

**Intercultural Communication  
Workshop**

**Presented  
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# Notes on Intercultural Communication

## Individualism Vs. Collectivism

- Attitude of valuing ourselves as separate, and self-reliant
- Emphasizes common interests, cooperation and interdependence

Ranking of Individualism (out of 53 countries):

Canada = 4/5 in the world

Mexico = 32

Source: *Cultures and Organizations*, by G. Hofstede, 1991, London: McGraw-Hill.

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## Culture Shock (CS)

- Trauma you experience when you move into a culture different from your own.
- Often a communication problem causing feelings of loneliness/frustration/helpless.
- Seen in not understanding customs and value systems.

Areas of concern:

- Conveniences, e.g. toilet or running water
- Standards of cleanliness
- Religion/values
- Attitudes toward women and children
- Clothing
- Housing

- Climate
  - Financial problems
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- Perceives a threat to his or her own values and identity.
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## Five Stages of CS

1. Excitement—fascination with new culture, i.e. “honeymoon”
  2. Crisis or disenchantment—awareness of differences, i.e. loss of “honeymoon”
  3. Adjustment phase—accept new culture, i.e. see humour in situations
  4. Adaptation—become more involved with host culture/people, i.e. adopt some customs
  5. Re-entry shock—trauma caused by going home, i.e. can’t relate to old family, friends and customs
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## Manage CS

### 1. Selection Process:

- Empathy
- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Tolerance
- Drive/needs

### 2. Prepare For Host Country:

- Observation, i.e. videos, discussions, lectures
- Emulation, i.e. simulate practices and values or problem solving

### 3. Feedback:

- Discussion
- Reminders of goals
- Recognition

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## Negative Effect

Worker:

- Stress
- Social Alienation
- Family Crisis

Employer:

- Loss of labour
  - Loss of potential profit
  - Unfavourable PR
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## Language

1. HI and Low context Language:

- Hi-context language communicates very little in what is said
- Hi-context cultures emphasize reading between the lines
- Low-context language is very direct and verbal
- Low-context cultures emphasize clarity and directness

2. So what:

- Low context cultures view hi-context communication as a waste of time
- Group-oriented, collectivistic cultures tend to use high-context language

3. Ritual Conversation:

- North Americans—interchanges are superficial
- North Americans—little interest in revealing personal info or emotions

- Latin-Americans—will discuss health and emotions for extended periods
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## Verbal Style

To North Americans, Mexicans seem:

- Over-dramatic and emotional
  - To rise above and embellish facts; eloquence is admired
  - To use diminutives to make the world more intimate
  - To appear less than truthful because they want to keep people happy for the moment, e.g. create answers to seem helpful
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## Cultural Observations

- Men dominate Mexican society.
- Catholic church plays an important role in Mexican society—85% of the population is Roman Catholic.
- Distinguishing individual differences are important in certain instances, e.g. personally, in terms of class.
- Mexican culture emphasizes the importance of family and personal relationships.
- Lunchtime is from 2pm to 4pm and is the main meal of the day (eating with co-workers and colleagues is preferred to brown bag lunches)
- Marigolds used to decorate cemeteries.
- Red flowers used for casting spells.
- Writing a person's name in red has connotations to death
- Holy days are strictly adhered to, e.g. Mother's day and the Day of the Dead.

- Punctuality is not highly regarded, i.e. rude to show up on time.
- Standing with your hands on your hips implies you are angry.
- In some cases, standing with your hands in your pockets is considered rude.
- There are two Mexicos.