Intercultural Communication:
Communication between or among people who have different cultural traditions

What's all this concern about culture and diversity?

Definitions

- **Culture** – Learned system of knowledge, behavior, attitudes, beliefs, values and norms that is shared by a group of people.

- **Co-culture** – Culture that exists within a larger cultural context.

Low vs. High Context

- What do I pay attention to?
  - What they said? → **Low context**
  - What they did? → **High context**
  - What is going on around us?

Context is relatively **unimportant** → **Very important**
**Culture and context**

- **Low context**
  - stress explicit communication
  - emphasize verbal, as opposed to nonverbal, messages
  - LC=individualistic

- **High context**
  - better at reading non-verbals
  - speak less and listen more
  - indirect and less explicit
  - conflict avoidant
  - HC=collectivist

**Cultural Elements**

- Material culture - things & ideas
- Social institutions - schools, governments, religious organizations
- Individuals & the universe - system of beliefs
- Aesthetics - music, theater, art, dance
- Communication - verbal and nonverbal communication system

**What kind of “culturation?”**

- **Enculturation** - through communication within a culture, from generation to generation

- **Acculturation** - through communication between/among cultures, through contact
Geert Hofstede
- Research conducted in 1970's
- Interviewed:
  - IBM employees
  - 50 different countries
  - 100,000 completed interviews
    - primarily male
- Still considered one of the most comprehensive studies

Geert Hofstede's ORIGINAL Cultural Dimensions (Values)
- Masculinity (MAS)
  - Masculine ➔ Feminine
- Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)
  - Tolerance of Uncertainty ➔ Avoidance of Uncertainty
- Power Distance Index (PDI)
  - Concentrated Distribution of Power ➔ Decentralized Distribution of Power
- Individualism (IDV)
  - Individual Emphasis ➔ Group Emphasis

Additional Cultural Dimensions (Values)
- Long-Term Orientation (LTO)
  - Short-term ➔ Long-term
    (added in 1991, research by Michael Harris Bond, supported by Hofstede)
- Indulgence versus Restraint (IND)
  - Indulgence ➔ Restraint
    (added in 2010, analysis by Michael Minkov based upon World Values Survey Data, supported by Hofstede in 2011)
Hofstede: Individualism (IDV)

- Individualistic
  - Individual identity prized over group identity
  - Personal goals
  - Direct communication

- Collectivist
  - Group identity is valued over individual desires
  - Emphasis is on fitting in
  - Avoidance of conflict

Hofstede: Power Distance Index (PDI)

- The degree to which some people accept authority and hierarchical organization as being natural

- Low Power Distance
  - More willing to question authority
  - Power limited to roles

- High Power Distance
  - Style is more authoritative

Hofstede: Masculinity (MAS)

- Masculine cultures
  - Values include: work, strength, competition, and assertiveness
  - Stricter sex roles

- Feminine cultures
  - Values include: affection, compassion, nurturance, and interpersonal relationships
  - Nonverbals are more important
Hofstede: Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

- **Low avoidance**
  - change and diversity is welcomed
  - differences are intriguing rather than dangerous
  - examples are Greece, Spain, and Belgium

- **High avoidance**
  - like lots of info about others
  - likes rules and predictability
  - dislikes ambiguity
  - examples include Canada, Jamaica, U.S.

Tolerance for uncertainty vs. Avoidance of Uncertainty

Barriers to Effective Intercultural Communication

- **Ethnocentrism** – the belief that your cultural traditions and assumptions are superior to those of others.
- **Different communication codes** – verbal and nonverbal codes.
- **Stereotyping & prejudice**
- **Assuming similarities** – not everyone thinks & acts like you
- **Assuming differences**
- **Varying conflict norms**

(continued)

More Barriers to Effective Intercultural Communication

- **Cultural imperialism** – promoting, distinguishing, separating, or artificially injecting the culture or language of one nation into another.
- **Cultural homogenization** – we’re all becoming the same
- **Culture shock**
Cultural Competence

- Knowledge
- Motivation
- Skill

How to Develop Knowledge

- Seek information about a culture
- Ask questions & listen attentively
- Develop a “Third Culture”

How to Develop Motivation

- Tolerate ambiguity
- Develop “mindfulness”
- Suspend negative judgments
How to Develop Skill

- Develop flexibility
- Become “Other-Oriented”
- Appropriately adapt your communication to others