



# Working in multicultural teams and environments

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# Managing in multicultural environments: global leadership?

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# STEP 1: DEVELOPPING CROSS CULTURAL AWARENESS



## SIMULATION GAME

### Derdia



**Pedagogical objective: Experiencing multicultural teamwork**

**Simulation game objective: Build a bridge!**

**2 groups: Derdians & Engineers + 1-2 observers**

The engineers should prepare a plan or a model; they should help the Derdians learn how to build the bridge.

### Phase 1

Each group will be in 2 different rooms, each group learns their role.

The engineers choose 2 persons who will make the first reconnaissance visit



### Phase 2

Two engineers visit the Derdians and try to get information



### Phase 3

The engineers build the model.



### Phase 4

All the engineers go to the Derdian village to teach them how to build the bridge.



### Phase 5

Debriefing

# Debriefing

Derdians

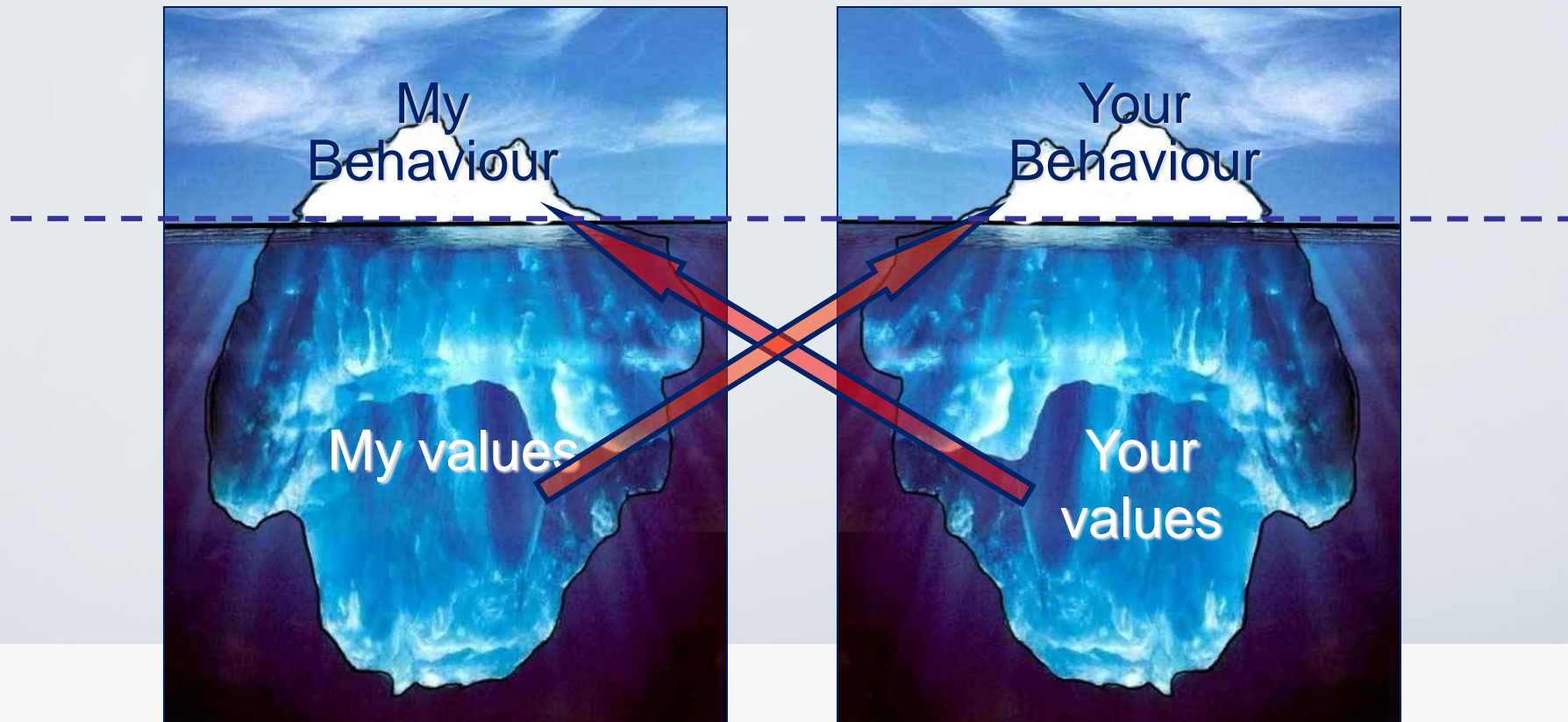
Engineers

# Debriefing

- Preparation issues ?
  - technical skills
  - cultural intelligence/intercultural sensitivity
- Adjustment process & learning?
  - Do you recognize any step in your team/individual adjustment process?
- Main barriers to intercultural interactions?
- Assessment of the working process & outcomes ?

# When does Culture Clash occur?

When you judge the behaviour of a person from another culture using your own values and vice versa.



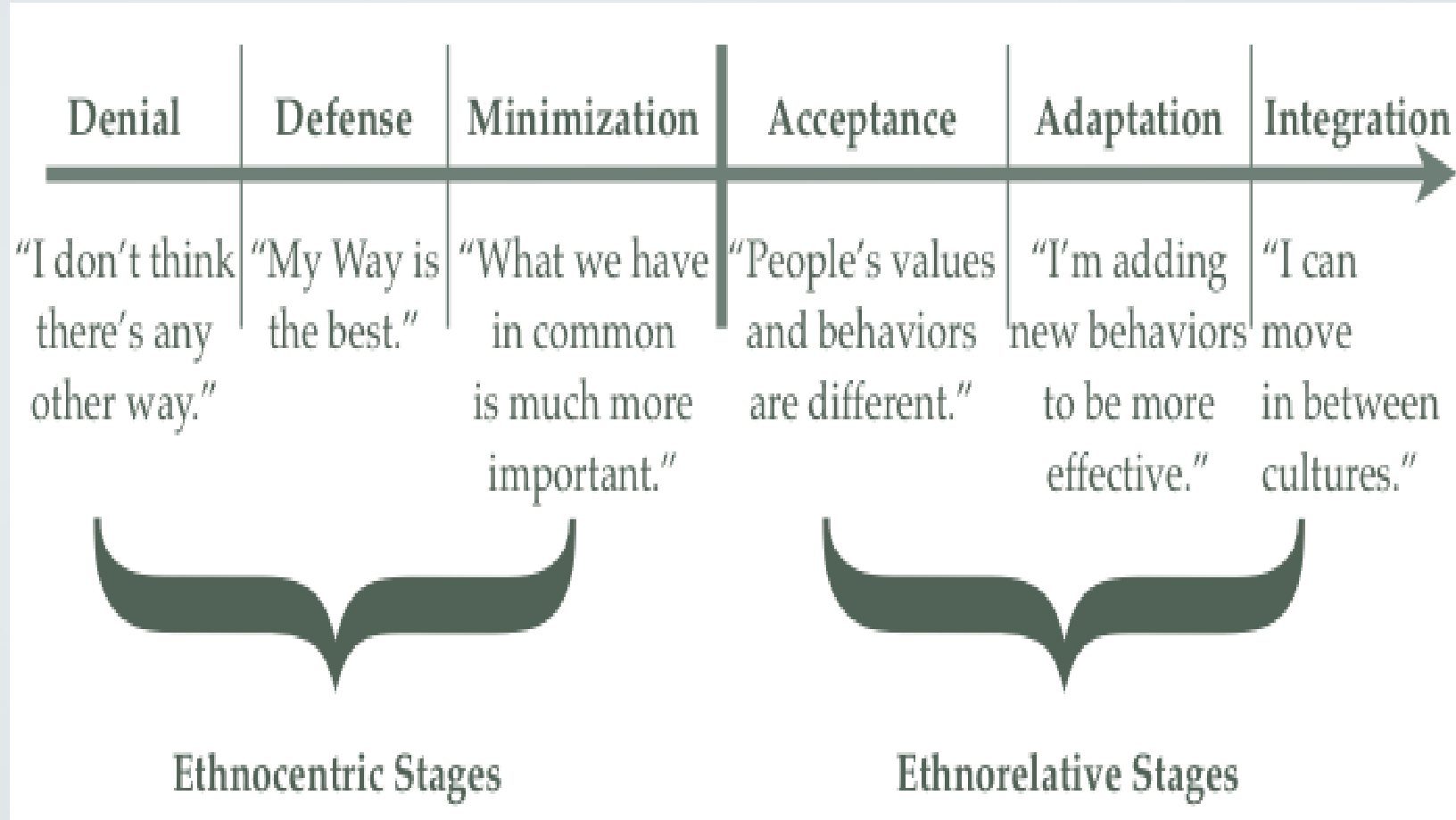
# DMIS

## Milton Bennett, 1986

- The *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*, revised in 1993.
- Describes 6 stages of cross-cultural experience,
  - Coping with the management of differences across culture.
- NB: Cultural sensitivity is not natural!
  - From “ethnocentrism” stages
  - To stages of “ethnorelativism”
- Where do you see yourself ?



# DMIS, Bennett, 1986



# CULTURAL AWARENESS & DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES

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## 4 STAGES

### **1 / Unconscious incompetence**

This has also been called the state of blissful ignorance. At this stage, you are unaware of cultural differences.

### **3 / Conscious competence**

You know cultural differences exist, you know what some of these differences are, and you try to adjust your own behavior accordingly. It doesn't come naturally yet.

### **2 / Conscious incompetence**

You now realize that differences exist between the way you and the local people behave, though you understand very little about what these differences are, how numerous they might be, or how deep they might go.

### **4 / Unconscious competence**

You no longer have to think about what you're doing in order to do the right thing. Culturally appropriate behavior is now second nature to you.



# ACCULTURATION & ADJUSTMENT PROCESS



"After 6 days in Paris, I knew nothing about French and I was lost. After 6 months in Paris I knew everything about French , and I could write a book on them. After 6 years in Paris, I know nothing about French and I am lost..."

- An american expatriate

➔ How do you interpret this? What kind of information does that tell us about culture adaptation?



# Acculturation



Adopting norms of a culture by a group from a different culture



In 1883, Powell defined "acculturation" to be the psychological changes induced by cross-cultural imitation.

# Culture shock

- Popularized by K. Oberg (1950)
- A state or a process?
- Identified different stages of adjustment process within a cross-cultural perspective
- Core issue: Identity

# Culture shock - K.Oberg

- If people are **immersed in a foreign culture for a prolonged period**, it can lead to a **state of frustration** called culture shock
- describes the anxiety and feelings when people operate within an entirely different culture/or social environment
- **describes the whole process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar culture**
  - leading to surprise, disorientation, confusion, angriness etc..

First definitions emphasize communication

- **"anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse"**

K. Oberg, Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments, Practical Anthropology **7**(1960), pp. 177-182.

- Weaver says culture shock has **"three basic causal explanations:**

- (1) the loss of familiar clues,
- (2) the breakdown of interpersonal communications, and
- (3) an identity crisis"

G.R. Weaver, Understanding and coping with cross-cultural adjustment stress. In: G.R. Weaver, Editor, Culture, communication and conflict: Readings in intercultural relations, Ginn Press, Needham Heights, MA (1994), pp. 169-189.

# The Nature of Culture Shock

Until recently, culture shock was assumed to be a consistently negative experience, much like an illness or disease.

## Past perceptions...

### **An occupational disease**

experienced by people suddenly transplanted abroad – for some a good recovery was made; in others the condition became chronic & debilitating

## Current understanding...

**Stress** experienced by people facing the demands of living in a new culture when they have not yet developed the necessary **cop**ing **skills**.

# Culture shock

- **Later definitions emphasize a psychological explanation**

“Culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness, irritability and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded.”

- *Nancy Adler, P.S. 1975. The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. Journal of Humanistic Psychology*

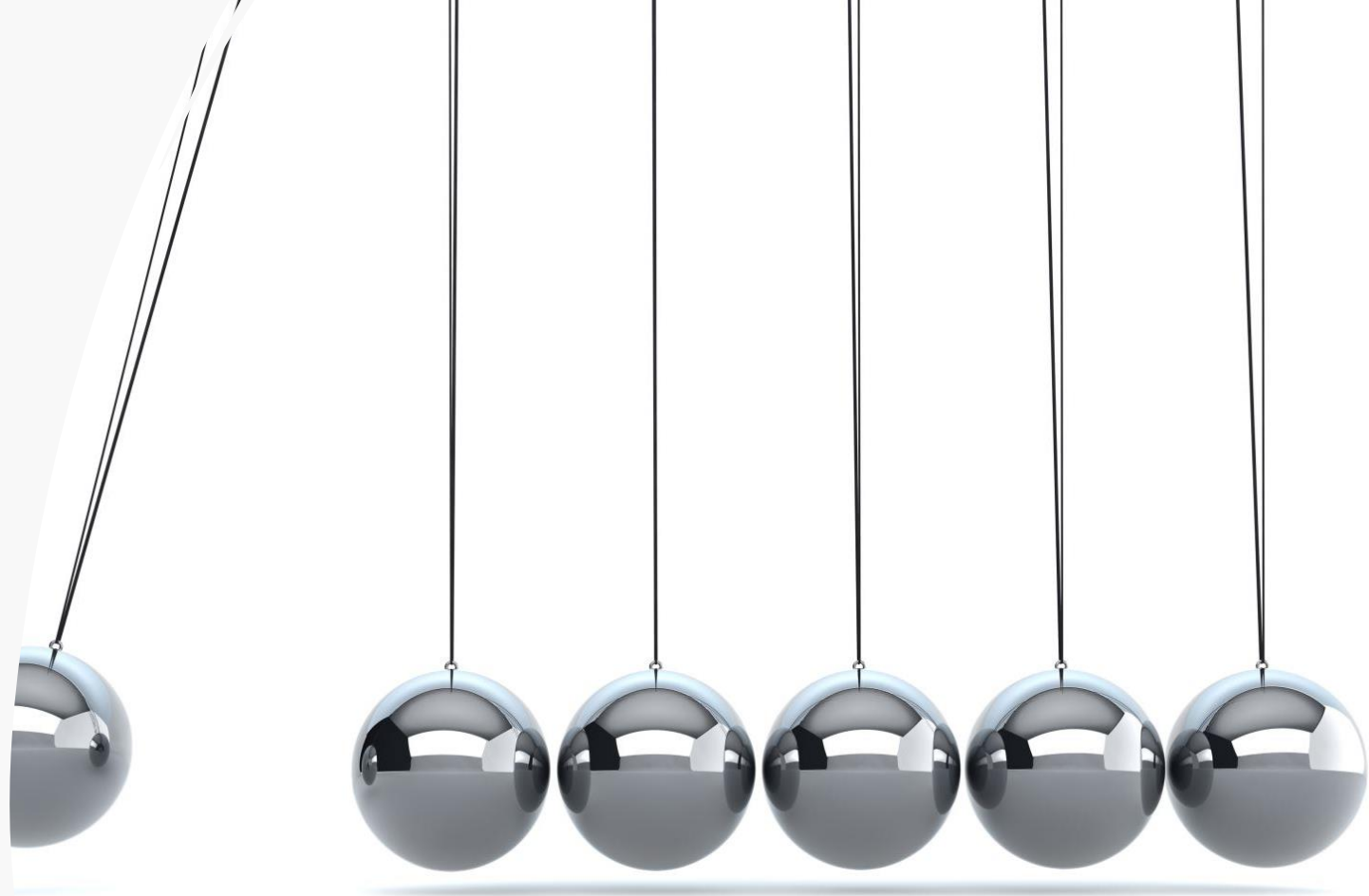


# Culture shock as a process of adjustment

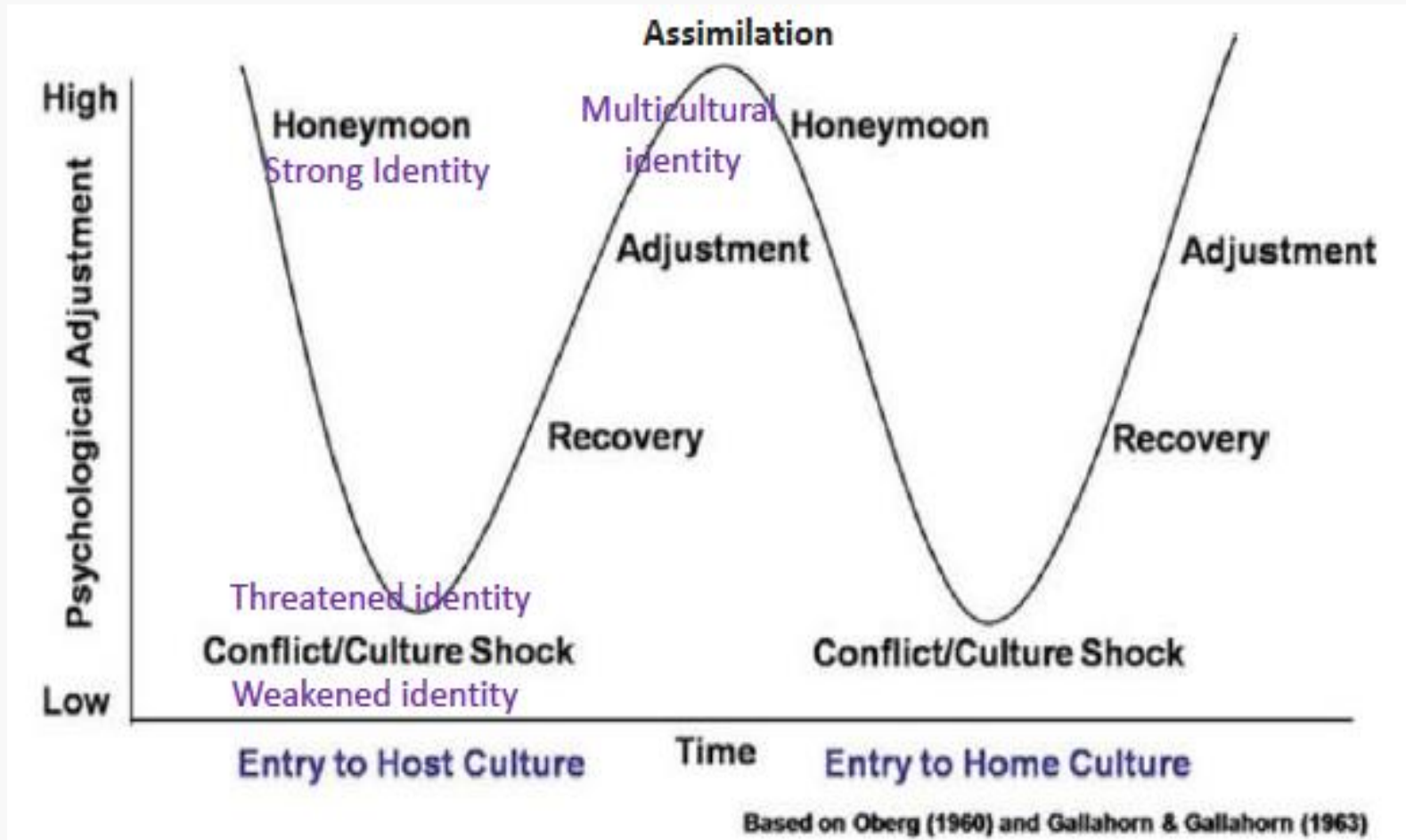
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- **Individuals differ greatly** in the degree in which culture shock affect them.
- Many models of adjustment, but mainly the steps follows this process:
  - **1-Honey moon stage**
  - **2-Rejection/Hostility stage**
  - **3-Adjustment stage**
  - **4-Assimilation stage**
  - **5-Reentry culture shock**

(Kalvero OBERG's model, 1954)

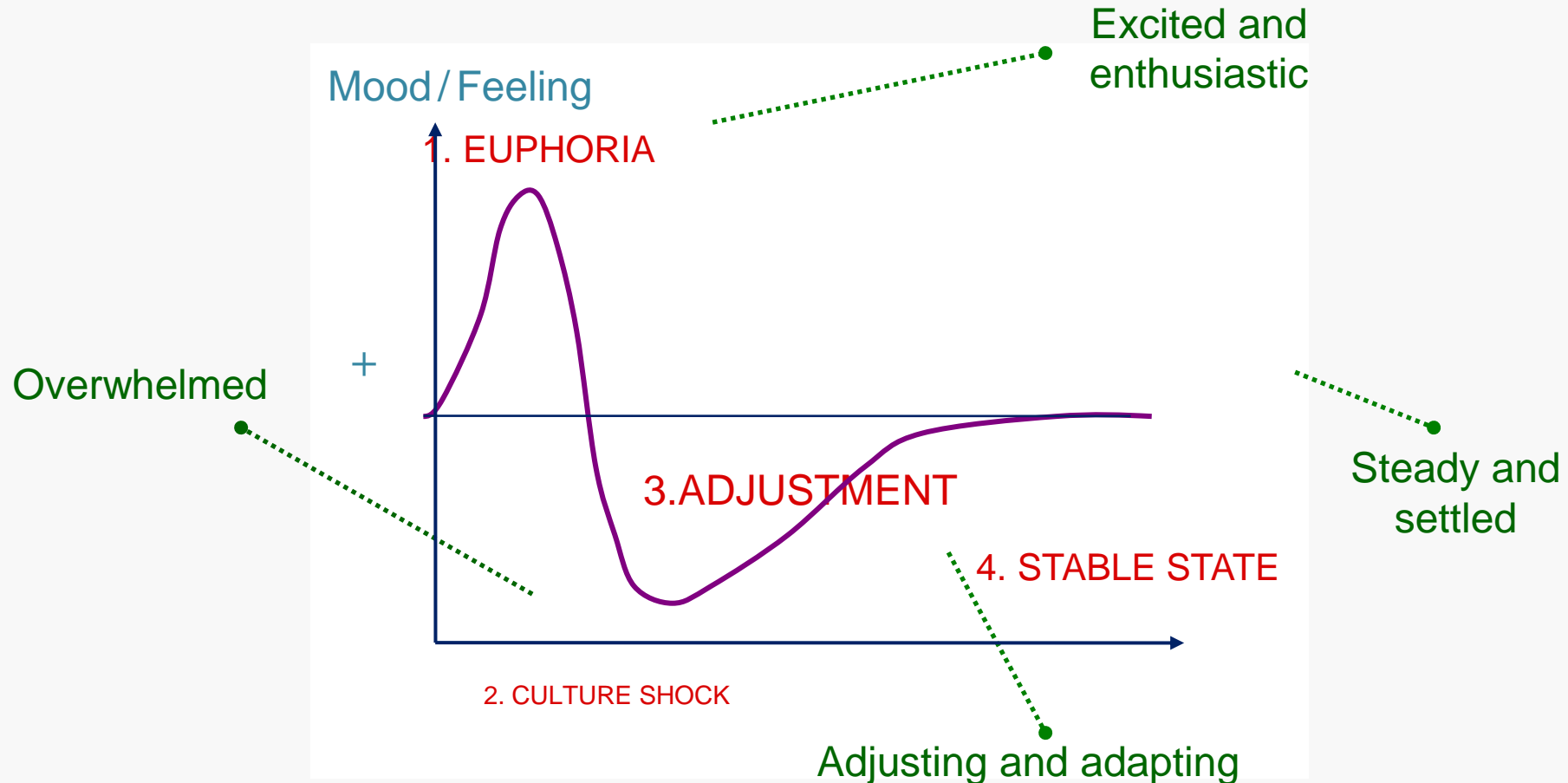


# CULTURE SHOCK: ADAPTATION W CURVE



# Crossing Cultures

What happens when we cross cultures?



# Culture shock symptoms

Reaction to new, unpredictable and thus uncertain environments



## Breakdown in a person's

Selective perception

Effective interpretation systems

- Anger, disappointment, embarrassments, frustration, impatience, sleepless nights, stomach ache, shaking hands

Effective handling of stress

- 3-6 months
- Know that they do not know

Ineffective handling of stress

- Blame the citizens of the host country
- Blame the company
- Blame the expatriate spouse



# Culture clash & expat success

- The **most effective global managers** experience often the **strongest culture clash**
  - Frustration & confusion as a result from a massive bombardment of new and in-comprehensive impressions and observations
  - It is **not a sickness**
    - A natural reaction to stress in the process of adjusting to new contexts
  - A sign that the expatriated person is getting deeply involved in the new environments.

# Repatriation success

- Reflective question
  - As international students, can you think about challenges returning home
  - If you were an expatriate, how would you feel about returning to your old position in the company after 2 years working at one of the company's overseas subsidiaries? Can you think of any problem you would encounter on your return to your parent country and company?

Loss of autonomy

Loss of status

Loss of carrer opportunities

- Combined with family re adjustment to the parent culture

Lead to resignation

- Break in the psycholgical contract (Linehan & Mayrhofer, 2005)

# Reentry culture shock

## REENTRY HOME SWEET HOME

- Expectations to reentry
    - No problems
  - I don't expect changes – Because it was short stay overseas. I expect to just slip back into my old mold"
  - I expect to have the same friends, the same activities and the same family connections
  - Going home is a harder move. The foreign move has the excitement of being new, more confusing, but exciting. Reentry is frightening.. I'll be happy to be home – I really wonder. If I can adjust back
  - While away from home, the home culture is likely to have been idealized remembering only the good sides
- Experience of reentry
    - Experience of misfit
      - between expectations and realities
      - Between what was and what is
      - culture shock
        - » I was pleasantly surprised by our neighbors. They really went overboard to welcome us back
        - » It is cleaner. Just reasonable number of people. Freedom to move. Quality of life is higher here and I notice it more
        - » Some of my friends couldn't even imagine the foreign country ..they asked me how it was, but they just wanted to hear fine
        - » Calling friends, my sister, my mom. Everyone was so busy with their lives that they didn't have time just to talk
        - » I came back with so many stories to share, but my friends and family couldn't understand them. It was as my years overseas were unshakeable



# Prescriptions for culture shock

**Understand symptoms** and **recognize signs of "culture fatigue » & "culture shock."**

Realize that some degree of discomfort and stress is **natural** in a cross-cultural experience.

**Recognize** that your **reactions are often emotional** and not always (or easily) subject to rational control.

Gather information so at least the cultural differences will seem understandable if not natural.

Look below the surface.

Look for the **logical reasons behind host culture patterns**. They "fit » the culture-discover why

Relax your grip on your normal culture and try to cheerfully adapt to new rules and roles.

Don't give into the temptation to disparage what you do not like or understand.

**Identify a support network** among host nationals: teachers, fellow, students, etc. Use it, but don't rely upon it exclusively.

Understand that any "cultural clash" will likely be **temporary**.

Give yourself quiet time some private space and don't be too hard on yourself when things are not going perfectly.

# What is expatriation Success?

Different people, different perspectives...

- Completing the assignment – not returning early
- Performing well in a new environment
- Learning about a new foreign culture & language
- Enjoying life overseas
- Developing skills for future career development

# Process of adjustment

- The process CAN be managed – everyone has the potential to influence their adjustment process given the knowledge, skills and motivation.

‘... it’s not the strongest species that survive, not the most intelligent, but the one’s most responsive to change.’

Charles Darwin, 1809 -1882

The background image shows a harbor scene with several sailboats docked in the foreground. In the background, there is a modern, multi-story building with a distinctive, stepped, and cantilevered architectural design. The sky is filled with clouds, and the overall scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text is overlaid on this scene in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# MAIN FIRST BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS



# Understanding key points

- More than 160 definitions of culture recensed!
- Pick up definition/ approach according to your field of interest...



## What is culture?





# Understanding key dimensions

## Levels of mental programming

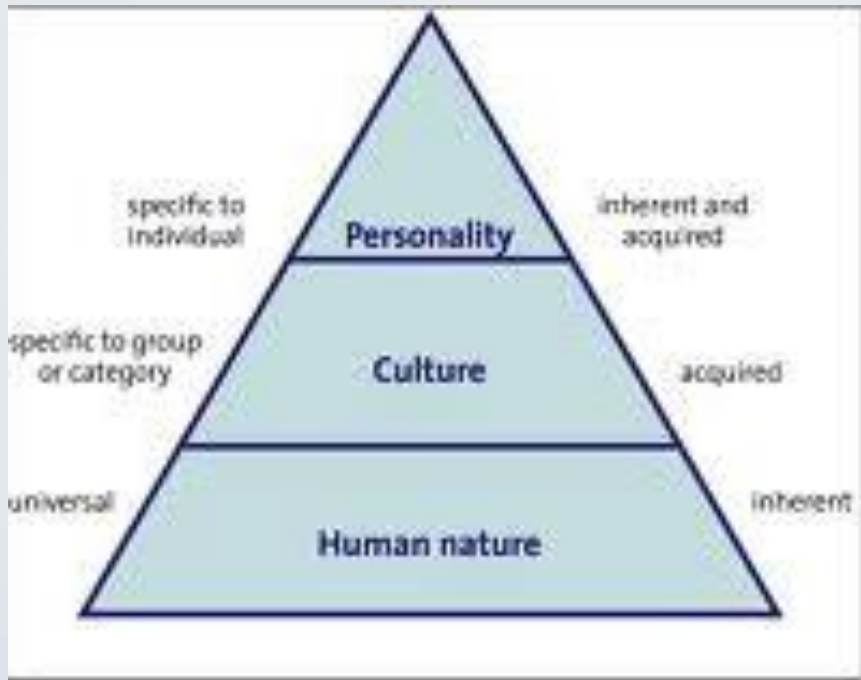
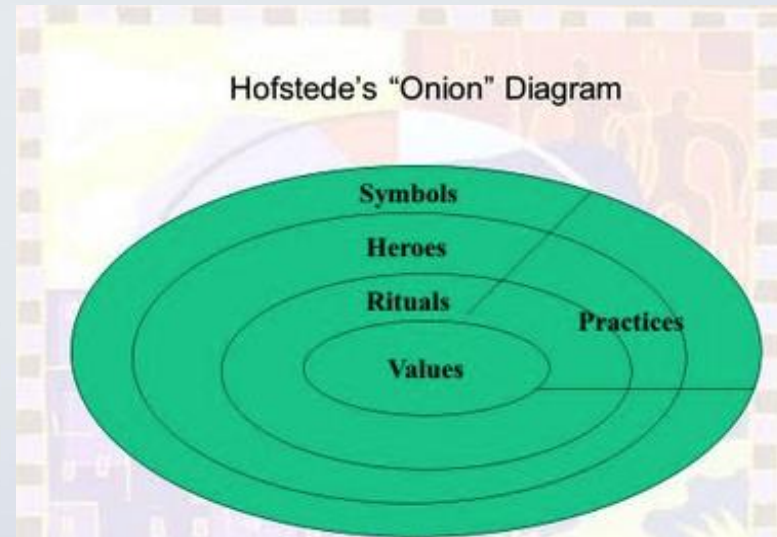


Fig. 1: Levels of mental programming



# Understanding key points: QUIZ

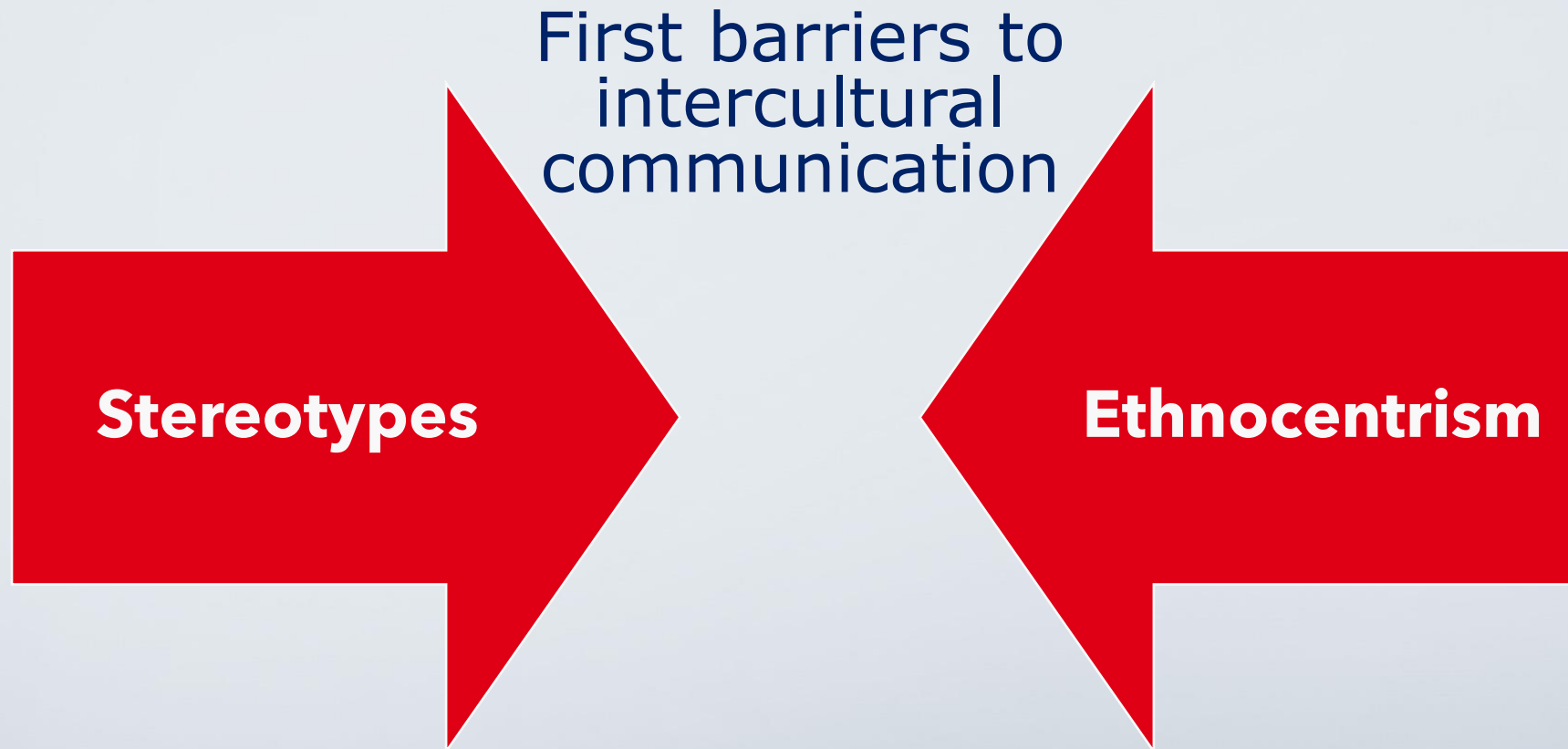
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UNIVERSAL? CULTURAL? PERSONAL?

|                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sleeping with a bedroom window open                                            |
| Running from a dangerous animal                                                |
| Considering snakes to be "evil"                                                |
| Men opening doors for women                                                    |
| Respecting older people                                                        |
| Liking spicy food                                                              |
| Preferring playing soccer to reading a book                                    |
| Eating regularly                                                               |
| Eating with knife, fork, and spoon                                             |
| Being wary of strangers                                                        |
| Calling a waiter with a hissing sound                                          |
| Regretting being the cause of an accident                                      |
| Feeling sad at the death of your mother                                        |
| Wearing white mourning robes for 30 days after the death of your mother        |
| Not liking to wear mourning clothes for 30 days after the death of your mother |

# Understanding key points

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- **Stereotypes**
- **Ethnocentrisme**

## First barriers to cross cultural interactions

# Understanding key points

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## **1<sup>st</sup> danger: our own stereotypes**

- Clichés
- Schemas
- Pre-conceived ideas





# First impressions

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What do you see?



# Understanding key points

## Advantages Vs. Drawbacks

- Normal process which fits our way of functioning
- Creates a stable and predictable environment for us to operate in
- Corresponds to our need to generalize

No one like to be associated to the characteristics of a group (e.g. The French are, but I am not) Homogeneity out group versus heterogeneity in group

Very resistant to change

They can be over-generalized (preventing us from seeing others as individuals)

Easy to become overly negative (halo effect and confirmation of assumptions) leading to prejudices and stigmatization

# Les premières barrières aux interactions culturelles

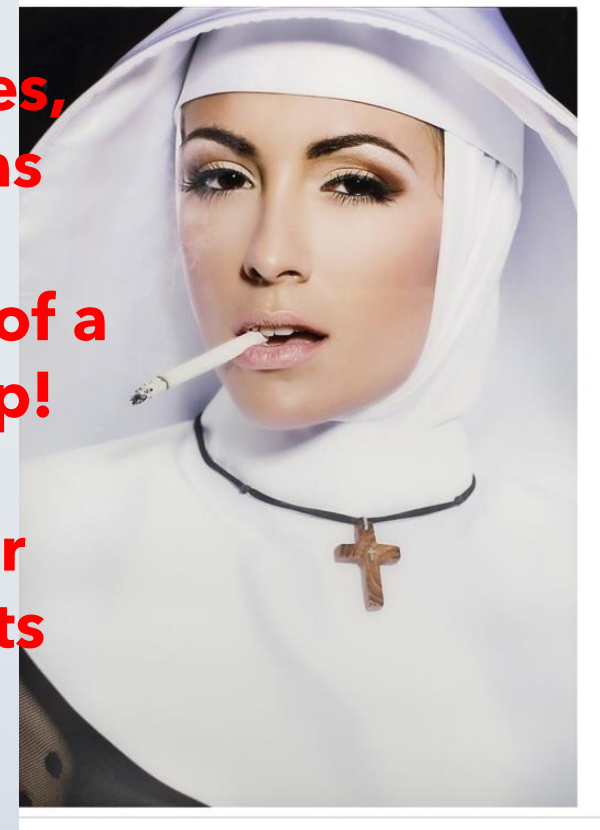
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## Activity on stereotypes

- Describing different cultures, what do we notice?

**Break out your stereotypes,  
interact with individuals as  
individuals  
and not as representants of a  
stigmatized cultural group!**

**We become aware of our  
stereotypes once elements  
appear and don't fit our  
expectations**





# Understanding key points

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# Understanding key points

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> danger: ETHNOCENTRISM

- Tendency to assume that our reference points or standards are universal
- Evaluating according to our own cultural standards
- Believing our own culture is superior to all others

- (Feeling that our own culture is the best)
- Seeing other cultures as inferior







**Culture also looks like...**

# Différents niveaux d'analyse des cultures... différents niveaux de sensibilisation à la culture

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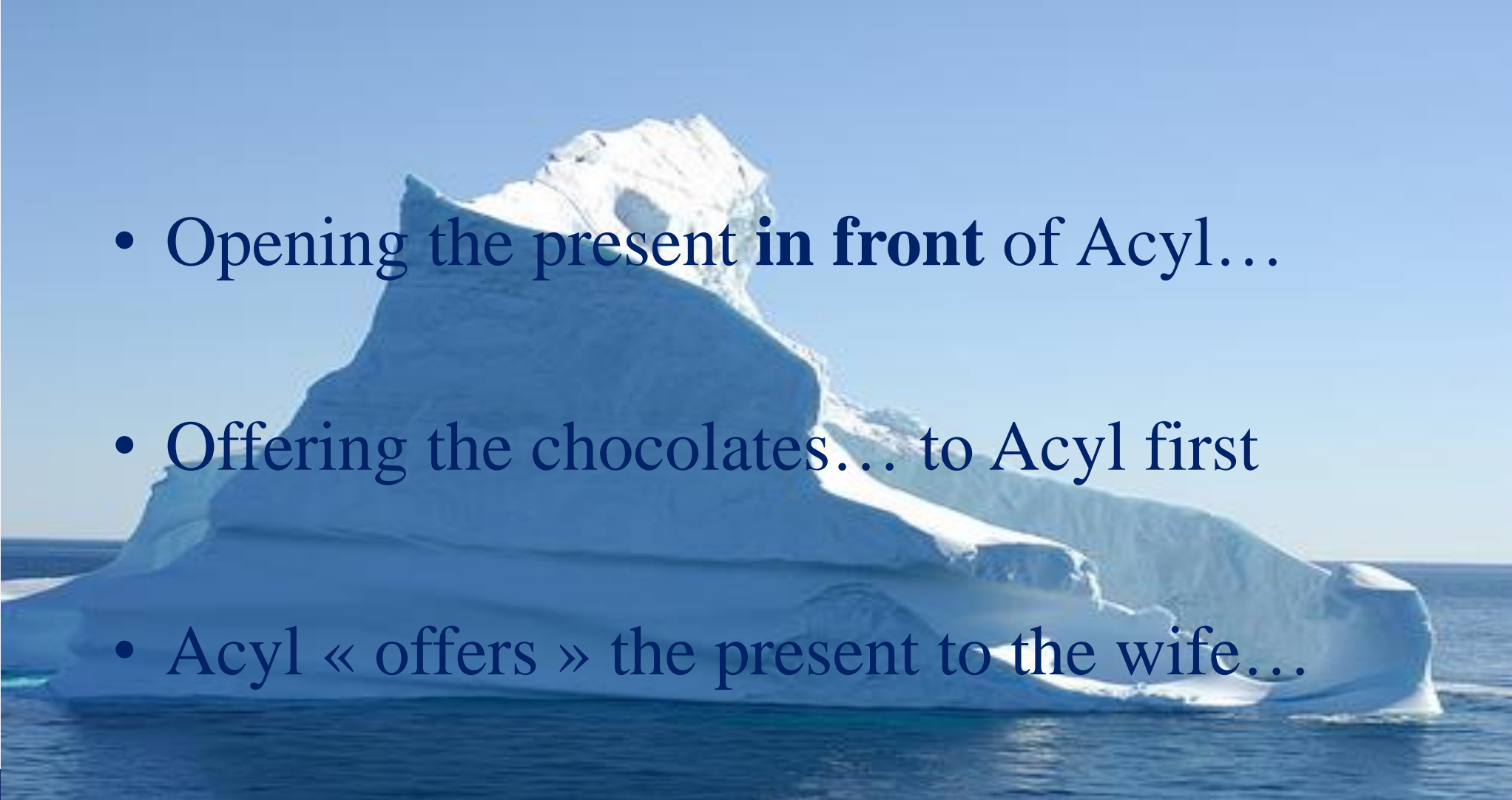
Acyl, a student from Tchad is invited to dinner by his internship Supervisor. The Supervisor and his wife are French, both 40 years old, with young children. Acyl has bought chocolates as a gift. He arrives, rings the doorbell, the hostess opens the door, takes the gift and thanks him for it. At the end of the dinner, the hostess opens the present and offers the chocolates to everyone, starting with her guest. Young Acyl feels very ill-at-ease and wishes he could leave.

# Différents niveaux d'analyse des cultures... différents niveaux de sensibilisation à la culture

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- Identify 3 sources of misunderstanding (superficial level)
- Use the concept of reference points to explain cultural gaps, expectations/values (deep level of analysis)
- Be ready to present in 10 mn

# 3 SOURCES of misunderstandings

- 
- A large iceberg floats in a blue ocean under a clear sky. The visible tip of the iceberg is small and jagged, while the vast, submerged portion is much larger and smoother, illustrating the concept of hidden misunderstandings.
- Opening the present **in front** of Acyl...
  - Offering the chocolates... to Acyl first
  - Acyl « offers » the present to the wife...



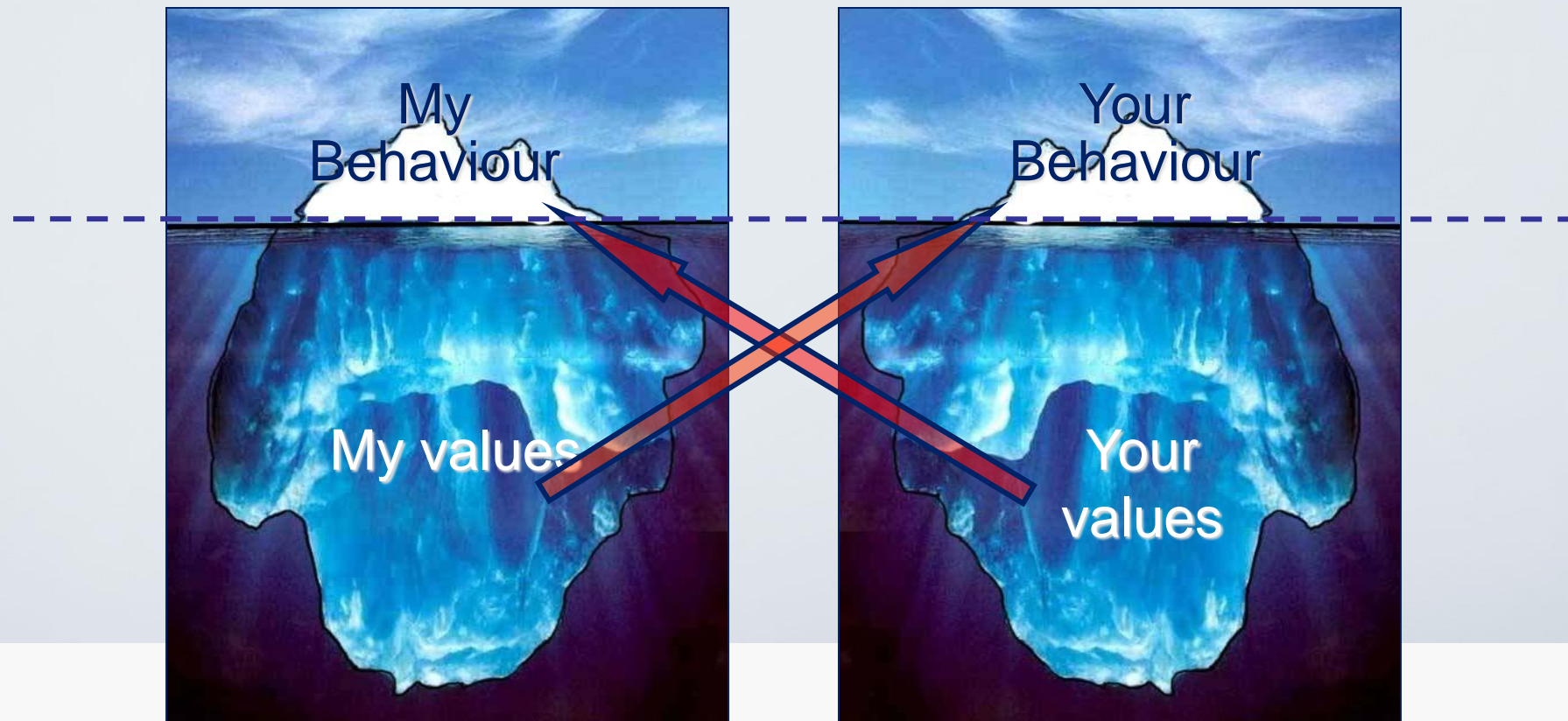
# DECODING

| From Hostess'<br>Reference points                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | From Acyl's<br>Reference Points                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Opening the present</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>intention</b> is more important, judeo-christianism principles.</li></ul>                                                                                                                    | Showing publicly the <b>VALUE</b> of the present leads to the loss of face                                                                              |
| <b>Offering the chocolate starting with the guest</b><br>→ “Guest first” is polite.(principle from Christianity)                                                                                                                                                   | Acyl is offended because if he's the one “tasting” the chocolates first<br>Issue of trust him<br>→ Misinterpreted from history (is it poisoned?)        |
| <b>Offering a present to the wife: meaning?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's not a problem for the husband that Acyl gives the chocolates to the hostess because she's the one who has made the dinner, so it's a kind of thanks to her.</li></ul> | Acyl is embarrassed to “offer” the chocolates to the hostess, it was not his intention since in his country is viewed as if he was trying to seduce her |



# When does Culture Clash occur?

When you judge the behaviour of a person from another culture using your own values and vice versa.



# And now...

## What do you think of the following statements?

- The world is essentially a global village
- The world would be a better place if everybody behaved like the people in my country
- One could live in any country in the world, if one were honest and well-intentioned
- Business is business in any country

# Main references

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