UNDERSTANDING DIMENSIONS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

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Culture:
>   An unconscious worldview into which we are socialized and which we use to socialize others.

Dimensions of Cultural Variation:
1. Cultural context (from E.T. Hall, *Beyond culture*, 1976)
    a) High context cultures: focus primarily on interpersonal relationships
    b) Low context cultures: focus primarily on task completion

2. Value dimensions (from Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, *Variations in value orientations*, 1961)
    a) Relationship with nature – the extent to which persons believe they control what happens
    b) Temporal orientation – oriented towards the past, present, or future
    c) Activity orientation – value "being" versus "doing"
    d) Relationship with others – emphasis on individual achievement or group cohesion

3. Differences in: (from Hofstede, *Culture's consequences*, 1984)
    a) Power distance – the degree of role formality expected
    b) Risk aversion – the value placed on innovation and taking risks
    c) Individualism – the balance between individual preferences and group concerns
    d) Masculinity – the degree of personalness expected

Understanding the Stages of Attitude Shift in Recognizing Cultural Variation:

Stage	Characteristics
Nondifferentiation	"I am the world" Unaware of other cultural groups Little awareness of own group identity
Simple differentiation	Aware of some differences between own & other groups Little understanding of the reasons for the differences See own group as superior
Complex differentiation	Aware of both similarities & differences between own & other groups Multidimensional model for own group Beginning awareness of universal human issues
Reciprocity	Understand "otherness" as relative Aware of a range of cultural perspectives Aware of a meta-cultural reality

Adapted from Metz, K. Desociocentering: A neo-Piagetian model of the process of decentering in the intergroup context. *Human Development*, 1980, 23:1-16.