

Intercultural Awareness Training for Students

Developed by Derek Murray, CETL

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Context

Approx. 25+ students in ELC 170 (Working with Families and Community). Students come from a variety of backgrounds and have been together throughout the term.

Setting & Supplies

Use a standard classroom with moveable furniture and create an open space for moving around in small groups. Students should have access to an internet-connected device (phone is fine).

Welcome (10 min)

- Share name, ancestry, land acknowledgement and gratitude.
- Remind about role and qualifications.
- **Name Whip activity:** Each person shares their name and one word that starts with the same letter as their first name and describes something about them.

Learning Outcomes (2 min)

By the end of this training session participants will:

- Appreciate the unique experiences of their peers.
- Reflect on the nature of both individual and cultural diversity.
- Consider how cultural characteristics influence values, communication styles, ethical standards, business practices, etc., in different societies.

Icebreaker (18 min)

Conduct **“More than one story”** icebreaker activity:

- **Form a line from oldest to youngest.**
- Make groups of 3 starting from oldest.
- Read instructions on PPT.
- Proceed through **three rounds, about 3 minutes per round.**
 - Hand out card to oldest member of each group. They share story. Repeat x2.
- **Debrief** with the class (stay in groups): What did you learn about the people in your group?
 - Much more to each of us than looks, language, culture, etc. We are all human.
 - Diversity means different things at level of individual and level of culture/society.
 - Take notes on board: What is culture?
 - Emphasize that culture is not a product, but a collective mentality.

Cultural Differences: (10 min)

Conduct **“East Meets West”** activity:

- **Form a line in alphabetical order based on family name.**
- Make groups of 3 starting from closest to A.
- In new groups of 3, participants go to <https://www.slideshare.net/cyrusinchina/east-meets-west-by-yang-liu/> or google “East meets west slideshare” and go to the site.
- Together, review the slides. Consider:
 - What differences surprise or stand out to you?

Materials

- PPT
- W-b markers
- Large sticky notes

PPT: slide 2

PPT: slide 3

W-b markers

PPT: slide 4

- How might these differences influence the way someone from a “Western” culture interacts with someone from an “Eastern” culture
- Provide a few minutes for groups to discuss among themselves
- Ask for representatives to **share some insights** from their conversations.
- **End with quote** from Gert Jan Hofstede: “Intercultural competence requires the ability to participate in the social life of people who live according to **different** unwritten rules.”¹
 - The differences noted in the exercise do not correspond to clearly defined guidelines or rules. They are sometimes clear, sometimes fuzzy. Sometimes they seem to hold true to one member of a society, but not others. **Don’t assume you know.**

PPT: slide 5

Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions (20 min)

Introduce the model. Used data from surveys of business professionals to generate model for mapping cultural attributes. Uses the following six modes of analysis to rate each culture:

PPT: slide 6

1. Individual/Collective – degree of interconnectedness in society
2. Power Distance – acceptance of status difference
3. Masculinity – directness vs. relationality; role rigidity vs. fluidity (label is problematic, but the underlying distinctions say something useful about a particular culture)
4. Uncertainty Avoidance – high = more structure; low = more flexibility
5. Long-Term Orientation – long-term outcomes vs. short term pragmatism
6. Indulgence/Restraint – free gratification vs. suppression and strict norms

These are not dichotomies, **not rules**, and intended to apply to **cultural groups**, not individuals.

Country Comparison -

PPT: slide 7

- **Form a line from tallest to shortest.**
- Make groups of 3 starting from tallest.
- In new groups of 3, participants go to <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/> or google “Hofstede country comparison” and go to the site.
 - Enter names of two countries you would like to compare.
 - Review their scores and analysis and **write a brief summary.**
 - What are key differences and similarities?
 - How might these qualities shape interactions between people in these cultures?
 - Post your summary on the wall.

large sticky notes

Gallery walk and debrief.

- Provide a few minutes to walk around the room and see the other summaries.
- What are strengths and weaknesses of this model?

Summary (10 min)

Remember that there are no easy answers to how to navigate cultural differences.

- Open, aware of own biases, aware that others see the world differently through the lens of their own cultures. Avoid judgement.
- Remember first activity: Above all, listen. Start from a place of humility, respect, and openness.
- Build relationships based on shared humanity.

¹ Gert Jan Hofstede, “The Moral Circle in Intercultural Competence: Trust Across Cultures,” in Darla K. Deardoff, ed., *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2009), 85.