Overview:

In this activity, participants will engage with an intercultural concept, continuum, or scale to articulate the complexity surrounding cultural norms. Participants will go on a media scavenger hunt where they will look for examples that demonstrate a “typical” value or norm associated with their culture. Then, they will search for counter-examples that defy that norm.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Engage with an intercultural concept, continuum, or scale to articulate the complexity surrounding cultural norms.
2. Reflect on how their own cultural values and norms exist on a continuum or spectrum rather than a binary.
3. Identify concrete examples and counter-examples that illustrate variation in norms for their own cultural groups.

Time:

2 hours

Group Size:

Entire group

Materials:

Access to the Internet, a computer and smartphone for all participants.

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

Other Skills:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Activity Instructions:

1. The facilitator should first choose an intercultural concept, continuum, or scale for participants to work with. Some options include the following:
   - Collectivism <-> Individualism
   - Universalism <-> Particularism
   - Indirect/High Context <-> Direct/Low Context
   - Masculinity <-> Femininity
   - Monochronic <-> Polychronic
   - High power distance <-> Low power distance
   - High uncertainty avoidance <-> Low uncertainty avoidance
   - Long term orientation <-> Short term normative orientation
   - Indulgence <-> Restraint
   - Achieved status <-> Ascribed status

   Note: For more information, or for more potential examples, see the Hofstede Value Dimensions Online Country Comparison Tool or the Round Robin tool on the HubICL.

2. Then, the facilitator should explain the concept, continuum, or scale to participants. The two tools linked above provide definitions of each of the terms. Facilitators should ensure that participants understand that these continua or scales are not binary and that even where an individual lands on the scale or continuum will “depend” on the situation and their feelings at the time. The facilitator may want to provide a concrete example for participants, potentially from their own culture and life experiences.

3. Participants should then search for cultural artifacts (films, songs, stories, news, etc.) that illustrate a “typical” example of a location on the continuum or scale for their cultural group. Note that participants can define culture as broadly or as narrowly as they would like. For example, they could draw from national culture, they could draw from their hometown culture, or they could draw from some other cultural marker, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.

4. Next, participants should search for a counter-example that defies the “typical” value or norm demonstrated by the example that they found in the previous step.

5. Finally, the facilitator can choose to have participants present their artifacts live (face-to-face or through synchronous virtual instruction) in small groups before a whole group debrief. Alternatively, participants could asynchronously write or film a brief introduction to each of the cultural artifacts. Either way, they should discuss them as if they are presenting them to cultural outsiders. Additionally, they should explain the artifacts’ cultural significance and where/why they fall on the assigned continuum or scale.

6. The facilitator should conclude the activity by debriefing with the following questions:
   - Why did you choose these particular artifacts?
   - What do these artifacts communicate about your culture?
   - How do these artifacts demonstrate the complexity underlying cultural values and norms?
Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- Direct-Indirect Communication
- Hofstede Round Robin
- Hofstede Value Dimensions Online Country Comparison Tool
- Human Values Continuum
- Individualist-Collectivist Quiz
- Monochronic-Polychronic Quiz
- Round Robin