

# Communicating with strangers

## Ethnocentrism

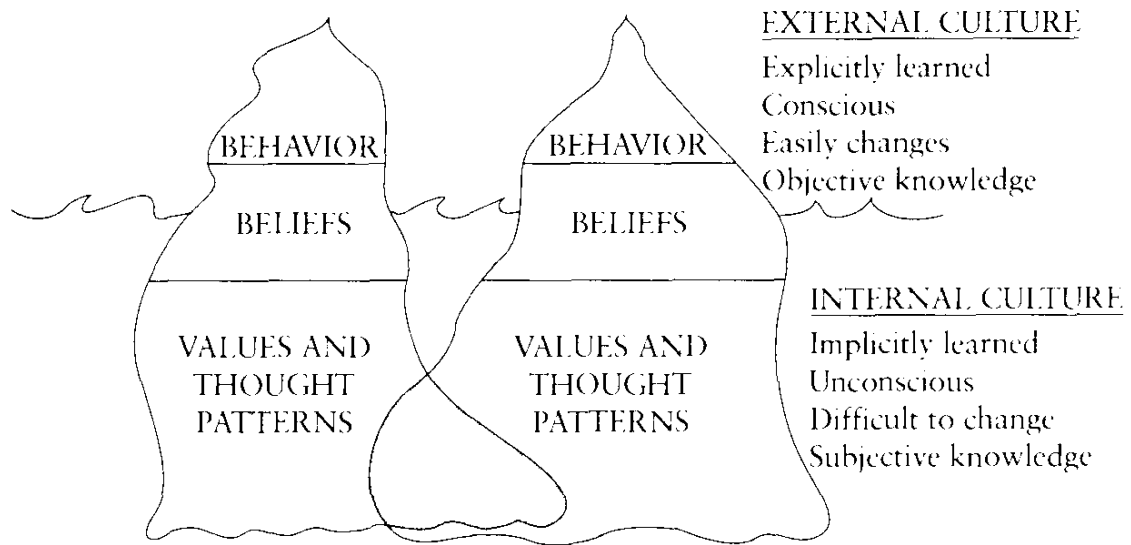
- The view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it." (Sumner 1940; quoted in Samovar, Porter: 11)
- "cultural filters" that influence the ways in which we see the world around us;
- "a bias leading people to judge another culture's habits and practices as right or wrong, good or bad according to their own cultural attitudes, beliefs, values." (Begley: 407)
- It is mostly learned at the unconscious level.
- View that the United States is the center of the world, as well as learning to judge that world by North American standards (Samovar, Porter: 11).
- Traditional Eurocentric racism: America defined as predominantly northern and western European in its culture and institutions, with a dominant Anglo-Saxon and Protestant foundation (Janzen: 36).

## Attributions of strangers' behavior

- Making wrong attributions: when the actor thinks that a behavior is due to one cause and the observer thinks that the behavior is due to a different cause, they each give a different meaning to the behavior.
- Example: two groups, A and B, in conflict; if a member of group B does something 'nice', members of group A attribute the behavior to external factors (e.g. he was forced to do it by circumstances); when a member of group B does something 'nasty,' members of group A attributed it to internal factors (e.g., they are nasty 'by nature')
- People all over the world have a tendency to make attributions incorrectly (Triandis: 23)

## Perception of strangers

- we first encounter the behavior and the language of another culture behind which lie the differing beliefs, values and thought patterns;
- we focus on differences in turn-taking, patterns of presentation; differences in verbal and non-verbal communication (eye-contact, tolerance of silence, gestures, volume of sound).
- but we should also focus on differences and similarities in situations, beliefs, value systems and thought patterns;
- concentrating too much on behavioral differences is a key factor in cross-cultural misunderstanding (Morgan: 238).
- See the 'Iceberg analogy of culture':



*The 'Iceberg analogy' of culture*

Literature:

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