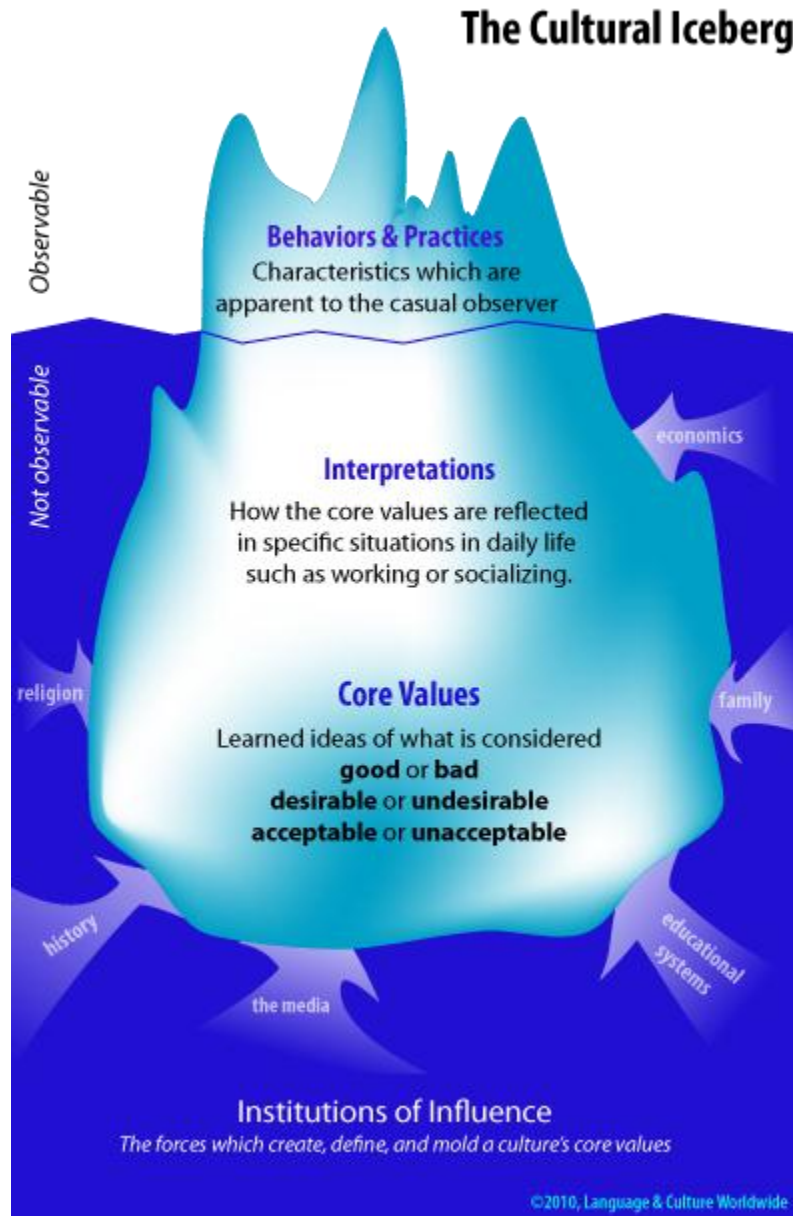


Why is culture like an iceberg?



Examples of observable behaviors and practices (above the water):

Food, dress, music, visual art, drama, crafts, dance, literature, language, celebrations



Examples of the 90% of culture which is out of conscious awareness (under the water):

Notions of modesty, concept of beauty, ideals governing childraising, relationship with animals, definition of sin, courtship practices, notions of leadership, concept of past and future, arrangement of physical space, concept of cleanliness, humor, attitudes toward elders, tempo of work, definition of obscenity, nature of friendship, AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

When we see an iceberg, the portion which is visible above water is, in reality, only a small piece of a much larger whole. Similarly, people often think of culture as the numerous observable characteristics of a group that we can *see* with our eyes, be it their food, dances, music, arts, or greeting rituals. The reality, however, is that these are merely an external manifestation of the deeper and broader components of culture -- the complex ideas and deeply-held preferences and priorities known as attitudes and values.

Deep below the "water line" are a culture's core values. These are primarily learned ideas of what is good, right, desirable, and acceptable, as well as what is bad, wrong, undesirable, and unacceptable. In many cases, different cultural groups share the similar core values (such as "honesty", or "respect", or "family"), but these are often interpreted differently in different situations and incorporated in unique ways into specific attitudes we apply in daily situations. Ultimately, these internal forces become visible to the casual observer in the form of observable behaviors, such as the words we use, the way we act, the laws we enact, and the ways we communicate with each other.

It is also important to note that the core values of a culture do not change quickly or easily. They are passed on from generation to generation by numerous institutions which surround us. These institutions of influence are powerful forces which guide us and teach us. Although an economic system may change, or a new methodology in school may be adopted, or new definitions of "common and normal" may be perceived on the television, there are innumerable forces that continue to mold a culture as they have in the past.

So, like an iceberg, there are things that we can see and describe easily... but there are also many deeply rooted ideas that we can only understand by analyzing values, studying institutions, and in many cases, reflecting on our own core values.

Source: www.languageandculture.com/cultural-iceberg