosmology
- Known and Seen
- Relationship to Animals
- Known and Seen
- Patterns of Superior/Subordinate Behavior
- Known and Seen
- Definitions of Sin
- Known and Seen
- Courtship Practices
- Known and Seen
- Conception of Justice
- Known and Seen
- Incentives to Work
- Known and Seen
- Notions of Leadership
- Known and Seen
- Tempo of Work
- Known and Seen
- Theory of Disease
- Known and Seen
- Attitudes toward the Dependent
- Known and Seen
- Approaches to Problem Solving
- Known and Seen
- Eye Behavior
- Known and Seen
- Conception of Status Mobility
- Known and Seen
- Conception of Past and Future
- Known and Seen
- Roles in Relation to Age, Sex, Class, Occupation, Kinship, and So Forth
- Known and Seen
- Definition of Insanity
- Known and Seen
- Conversational Patterns in Various Social Contexts
- Known and Seen
- Nature of Friendship
- Known and Seen
- Ordering of Time
- Known and Seen
- Preference for Competition or Cooperation
- Known and Seen
- Body Language
- Known and Seen
- Social Interaction Rate
- Known and Seen
- Notions of Adolescence
- Known and Seen
- Notions about Logic and Validity
- Known and Seen
- Patterns of Handling Emotions
- Known and Seen
- Facial Expressions
- Known and Seen
- Arrangements of Physical Space
- Known and Seen
- AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

From a variety of websites including:
http://www.wou.edu/student/sla/Assets/leadershipresources/Iceberg%20Cultural%20Model.doc
http://www.hrsa.gov/culturalcompetence/curriculumguide/Iceberg%20Analogy.jpg and http://www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp

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