How to Talk About Difference:

Leveraging Virtual Space in International Education

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Purpose of this Presentation

- Adobe Presenter
- Context
- The Culture Module and my process

Be thinking about:
- What is relevant to your audience?
- How would you need to modify it to be relevant to your audience?
Adobe add-in to PowerPoint

Record and synch the presentation
Carlson School Context

- International Experience Requirement
- Need for streamlining education abroad orientations
- Culture was missing
Goal of the Culture Module

- Neutral vocabulary to talk about difference
- It had to include something to take away
- For an audience with little or no prior cross-cultural experience
  - But must also to be relevant to students with previous experience
- Need to “sell it”

Why Hofstede?

- One model covers many bases
- Interactive website provides take-away tool
Situating Global Competence

- The International Experience Requirement
- Carlson Global Institute’s role
“Wherever you are from and whatever your experience in other countries or with other cultures, this information will help start or deepen your understanding of difference and provide you with some vocabulary to use when talking about cultural differences.”

Defining Global Competence

“Wherever you are from and whatever your experience in other countries or with other cultures, this information will help start or deepen your understanding of difference and provide you with some vocabulary to use when talking about cultural differences.”

UMN definition
Understanding culture

What is Culture?

“Culture refers to values, beliefs, attitudes, preferences, customs, learning styles, communication styles, history... the sum total of what a particular group of people has created together, share, and transmit.”

R. Michael Paige
University of Minnesota

Inside Jokes and Icebergs

The Cultural Iceberg

- 10 % Easy to see
  - customs
  - mores
  - courtesies

- 90 % Difficult to see
  - values
  - priorities
  - assumptions

http://www.cross-culture.de/intercultural_coaching.htm
Introducing Hofstede

- Importance of neutral language
- Establishing credibility and relevance

Comparing Cultures

- Neutral language
  - Words like “strange” or “awesome” evaluate a difference rather than describe it

- Geert Hofstede
  - Dimensions of culture
    - They “do not ‘exist’ (in the literal sense); they are tools for analysis which may or may not clarify a situation”

- Dimensions compare without evaluating difference
Introducing the Dimensions

Six Dimensions of Culture

Power Distance
How societies view inequalities between people:
- High power distance societies have defined hierarchies and inequalities between people are accepted without justification
- Low power distance societies view people as generally equal and demand justification for inequalities of power

Individualism vs. Collectivism
Is your self-image defined as “I” or “we”?
- Individualistic societies are defined by loose-knit social frameworks; the ultimate focus of a person’s life is “I” and success of “I” comes before that of the group
- Collectivist societies are defined by a tightly-knit social framework; loyalty to in-groups is of utmost importance, even at the cost of the individual

Masculinity vs. Femininity
Performance or Consensus-Oriented?
- Performance-Oriented (Masculine) societies value being assertive, tough, and focused on material success
- Consensus-Oriented (Feminine) values modesty, tenderness, and concern for the quality of life

Uncertainty Avoidance
A society’s comfort with uncertainty and ambiguity:
- Strong uncertainty avoidance countries maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant of rule breaking and unorthodox ideas
- Weak uncertainty avoidance countries maintain a more relaxed attitude toward unstructured situations and new ideas
Then What?

- Hofstede’s website
Questions??

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