

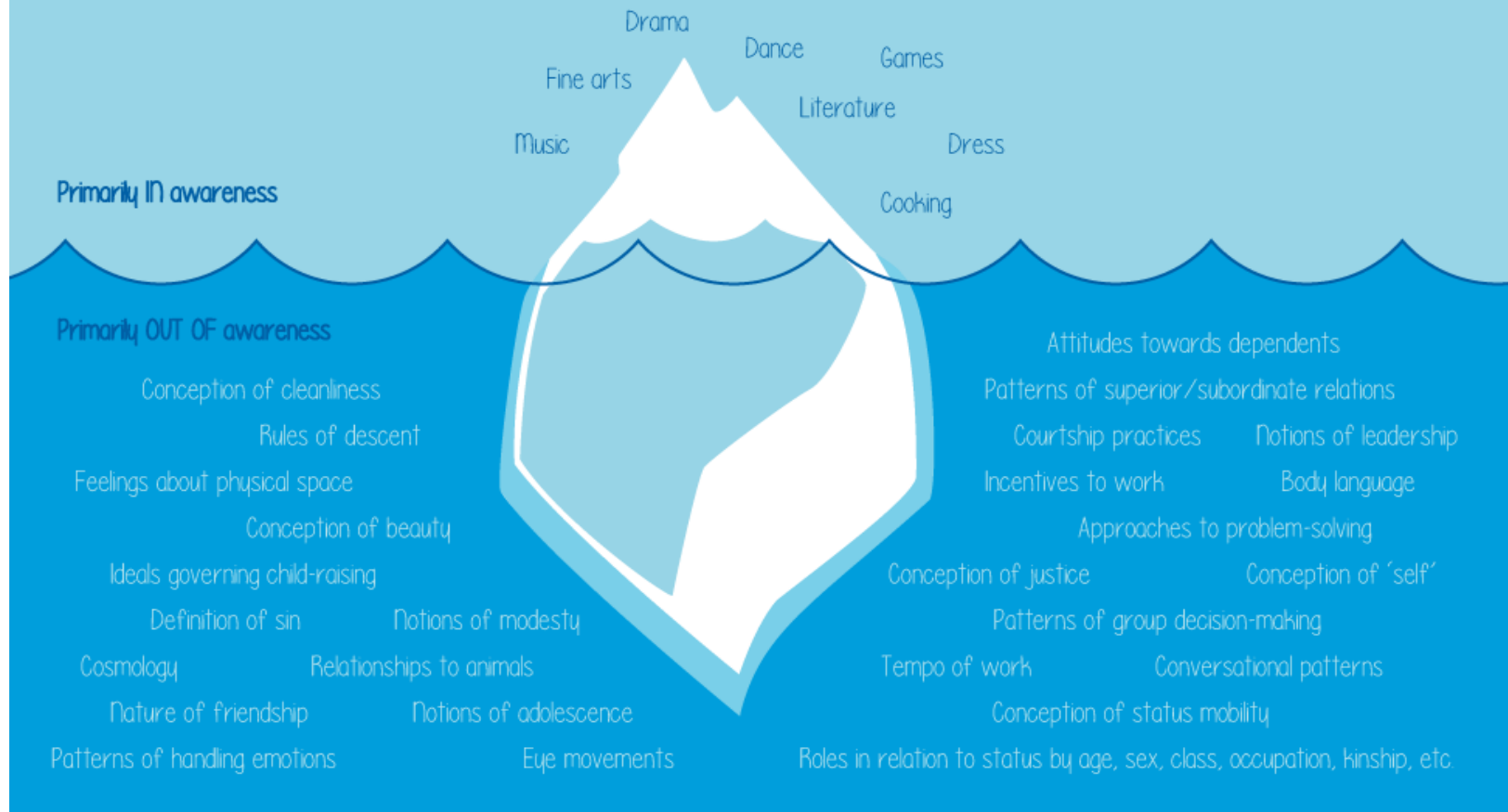


# U.S. Work Culture

**Global Engagement Office**  
**International Students and Scholars**



## The Iceberg Concept of Culture





## American Culture and Silicon Valley

- There is no one “American culture”
- Cultural norms and expectations vary by location, and by work place
- The bay area is one of the most diverse places in the U.S. and has the highest rate of immigration in the U.S.
- Companies in this area typically have global workforce, and this is especially true in most engineering and technology organizations.



# American Values Define Our Work Culture

- ***Independence and Self-Determination***
  - Americans believe in self-improvement, and the power to change their life.
  - Individual contributions, novel ideas are valued
  - Achievement Oriented
  - Competitiveness
- ***All people are “created equal”***
  - Americans do not often show of deference to people in authority.
  - Formal titles, such as "sir" and "madam" are seldom used between adults.
  - It is considered unacceptable to treat people differently based on their identity or personal traits



## American Values Define Our Work Culture

- ***Direct & Assertive Communication***
  - Speak up, express your opinions
  - It's okay to disagree
  - This often comes off as rude
- ***Time is Money***
  - Time is a commodity -- you can waste it the same way you can waste water or food
  - It may reflect poorly if you are late to an agreed upon appointment.
- ***Forward Looking, Always Moving***
  - Change is associated with innovation, progress, improvement.
  - Holding on to traditions can be considered negative and imply old and outdated ways.



## Physical Space, Persistence and Social Interactions

### ● Physical Space

- Smiling
- Firm handshakes
- The American "bubble" (2-3 ft)

### ● Persistence

- Timelines are generally followed
- You do not need to regularly follow-up
- Being too persistent can be considered rude or even scary

### ● Social Interactions

- Idioms
- Informal, Casual
- Surface Level
- Americans generally make friends easily, open to new friends and people



## Q&A

**Please keep questions and comments general in nature (not specific to your situation).**



## Sources, Further Reading

- [https://www.afsusa.org/educators/blog/article/?article\\_id=8261](https://www.afsusa.org/educators/blog/article/?article_id=8261)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9Z83I\\_g4Hw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9Z83I_g4Hw)
- <http://www.internationalstudentguidetotheusa.com/articles/culture.html>
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