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# OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNCIATION

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# HISTORY OF TRAINING

- COOKBOOKS OR DO'S-AND-DON'TS
- PERPETUATED STEREOTYPES
- COUNTERPRODUCTIVE
- FOCUS WAS ON "THOSE PEOPLE"
- NEED TO EMPHASIZE "PROCESS" AND INTERACTION

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# Cultural Generalization vs. Stereotype

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

# What is "Culture?"

- the way of life of a people passed down from one generation to the next through learning

Enculturation: Learning a Primary Culture

Acculturation: Learning a Secondary Culture

# Culture and Personality

**Both are abstractions and generalizations**

**Begin by examining the childhood of an individual or the history of a people**

# Realistic Cultural Empathy

## Realistic Cultural Empathy is *NOT*

- Sympathy
- Agreement with
- Identification with

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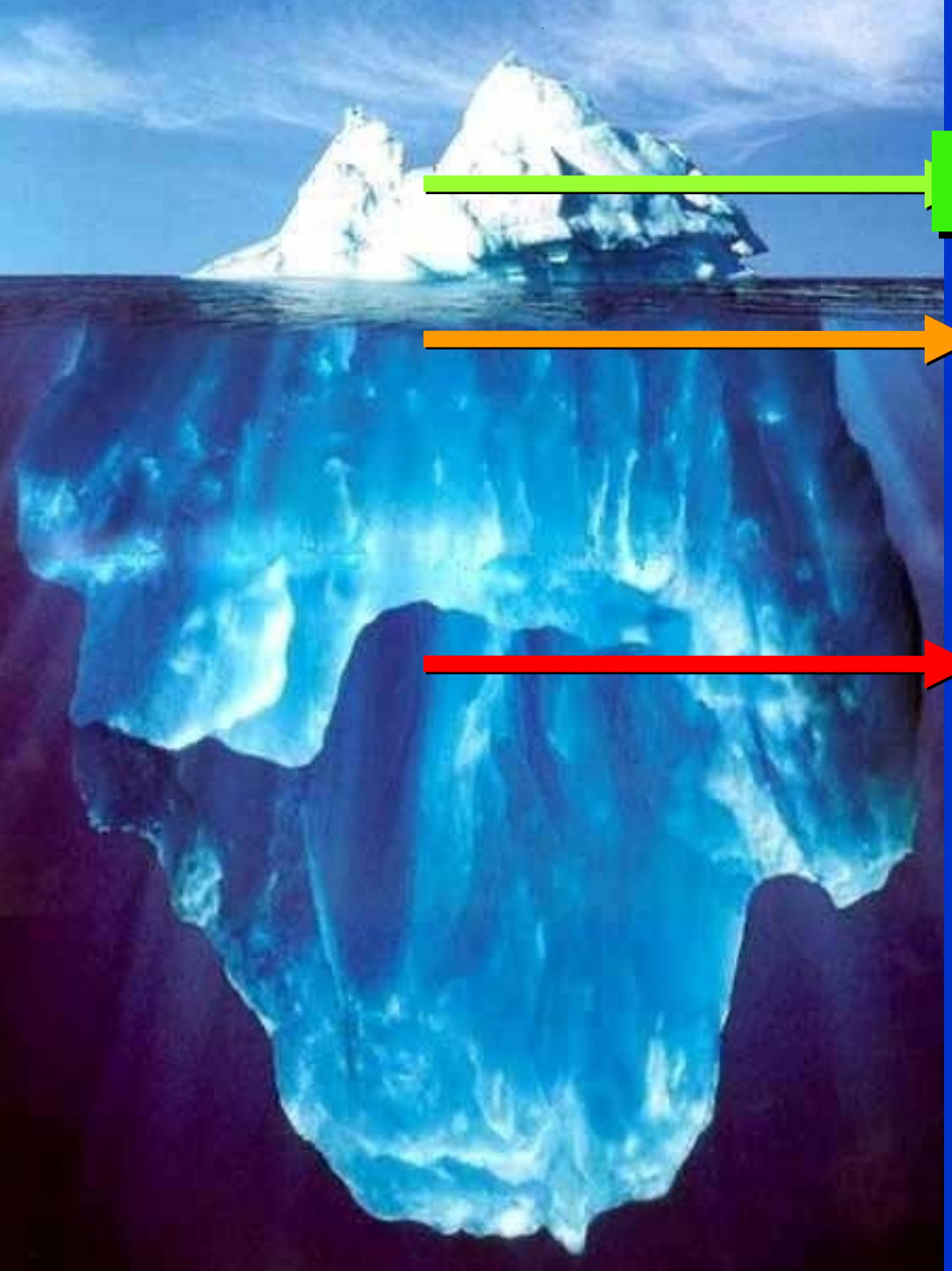
# TRAITS THAT CORRELATE WITH INEEFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL INTERATION

- Low tolerance to ambiguity or high uncertainty avoidance
- Overly task-oriented or high need for individual achievement
- Overly closed-minded and inflexible

**Culture is like an Iceberg.**

**Most of it is UNDER the water of awareness**



BEHAVIOR

BELIEFS

VALUES AND THOUGHT PATTERNS

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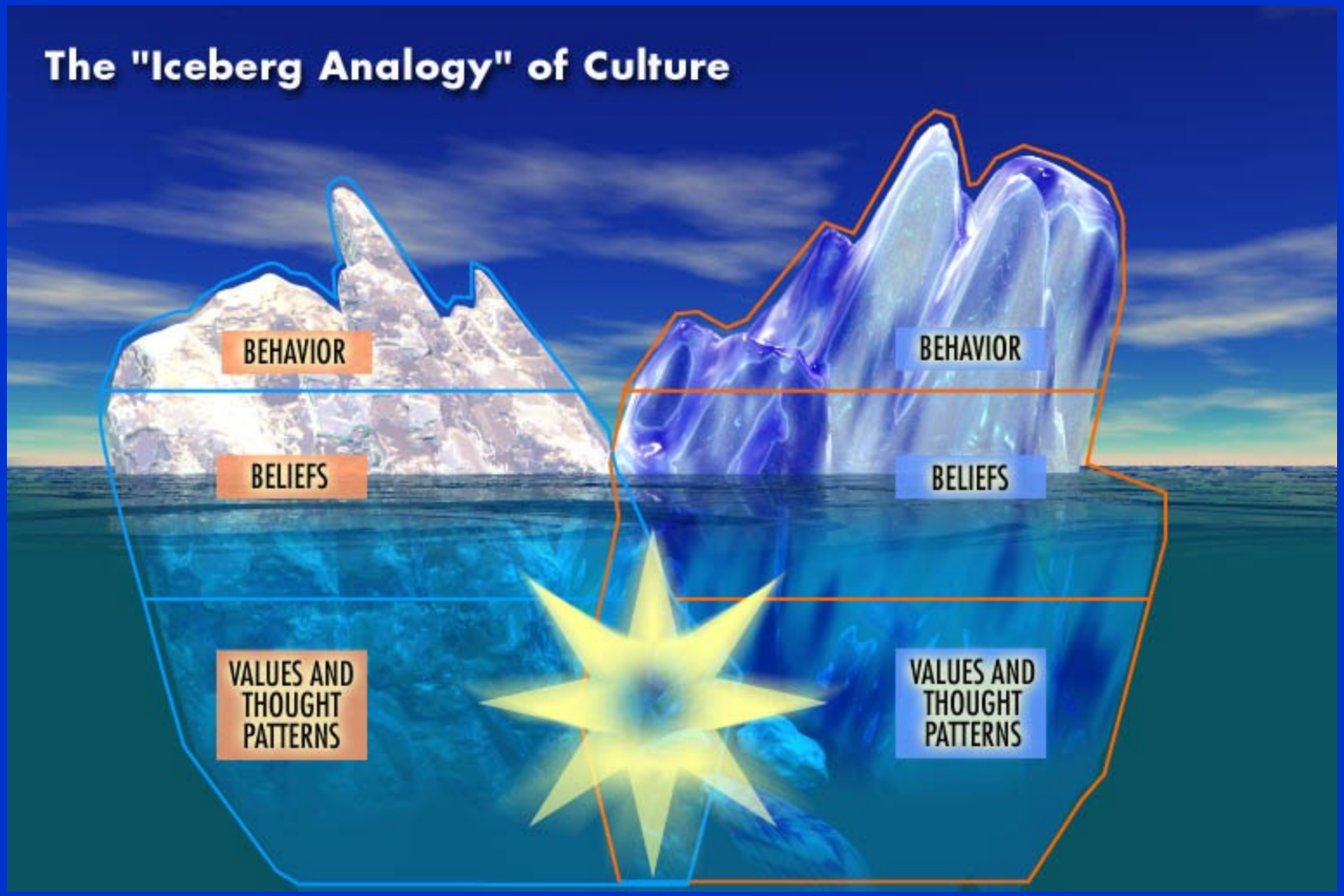

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# WHEN ICEBERGS COLLIDE

- **VALUABLE – If we know their values we can explain their behavior.**

- **EVALUATE – If their behavior is different than ours, we often describe it both SUBJECTIVELY and NEGATIVELY**

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# BASIC AMERICAN BELIEFS

## Extreme Individualism

## and

## Distrust of Strong Centralized Authority

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# SIMILAR COUNTRIES?

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- AUSTRALIA
- SOUTH AFRICA

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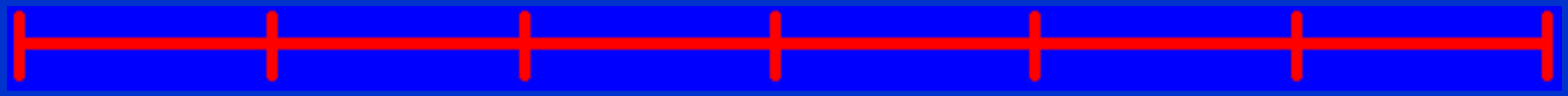
# CULTURAL CONTINUUMS



| To Do | To Be |
|---|---|
| Earned Status | Ascribed Status |
| Individual Achievement | Affiliation |
| Individual Action | Stability |
| Equality | Inequality |
| Immediate family | Extended Family |
| Self Reliance | Reliance on Others |
| Independence | Interdependence |
| Individual Competition | Cooperation |
| Individualism | Collectivism |
| Guilt | Shame |
| Future | Past or Heritage |
| Class Mobility | Caste Rigidity |

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# PERCEPTIONS AND MISPERCEPTIONS OTHERS HAVE OF AMERICANS

**Americans don't help others**

**Americans don't honor elders**

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# Contrasting and Comparing Values

| | US TYPICAL AMERICAN VALUES | | NIGERIA TYPICAL VALUES | | PERSONAL VALUES FOR ME I VALUE: | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Honesty | # 151 | % 40.4 | # 77 | % 20.6 | # 267 | % 71.4 |
| Work hard, be productive | # 297 | % 79.4 | # 66 | % 17.6 | # 240 | % 64.2 |
| Honor your elders | # 1 | % 00.3 | # 356 | % 95.2 | # 160 | % 42.6 |
| Patriotism | # 54 | % 14.4 | # 65 | % 17.4 | # 57 | % 15.2 |
| Freedom | # 286 | % 76.5 | # 43 | % 11.5 | # 129 | % 34.5 |
| Pursue happiness | # 59 | % 15.8 | # 70 | % 18.7 | # 66 | % 17.6 |
| Gain goods and wealth | # 80 | % 21.4 | # 151 | % 40.4 | # 28 | % 07.5 |
| Education | # 160 | % 42.8 | # 162 | % 43.3 | # 224 | % 59.9 |
| Religion | # 14 | % 03.7 | # 253 | % 67.6 | # 118 | % 31.6 |
| Know the right people | # 25 | % 06.7 | # 64 | % 17.1 | # 24 | % 06.4 |
| Help other people | # 31 | % 08.3 | # 187 | % 50.0 | # 121 | % 32.4 |
| Try new things | # 132 | % 35.3 | # 12 | % 03.2 | # 59 | % 15.8 |
| Obey the law | # 120 | % 32.1 | # 88 | % 23.5 | # 87 | % 23.3 |
| Know your heritage | # 5 | % 01.3 | # 190 | % 50.8 | # 36 | % 09.6 |
| Save time, be punctual | # 216 | % 57.8 | # 4 | % 01.1 | # 50 | % 13.4 |
| Stand up for what you think is right | # 142 | % 38.0 | # 27 | % 07.2 | # 125 | % 33.4 |
| Achieve individual success | # 76 | % 20.3 | # 70 | % 18.7 | # 65 | % 17.4 |

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# OTHER CONTRASTS

- Youth
- Male
- Urban
- Heterogeneous
- Modern
- Low-Context
- Humane
- Monochronic
- External rules

- Adults
- Female
- Rural
- Homogeneous
- Traditional
- High-Context
- Human
- Polychronic
- Internal rules

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# HOFSTEDE'S DIMENSIONS

- POWER DISTANCE (PDI)
- INDIVIDUALISM (IDV)
- MASCULINITY (MAS)
- UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE INDEX (UAI)
- LONG-TERM ORIENTATION (LTO)

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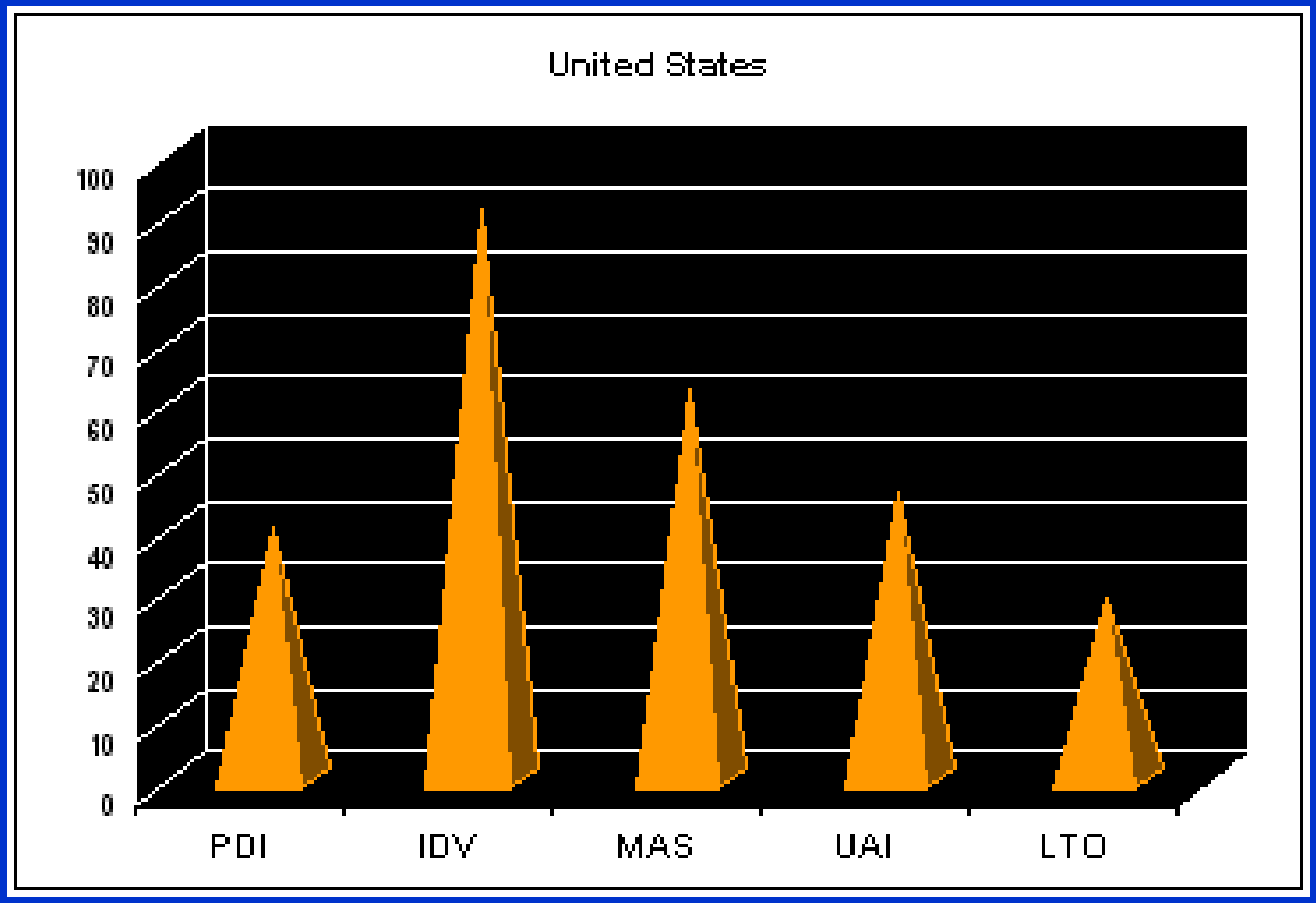
# Cultural Characteristics



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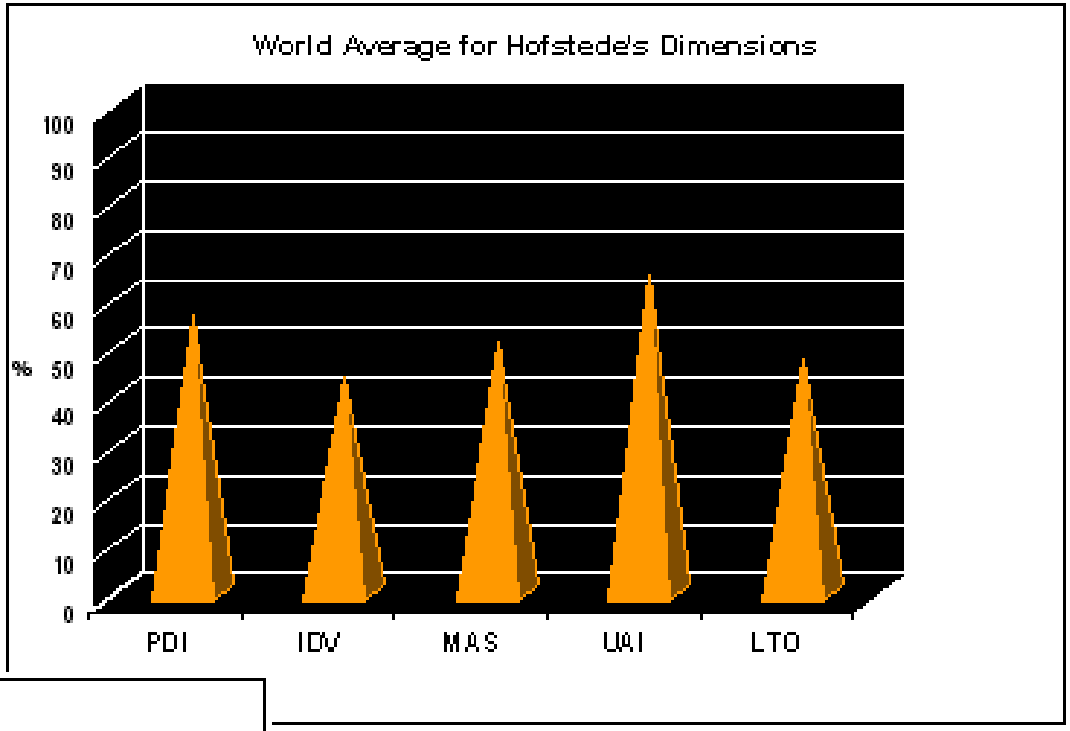
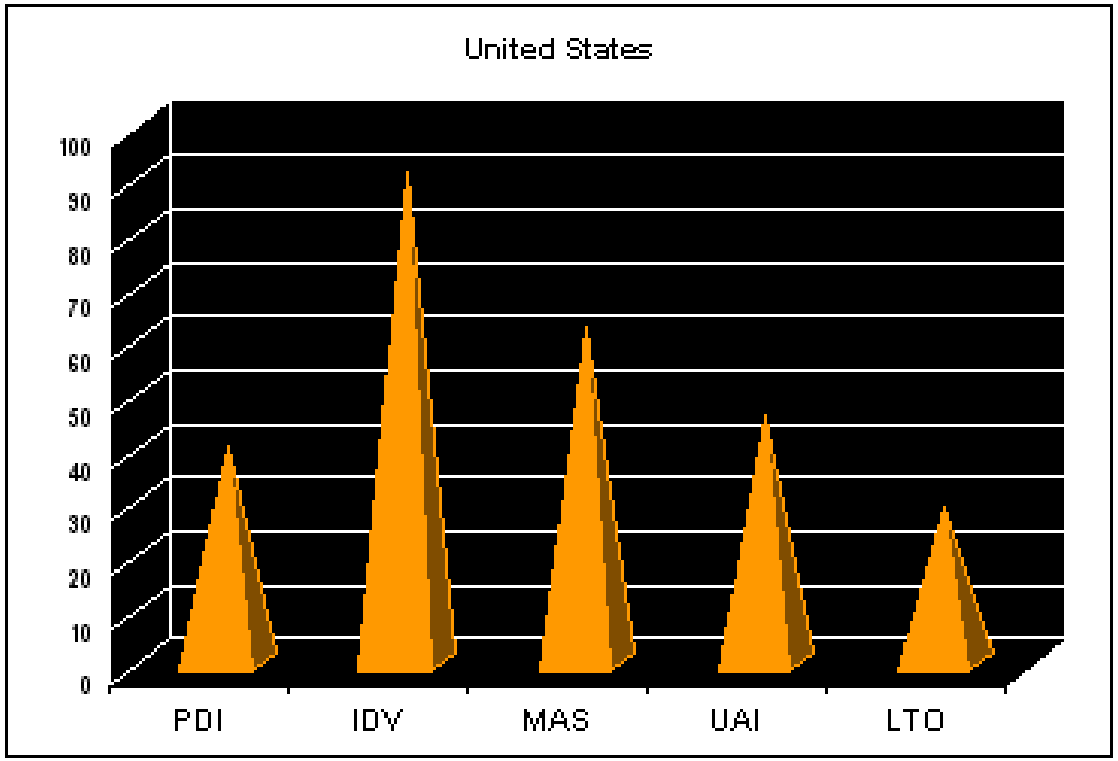
# Cultural Dimensions Compared

## World Average

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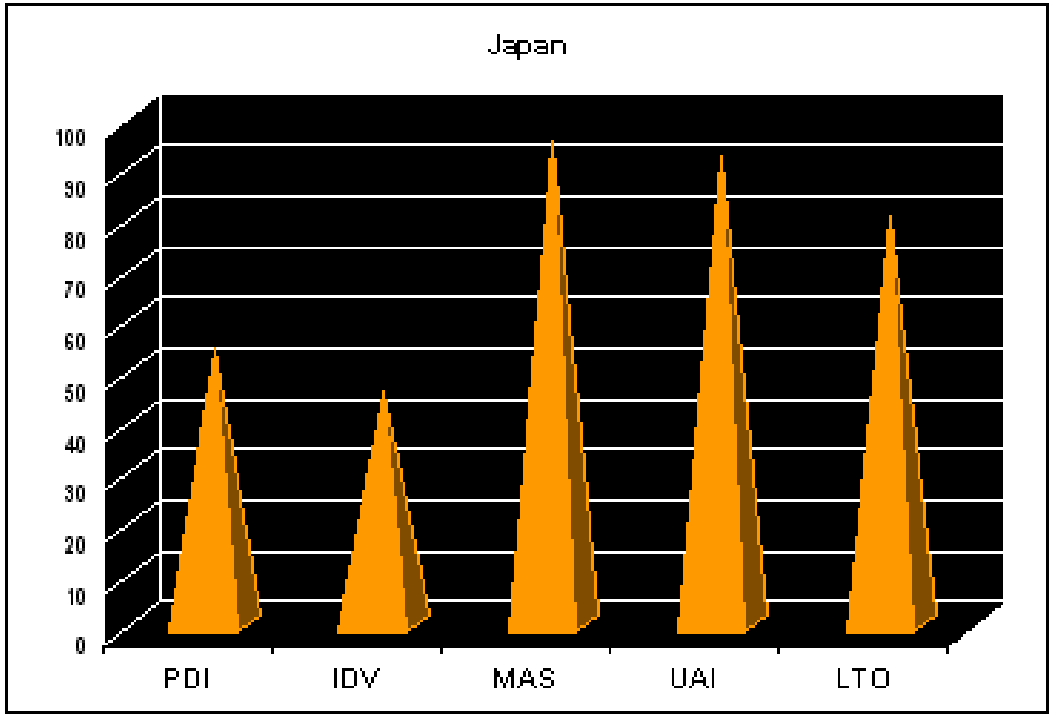
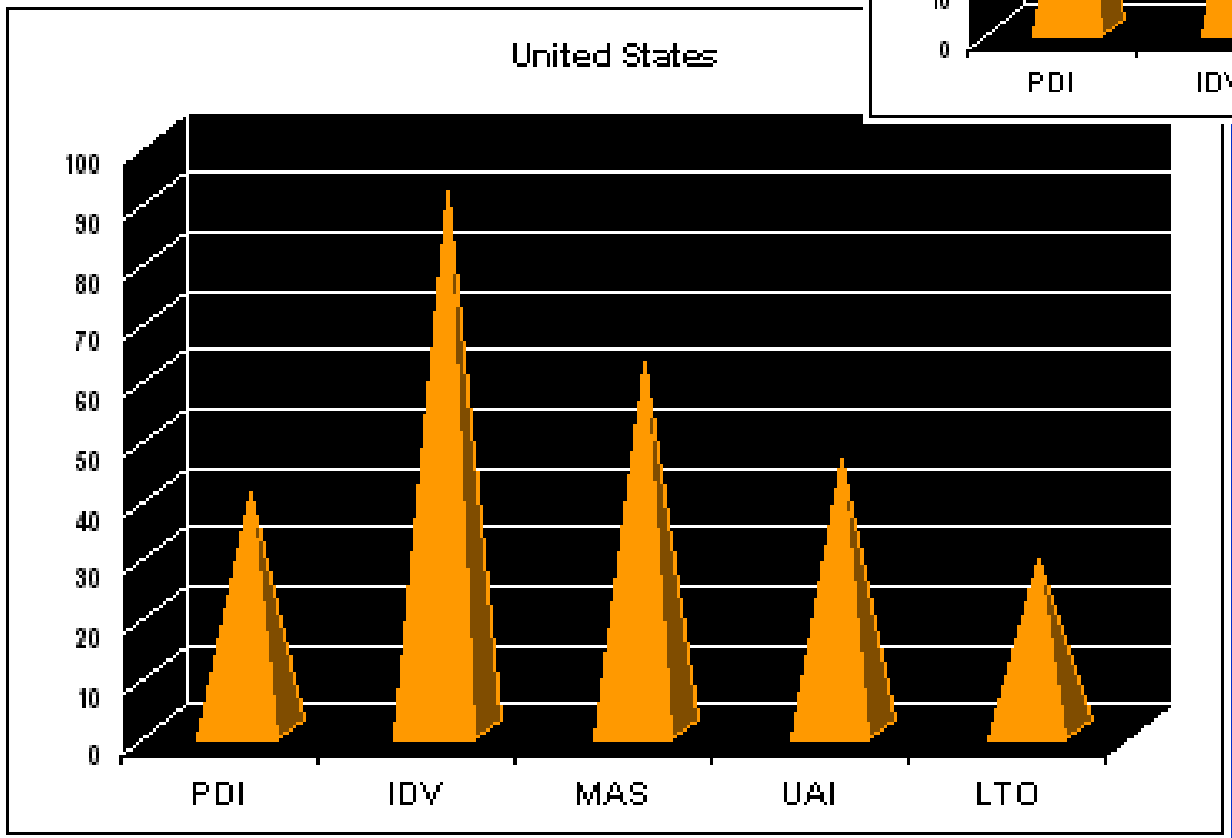
# Cultural Dimensions Compared

## Japan

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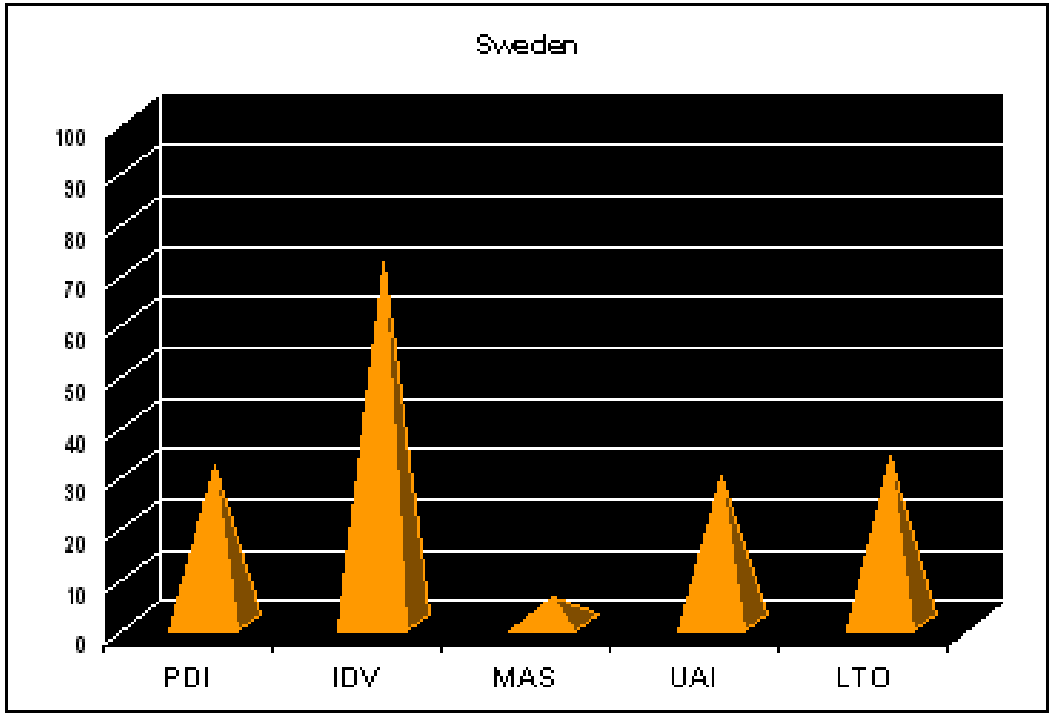
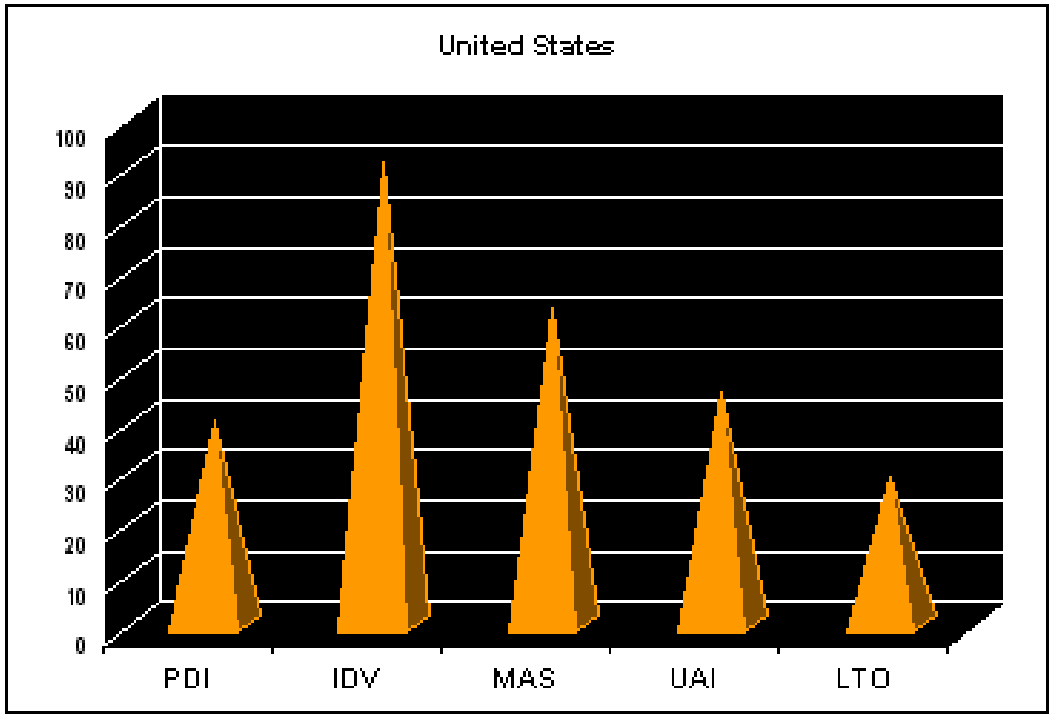
# Cultural Dimensions Compared

## Sweden

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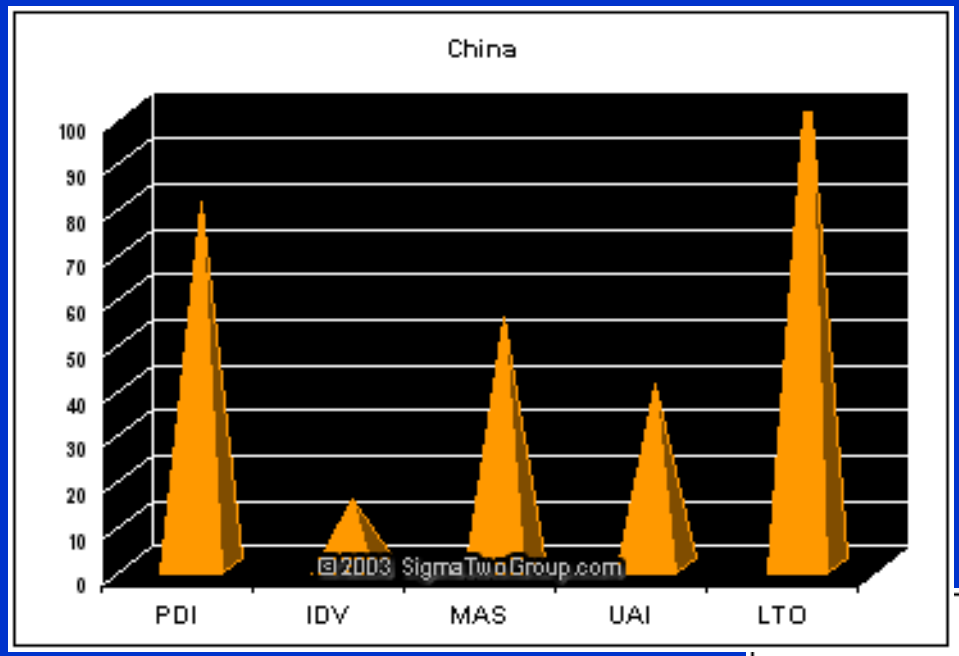
# Cultural Dimensions Compared

## China

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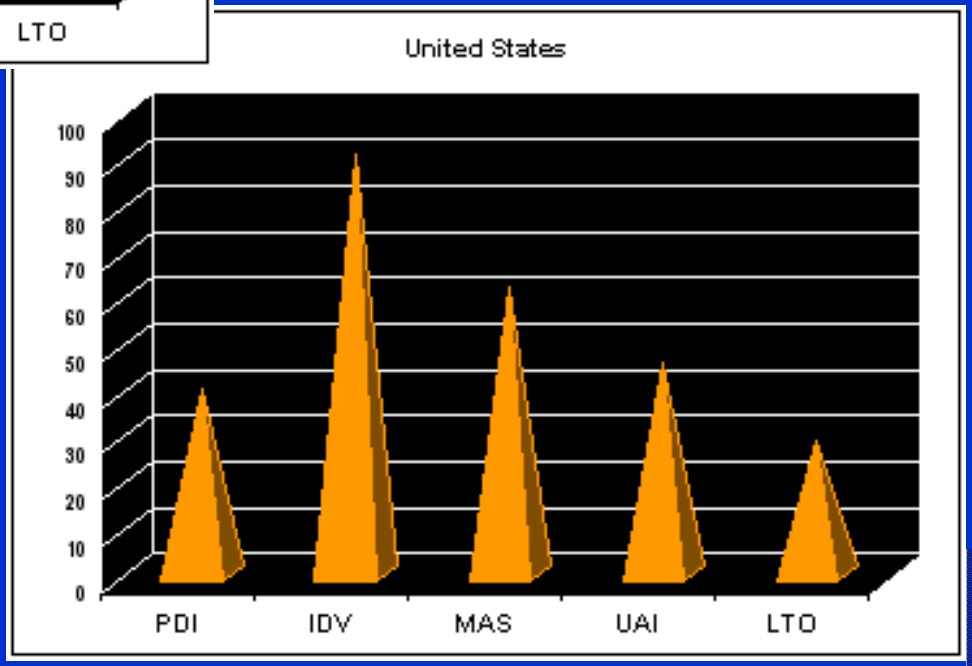

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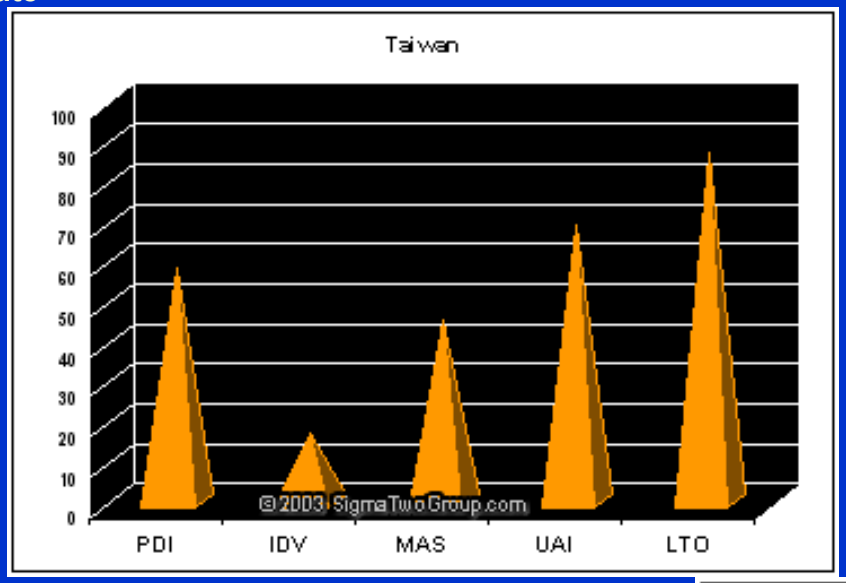
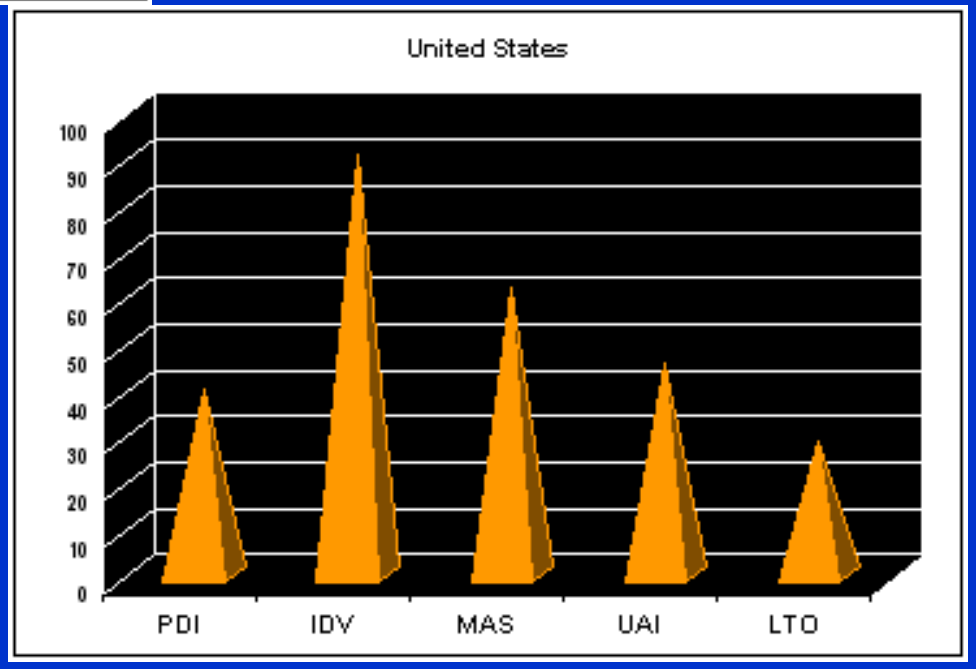
# Cultural Dimensions Compared

## Taiwan




## United States



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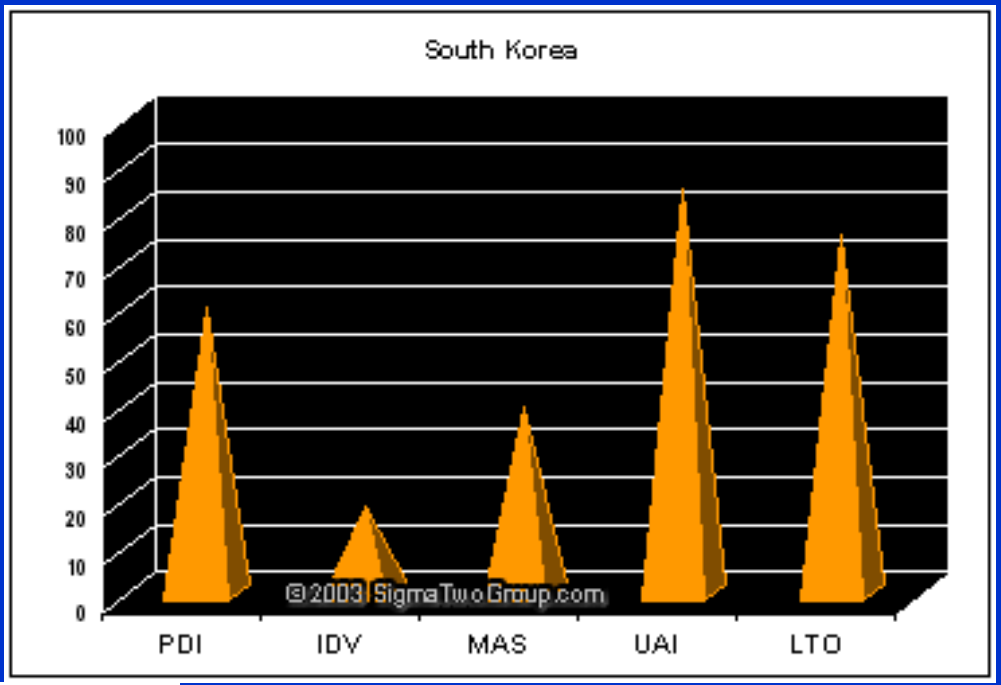
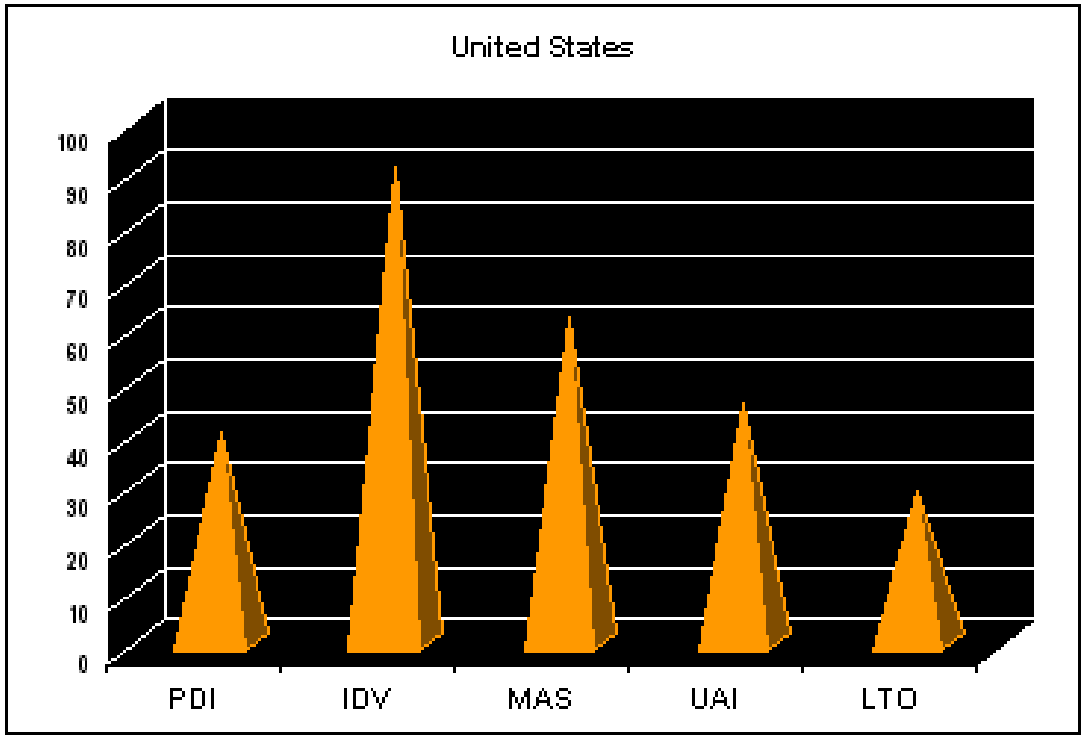
# Cultural Dimensions Compared

## South Korea

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# CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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# What Doesn't Fit?

**Nice weather we're having!**

**Sunny, high in the 70s.**

**Haven't we met before?**

# What Doesn't Fit?

- Nice weather we're having!
- Haven't we met before?
- 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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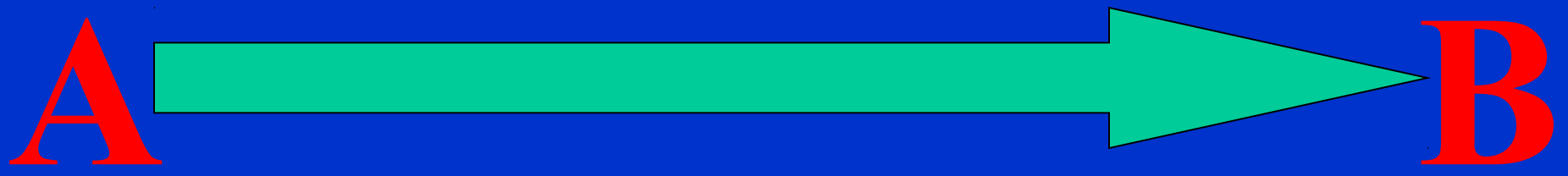
# Communication Styles



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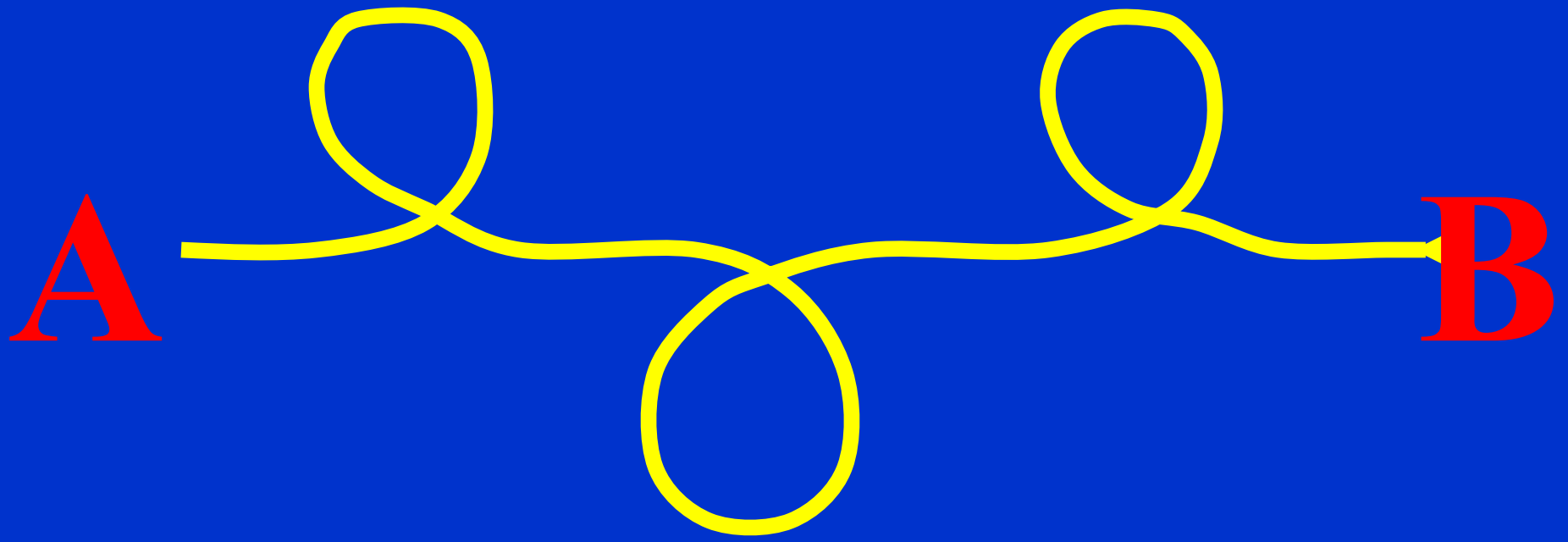
# Communication Styles



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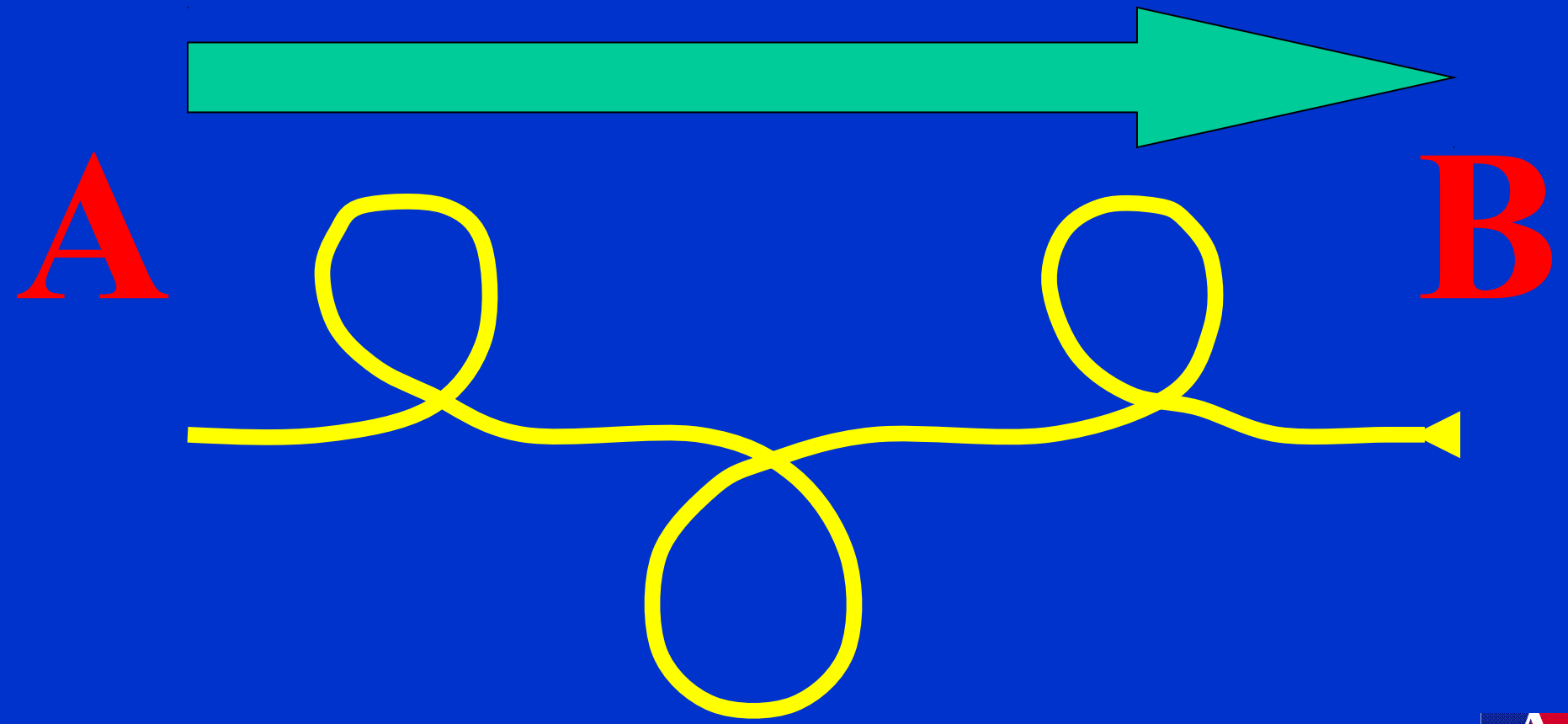
# Communication Styles



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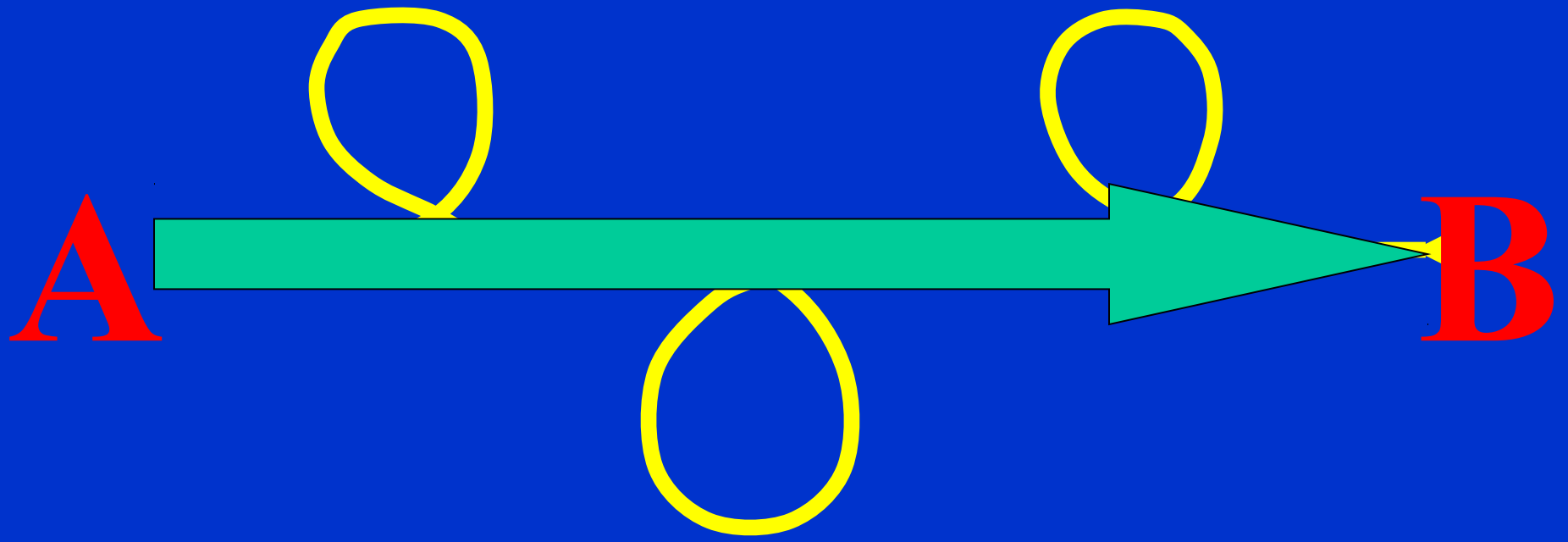
# Communication Styles



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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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# NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

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

# IMPLICATIONS

- Face-to-face communication is the most effective for “to be” people
- Written communication is most effective for “to do” people
- Developing “trust” will take patience and commitment

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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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# CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT STRESS

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# CULTURE SHOCK

- Oberg's experience in Brazil
- "Disease"
- "Occupational illness"

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# IT IS *NOT* A DISEASE

- It is a result of the stress produced when we leave our home cultural environment to enter another.

- It is a psychological phenomenon and the "symptoms" and "prognosis" varies with each individual.

- There is no "cure."

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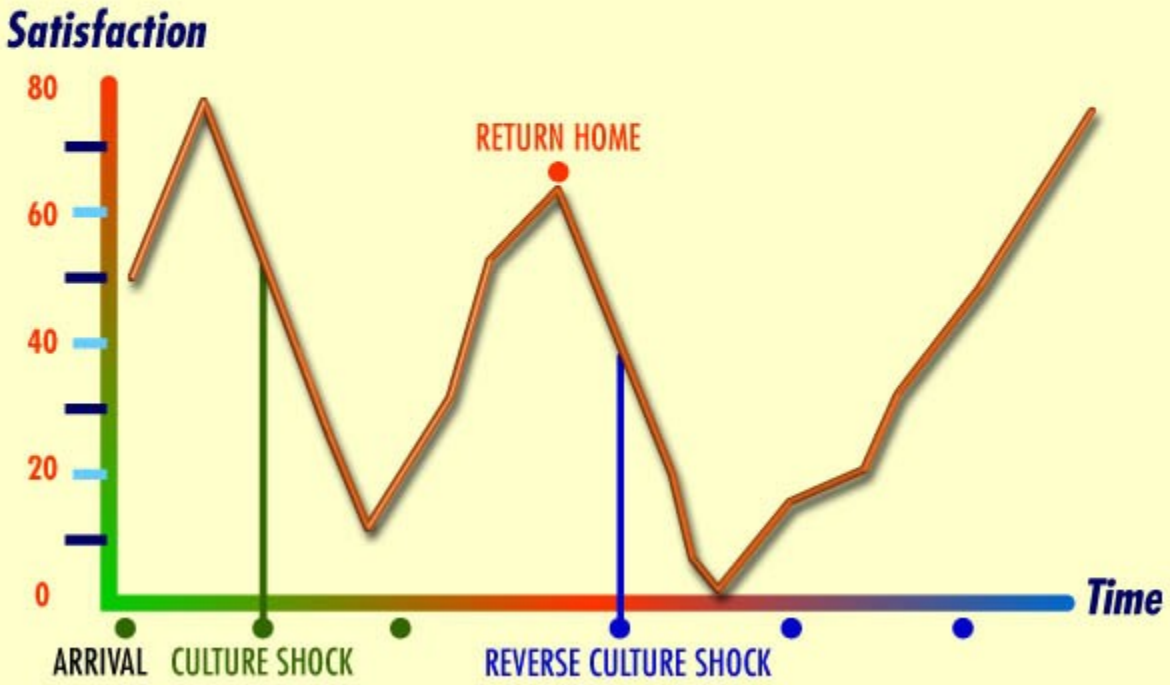
# Pattern of Adjustment



# Causes of Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock

- Collision of "Icebergs" or Internal Cultures
- Breakdown of Communication
- Loss of Cues or Reinforcers
- Identity Crisis

# BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATION

- We are social animals
- When communications break down, we experience pain and frustration
- In a cross-cultural encounter, communications will break down

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# REACTIONS TO THE BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATIONS

- "OUT OF CONTROL"
- FLIGHT
- FIGHT
- FILTER
- FLEX

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# Coping Strategies for Loss of Cues

- Transfer Cues
- Modify Cues

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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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# WHAT IS THE REAL VALUE OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE?

1. Self-control and self-confidence
2. Awareness of another internal culture through experience
3. Awareness of our own internal culture
4. Self-awareness of our own values and identity

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# Resources

- Hall, Edward. *Beyond Culture*.
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- www.interculturalpress.com
- www.imi.american.edu

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# Thank You

# Questions?