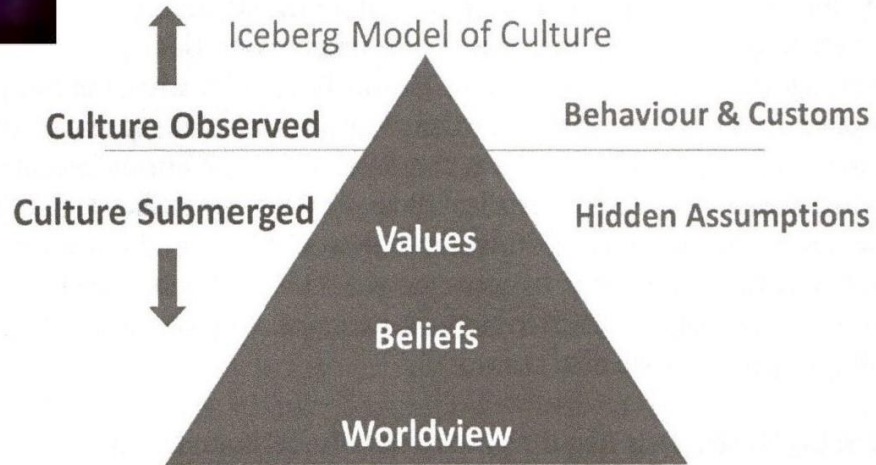




How is Culture is Like an Iceberg?

Employing the D.I.E. framework in our faith communities can be successfully introduced when we think about culture as an iceberg. Dr. Robert Cousins, in his role as director of the Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Centre (TIM Centre) describes culture this way in the book From the Margins to the Centre: the Diaspora Effect (Tyndale, 2018, pgs 46-47)



Someone has said that culture is like an iceberg. We only see the tip, which makes up 10% of our cultural assumptions; the other 90% is

based on our values, beliefs, and worldviews. One way of understanding our hidden assumptions is to reflect on the socialization process that takes place in developing our cultural identity. Lustig comments on this enculturation process:

People are taught about groups to which they do not belong, and they often learn that certain groups should be avoided. This tendency to identify as members of some groups, called in-groups, and to distinguish these in-groups from out-groups is so prevalent in human thinking that it has been described as a universal tendency. (Lustig 2010, 130)

A classic biblical illustration of the in-group mentality, resulting in the refusal to engage in cross-cultural mission, is found in the story of Jonah. God challenged Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach a prophetic word of salvation to the people of that city. Because the people of Nineveh were cultural outsiders and the enemy of Israel, Jonah refused to obey God and took flight in the opposite direction. Jonah's refusal to enter the city of Nineveh was an outright denial that these people were worthy of being welcomed into the divine embrace.

For Jonah, his personal boundary identity was impenetrable, fixated on his own ethnic and cultural purity, by maintaining "in-group" exclusiveness. Rather than risk embracing the stranger, he recoiled and ran, seeking to distance himself from the "other." He was unaware of his own cultural idolatry in making his ethnicity and identity the only one acceptable to receive God's forgiveness and embrace. This judgmental spirit of Jonah towards cultural outsiders can also be seen in the way James and John, the disciples of Jesus, wanted God to destroy their enemies, the Samaritans (Luke 9:54). Because the Samaritans were from the cultural out-group, they were deemed worthy only of God's judgment, not his blessing. In the life and ministry of Jesus, we see a distinct contrast to the oppositional understanding of culture that Jonah, James, and John practiced. In contrast, Jesus practiced radical inclusiveness, embracing the marginalized of society. In this demonstration of missional hospitality, Jesus welcomed the outsiders and invited them to become insiders.