

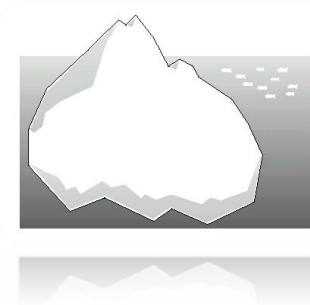
## Exercise I. On Target with Culture

**Introduction:** This is an interactive exercise that will take some personal reflection. We believe that people are like icebergs. An iceberg has about 10% of its mass above water where it is visible and about 90% of its mass is not visible and under water. This is potentially true with an individual's culture. Read the text below and then create your own culture iceberg. Reflect on what is easy for people to see and that will go in the ten percent "above water" portion of the iceberg. Then, take some time to reflect on your own culture what are some of the attitudes and belief systems that you hold that are not readily visible to others who do not know you and may have just met you?

### **Purpose:**

Explore your culture

### **Directions:**



Take ten minutes to read the next few pages about exploring culture. Using the example iceberg, create your own personal cultural iceberg. For example, if in the top ten percent the example says: language, you would write English Speaking, in the top portion of the iceberg if your first known language was English. In the bottom 90% of the iceberg you will write things like your concept of justice- DO you believe in an eye for an eye or do you turn the other cheek? It is all about your culture!

## Iceberg Model

Culture can be compared to an iceberg, because so much goes undetected. Only ten percent of who we are is really above surface at any one time. Even communication in general is 80% nonverbal. Within our lives and work, our understanding of culture is often ignored or not explored. The influence of culture on an individual's recovery journey needs to be explored rather than taken for granted or ignored. The list below shows some of the cultural issues that impact on our work as Peer Support Specialists. Use these examples to create your own iceberg on the next page.

Surface Culture

LANGUAGE

ARTS, LITERATURE

RELIGIONS, MUSIC, DRESS

DANCE, GAMES, SPORTS, COOKING

\\ awareness level boundary\\

NOTIONS OF MODESTY CONCEPTS OF BEAUTY

Invisible EDUCATION CHILD RAISING RULES OF DESCENT

COSMOLOGY RELATIONSHIP TO THINGS, ANIMALS & PLANTS

COURTSHIP PRACTICES CONCEPT OF JUSTICE MOTIVATION TO WORK

CRITERIA FOR LEADERSHIP DECISION MAKING PROCESSES DEITIES DEATH

IDEAS OF CLEANLINESS LOCUS OF CONTROL THEORY OF DISEASE PHYSICAL SPACE

DEFINITION OF SANITY, FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, MURDER, LIFE, GENDER, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

ROLES IN RELATION TO STATUS BY AGE, GENDER, CLASS, KINSHIP, OCCUPATION, RELIGION,

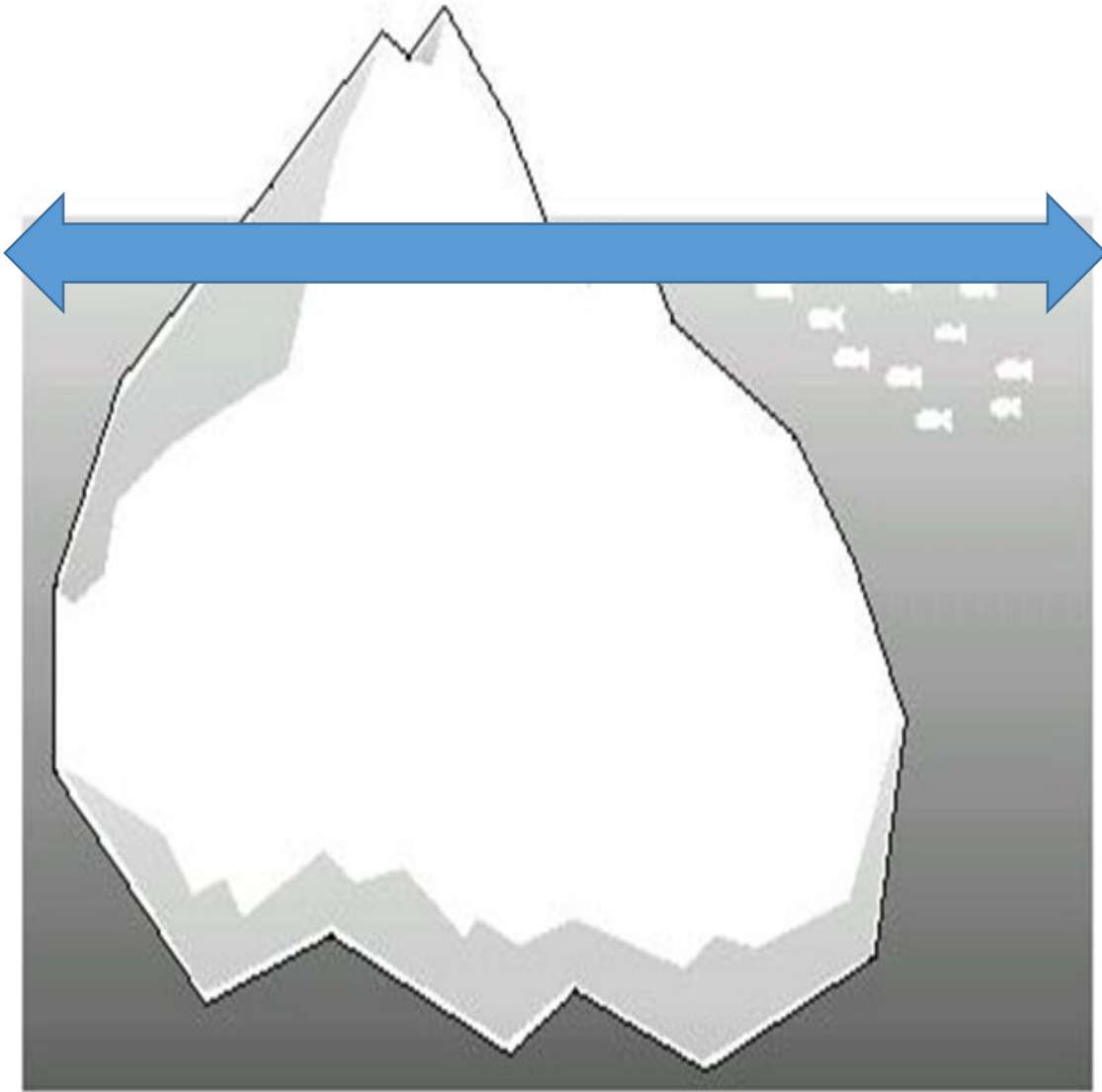
CONVERSATIONAL PATTERNS IN VARIOUS SOCIAL CONTEXTS, CONCEPTION OF TIME & SPACE

PREFERENCES FOR COMPETITION, COOPERATION, INDIVIDUALISM OR GROUP NORMS, SIN, GRACE

NOTION OF ADULTHOOD, NOTION OF LOGIC AND VALIDITY, PHYSICAL SPACE ARRANGEMENTS, LIFE

ODORS, HANDLING OF EMOTIONS, ACCEPTANCE OF FRUSTRATION OR PAIN, CONCEPT OF FAITH

NAME \_\_\_\_\_



Culture has been aptly compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a visible section above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the water line, so culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be suspected, imagined, or intuited. Also like an iceberg, the part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole.

The items that appear below are all features of culture. Keeping in mind that observable behaviors belong above the surface of the water, while the invisible aspects of culture belong below the surface, drag each feature to show whether it should be "above" or "below."

## **Discussion**

Culture is what makes us all human in a general sense. Every culture, past and present, has had to decide how to satisfactorily solve common human problems and concerns. Some universal categories of human activity that have been addressed for millennia by all cultures are:

1. Religious beliefs and the relationship of humans to the supernatural
2. Political power and the exercise of leadership in governance

This list, like all considerations of the highest levels of cultural concerns, is very abstract and general and it would be possible to list hundreds of additional issues or problems which human beings have struggled to resolve. Specific cultures have determined how to deal with these issues by developing ideas and constructing their patterns from a wide range of possible alternatives. Most of those choices were made a long time ago. Members of the culture adopted them as part of defining who they are and those patterns represent some of the knowledge a member of their group must know to belong. The original cultural patterns may have been modified over time but the core of values and beliefs tend to remain constant. Therefore, when you arrive in a foreign country you will be confronting a new culture that is likely to differ significantly from your familiar way of life.

Studying abroad is an opportunity to experience something new and novel directly, and that is what makes study abroad so exciting. In the course of encountering alternative ways to live life and solve problems, it is possible to experience tremendous intellectual and personal growth. Becoming skilled at functioning effectively in another country builds a capacity for making all kinds of transitions and for "cultural learning" generally. Entering another country is not just a geographical shift but a psychological one as well. Three things to keep in mind as you begin to consider the role of culture in the sojourn are:

All cultures have struggled with the full range of human problems and they have adopted solutions that are at least acceptable to members of the culture.

In the process of forming a culture, a group has made decisions about what to emphasize, how to pass it on to a new generation, and what it values above all else...and you can be sure that it excludes or devalues some things another culture (maybe even you!) holds dear.

Because the patterns that exist in various cultures have been passed on by respected leaders and/or elders and have become sanctified over time, they are not only considered good and proper but natural and normal. This is why cultural matters are deeply rooted and intensely felt by members of a society. Therefore, conflict and change involving core values are always accompanied by tension. Studying abroad, which promotes encountering cultural difference and, hopefully, crossing cultural boundaries, can be expected to be uncomfortable and even incomprehensible some of the time.

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