Intercultural competence
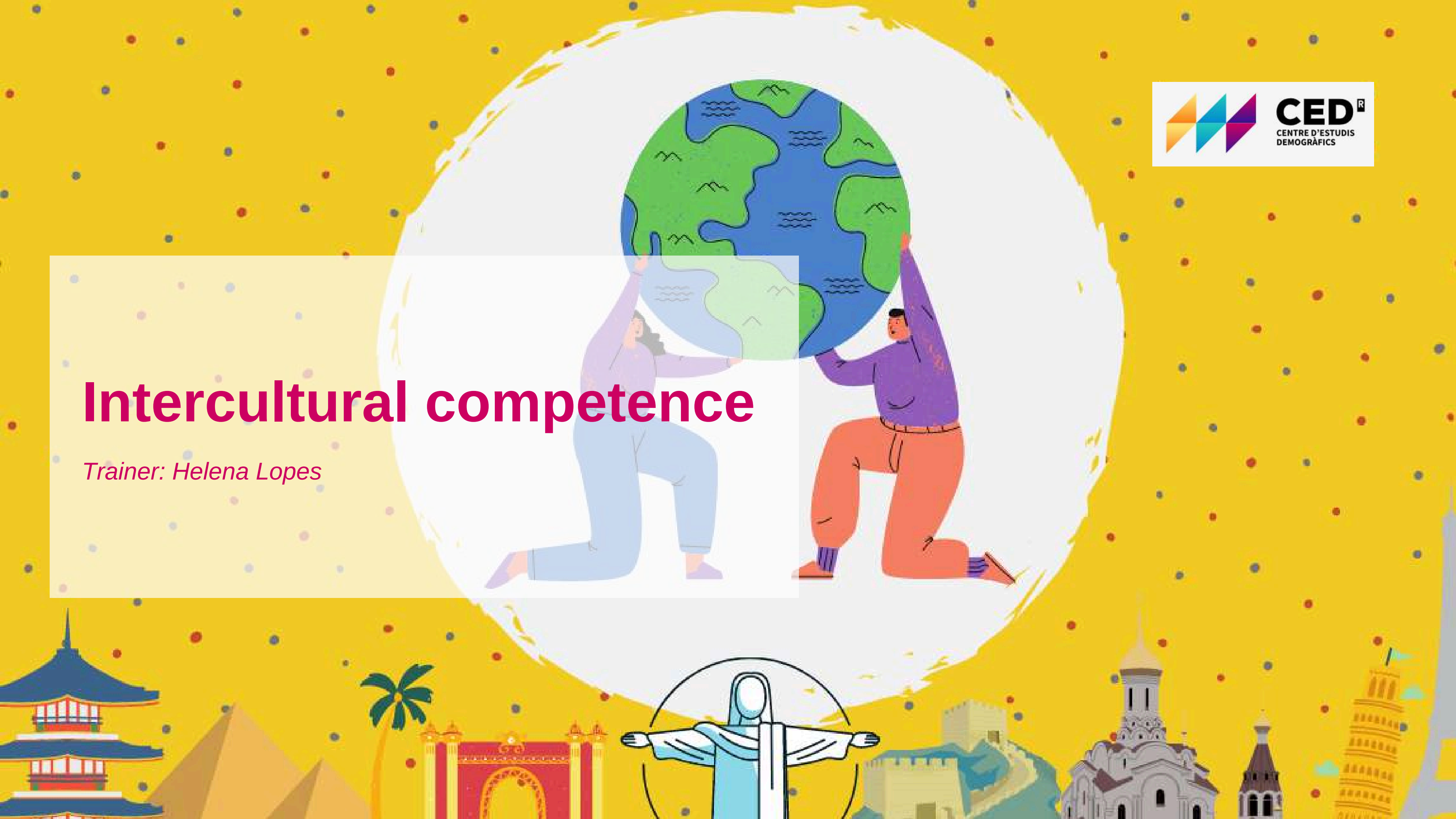
Trainer: Helena Lopes

Agenda

1   Cultural Context and Conflicts

2   Definition of Culture and Interculturality

3   Challenges of Interculturality: privileges and unconscious biases

4   Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Sensitivity

Goals

Understand how cultures affect the way we perceive reality, think and behave.

Raise awareness of cultural differences that impact the work environment.

Reflect on the stages of cultural adaptation.

Discover some important characteristics and key aspects of Intercultural competence.

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Cultural diversity

It refers to the variety and richness of different cultures, traditions, customs, languages, religious beliefs and social practices present in a given environment or group.

Can bring the ability to **adapt, creativity, innovative spirit, dynamism**, new knowledge and experiences, etc.

The barriers vary greatly **depending on the country of origin**. Some nationalities have more difficulties when it comes to accessing **job opportunities**.

The relationship between cultures **can generate conflicts if not managed correctly**. It is necessary to develop our **intercultural competence.**

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Interculturality

Interculturality is, without a doubt, key for inclusion to work, or we can say that the existence of interculturality is the final result of there **being real inclusion.**

Multiculturality

≠

Interculturality

3 basic principles:

Equal presence and participation

Respect for diversity and the value of each culture

Dialogue and positive interaction

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Cultural diversity

In 2019, according to the IOM, 272 million people were international migrants, **3.5% of the world's population**.

13% Migrant population in Spain

16% Migrant population in Catalonia

29% Migrant population in Barcelona (city)

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Cultural conflicts

▶▶ **Miscommunication and misunderstanding**: because of language barriers and different communication styles.

▶▶ **Different work ethics and attitudes**: varying cultural attitudes towards work, time management, and hierarchy.

▶▶ **Resistance to change:** employees may resist new policies or practices that are unfamiliar.

▶▶ **Stereotyping and prejudice**: cultural stereotypes can lead to discrimination, affecting team dynamics and morale.

▶▶ **Integration challenges**: integrating employees from diverse cultural backgrounds can be challenging, affecting team cohesion.

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What is culture?

Beliefs, values, and behaviors that are shared within a group.
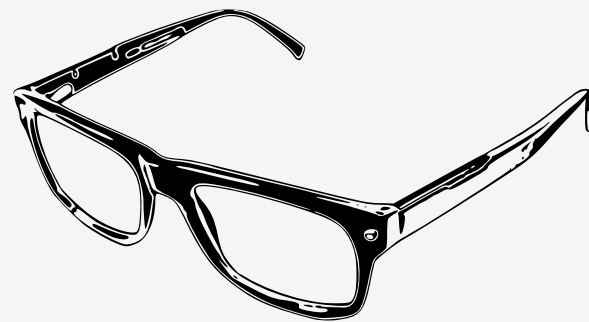
Culture is like the glasses we wear and we see the world through them.
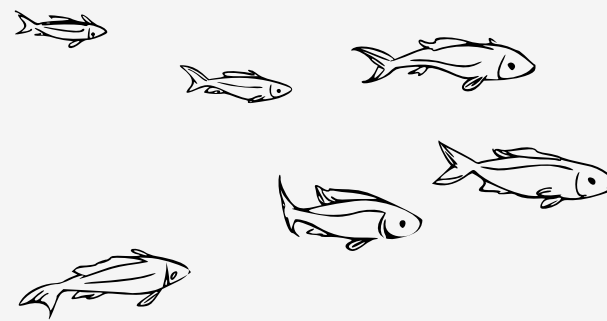
Culture is this thing where we are and we don't realise it, we are only aware of it when we come out of it.

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Cultural diversity at the workplace

What cultural aspects do you think have an impact on the workplace?

Cultural diversity at the workplace

Approach to work

Working hours

Communication styles

Conflict management

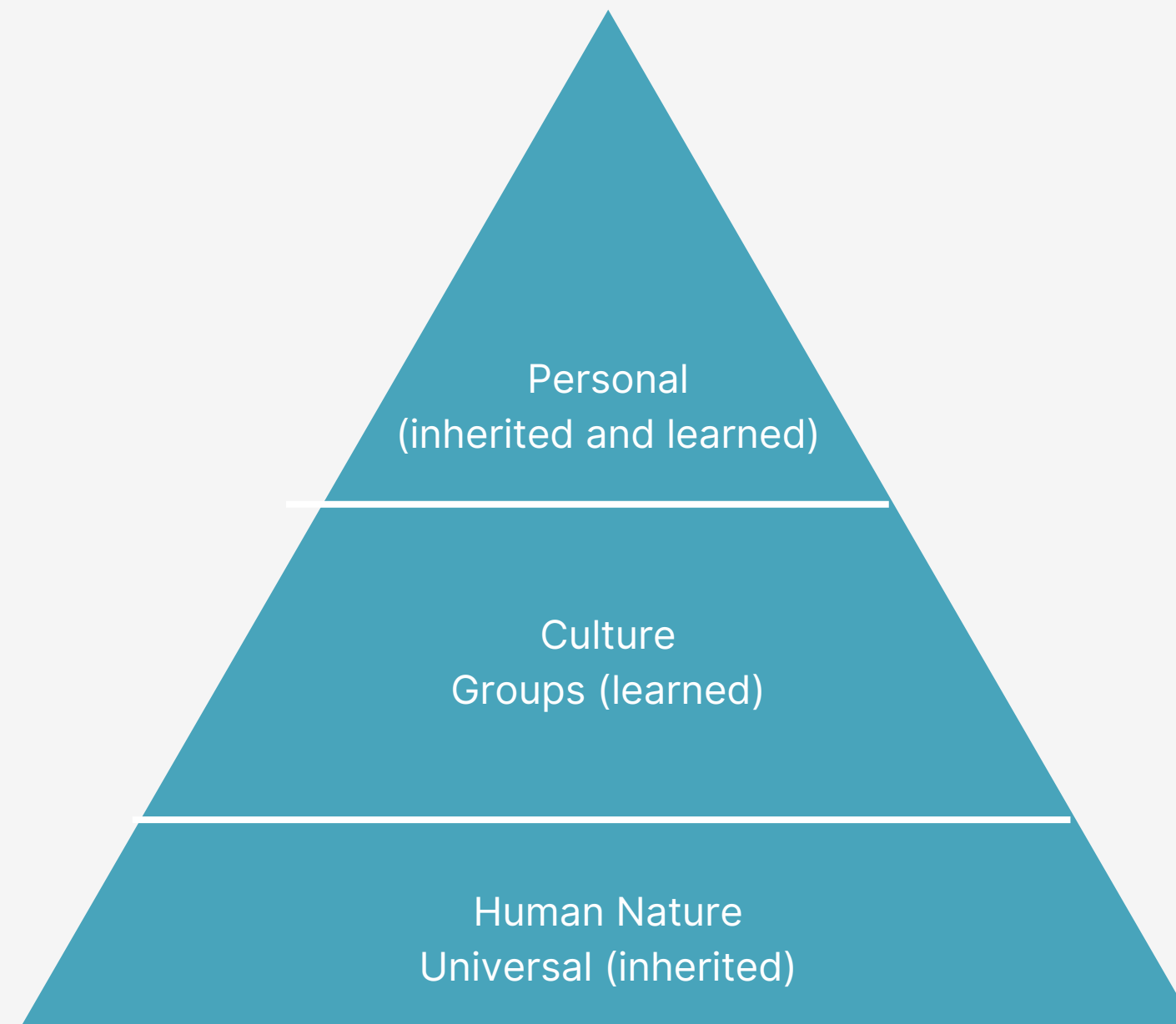Perception of time

Building trust

Decision making

Sense of humor

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How culture impacts in the workplace

- Mime and gestures
- Beliefs (e.g. religious)
- Concepts such as family or friendship
- Values
- Cuisine
- Clothing
- Social etiquette (greetings)
- Work ethic (rules and regulations)

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How culture impacts in the workplace

Personal
(inherited and learned)

Culture
Groups (learned)

Human Nature
Universal (inherited)

Source: "Software of the mind" Hofstede, 1999:36

Personal, Cultural, Universal

Respect older people

Personal, Cultural, Universal

Sleep with the light on

Personal, Cultural, Universal

Feeling bad when stepping on someone's foot

Personal, Cultural, Universal

Celebrate people's birthdays

Why is it complex to include cultural diversity in the work environment?

In a diverse environment, there is no common sense, nothing is obvious or "normal"...

Challenges of cultural diversity

Language barriers

Different value systems and norms

Different communication styles

Privileges and vulnerabilities

Biases, stereotypes and prejudices

Privileges and vulnerabilities

Intersecionality
*The intersection of various oppressions*

Example: a black woman in the workplace

A black woman can face discrimination because of both her gender and her race. A Black woman's experiences in the workplace can differ significantly from those of a White woman or Black man, due to the intersection of these two identities.

Privileges and vulnerabilities

Practical exercise:

- Check the option that most applies to your life path in each aspect.

- Reflect on your learnings by visualizing your privileges.

- Choose three characteristics that have the greatest impact on your life.

- Reflect on how and why these characteristics can open doors or create barriers for you.
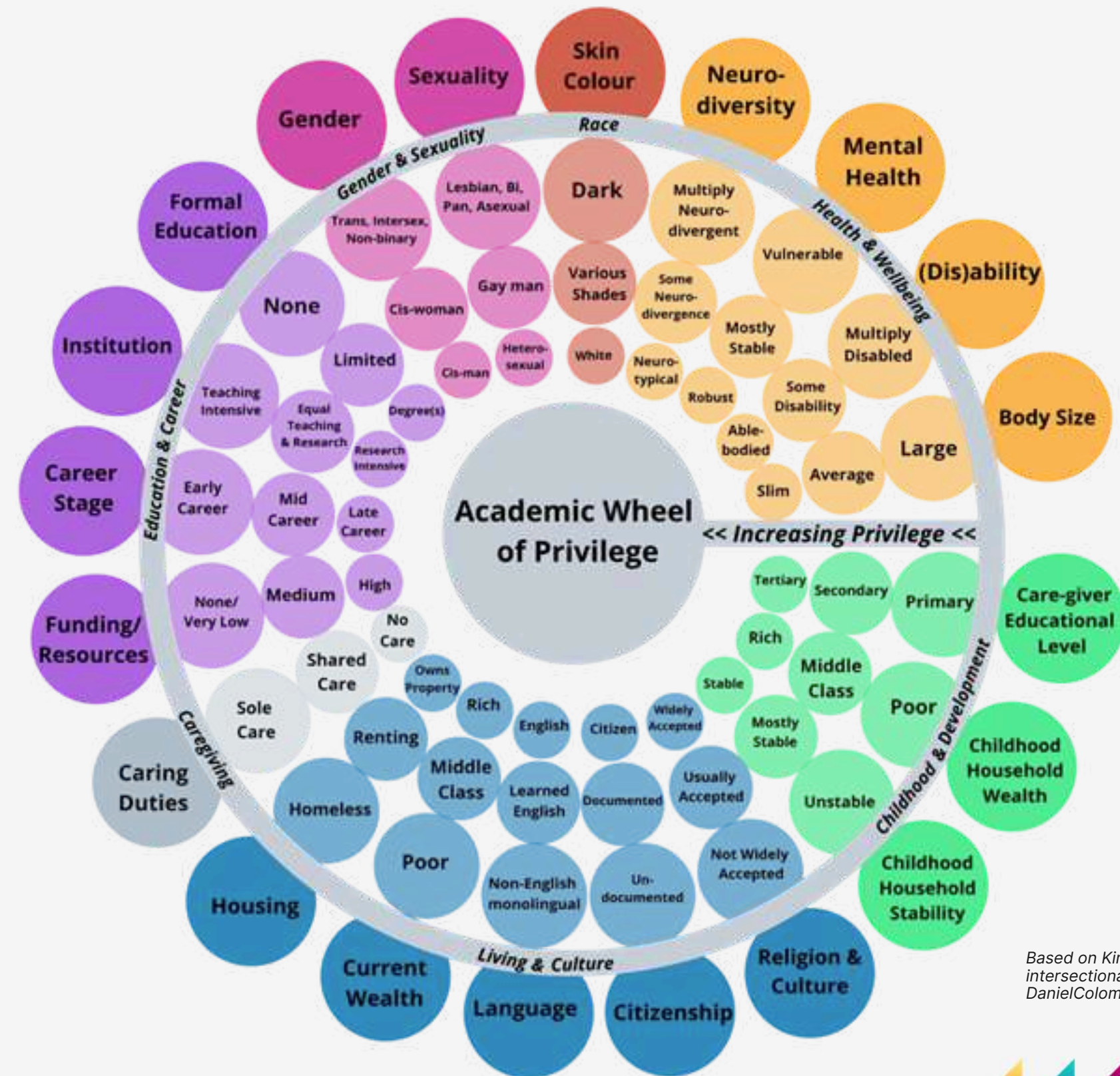
Based on Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1989) and DanielColombo.com

How many triangles are there here?
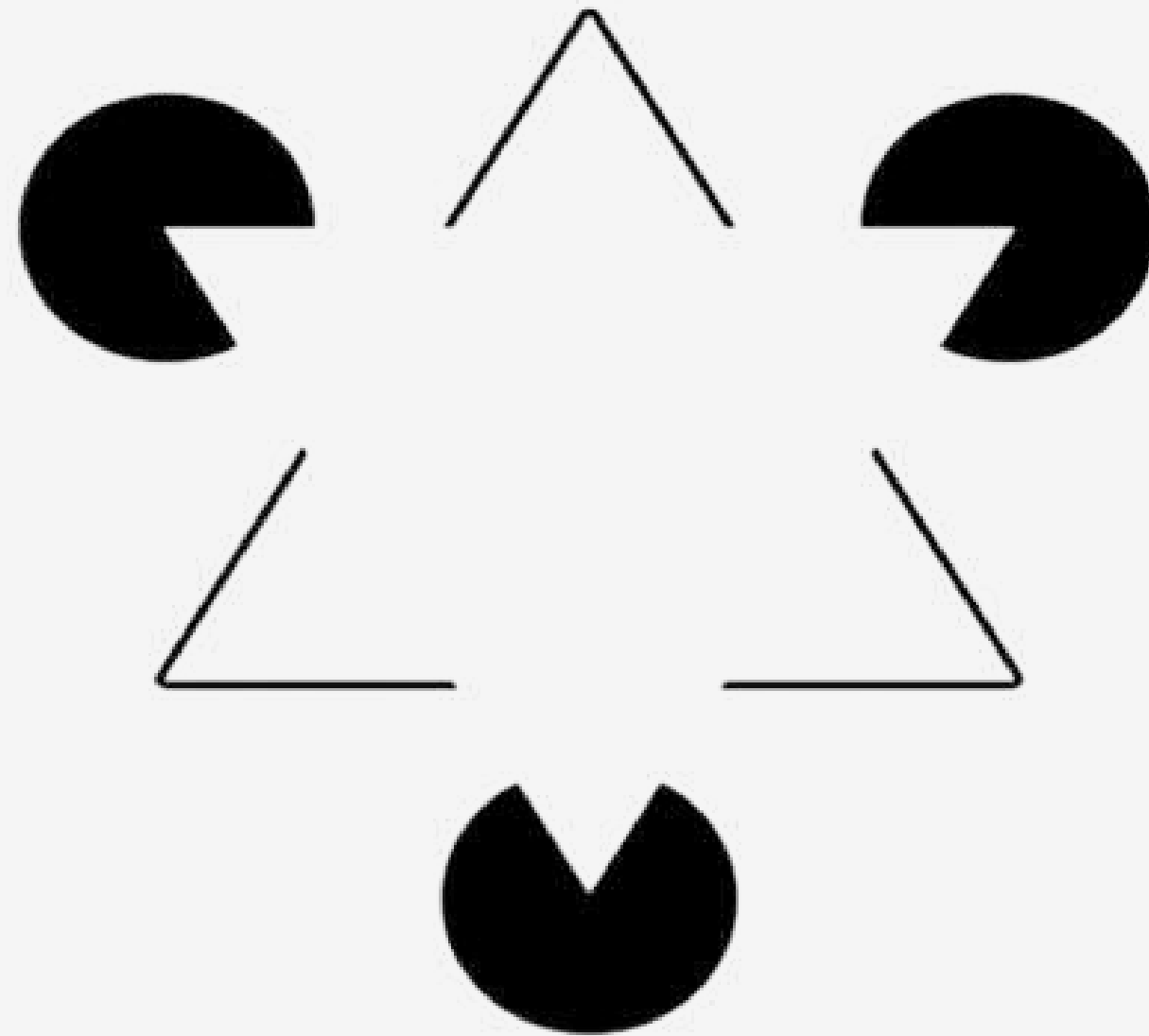
How many triangles are there here?

If you think about the definition of a triangle (three lines meeting at a common point) your answer would be none.

But our **brain is programmed to fill in information it doesn't have**, so you'd probably see 2, 8, or 11.

This is an example of how we don't see things as they really are.

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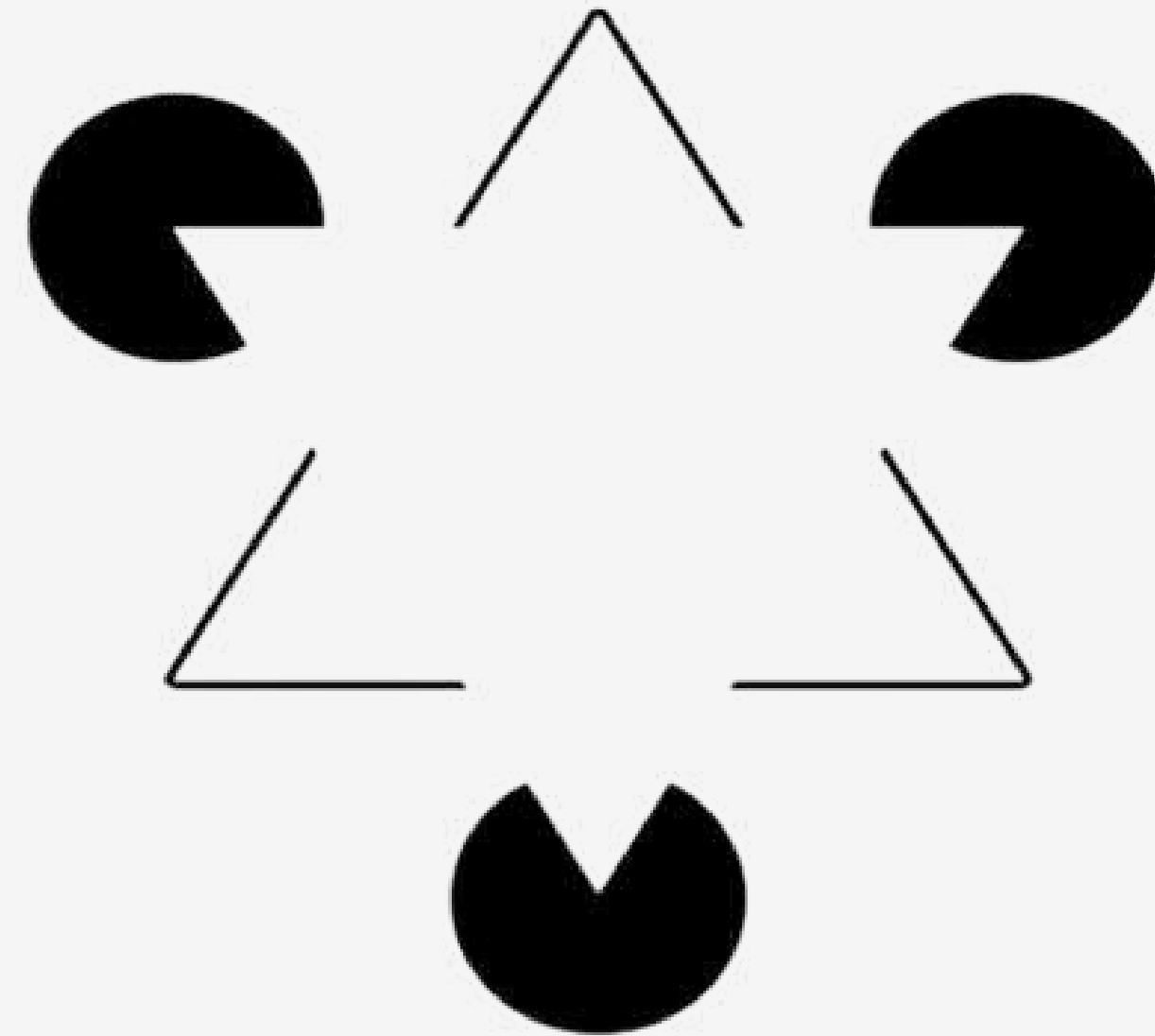
Unconscious biases

- Mental shortcuts
- Simplify information
- Allow us to follow patterns
- Help to act quickly

- Limit our vision
- Create barriers in relationships
- Lead to bad decisions

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Unconscious biases

Bias = Brain programming

Stereotype = Idea

Prejudice = Feeling

Discrimination = Action

Quan Zhou Wu (Sweet and sour gazpacho) - Illustrator and anti-racist activist

Unconscious biases

Brain programmed

Trust what is familiar and reject what is different.

Train our brain to see what is different as familiar.

We are not naturally inclusive

Accepting diversity and including it is a daily, conscious exercise in identifying and managing our biases and prejudices.

We all have biases

It doesn't matter how much we have studied or how diverse our environment is or how much information we have.

Be aware and act

The key is to be aware of this and to actively work to ensure that these biases do not turn into prejudice and discriminatory attitudes.

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Unconscious biases

Affinity bias
We respond better to people who are physically and attitudinally similar to us. Defence mechanism, in prehistoric times danger always came from other tribes.

Overconfidence bias
Believing that others think as we do, that our perceptions are 100% correct.

Confirmation bias
Selective attention, the tendency to seek out and identify information that confirms our existing beliefs and to reject anything that goes against what we already think.

Which of these biases have you experienced in recent weeks? Comment in pairs.

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Unconscious biases
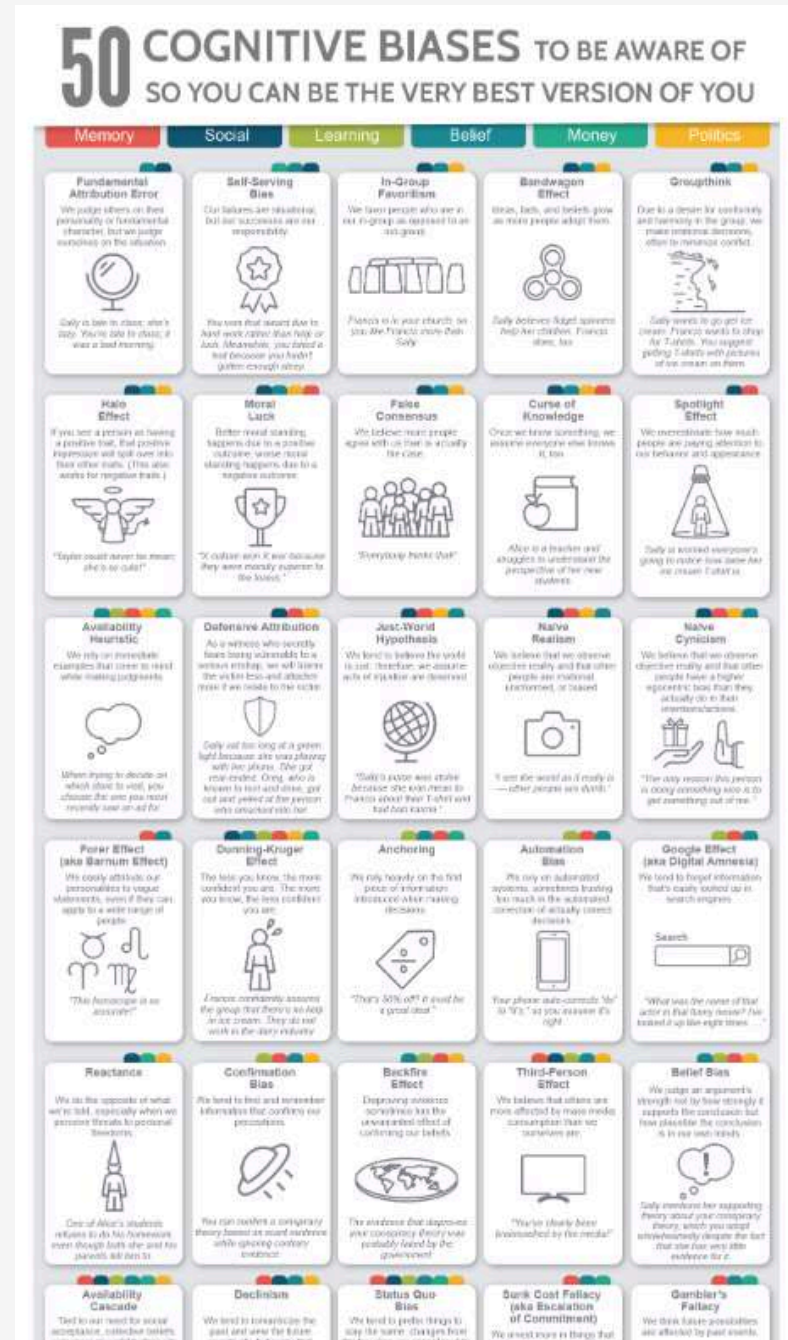
We are not inclusive people by nature.
Accepting diversity and including it is a daily exercise, to identify and manage our biases and prejudices.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural Competence

- Set of **knowledge, attitudes and skills** that allow us to better relate and have efficient and effective collaboration in a diverse environment.

- Being able to **integrate one's own cultural background** with the background of other people.

- Being in a culturally diverse environment does not mean having intercultural competence.

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Intercultural Competence

Knowlegde

Attitudes

Skills

Intercultural Competence

Knowlegde

- **Cultural self-knowledge**
- Understand the impact of culture on our behavior
- **Recognition of cultural differences**
- New lenguages
- Norms from other cultures

Attitudes

- **Respect**
- **Opening**
- **Empathy**
- **Curiosity**
- Kindness
- Flexibility

Skills

- **Identify our biases and prejudices**
- Understand non-verbal language
- **Evaluate and interpret without judgment**
- **Actively listen**
- Adapt
- Manage uncertainty
- Know how to give and receive feedback
- Develop metacommunication

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Story Circles

- Recover the power of telling stories.
- Methodology created in 2020 by Darla K. Deardorff for UNESCO.
- Purpose: **promote intercultural dialogue**, thanks to the strengthening of interaction and understanding across differences.

Story Circles: instructions

Divide yourselves into groups of 4 people and organize the order by birthday.

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- A real, concrete and memorable experience you have had with a person of another culture/ethnicity/religion
- What did you learn about yourself and the other person in that experience?

3 In 30 seconds each person shares what has impact them most about each person's stories.

Very important: do not interrupt and do not ask questions

Intercultural sensitivity

Ethnocentrism
Evaluate other cultures from the perspective of your own culture and consider it superior.

Cultural Relativism
Recognize and respect that each culture has its own norms, values and beliefs.

Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration

Fuente: Bennett, M. J. (1993)

Intercultural sensitivity

Denial

Own differences are not identified. Prejudice is denied.

Need: recognize cultural differences.

Defense

Cultures differ but it is considered a same as superior.

Need: awareness culture and acceptance.

Minimization

Feeling of threat because of what is different, but They accept trivial traits.

Need: to know yourself more and not project on others.

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Intercultural sensitivity

Acceptance

Understanding the complexity of one's own.

Need: to have genuine curiosity, inform and learn, instead of confirming prejudices.

Adaptation
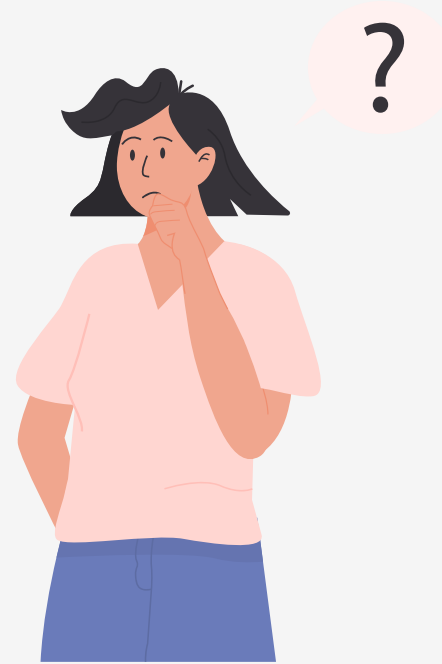
Conscious adjustment and intentional of the behaviors.

Need: expansion of behaviors.

Integration

Analyze everything from different points of view, live in an ambiguity cultural.

Need: transform interculturality into a source of innovation.

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In pairs, reflect on which stage of the process you are currently experiencing

Navigating cultures

Develop an open and curious mindset

Actively listen and observe (don't assume anything)

Adapt your communication style

Recognize and respect cultural differences
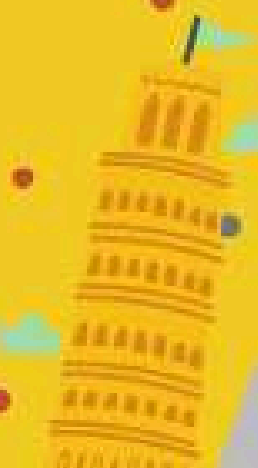
Pre work for next session
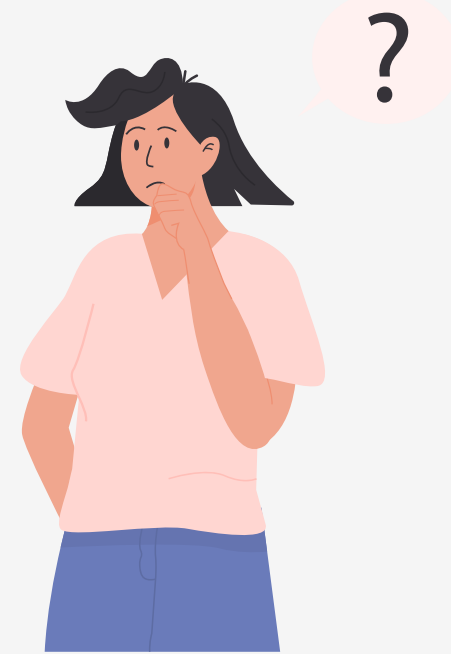
What's Your Cultural Profile?

Take this assessment to understand how well you understand cultural differences within the workplace.

Harvard Business Review / Aug 14, 2014

Intercultural communication

Trainer: Helena Lopes

What do you remember from the last session?

Menti.com
Code: 8401 2614

Navigating cultures

Develop an open and curious mindset

Actively listen and observe (don't assume anything)

Adapt your communication style

Recognize and respect cultural differences

Meaningful conversations about cultural diversity

diversophy®

How to play?

This is a safe space, everything shared is private and confidential.

✓ Form groups of 3 people

✓ Read the card aloud

✓ Each person must share his or her opinion

✓ When you have finished the debate, you can move on to the next card.

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The national or ethnic identity of a foreigner can be identified by their appearance, way of dressing, movements or way of speaking.

True or false?

False. You can make assumptions, but there are too many variables for certainty. Intercultural skills, language learning and different cultural identities can trick you. The best thing is to be curious to know people before assuming or reinforcing stereotypes.

Have you ever had to hide or deny a part of your identity, of who you are, such as changing your name, your appearance or something about your history, to fit into a group?

Diverse teams often struggle, hindering their overall productivity and creativity.

True or False?

diversophy®
Game of Cultural Competence

False. While cultural differences in diverse teams can initially pose communication challenges, they can also be a catalyst for creativity and innovation. Embracing diverse perspectives fosters a richer exchange of ideas, leading to more innovative solutions and enhanced creativity within the team.

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DEMOGRÀFICS

diversophy®
Game of Cultural Competence

Share some aspect of other cultures that you like or that you have incorporated into your identity.
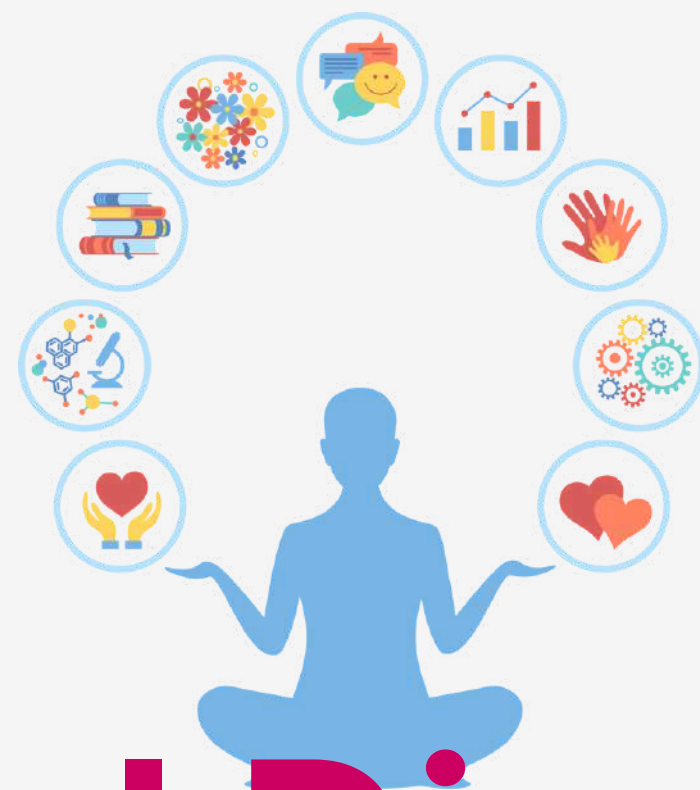
diversophy®
Game of Cultural Competence

More than 80% of cultural differences exist within countries, not between them. Also, each of us is likely to belong to 15 to 20 cultural groups at the same time.

Comment with your group.

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Where do you think these people are from?

1

- Relaxed
- Friendly
- Emotional
- Impulsive

2

- Always in a hurry
- Contained
- Formal
- Methodical

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DEMOGRÀFICS

Where do you think these people are from?

Both from the United States, but described by different people.

- Relaxed
- Friendly
- Emotional
- Impulsive

- Always in a hurry
- Contained
- Formal
- Methodical

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Cultural dimensions

> Cultural dimensions summarize the degree to which cultural groups empirically differ from each other in terms of psychological attributes such as **values, beliefs, self-construals, personality, and behaviors***.

*Smith P.B., Bond M.H. (2020) Cultural Dimensions Theory.

They are **categorizations** of cultures. They serve as a **starting point**, but we must remember that each person is different and it is not about creating or reinforcing stereotypes. The dimensions only make sense in **comparison between different cultures.**

Cultural dimensions

"People in the United States tend to have a direct communication style."
Generalizations are useful.

"The French are arrogant and not friendly to foreigners".
Stereotypes are painful.

It helps to anticipate, organize and make sense of new information and sensations in intercultural situations.

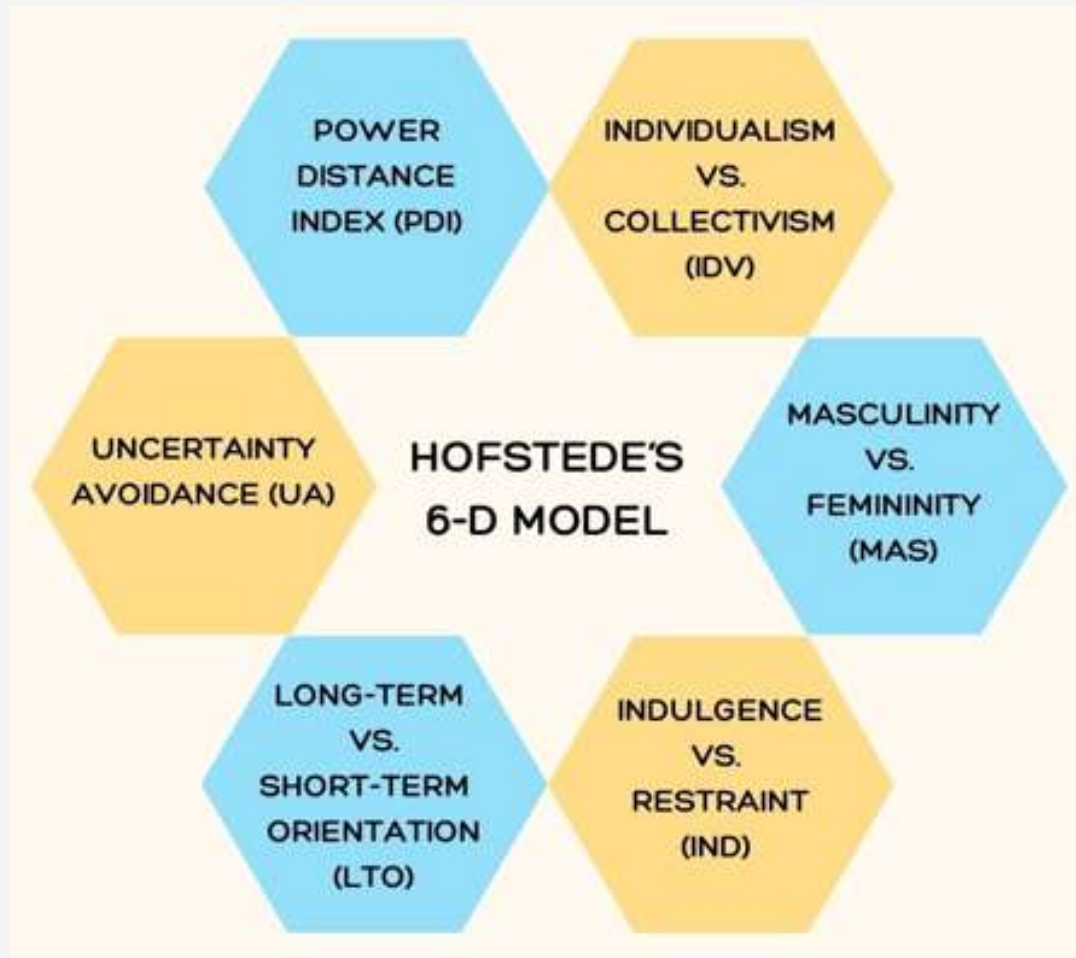It puts people into boxes and categories and limits them to those specific perspectives.

STARTING POINT

FINAL POINT

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Cultural dimensions
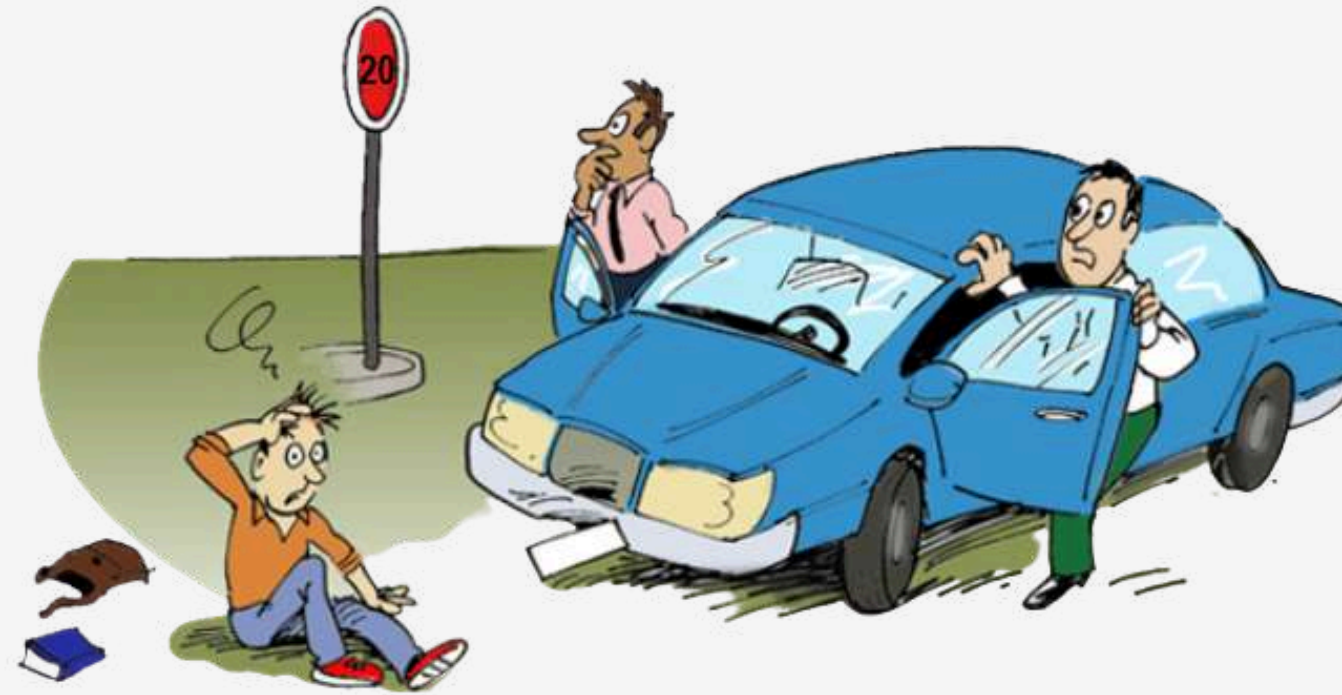

Geert Hofstede

Trompenaars

Erin Meyer

Discuss in pairs your cultural preferences.
What attracts your attention the most?

Rules and norms

You are riding in a car driven by a close friend and he hits a pedestrian. You know he was going at least 35 miles per hour in an area of the city where the maximum speed allowed is 20 miles per hour. There are no witnesses. His lawyer says that if you testify under oath that he was only driving 20 miles per hour, you can avoid serious consequences.

What right does your friend have to expect you to protect him?

Rules and norms

1. My friend has every right to expect me to testify on his behalf.

2. My friend has some right to expect me to testify on his behalf.

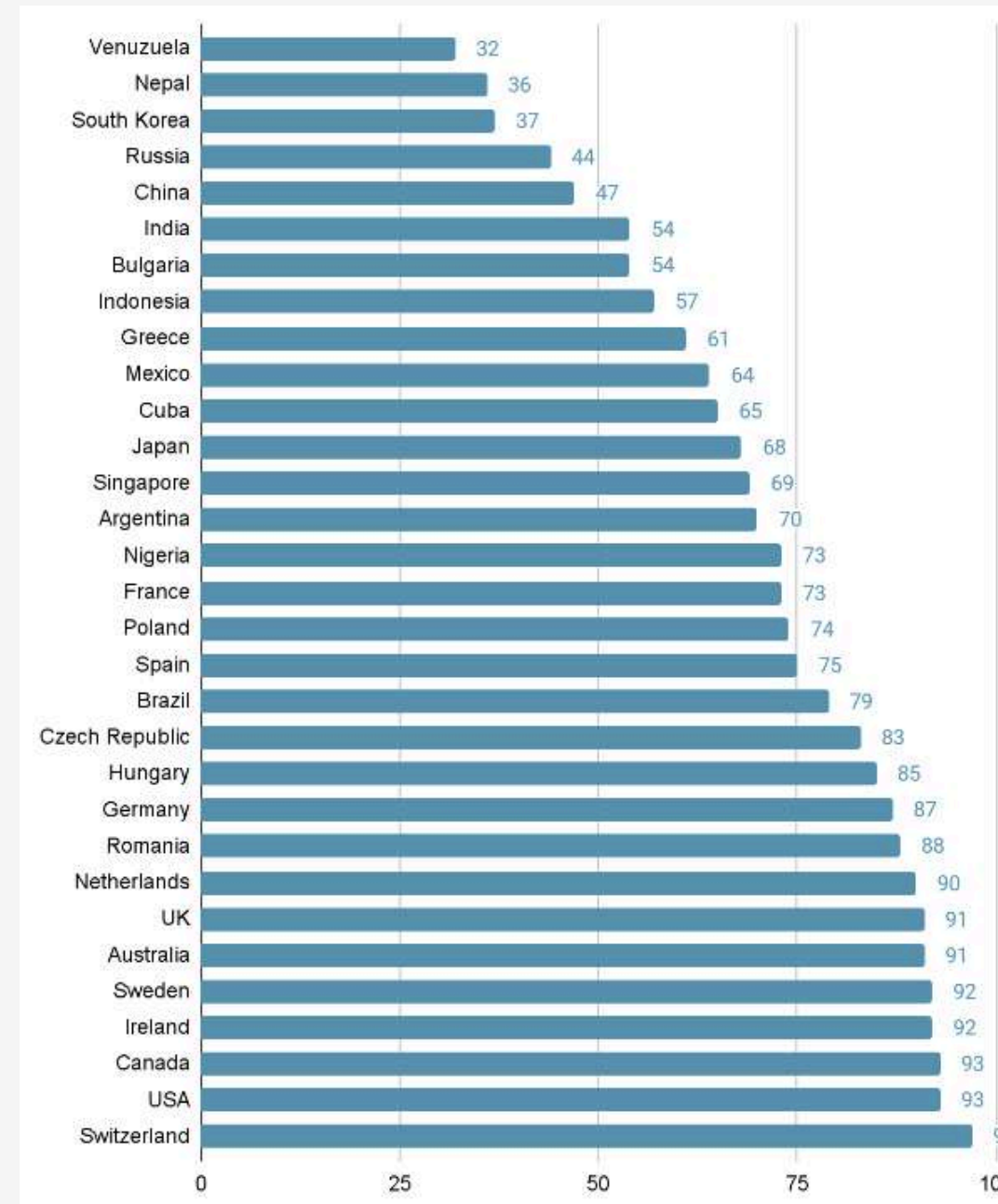3. As a friend, he has no right to expect me to testify on his behalf.

Would you testify on your friend's behalf?

Source: Trompenaars, Fons and Hampden-Turner, Charles (1997). Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business. McGraw Hill; 2nd edition.

Rules and norms

➥ The graph shows the percentage of people who have chosen the option:

"I wouldn't testify on behalf of my friend."

Why do you think the people from Venezuela testified in favor of their friend and the people from Switzerland wouldn't they?

Country	Value
Venuzuela	32
Nepal	36
South Korea	37
Russia	44
China	47
India	54
Bulgaria	54
Indonesia	57
Greece	61
Mexico	64
Cuba	65
Japan	68
Singapore	69
Argentina	70
Nigeria	73
France	73
Poland	74
Spain	75
Brazil	79
Czech Republic	83
Hungary	85
Germany	87
Romania	88
Netherlands	90
UK	91
Australia	91
Sweden	92
Ireland	92
Canada	93
USA	93
Switzerland	97

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Universalism vs Particularism

Universalism

- Attached to the laws, norms and obligations
- Collective obligations take precedence over individual ones
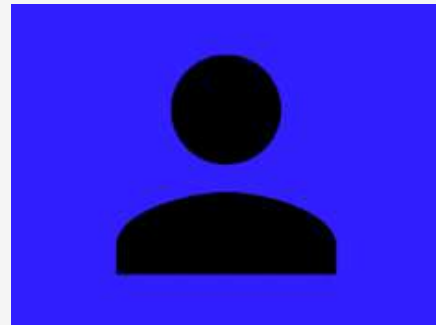- Avoid exceptions

Particularism

- Prioritize autonomy, flexibility and relationships
- Personal obligations are more important than those of society
- Each situation requires a different response

Individualism vs. Collectivism

This dimension is reflected in whether people's self-image is defined in terms of **"I" or "we"** in a culture.

Individualism: preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families.

Collectivism: preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular ingroup to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

https://www.hofstede-insights.com

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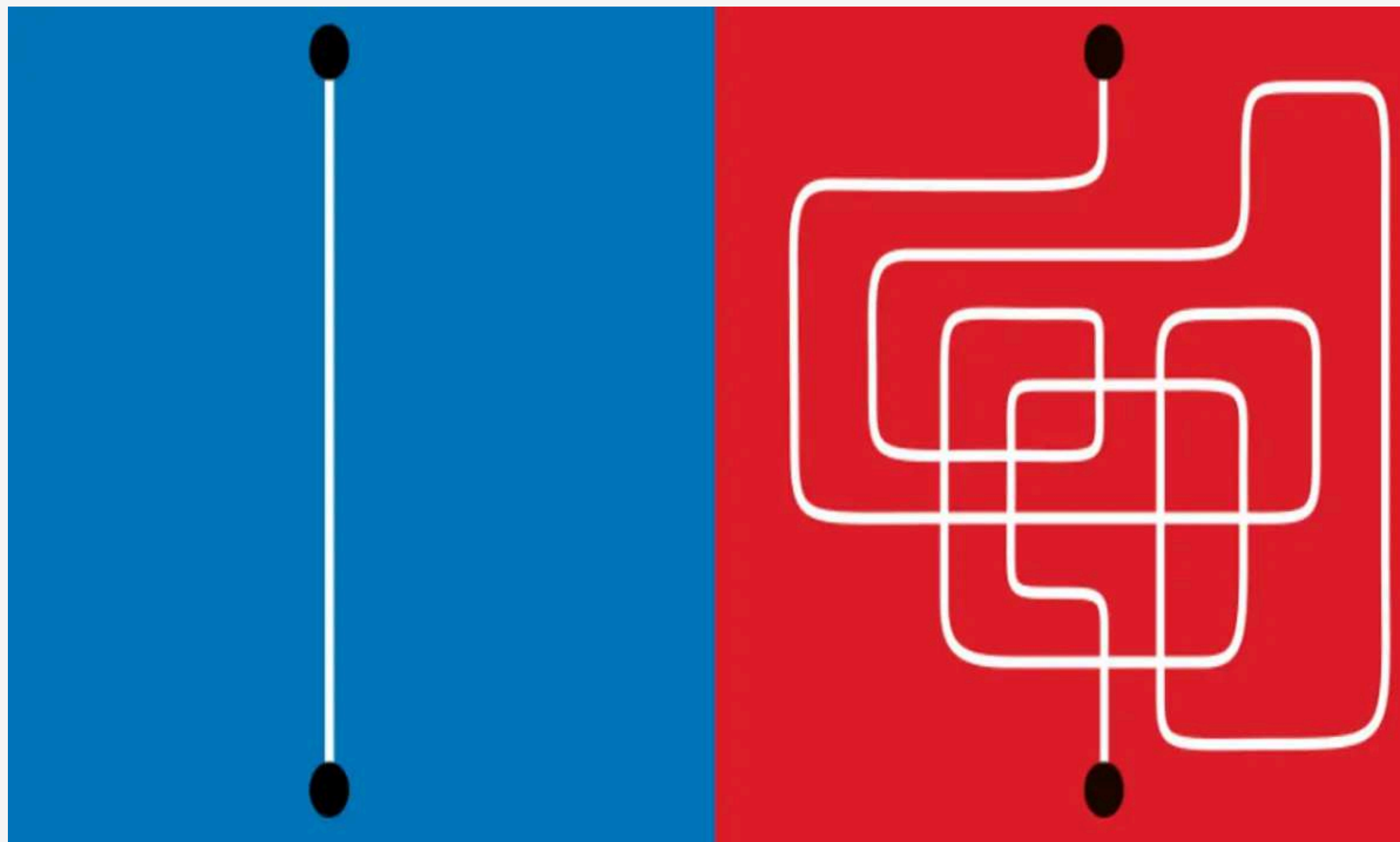
Individualism vs. Collectivism

Indv | Collv

People may sacrifice their happiness or time for the benefit of someone else or for the greater good of a group

☐ ☐

Remote work group comes natural, since people do not need to meet regularly to make progress

☐ ☐

Feedback is given in an direct and frank manner

☐ ☐

Family relationships or friendships are adding value to professional relationships

☐ ☐

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Individualism vs. Collectivism

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Feedback is given in an direct and frankmanner — ☑ ☐

Family relationships or friendships are adding value to professional relationships — ☐ ☑

https://www.hofstede-insights.com

Yang Liu

Direct and indirect communication

Low context cultures:
Direct, precise, simple, explicit, and clear communication.
Written communication.
You say what you think.

High-context cultures:
Sophisticated communication, with nuances and layers.
Greater oral communication.
Important to know between the lines and take into account the context.
Importance of non-verbal communication.

Source: Erin Meyer Culture Map

When entering a new company, do you **prioritize** getting to know people and building relationships or understanding your tasks well and starting to deliver what is necessary?

Build trust

Based on tasks:
Trust is created based on achievements in business relationships and their benefits.
This trust can be easily built and dissolved.

Based on relationships:
Trust is created based on shared personal relationships and experiences.
These cultures believe that a relationship of trust takes time and effort to nurture.

Source: Erin Meyer Culture Map

At a department meeting, the director shares information that you know is wrong. **What would you do in this situation?**

Disagreement

Given to confrontation:
Separate the person from the idea they agree with.
This look does not negatively affect relationships and disagreements.

Avoid confrontation:
Open confrontation can be disruptive to the harmonious structure of the group.
They do not separate the person from the idea; to disagree with the idea is to disagree with the person.

Source: Erin Meyer Culture Map
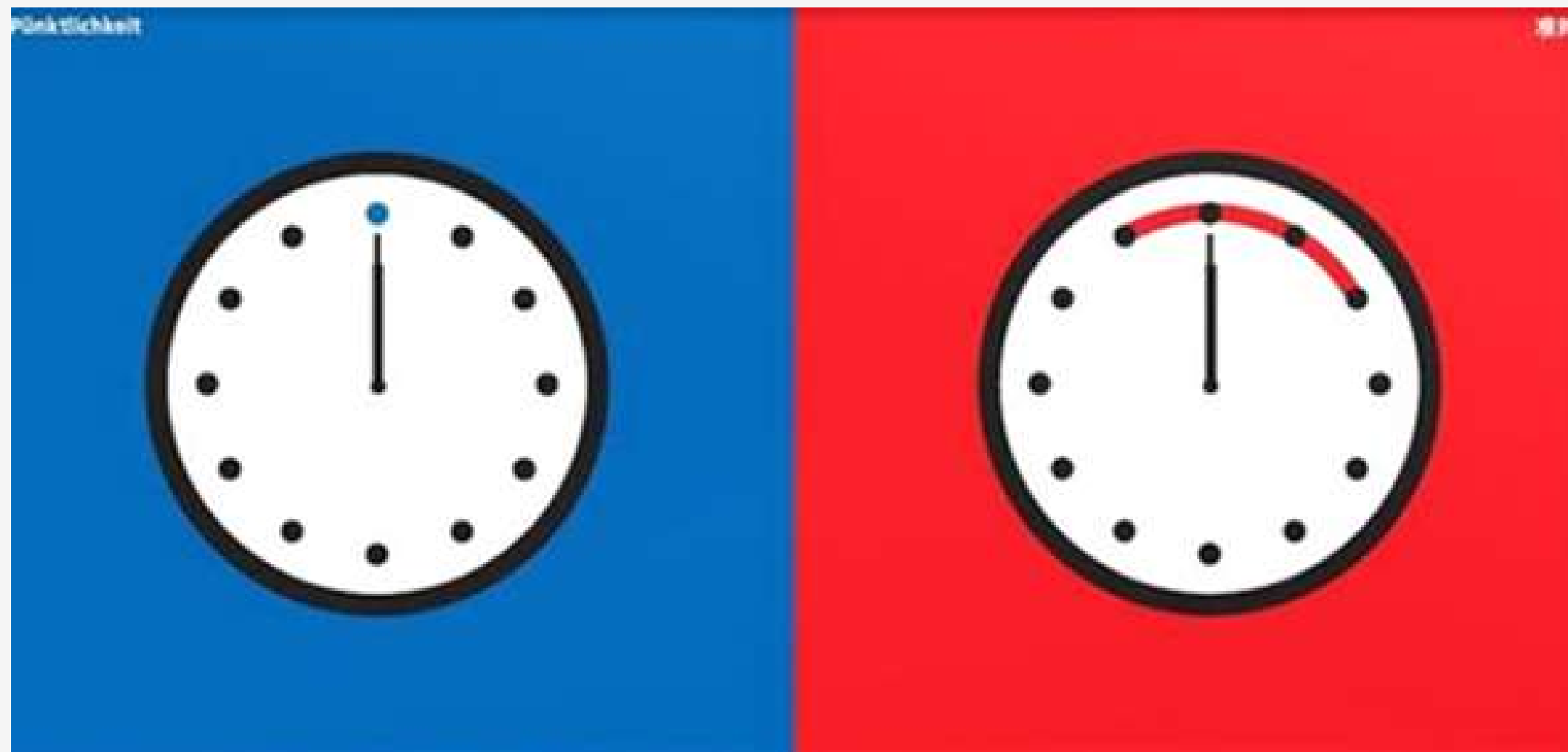
Yang Liu

Time perception

Linear time:
Focus on one task before moving to another.
Meet deadlines.
Consider it disrespectful to start another
task before finishing the previous one.

Flexible time:
Practice multitasking.
Different topics and tasks can be
developed at the same time.
Adaptability and flexibility are normal.

Source: Erin Meyer Culture Map

Tools: country comparison

Country comparison tool

Please select a country in the dropdown menu below to see the values for the 6 dimensions. After a first country has been selected, a second and even a third country can be chosen to be able to see a comparison of...

theculturefactor.com

Story Circles

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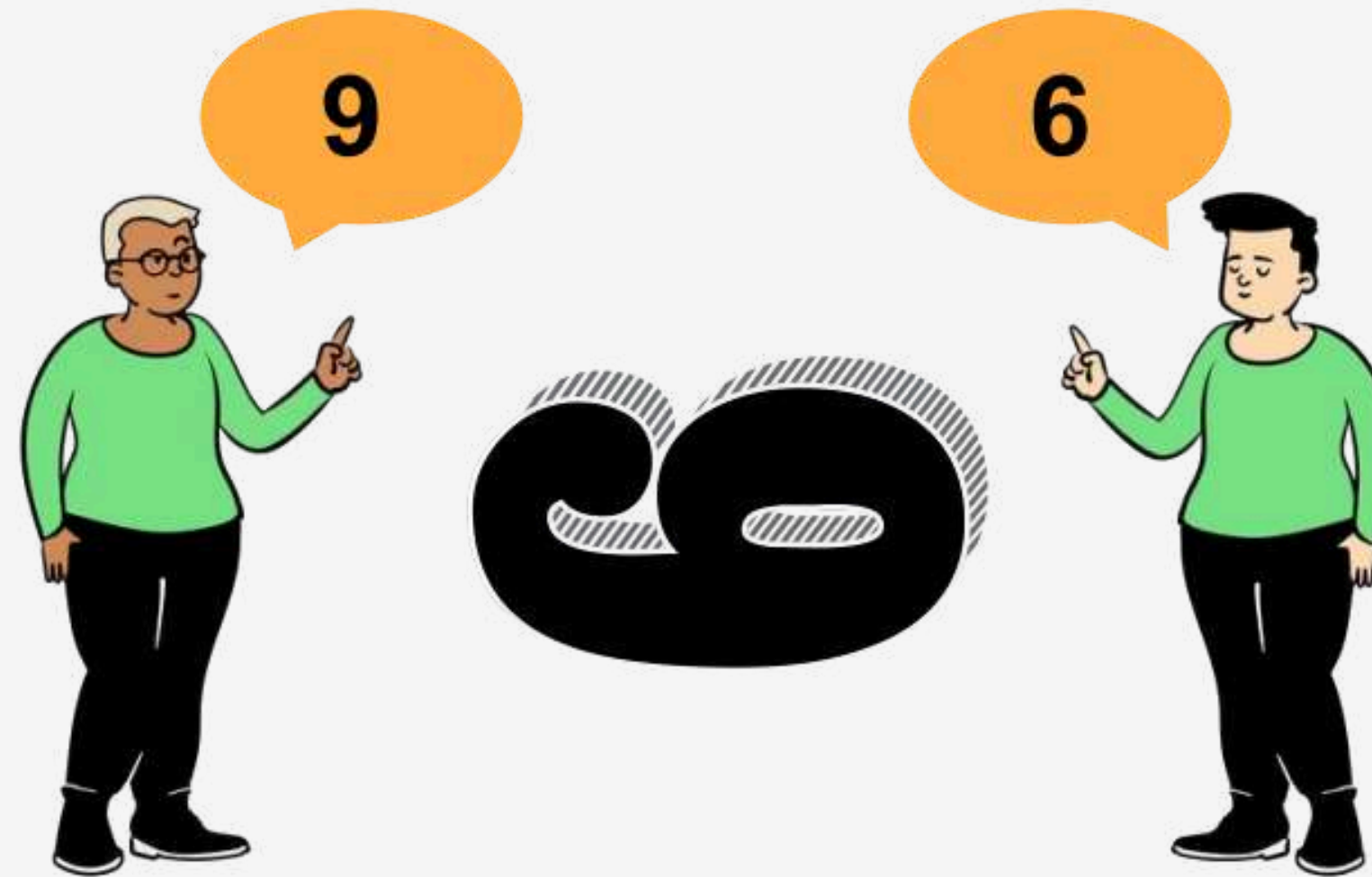
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In 30 seconds each person shares what has impact them most about each person's stories.

📢 Very important: do not interrupt and do not ask questions

By **recognizing and navigating cultural differences**, companies can develop effective cross-cultural strategies and build successful global teams.

Reflection

STOP What will I stop doing	START What will I start doing	CONTINUE What will I continue doing

Menti.com
Code: 1343 7446

Final conclusions

STOP What will I stop doing?	START What will I start doing	CONTINUE What will I continue doing
Work only with people like me	Open myself to the possibility of working with people of different ages, professions, cultures, etc...	Learn more about biases and how to identify them
Think that all people are equal	To pay more attention to my own diversity to be able to recognize that of other people	Train me on issues of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Expect all people to share the same opinions, ways of thinking and working	Encourage open dialogue about diversity and inclusion on my team	Actively listen to my team to promote psychological safety, even when it is difficult for me

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Final comments and conclusions

Thank you!