

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.” ~ Charles Darwin

# **Education Abroad**

## **Orientation 3**

All about Culture

# Today's Orientation

- Culture
- Themes across Cultures
- Communication and Culture
  - Verbal
  - Non-verbal
- Homesickness
- Culture Shock
- Reverse Culture Shock



“All journeys have secret destinations to which the traveler is unaware.” -Martin Buber

- Culture
  - A collection of learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviors of a group of interacting people, usually in the same geographic region.
- Ethnocentrism
  - Universal tendency of human beings to feel that their ways of thinking, acting, and believing are the only right, proper, and natural ways.
- Cultural Awareness
  - Being aware of differences without assigning value (ie, better or worse, right or wrong) to those differences, just because they are different. **Being culturally competent and making authentic connections is part of traveling sustainably.**

# The Iceberg Effect

## Surface Culture



The diagram illustrates the 'Iceberg Effect' of culture. A horizontal line represents the water surface. Above the line is the 'Surface Culture' (the tip of the iceberg), and below the line is the 'Hidden Culture' (the submerged part). The surface culture includes Food, Clothing, Language, and Physical Features. The hidden culture includes Values, Beliefs, Attitudes, Perceptions, Assumptions, and Communication Styles.

Food  
Clothing  
Language  
Physical Features

## Hidden Culture

Values  
Beliefs  
Attitudes  
Perceptions  
Assumptions  
Communication Styles

# **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*



# Individual vs. Collective: “When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.” (Ethiopian proverb)

- Collective Cultures

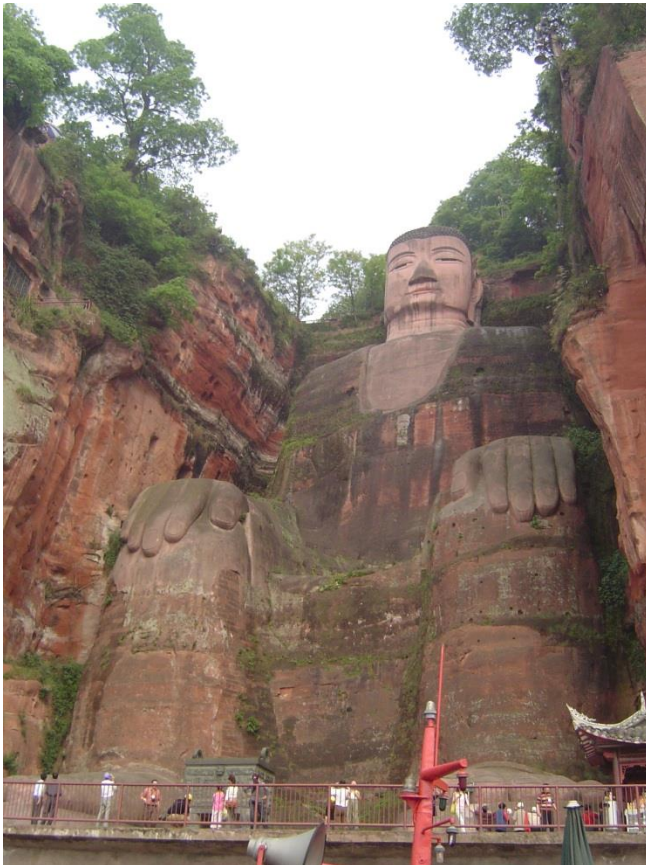
- Devotion to the unit (family, extended family, religion, business organization) in exchange for life-long loyalty
- Group decisions instead of individual decisions
  - *Example Cultures: Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, & the Pacific Islands*

# 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*



# 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**, and 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, and **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*



“If you reject the food, ignore the customs, fear the religion, and avoid the people, you might better stay home.” -James A. Michener



## Verbal Communication

- It's ok to mess up
- Practice correct pronunciation/tone.
- When speaking English, be careful with idioms and slang.
- English-speaking countries: consult guidebooks for vocab differences.

# “When in Rome, do as the Romans.”

## Nonverbal Communication

- 85% of communication can be nonverbal.
- Includes eye contact, facial expression, hand gestures, the use of physical space, the use of silence.
- All of the above can convey a meaning different than its meaning in the US.



“Our native soil draws all of us, by I know not what sweetness, and never allows us to forget.” ~Ovid

## Homesickness

- You're supposed to get homesick from time to time
- Stay in touch
- Care packages
- Talk with other students about their homesickness
- Journal
- Emergency action: find an American style restaurant



# **Culture Shock:** “I met a lot of people in Europe. I even encountered myself.” ~James Baldwin

- Stages of Culture Shock
  - Honeymoon stage.
  - Critical stage.
  - Adjustment stage.
  - Acceptance stage.





# Culture Shock: Stages 1 and 2

- Honeymoon Stage
  - Characterized by euphoria—you're finally there, seeing new sights, and trying new things. Everything is new! Enjoy.
- Critical Stage
  - Novelty wears off, you notice the differences, it's harder to get things done, you're frustrated by the differences, language barrier/your limits, you miss your loved ones/friends, homesickness sets in, you might be depressed.
- What you need: conversation, a journal, patience with yourself, and flexibility.

# Culture Shock: Stages 3 and 4

- Adjustment Stage
  - You begin to adjust to the differences, you get better at negotiating the ways of life in host culture, your language acquisition improves, you make local friends, you're in a routine, etc.
- Acceptance Stage
  - You're a pro at getting around now, your language acquisition is even better, you love all the differences that frustrated you at first, you're critical of how things are done back home in the US, and you never want to leave.

# Reverse Culture Shock: Coming Home

## Stages

- **Honeymoon Stage**—you're happy to see all your friends and family again.
- **Critical Stage**—Everything is different but the same. Friends haven't changed like you have. They're tired of your stories now; they don't understand what you've experienced. You're depressed. Square peg in a round hole. You take a well-deserved look at your own culture. You make plans to go abroad again.
- **Adjustment Stage**—You get used to life in the US again. You might make new friends and get a new job.
- **Acceptance Stage**—With time, you learn to be happy with your life in the US.

**Questions:** “Two roads converged in a wood, and I, I, took the road less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

~Robert Frost

