



Crossing Cultural Communication: A Primer

SNAP WASHINGTON

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▶ Introductions

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- ▶ Thank you for your hard work!



Immigration Designations

- ▶ Immigrant (including special immigrants)
 - ▶ U/T Visas
 - ▶ SI/ SQ
 - ▶ Diversity Visa
- ▶ Refugee (vs IDPs)
- ▶ Asylum Seeker
- ▶ Undocumented
- ▶ Legal-nonimmigrants (Marshallese)

Who are
you
working
with?

The Marshall Islands


- ▶ From 1946-1958 was the site of 67 weapon tests (the famous Bikini Atoll)
- ▶ Claimed radioactive material stayed within 5k of explosion site
- ▶ Radioactive fallout caused severe health problems & made the islands unsafe for edible agriculture
- ▶ Import diet has lead to high levels of diabetes, obesity and other disease
- ▶ Legal nonimmigrant status: Cannot become US citizens (only potentially through marriage or service in US armed forces)
- ▶ Family structure in conflict with US immigration parameters (educational, medical conflicts)



Refugee: Five Grounds of Persecution

To achieve refugee status, you must flee across your country's borders and prove persecution in one of five categories designated by the UNHCR (1951):

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Membership of a social group
- Membership of a political group



What is NOT covered by this act?

Refugee Data

- highest levels of displacement on record
- **70.8 million** people around the world have been forced from home.
- **25.9 million refugees**, over half of whom are **under the age of 18**.
- **3.5 million asylum seeker**
- **1 person is forcibly displaced every two seconds** as a result of conflict or persecution
- 57% of refugees come from three places: Afghanistan, Syria, and South Sudan
- FY 2020 cap is 18,000 lowest ever (compared to FY 2016 85,000)
- Source: [UNHCR](#) and [Migration Policy Inst. \(MPI\)](#)

From around the world

The top 20 countries of origin of refugees who have come to Washington since 2003.

THE REST OF THE TOP 20

- 11 Vietnam
- 12 Dem. Rep. Congo
- 13 Sudan
- 14 Cuba
- 15 Belarus
- 16 Liberia
- 17 Burundi
- 18 Afghanistan
- 19 Kazakhstan
- 20 Kyrgyzstan



Source: [Seattle Times \(2015\)](#)

Strengths of Immigrants and Refugees

- ▶ Resilient
- ▶ Flexible
- ▶ Persevering
- ▶ Family-oriented
- ▶ Willing to make sacrifices
- ▶ Wealth of lived-experiences

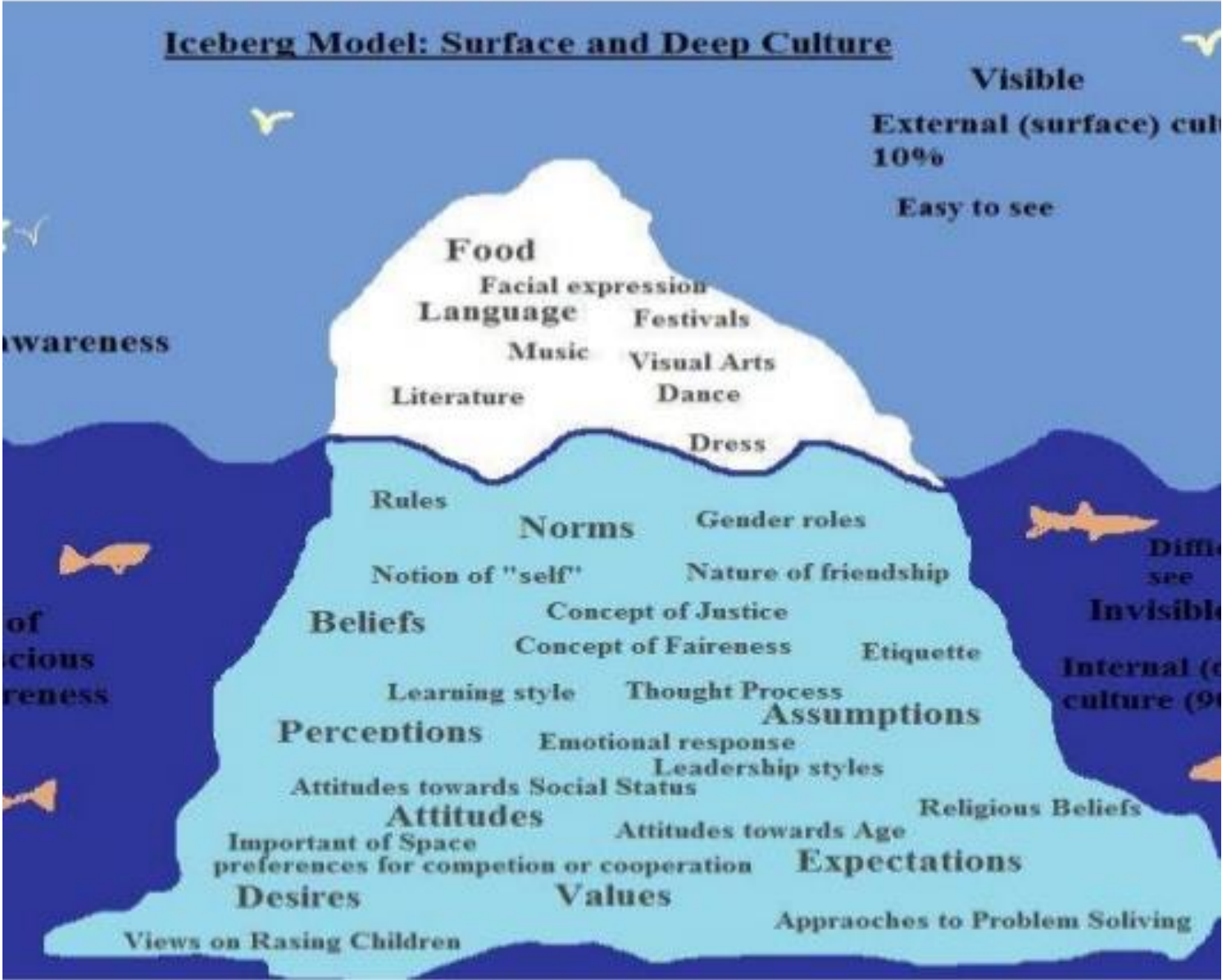
Challenges Facing Immigrants

- ▶ Cross Cultural Clashes
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Loss of status (eg: from professional to unemployed)
- ▶ Role reversal (children become providers)
- ▶ Busy-ness (a US cultural trait)
- ▶ Trauma, loss and separation (global and local)
- ▶ Mental and Physical Health Issues
- ▶ Time constructs (refugee camp vs. US daily life)

What is culture?

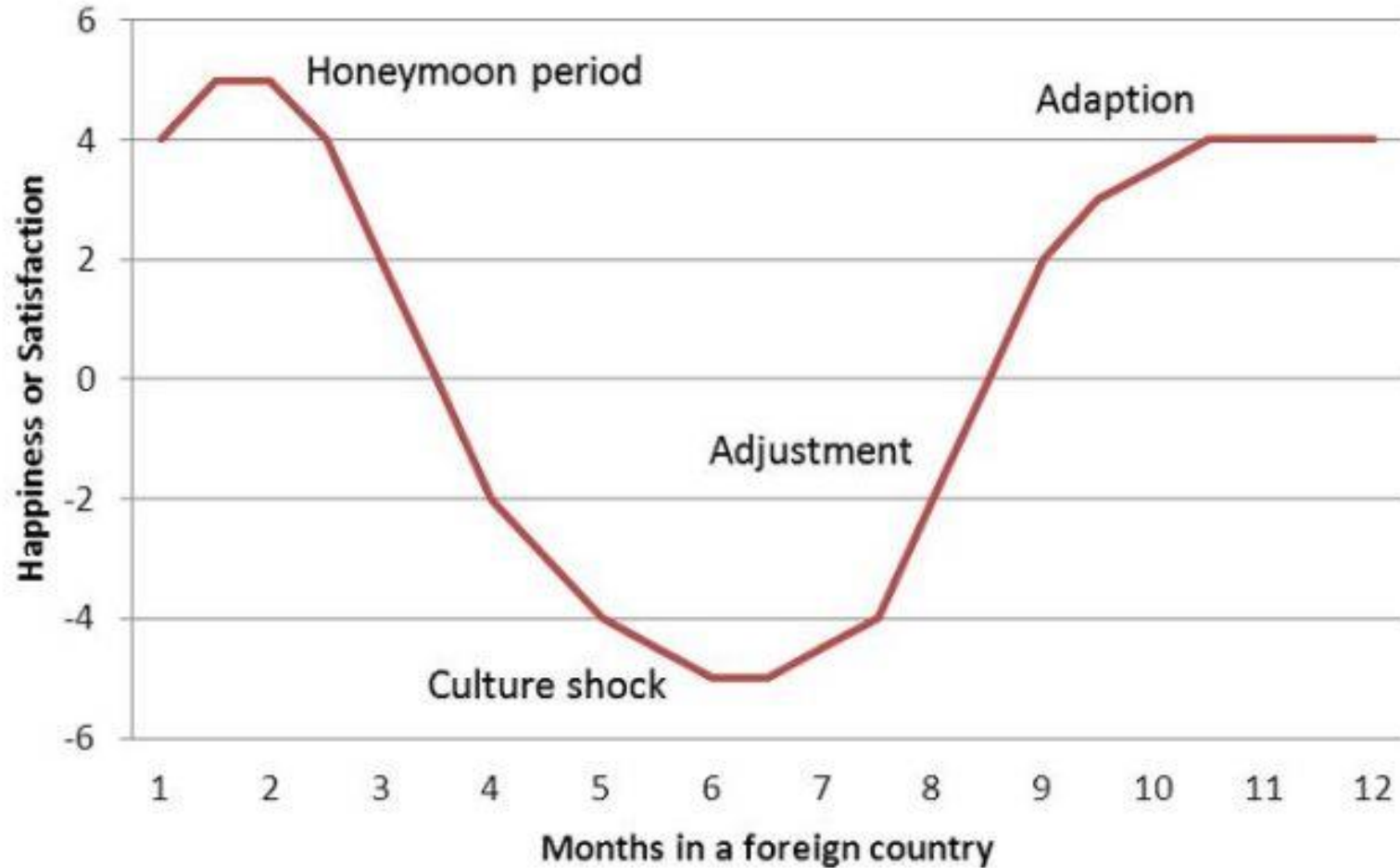
- ▶ Culture is not...
 - ▶ Limited to FFF (Food, Fashion, Festivals)
 - ▶ "I am normal...and everything different is 'culture'."
- ▶ Consider:
 - ▶ What is typical of American culture?
 - ▶ Getting louder as we repeat?
 - ▶ What are common and unique workplace cultural perceptions?

Edward T. Hall's "cultural iceberg" analogy (surface and subsurface)



Cultural Iceberg

Culture Shock Curve

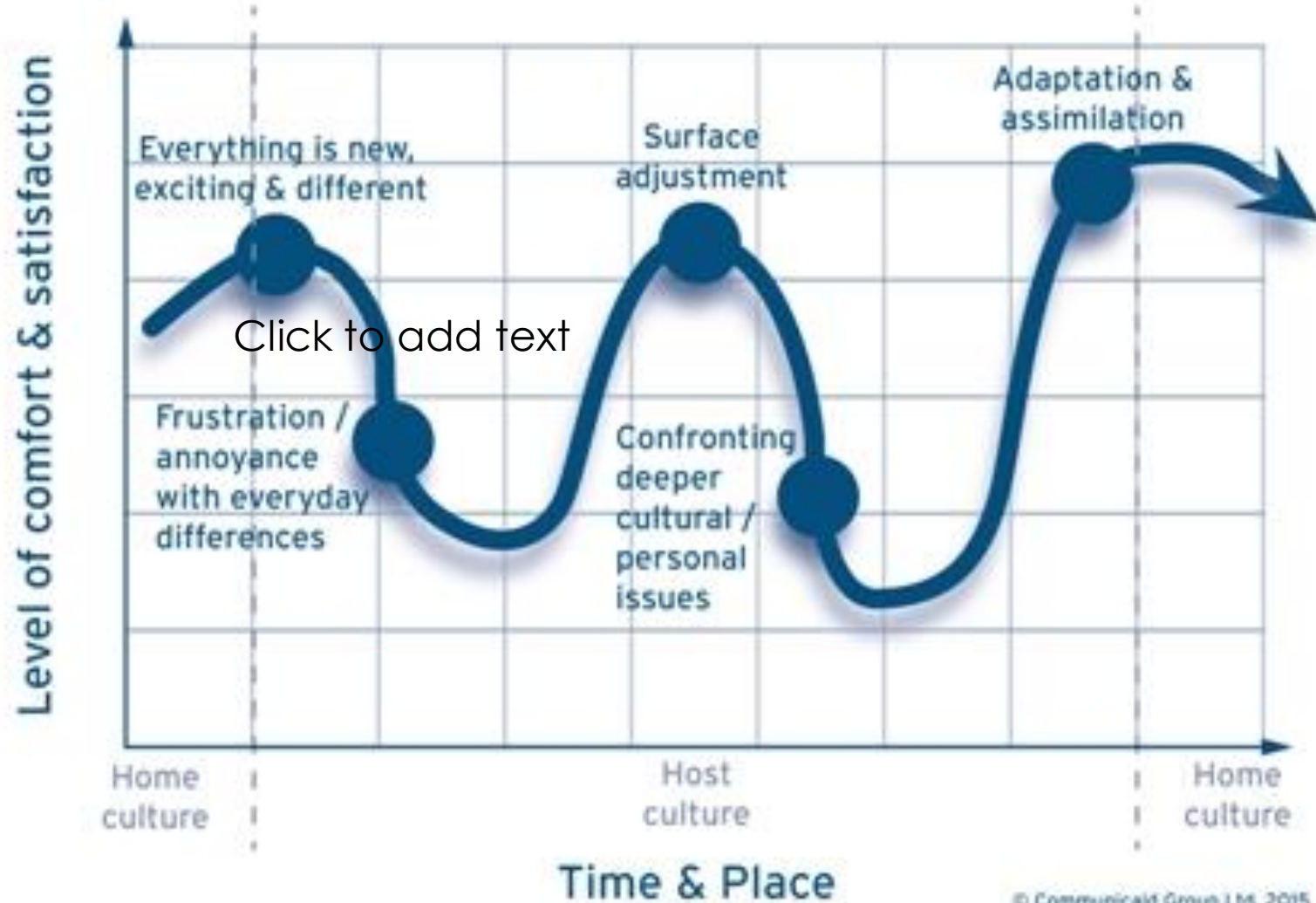


The Cycles
of Culture
Shock

"U Curve"

"W Curve"

Culture Shock in Action



Invisible Barriers on the path to being seen

- ▶ ICE
- ▶ Fear of citizenship denial if receiving benefits
- ▶ Women living in fear of husband/ partner
- ▶ Interpreter issues (gender, religion, culture)
- ▶ Sorting mail: What is important, what is spam?
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Harassment
- ▶ Discrimination
- ▶ Digital Literacy

Elements of Effective Pathways

Get clear on cross cultural expectations:

- ▶ **Time:** discuss keeping appointments, for example what is “late?”
- ▶ **Language:** Providing language frames and functional dialogues, along with opportunities for visuals and role play
- ▶ **Assigning next steps:** comprehension checks, follow up, multiple access points for information (written, email, text, phone call, video)
- ▶ **Contacts and protocols** (terminology, acronyms, etc.)
- ▶ **Creative steps for COVID19** for working with immigrants (video how-to, WhatsApp, screen-casting through Loom)

Back to Basics: Cross Cultural Communication

Awareness: being aware that different countries have different ways and times of doing things. (eg. Ramadan)

Preparation: Take the time to read up on a culture's rituals and etiquette. Also, check your language. Can you make it more "basic"? (e.g. avoid colloquialisms or phrasal verbs)

Language: Proper interpreter protocol & multiple formats (is the interpreter not just bilingual but also bicultural?)

Humor/ Lightness: Taking things at face value, asking questions instead of making assumptions.

Openness: Is what I am perceiving a universal concept? Are there other signs? Ask open-ended questions.

Oral
Communication
Strategy:
Negotiating
Meaning

- ▶ Negotiating Meaning (REDD Check):
 - ▶ Repeat (maybe even slow down or write it down)
 - ▶ Provide an Example
 - ▶ Provide Definition
 - ▶ Provide Demonstration
 - ▶ Check yourself for making judgements and assumptions: You may be misreading cultural cues

Conveying Written Information

- ▶ Multiple Formats, with Comprehension Checks)
 - ▶ Email
 - ▶ Text
 - ▶ Mail hard copy (Plus time to process/sign)
 - ▶ Face-to-face (WhatsApp or Zoom App)
 - ▶ Demonstration from provider, and then ask for same demonstration from client
 - ▶ Walk through online procedures (Facetime, screencast loom.com)

Moving beyond cultural competence as a way of learning and developing a skill set of facts about individual race/ethnic groups in order to provide culturally competent care: *the concept of cultural humility.*

Lifelong learning
and self-reflection

Mitigating power
imbalances

Institutional
accountability



Cultural Humility

Source: Ethnomed.org

Resources



- ▶ Ethnomed.org
- ▶ [CDC Immigrant & Refugee Health](#)
- ▶ [Immigrant and Refugee Integration \(CAL COR\)](#)

Let's Talk

- ▶ What has worked for you?
- ▶ What are some things that haven't worked for you?
- ▶ What are some of your fears?
- ▶ What are some of your needs?
- ▶ What are some of your success stories?

Going Deeper: Cultural Humility

- ▶ How does the advantage you have had in life contribute to your opinions and actions when caring for clients? Or viewed another way, how does your lack of disadvantage keep you from fully understanding the struggles of your clients?
- ▶ How do I recognize that our clients bring valuable insight and knowledge to the equation?
- ▶ What are the relationships our organizations have with the communities we serve? Do we have knowledge about a cultural group/community but also intention and time to develop trusting relationships within the context of their beliefs and values?

THANK YOU!

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