Communicating Across Cultures
Introductions

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Goals

● Introduce a framework for considering how culture can influence communication
● Using the framework, explore our personal cultural communication style
● Reflect on challenging situations and relationships where cultural communication styles may have been at play
● Collectively brainstorm ways to flex our cultural communication style
● Build connections among the group
Iceberg MODEL of Culture

EXTERNAL

Food
Music
Language
Holidays
Games
Dress

INTERNAL

Learning Styles
Gender Roles
Religious Beliefs
Values
Importance of Time/Space
Leadership Styles
Etiquette
Notions of Cleanliness
East v. West
Pünktlichkeit

准时
The child
Boss
Dealing with problems
Culture & Communication Styles
Power Gap Definition

- the social distance that separates individuals from those in positions of authority, whether in formal or more informal structure, defined by gender, age, or cultural differences
Power Gap

Low Power Gap

Many, if not all are seen to share power

E.g. Western Europe

High Power Gap

Those of higher position have more power and authority

E.g. - East Asian Countries, Middle Eastern Europe,
Communication Styles

Direct

words are the entirety of the message

Indirect

use of other signals, signs, codes, and 3rd parties to communicate meaning
7-38-55

Elements of Personal Communication

- 7% spoken words
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language

Source: Professor Albert Mehrabian
University of California Los Angeles
Non-verbal Communication
Expression Style

Expressive
excitement, body language, tone of voice; “heart on sleeve”

Restrained
words and emphasis on facts
Trust Building

Task Focused
Task first - business first

Relationship Focused
People first - small talk
Sense of Self

**Individualistic**
rights of the individual are most important

**Collectivistic**
thinking about the collective is important
Low Context
little is taken for granted or assumed by each party; behaviors and beliefs are explicit and defined through language
(e.g. Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Canada, United States)

High Context
the rules of communication are primarily transmitted through the use of contextual elements (body language, a person's status, and tone and are not explicitly
(e.g. Asian countries, most Arab countries, Latin America, most African countries, Italy)
Fresh Off the Boat - Polite Fight
Crazy Rich Asians
Exploring Your Cultural Communication Style
Discussion

1. Discuss what are your preferred styles on each of the spectrums.

2. Share an example of when and how your cultural communication style was in conflict with someone else’s?
   a. In hindsight, what do you think the other person’s cultural communication style might have been?
   b. With this in mind, how might you have communicated differently?

3. Thinking about your role / team / work, which cultural communication style will be important for you to develop? What are resources that could help you develop this style?
Questions?
Resources

“Flex” by Jane Hyun and Audrey S. Lee

UM International Center

“Cultures and Organizations” by Geert Hofstede et al
Additional Resources & Opportunities

● International Center: Education and Outreach for Departments
● Intercultural Leadership Seminar (for students)
● Student Life DEI Workshop Series

Outside of U-M:

● Intercultural Communication Institute
● SIETAR
● NAFSA (online training opportunities)
Thank you!