A Closer Look at Culture
Culture

*Culture* is an integrated pattern of human behavior which includes but is not limited to:

- communication
- thought
- customs
- manners of interacting
- rituals
- courtesies
- relationships
- expected behaviors
- roles
- languages
- practices

... of a racial, ethnic, religious, social, or political group; the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations; dynamic in nature.

Slide Source: The National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006
Culture is akin to being the person observed through a one-way mirror; everything we see is from our own perspective.

It is only when we join the observed on the other side that it is possible to see ourselves and others clearly – but getting to the other side of the glass presents many challenges.

(Lynch & Hanson, 1992, “Developing Cross Cultural Competence”)

Slide Source: National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006
Culture is...

- applicable to all peoples
- active & dynamic
  - changes over time
  - changes with migration
  - changes to meet new challenges to group
  - changes through interactions with other groups
  - changes based on climate

Adapted from Vivian Jackson, NCCC, 2003
Slide Source: The National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006
Culture is…

- multi-layered
- at personal, family, community level
- home, school, work/profession levels
Culture is…

- malleable over time
- always considered within a context

Adapted from Vivian Jackson, NCCC, 2003

Slide Source: The National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006
Culture …

- structures perceptions
- shapes behaviors
- is the total way of life – it tells group members how to behave and provides their identity

Adapted from Vivian Jackson, NCCC, 2003

Slide Source: The National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006
An Iceberg Concept of Culture

- dress
- age
- gender
- language
- race or ethnicity
- physical characteristics
  - eye behavior
  - facial expressions
  - body language
  - sense of self
  - gender identity
- notions of modesty
- concept of cleanliness
- emotional response patterns
- rules for social interaction
- child rearing practices
- decision-making processes
- approaches to problem solving
- concept of justice
- value individual vs. group
- perceptions of mental health, health, illness, disability
- patterns of superior and subordinate roles in relation to status by age, gender, class
- sexual identity & orientation

and much more...

Slide Source: The National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006
The iceberg concept of culture is widely used and available in the public domain, for example see:

Culture Matters
www.peacecorps.gov

or

www.genderandpeacekeeping.org
Cultural Factors That Influence Diversity Among Individuals and Groups

Internal Factors

- Cultural/Racial/Ethnic Identity
- Tribal Affiliation/Clan
- Nationality
- Acculturation/Assimilation
- Socioeconomic Status/Class
- Education
- Language
- Literacy
- Family Constellation
- Social History
- Perception of Time

- Health Beliefs & Practices
- Health Literacy
- Perception of Disability
- Perception of Mental Health
- Age & Life Cycle Issues
- Gender & Sexuality
- Sexual Orientation & Identity
- Religion & Spiritual Views
- Spatial & Regional Patterns
- Political Orientation/Affiliation

Modified from James Mason, Ph.D., NCCC Senior Consultant

Slide Source: The National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006
Cultural Factors That Influence Diversity Among Individuals and Groups

External Factors
- Institutional Biases
- Racism & Discrimination
- Community Economics
- Intergroup Relations
- Group & Community Resiliency

Natural Networks of Support
- Community History
- Political Climate
- Workforce Diversity
- Community Demographics

Modified from James Mason, Ph.D., NCCC Senior Consultant

Slide Source: The National Center for Cultural Competence, 2006