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INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS

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CULTURE, COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT

Gary R. Weaver
American University
June 9, 2005

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WHAT IS “CULTURE”?

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CULTURE IS:

**THE WAY OF LIFE OF A
GROUP OF PEOPLE
WHICH IS PASSED DOWN
FROM ONE GENERATION
TO ANOTHER THROUGH
LEARNING**

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WHY IS CULTURE IMPORTANT?

Changing demographics

Not just in urban areas

“Globalization”

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The American Culture Today

- **Not a Cultural Cookie Cutter or Melting Pot**
- **Patchwork Quilt**
- **Salad Bowl**
- **Mosaic or Tapestry**

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Minorities in USA Today

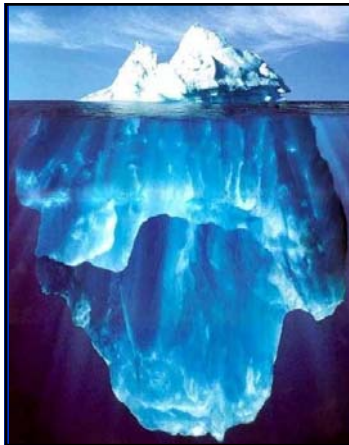
- 12% African American
- 13% Hispanic
- 4% Asian and Pacific Islanders
- 1% American Indian

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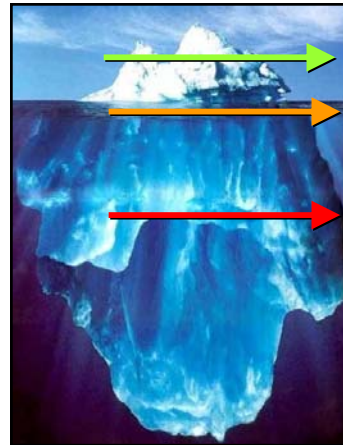
Enculturation: Learning a Primary Culture
Acculturation: Learning a Secondary Culture

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Culture
is like an
Iceberg.

Most of it
is
UNDER
the water



BEHAVIOR
BELIEFS
VALUES AND
THOUGHT
PATTERNS



Generalization vs. Stereotype

- **Cultural Generalization**
 - Never applies to everyone in every situation
 - Only a first “guess”
 - Discard it when no longer accurate or useful
- **Cultural Stereotype**
 - Applies to everyone in every situation – no exceptions
 - Retained even when no longer accurate or useful

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Realistic Cultural Empathy

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Realistic Cultural Empathy is **NOT**

- Sympathy
- Agreement with
- Identification with

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Personality Types

- **Intolerant to Ambiguity**
– High Uncertainty Avoidance
- **Overly Task Oriented**
– High Need for Individual Achievement
- **Overly Closed-minded & Inflexible**

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The "Iceberg Analogy" of Culture



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CULTURAL CONTINUUMS

To Do	-	To Be
• Earned Status		• Ascribed Status
• Individual Achievement		• Affiliation
• Individual Action		• Stability
• Equality		• Inequality
• Self Reliance		• Reliance on Others
• Independence		• Interdependence
• Individual Competition		• Cooperation
• Individualism		• Collectivism
• Guilt		• Shame
• Class Mobility		• Caste Rigidity


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THE BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATION

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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- We send messages, not meaning
- **TO DO** people tend to be trust words—especially written words
- **TO BE** people use all senses

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CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN NONVERBAL NEGOTIATING BEHAVIOR

BEHAVIOR (TACTIC)	JAPANESE	AMERICAN	BRAZILIAN
SILENT PERIODS (Number of silent periods greater than 10 seconds, per 30 minutes)	5.5	3.5	0
CONVERSATIONAL OVERLAPS (Number per 10 minutes)	12.6	10.3	28.6
FACIAL GAZING (Minutes of gazing per 10 minutes)	1.3	3.3	5.2
TOUCHING (Not including handshaking, per 30 minutes)	0	0	4.7

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REACTIONS TO THE BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATIONS

- “OUT OF CONTROL”
- FLIGHT
- FIGHT

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What Doesn't Fit?

- Nice weather we're having!
- Sunny, high in the 70s.
- Haven't we met before?

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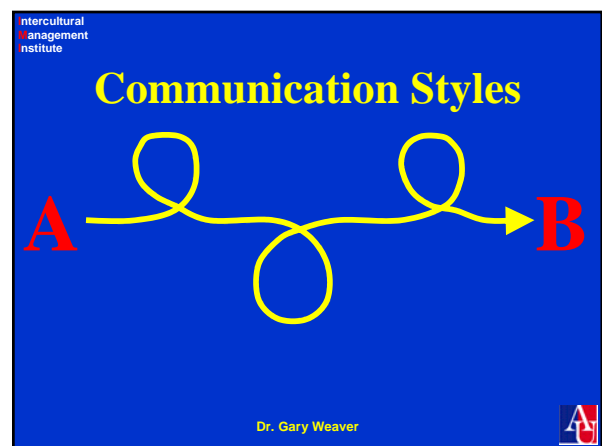
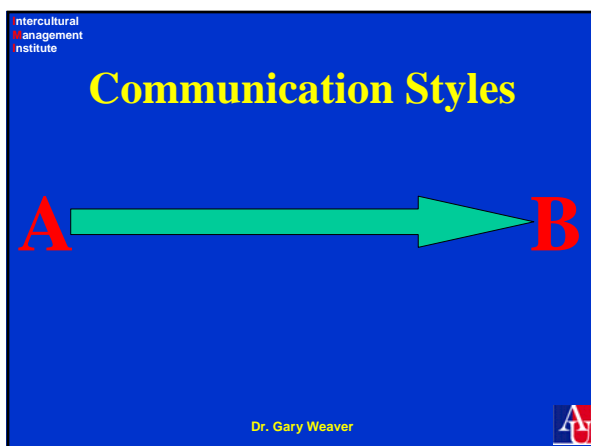


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What Doesn't Fit?

- Nice weather we're having!
- High-Context - Relational - Associative
- To Be - Poets
- Sunny, high in the 70s.
- Low Context - Abstractive - Analytical
- To Do - Memo Writers/Lawyers

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Communication Styles

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Communication Styles

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Project Timeline

Stage One 0 - 6 Months	Stage Two 6 - 12 months	Stage Three 12 - 18 Months	Stage Four 18 - 24 months
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Project Timeline

Stage One 0 - 12 Months	Stage Two 12 - 18 Months	Stage Three 18 - 22 Months	Stage Four 22 - 24 Months
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Cross-Cultural Conflict

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QUESTIONS:

- How do you know if it's a conflict?
- Is it escalating or de-escalating?
- When do you resolve it?
- When it is beyond resolution?
- How do you resolve the conflict?

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THE VALUE OF CROSS- CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATION

- Serving clients more effectively
- Creativity
- Awareness of culture—our own and others
- Self-awareness

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Other Resources

- Hall, Edward. Beyond Culture.
- Weaver, Gary R., ed. Culture, Communication and Conflict, 2nd edition. Boston, MA:Pearson Publishing, 2000.
- www.interculturalpress.com
- www.imi.american.edu
- gweaver@american.edu

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Thank You

Questions?

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