# MY SELF DISCOVERY

Week 3-Cross-Cultural Intelligence

## Why is Cross-Cultural Intelligence Important?

"The concept of cross-cultural intelligence grew in a response to globalization.  Today, basically all firms regardless of size, have the capability to be global.  As well, the diversity of the employees of every organization has never been greater.  Tomorrow's employee, even more than today will have to learn to compete, and work in a global world." (Thomas & Inkson, 2004)

As Ontario's cultural diversity continues to grow, employers are seeking culturally agile professionals who are able to successfully adapt and effectively manage workplace challenges that arise from cross-cultural differences within both internal and external stakeholder groups.  Cultural agility has been identified as key skill for the 21st Century and those who can effectively articulate and demonstrate this skill in their resume or during the interview process will have a competitive advantage in the job market.

## What is Culture?

Culture is often compared to the iceberg analogy – like an iceberg, only ten percent of culture is visible to the eye and remaining ninety percent is below the surface and invisible. As a result of this, often the depth of our understanding of different cultures remains at a surface or very superficial level. To truly understand culture, we must dive below the surface and begin to explore the invisible aspects such as values and beliefs towards time, gender roles, leaderships, power distance, communication styles, tolerance to change, importance of work, individualism, and collectivism.

Everyone has "culture" or a cultural background that often guides our thoughts, feelings, words, and behaviors.  At an unconscious level, our cultural beliefs directly impact every communication and interaction that we have with other people.  Hence, the reason it is so important to begin understanding ourselves and how we engage with cultures that are very different from our own.

As individuals, we all have groups that we belong to or identify with. Culture is the groups' shared common understanding of various norms, values, beliefs and traditions. Often when hear the word culture, we relate it to a specific nationality or ethnic group. However, there are many cultural groups that people belong to including:  age, sexuality, class, physical ability, interests, occupations, gender, religion and language.

# What are Cultural Dimensions?

Geert Hofstede was a Dutch social psychologist and former IBM employee. Hofstede carried out research amongst 100,000 employees working around the world for IBM attempting to categorize cultures of different nationalities working at IBM."

It is important to remember, that Hofstede's cultural scales transcend beyond nationality and are found at a corporate and individual level – individual personality will always supersede, as our own values can be very different from that of our family, community and country.

In his book, "Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures," Brooks Peterson, has developed a cultural framework based on following five cultural scales:

## Hierarchy vs Equality

A style that is based on "**hierarchy**" means people prefer: to take direction from those above; have strong limitations about appropriate behavior for certain roles; respect and not challenge the opinions of those who are in power because of their status and their position; enforce regulations and guidelines; and expect men and women to behave differently and to be treated differently

A style based on "**equality**" means people prefer: to be self directed; have flexibility in the roles they play in the company or on a team; have the freedom to challenge the opinion of those in power; make exceptions, be flexible, and maybe bend the rules; and treat men and women in basically the same way.

## Direct vs Indirect Communication Style

A "**direct**" communication style means people prefer to: be more direct in speaking and be less concerned about how something is said; openly confront issues and difficulties; communicate concerns straight-forwardly; engage in conflict when necessary; express views or opinions in a frank manner; and say things clearly, not leaving much open to interpretation.

An "**indirect**" communication style means people prefer to: focus not on what is being said but how it is being said; discreetly avoid difficult or contentious issues; express concerns tactfully; avoid conflict if at all possible; express views or opinions diplomatically; and count on the listener to interpret the meaning.

## Individual vs Group

An "**individual**" style means people prefer to:  take individual initiative; use personal guidelines in personal situations; focus on themselves; judge people based on individual traits; make decisions individually; put individuals before the team; be nonconformists when necessary; move in and out of groups as needed or desired.

A "**group**" style means people who prefer to:  act cooperatively and establish group goals; standardized guidelines; make loyalty to friends a high priority; determine their identify to group affiliation; make decisions as a group; put the team or group before the individual; conform to social norms; and keep group memberships for life

## Task vs Relationship

A "**task**" style means people prefer to:  define people based on what they do; move straight to business – relationships come later; keep most relationships with co-workers impersonal; sacrifice leisure time and time with family in favor of work; get to know co-workers and colleagues quickly but usually superficially; use largely impersonal selection criteria in hiring; and allow work to overlap with personal time.

A "**relationship**" style means people prefer to:  define people based on who they are; establish comfortable relationships and a sense of mutual trust before getting down to business; have personal relationships with co-workers; sacrifice work in favor of leisure time and time with family; get to know co-workers and colleagues slowly and in depth; use largely personal selection criteria when hiring; and, not allow work to impinge on personal life.

## Risk vs Caution

A "**risk**" style means people prefer to:  make decisions quickly with little information; focus on present and future; be less cautious – in a "ready, fire, aim" way; change quickly without fear of risks; try new and innovative ways of doing things; use new methods for solving problems; have fewer rules, regulations, guidelines, and directions; be comfortable changing plans at the last minute.

A "**caution**" style means people prefer to:  collect a considerable amount of information before making a decision; focus on the past; be more cautious – in a "ready, aim, aim, fire" way; change slowly and avoid risks; want more rules, regulations, guidelines, and directions; refer to past precedents of what works and what doesn't; stick to proven methods for solving problems; and not change plans at the last minute.
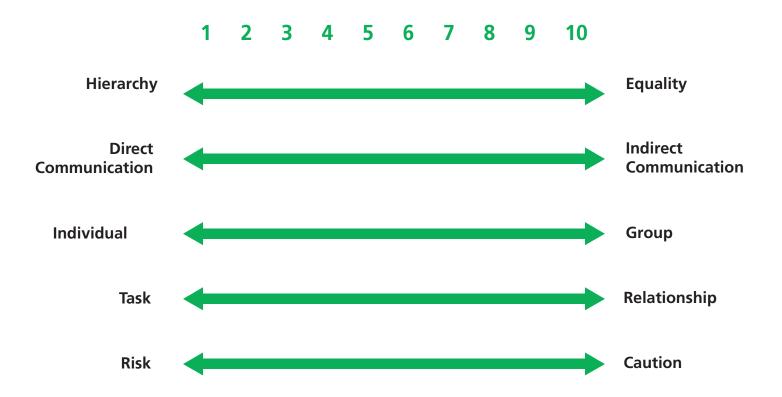
# 5 Basic Cultural Scales - Adapted from Geert Hofstede & Brooks Peterson

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

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|---|---|
| **Hierarchy** | ←————————————→ | **Equality** |
| **Direct Communication** | ←————————————→ | **Indirect Communication** |
| **Individual** | ←————————————→ | **Group** |
| **Task** | ←————————————→ | **Relationship** |
| **Risk** | ←————————————→ | **Caution** |

## Cultural Intelligence Exercises

Take a moment to reflect on what specific cultural group (s) that you identify with or belong to.  When you think about what you share in common with this group, is it part of the visible or invisible culture (see Cultural Iceberg)?

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As you read through each of the five cross-cultural scales, identify and explain what scales you most identify with based on your values?  Why this is important to you and how others would observe this through your attitude and behaviors?

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Provide an example of a situation where you have experienced "tension" interacting with someone due to cultural differences.  Using the S.A.R method (situation/action/result) provide a detailed description of the situation (S), what actions (A) you took to resolve the situation and what were the results (R).

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NEXT