US Culture - Overview

Erv Thomas

International Life

May 22, 2015

Agenda

- Resource locations
- What is culture?
- Elements of culture
- Culture comparisons
- Summary

http://www.international-fellowship.net

Resource Locations

- isiervthomas.weebly.com/my-talks
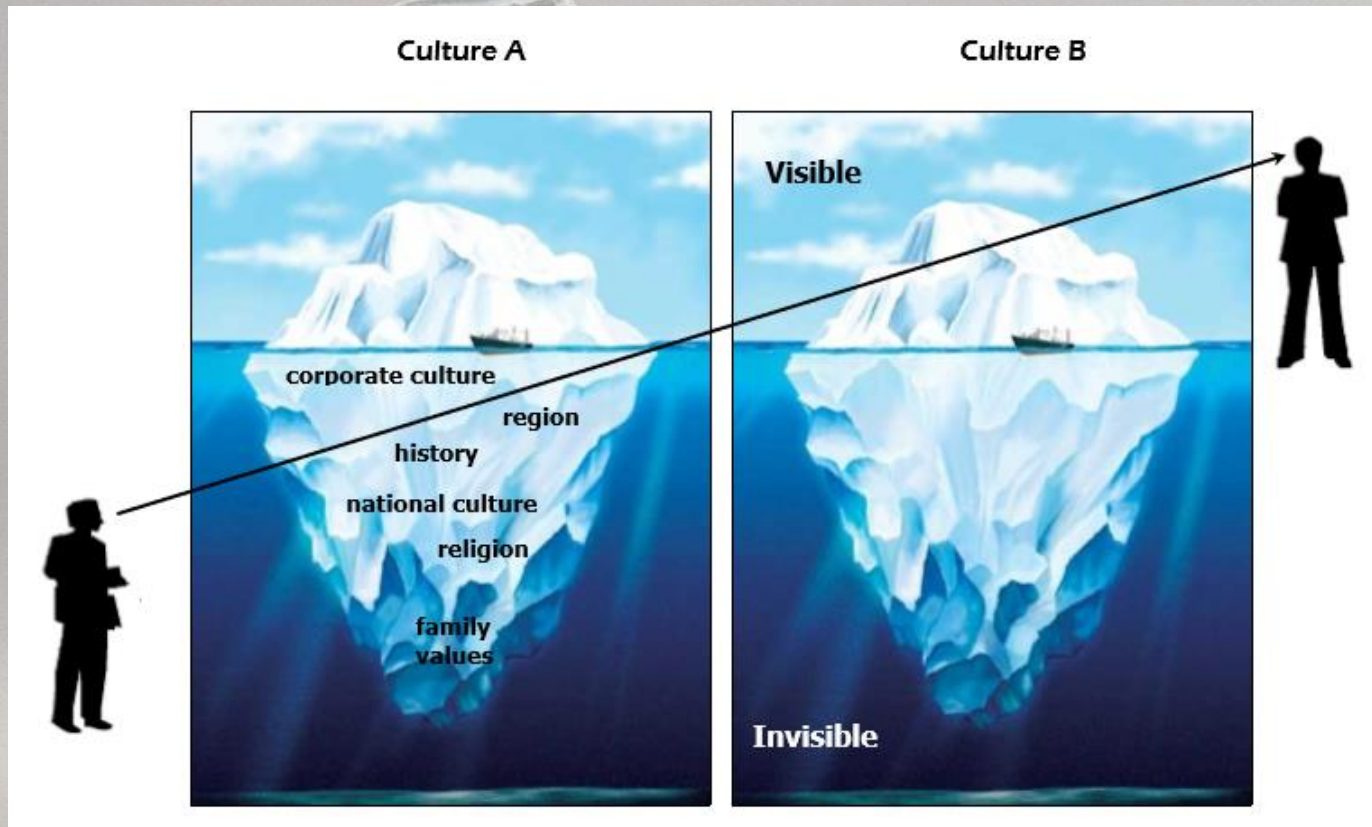- www.globesmart.com

What is Culture?
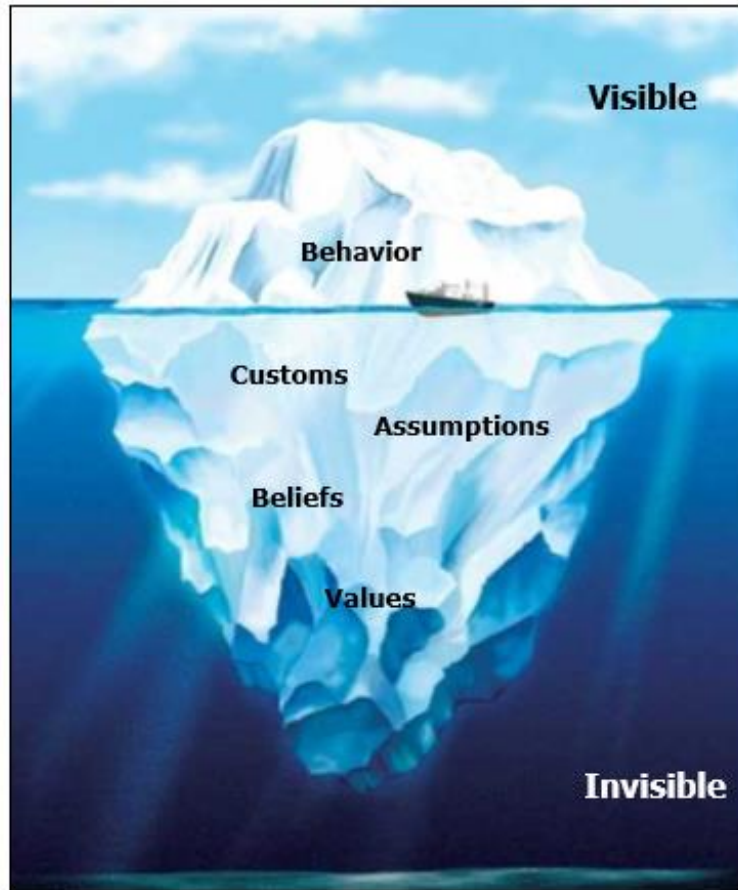
- Culture is the shared ways in which groups of people understand and interpret the world

- [Culture] is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group ... from another

Is That a Problem?

Culture hides more than what it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants

Challenges

Challenges of Working Around the Globe

|	
Language barriers	Time zones and distance
Understanding protocol	Building relationships across cultural differences
Virtual communication (e-mail, teleconferences)	Working on a global, virtual team
Motivating people and creating a sense of urgency	Different expectations about team processes
Achieving an effective global - local balance	Problem solving and decision making
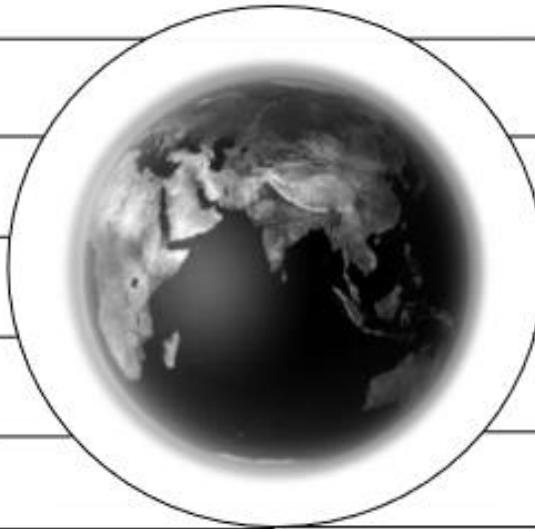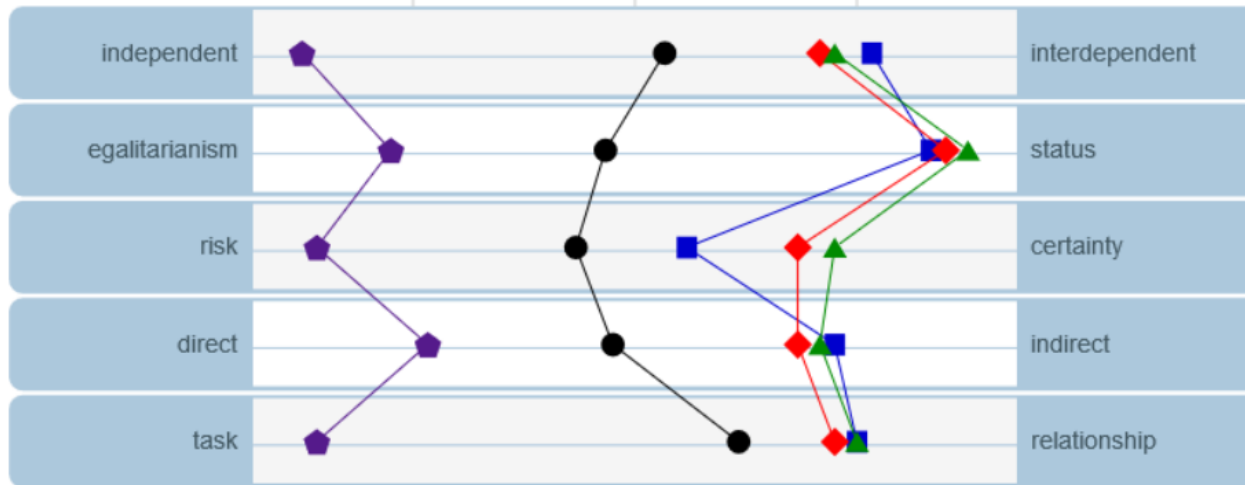
Culture Comparisons

Comparison 1 & 2

independent   **interdependent**

- Place great importance on individual identity ←
- Derive identity from personal choices and achievements ←
- Prefer taking action on one's own ←

- Place great importance on group harmony and cooperation →
- Derive identity from group affiliation →
- Feel a sense of duty, obligation, and loyalty to ascribed groups →

egalitarianism   **status**

- Be comfortable challenging the views of superiors ←
- Be flexible about roles ←
- Treat everyone much the same ←
- Assume power and authority should be shared broadly among a group ←

- Prefer not to challenge those above them →
- Be deferential to superiors →
- Adapt behavior depending on relative status →
- Assume power and authority should be reserved for a few members of a group →

Comparison 3 & 4

risk   **certainty**

- Prefer rapid decision-making and quick results ←
- Place great importance on flexibility and initiative ←
- Value speed over thoroughness ←

- Spend significant time on background research →
- Establish proper procedures before starting a project →
- Value thoroughness over speed →

direct   **indirect**

- Come to the point quickly ←
- Be forthright in asking questions in most settings ←
- Be comfortable making requests, giving direction, or disagreeing with others ←
- Give negative feedback directly ←

- Spend time explaining the context before coming to the point →
- Avoid asking questions publicly →
- Express disagreement in subtle ways →
- Give negative feedback indirectly →

Comparison 5

task	relationship

- Place high value on reaching goals and objectives on schedule ←
- Prioritize accomplishing tasks over maintaining relationships ←
- Focus on what people achieve more than whom they know ←

- View time building relationships as key to achieving good results →
- Prioritize maintaining relationships over accomplishing tasks on time →
- Focus on who people know as much as what they themselves can achieve →

Cultural Dimensions

Independent (Individual)
- Take more individual initiative
- Use individual decision-making styles (brainstorming)
- Reward/recognize individuals

Interdependent (Group)
- Focus more on cooperation and group goal
- Use group decision-making styles (consensus, meeting before the meeting)
- Reward/recognize group

Egalitarianism
- Self-directed
- Flexibility in roles
- OK to challenge opinion of people in power

Status (Hierarchy)
- Enforce/follow guidelines
- Appropriate behavior for different roles
- Status and position respected

Risk
- Demonstrate quick results
- Flexibility and initiative valued Reward/recognize individuals
- Speed valued more than thoroughness

Restraint
- Spend time on background research
- Establish proper processes and systems
- Take time before making a change

Direct
- More direct and to the point
- Openly confront difficulties
- Constructive feedback

Indirect
- Take care with how something is said
- Avoid discussing difficulties Reward/recognize individuals
- Personal dignity/*face* issues

Task
- Move quickly to business, relationships develop alongside
- Relationships with colleagues and customers develop quickly
- Focus on what you do, achievements

Relationship
- Relationship-building critical to the success getting the job done
- Relationships with colleagues and customers develop slowly over time
- Focus on who you are, network

Short-Term
- Demonstrate immediate results
- Efficiency and speed important in decision-making process

Long-Term
- Emphasize big picture and long term results
- Thoroughness, consensus-building and discussion of possible outcomes important

Use the Advice Feature

Click on the Red Bars

Independent/Interdependent

People in India are somewhat more <u>inter</u>**dependent** than you. This means that they may conform to social norms more than you do. Because of this, some of your counterparts from India may:

- Require more input from others before taking action than you do;
- Take more time in their decision-making process than you;
- Be less forthcoming about speaking of their achievements than you;
- Offer fewer personal opinions and be more cautions in expressing disagreement than you;
- Have more appreciation of protocol than you.

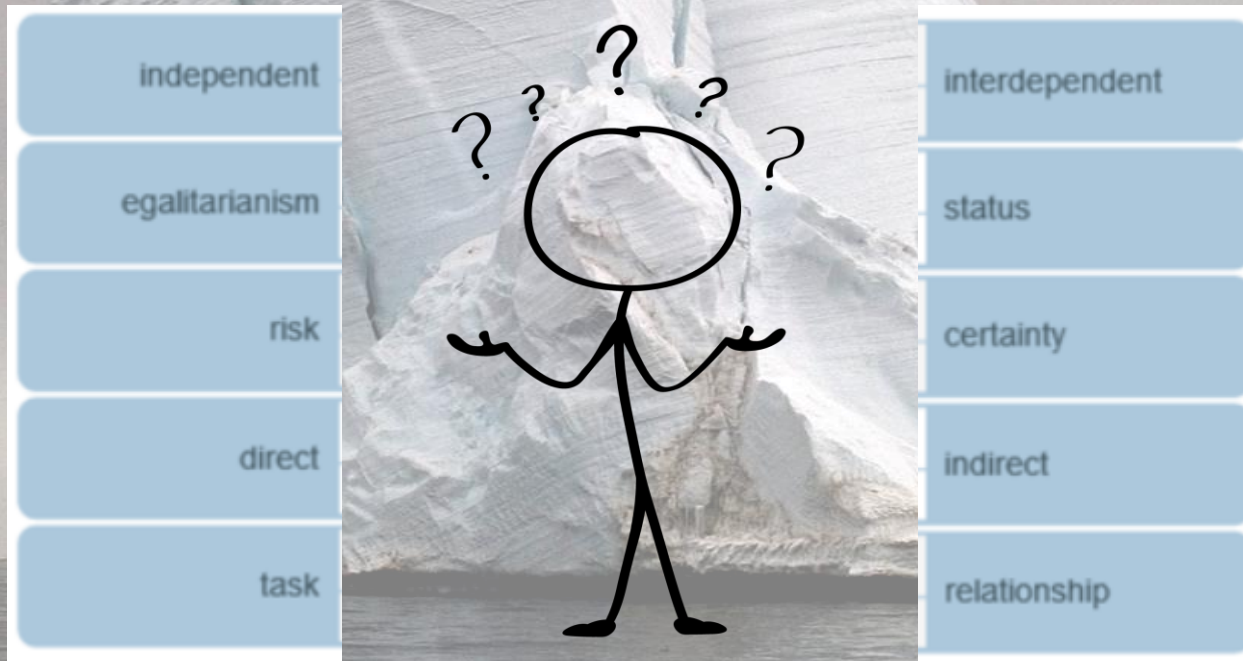Learn more about the concept of <u>style switching</u>.

independent • ■ interdependent

Show Advice

Me ●
India ■

Conclusion

- Understand the cultural differences in each of these key areas when working or communicating

independent	interdependent
egalitarianism	status
risk	certainty
direct	indirect
task	relationship

Backup

http://www.international-fellowship.net

Rewards

- Talk about the rewards of embracing the diversity of culture
  - Results
  - Beauty of unity
  - New ideas
  - Better relationships = better life
  - Strong foundation for future success

Further Info

Research confirms that Emotional Intelligence, or EQ, accounts for a much larger portion of our career success than our purely intellectual IQ. Analysts estimate the importance of EQ to career success (relative to IQ) as being between 80 and 99%, depending upon the complexity of the position. This should not come as a surprise; every day we see those with superior professional networks, influencing skills, managerial acumen, conceptual thinking abilities, and other "soft" skills achieving career success. Whether we like it or not, those are the skills that take our teams and our own careers the farthest.

http://www.international-fellowship.net