

DM2556

Intercultural communication

Lecture 3

Leif Dahlberg CSC/KTH

“D.I.E.”

- Description
- Interpretation
- Evaluation

Culture is defined as a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms and social practices.

Mixed metaphors for the US motto 'E pluribus unum' ('Out of many, one')

Melting pot
Tributaries
Rainbow
Tapestry
Garden salad

Compare the motto of the European Union:
'United in diversity' (http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/motto/index_en.htm)
What metaphors do we use about EU?

Intercultural communication (first definition) (IC 43)

”Intercultural communication is a symbolic interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings.”

Intercultural communication (second definition) (IC 49)

”Intercultural communication occurs when large and important cultural differences create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently.”

Intercultural competence depends on

knowledge,

motivation,

and skills

An iceberg floating in the ocean. The top part is above the water surface, and the bottom part is submerged. The sky is blue with white clouds. The water is a deep blue. The submerged part of the iceberg is a lighter blue color.

'Culture'

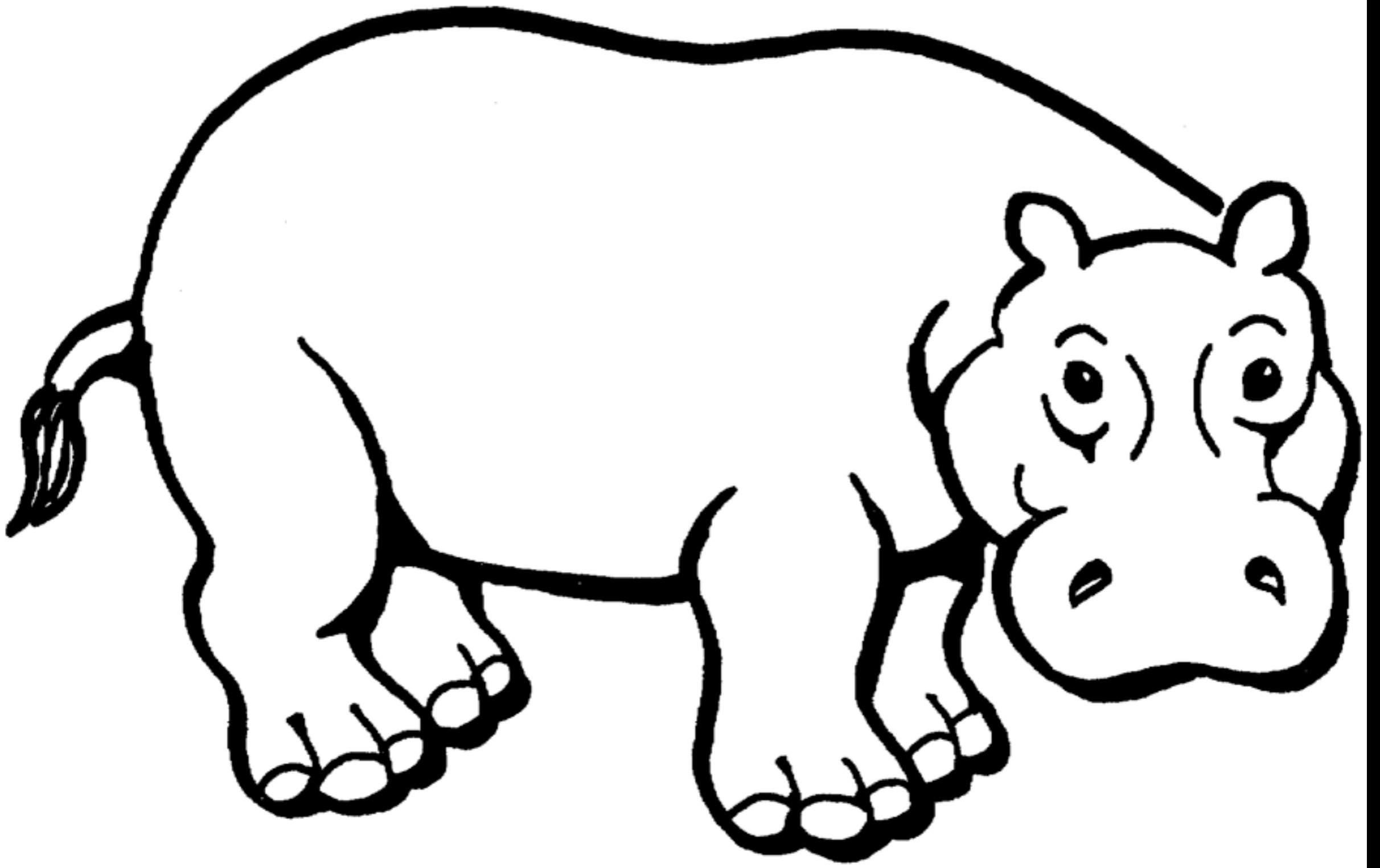
10% above (visible), food, music, tools, clothes, etc

Iceberg analogy

90% below the surface (invisible): core aspects of culture, conventions, deeply held *beliefs, values, norms*

Cultural patterns

= shared patterns



'BASIC'

- Display of respect
- Orientation to knowledge (individuals' experiences shape what they know)
- Empathy
- Interaction management (skill regulating conversations and taking turns)
- Task role behaviour (tasks & problem-solving in groups)
- Relational role behaviour (interpersonal harmony and mediation)
- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Interaction posture (ability to respond to others in descriptive, nonevaluative & nonjudgmental ways)

‘shared interpretations’ = cultural patterns

‘the culture’s collective assumptions about what the world **is**, shared judgments about what it **should be**, widely held expectations about how people **should behave**, and predictable **behaviour patterns** that are commonly shared.’ (IC 78)

shared interpretations / cultural patterns

translate into beliefs, values, norms and social practices, that are primarily 'inside people, in their minds' (and bodies):

'They provide a way of thinking about the world, of orienting oneself in relation to it.' (IC 79)

‘Cultural patterns are not so much consciously taught as unconsciously experienced as a by-product of day-to-day activities.’ (IC 79)

1. **Beliefs** is an idea that people (in general) assume to be true about the world. Typically unnoticed.

Peripheral beliefs refer to personal taste.

2. **Values** involves what a culture holds as good or bad, right or wrong, fair or unfair, beautiful or ugly, clean or dirty, valuable or worthless, kind or cruel (etc.). *Desired* rather than *actual*. **Valence** = positive or negative value. **Intensity** = strength or importance of value.

3. **Norms** are the socially shared expectations of appropriate behaviour. Norms are linked to **beliefs** and **values**.

4. **Social practices** are predictable behaviour patterns that members of a culture typically follow. *Informal*, everyday practices; *formal* practices (rituals, ceremonies etc.)

‘Individuals in a culture generally are socialized in ways consistent with cultural-level tendencies, but some individuals in every culture learn different tendencies.’ (Gudykunst & Lee; quoted in IC 82)

Question of *agency*

Value orientations, or the functions of cultural patterns.

1. People in all cultures face common human problems for which they must find solutions.
2. The range of alternative solutions to a culture's problems is limited.
3. Within a given culture, there will be preferred solutions to these problems.
4. Over time, the preferred solutions shape the culture basic assumptions about beliefs, values, norms and social practices - the cultural patterns.

Five problems:

1. Orientation to activity
2. Relationships of humans to each other
3. Nature of human beings
4. Relationship of humans to the natural world
5. Orientation of humans to time

Orientation

Postulated range of variations

Activity

Being

Being-in-becoming

Doing

Relationships

Linearity

Collaterality

Individualism

Human nature

Evil

Mixture of good and evil

Good

People-nature

Subjugation to nature

Harmony with nature

Mastery over nature

Time

Past

Present

Future

Exercise 1:

Define your own culture's value orientation

Exercise 2:

Weaknesses in the notion of 'cultural patterns'

Activity orientation

define activity:

being - becoming - doing

striving vs. fatalistic

compulsive vs. easygoing

evaluate work:

techniques vs. goals

procedures vs. ideals

regard of work:

an end in itself vs. a means to other ends

separate from play vs. integrated with play

a challenge vs. a burden

problem solving vs. coping with situations

Social relations orientation

relate to others:

as equals vs. hierarchical

informal vs. formal

member of many groups vs. member of few groups

weak group identification vs. strong group identification

roles defines and allocated:

achieved vs. ascribed

gender roles similar vs. gender roles distinct

interpersonal communication:

direct vs. indirect

no intermediaries vs. intermediaries

social reciprocity:

independence - interdependence - dependence

autonomy vs. obligation

Self-relation (orientation)

forming of identity:

by oneself vs. with others

changeability of self:

changeable vs. unchangeable

self-realization stressed vs. self-realization not stressed

motivation for the self:

reliance on self vs. reliance on others

rights vs. duties

value & respect:

young vs. old

vigorous vs. wise

innovative vs. prominent

material attributes vs. spiritual attributes

World orientation

relation to the world:

separate from nature vs. integral part of nature

humans modify nature vs. humans adapt to nature

health natural vs. disease natural

wealth expected vs. poverty expected

what is the world like:

spiritual-physical dichotomy vs. spiritual-physical unity

empirically understood vs. magically understood

technically controlled vs. spiritually controlled

Time orientation

define time:

future - present - past

precisely measurable vs. undifferentiated

linear vs. cyclical

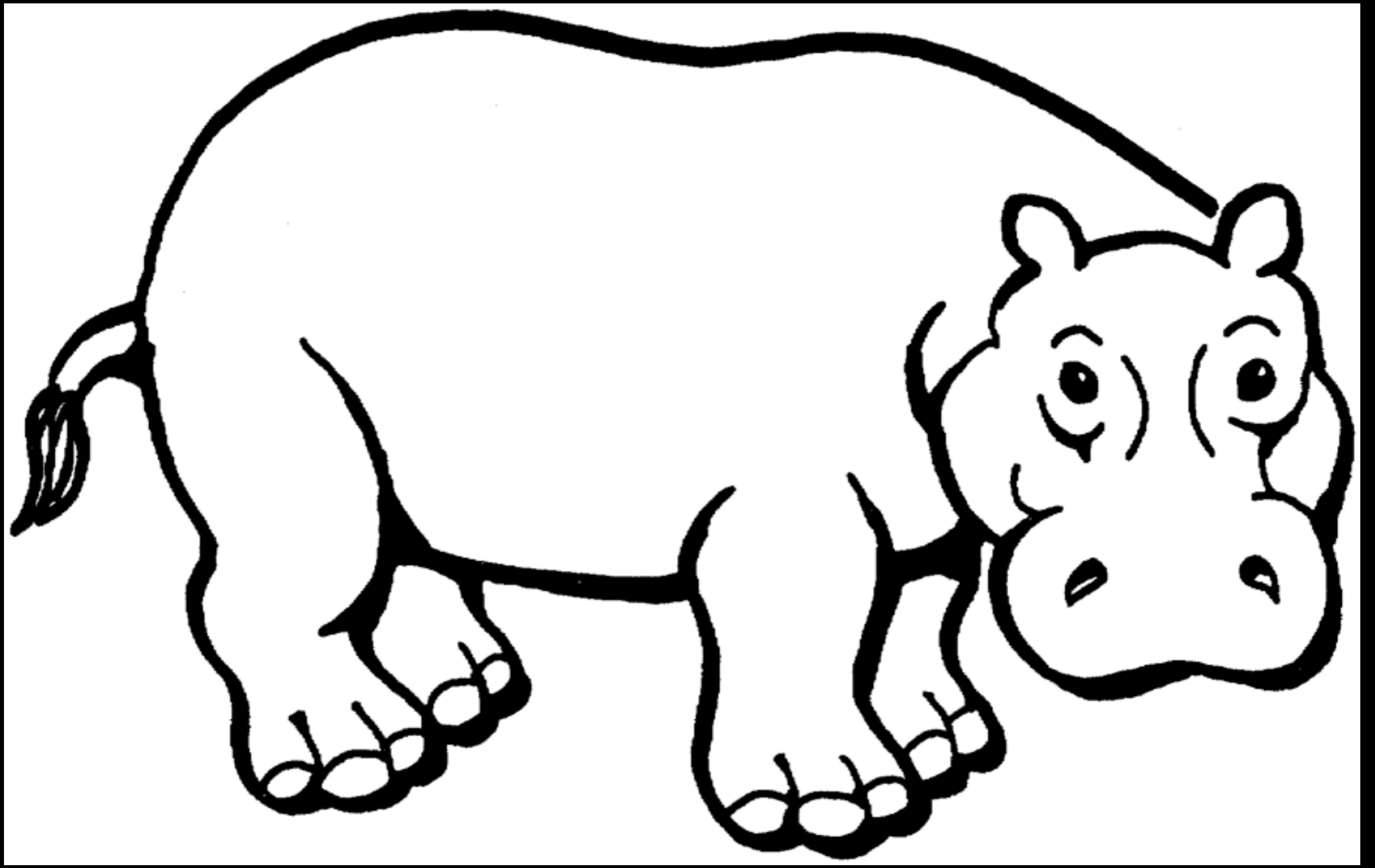
valuation of time:

scarce resource vs. unlimited

fast pace vs. slow pace

‘Being on time has to do with participating in the fulfillment of an activity that is vital to the sustenance of a basic rhythm, rather than with appearing on the scene at, say, “twelve o’clock sharp”. The key is not to be “on time” but “in time”.’

(Daniel & Smitherman; quoted in IC 95)



Four key dimensions:

Macro- & micro-levels

Short- & long term

Stress response & learning (*stress-adaptation-growth model*)

Assimilation & ethnic plurality

Intercultural competence depends on
knowledge, **motivation** and skills

*Cross-cultural adaption as a **process** of **acculturation** and **deculturation**, moving in the direction of **assimilation**.*

Cross-cultural adaptation is viewed essentially as a *communication process* between the individual and the environment

Sensitivity stages

Characteristics

Ethnocentric denial

One's own culture is experienced as **the only real one**. Other cultures are avoided by maintaining psychological and/or physical distance. Here, people are generally disinterested in other cultures.

Ethnocentric defence

One's own culture is experienced as **the only good one**. The world is organized into 'us' and 'them', where we are superior and they are inferior.

Ethnocentric minimization

Elements of one's own worldview are experienced as **universal**. People expect similarities and they may insist on correcting others' behaviour to match their expectations.

Ethnocentric acceptance

One's own culture is experienced as **equal to others**. Acceptance does not have to mean agreement -- cultural difference may be perceived negatively, but the judgment is not ethnocentric. People are curious about and respectful of cultural difference.

Ethnocentric adaptation

The experience of another culture replaces perception and behaviour appropriate to that culture. One's own worldview is expanded to include worldview constructs from others. People may intentionally change their behaviour to communicate more effectively in another culture.

Ethnorelative integration

One's experience of self includes the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews.