Crossing Borders:
From the United States to Argentina

A cross-cultural training program for business professionals

by Lindsey Lea Schneckloth
Overview of the Program

• Purpose and Objectives of Program
• Contrasting Values
• Discussion of Culture and Values
• Storti’s Situations
• Workbook
Introduction

• 100,000 expatriates annually from the U.S. (Baruch & Altman 2002)

• 15-40% Expatriate Premature Return and Failure (Hammer 1999)

• Average cost for failed overseas assignment = $40,000 to $1,000,000 (Hawley 2009; Vogel & Van Vuuren 2008)

• Expatriate failure costs U.S. companies $2 billion dollars annually (Kealey 1996).

• Research has found failure to be due to cross-cultural incompetence (Hammer 1999)
Objectives

• To shed light and understanding of cultural differences between Iowa and Argentina.
• To psychologically prepare Iowa business professionals for what to expect abroad.
• To decrease anxiety and increase confidence within the soon to be expatriates.
• To develop the building blocks of cross-cultural competence.
• To increase effectiveness of future intercultural relationships.
• To instill empathy within headquarter support staff.
Contrasting Values

• Separate into 5 groups of 4
• Arrange the value cards into two categories
  – U.S. Values
  – Contrasting Values
• You have 20 minutes to complete this exercise
## Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tradition, Stability</th>
<th>Direct Eye Contact</th>
<th>Group Welfare</th>
<th>People, Relationship Oriented</th>
<th>Rules Rigid</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informality, Casual Interaction</td>
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<td>Gender Equity</td>
<td>Directness</td>
<td>Frankness, Honesty</td>
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<td>Action, Task Oriented</td>
<td>Action, Task Oriented</td>
<td>Harmony, Face Saving</td>
<td>Rules Flexible</td>
<td>Formality, Status Interaction</td>
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<td>Competition, Individual Achievement</td>
<td>Cooperation, Group Achievement</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Eye Contact Avoided</td>
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<td>Rank, Status, Hierarchy</td>
<td>Rank, Status, Hierarchy</td>
<td>Status Earned</td>
<td>Focus on Past or Present</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>United States</th>
<th>Contrasting Values</th>
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<td>Rules Rigid</td>
<td>Rules flexible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change Positive</td>
<td>Tradition/Stability</td>
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<td>Gender Equity</td>
<td>Male Superiority</td>
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<td>Rank/Status/Hierarchy</td>
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<td>Status Given</td>
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<td>Competition/Individual</td>
<td>Cooperation/Group Achievement</td>
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<td>Achievement</td>
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<td>Focus on Future</td>
<td>Focus on Present or Past</td>
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<td>Action/Task-Oriented</td>
<td>People/Relationship-Oriented</td>
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<td>Informality/Casual Interaction</td>
<td>Formality Status Interaction</td>
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<td>Directness</td>
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<td>Direct Eye Contact</td>
<td>Eye Contact Avoided</td>
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<td>Frankness/Honesty</td>
<td>Harmony/Face Saving</td>
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Debriefing Questions
• For which values sets did you find it easiest to achieve agreement?

• Which were the hardest?

• Why?
• Which values would be the most difficult for you to adapt to?

• How could these value differences influence intercultural interactions in the workplace?

BREAK!!!!!!!!!!
Three Levels of Uniqueness in Human Mental Programming

- **Human Nature**
  - Universal
  - Inherited

- **Culture**
  - Specific to group or category
  - Learned

- **Personality**
  - Specific to Individual
  - Inherited & Learned

Culture

- The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others. – Hofstede 2005
  - Includes (Symbols, Rituals, Heroes, Practices, and Values)

The “Onion”: Manifestations of Culture At Different Levels of Depth

Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

- Power Distance
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Masculine/Feminine
- Individualism/Collectivism

Power Distance

• The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>1-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

United States

- Informal employee participation
  - Employees more likely to overtly disagree with management
- Inequality minimization
  - Superiors are like me and subordinates are like me
- Equal Rights
- Importance on working interdependently
- Rank/Status is earned and skill based
- Modesty is valued
- Respect for the individual

Argentina

• Formal Employee Participation
  – Less likely to overtly disagree with management

• A more hierarchical structure
  – Centralization of decision making

• Relationships valued over skills

• Importance placed on titles and formalities

• Privileges and status symbols are normal and popular

• Rank/Status is given

Uncertainty Avoidance

• The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Greece</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17-22</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

United States

- Change is positive
- Preference to broad guidelines
- Conflict within organization is natural
- Peer competition is good
- Top management concerned with strategy
- Loyalty to employer not as important
- Optimistic of people in general

Argentina

- Resistance to change
- Preference for well-defined rules
- Loyalty to employer
- Less optimistic of people in general
- What is different is dangerous
- Top managers concerned with daily operations
- Need for precision and formalization

Masculinity Index

- Masculine Society: Emotional gender roles are clearly distinct.
- Feminine Society: Emotional gender roles overlap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Masculinity Index</th>
<th>Femininity Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>Argentina</td>
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<td>28-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

United States

• Earnings, recognition, challenge, & advancement are all very important
• Management decisive and aggressive
• People live in order to work
• More money is preferred over more leisure time
• Performance & growth are important
• Preference for larger organizations

Argentina

• Lower-end Masculine society
• People work in order to live
• Preference for more leisure time to higher salary
• Management is decisive and aggressive
• Preference for smaller organizations
• Money and things orientation
• Performance and growth important

Individualism/Collectivism

• Individualism: Societies in which the ties between individuals are loose.

• Collectivism: Societies in which from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups that provide unquestioning loyalty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Guatemala</th>
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<td>• 91</td>
<td>• 46</td>
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</table>
United States

• Importance of Self
• Managers aspire to leadership
• Networking important
• Emphasis on achievement
• Occupational mobility is high
• Hiring and Promotion based on skills
• Task prevails over relationship
• The purpose of education is to learn how to learn
Argentina

• Relationships prevail over tasks
• Occupational mobility is lower
• Hiring and promotion based on relationships
• Employer-Employee relationship is similar to a family link
• The purpose of education is learning how to do
Communication Styles
High Context vs. Low Context
Polychronic vs. Monochronic
Edward T. Hall (1976)

Low Context Cultures

• United States, Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavian countries, etc.
• Message is explicit and more direct
• Focus on content
• Words carry the majority of the information
• More culturally acceptable to disagree explicitly

High Context Cultures

• Argentina, Latin American Cultures, Spain, Japan, Arabian, Italian, etc
• Most information contained in nonverbal aspects of communication
  – Who says it, when it is said, how it is said
  – Ex: Communication with a best friend
• Less acceptable to openly disagree
• Focus on saving “face”

Monochronic
(United States)

- Focus on linear thinking
- Time is money
- Punctuality is of great importance
- Time is considered a valuable resource to not be wasted
- Practice of compartmentalization
- One thing at a time

Polychronic
(Argentina)

- Simultaneous occurrence of many things
- Great involvement of people
- Allows for relationships to build along with context
- Low focus on actual time
- Punctuality is not valued
- “The clock did not invent man.” Nigeria (Hernandez & Graham 2008)

# Dimensions of Culture, A Synthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information-Oriented (IO)</th>
<th>Relationship-Oriented (RO)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Context</td>
<td>High Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower Power Distance</td>
<td>Higher Power Distance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bribery less common</td>
<td>Bribery more common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low distance from English</td>
<td>High distance from English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic directness</td>
<td>Linguistic indirectness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monochronic Time</td>
<td>Polychronic Time</td>
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<td>Internet</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreground</td>
<td>Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Reduce transaction costs</td>
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</tbody>
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Storti’s Cross-Cultural Dialogues

• Divide into 10 groups of two
• Discuss the given dialogues in groups
• Present the dialogues as a role-play
  – Present ideas as to what happened
  – Go over Storti’s Explanations
  – Relate to values discussed previously in program
• Review

Class of ‘97

• Karen: How did you make out at registration?
• Carmen: Quite well. I got into every course I wanted. But one thing confused me.
• Karen: What was that?
• Carmen: They said I was in the class of ’97. I don’t understand what that means.
• Karen: That’s easy. You’ll graduate in 1997, four years from now.
• Carmen: But that’s just what confused me.

• From Carmen’s point of view, it is arrogant, if not preposterous, to say with any certainty what is going to happen four years from today.
• Carmen’s culture believes that many events are beyond our control.
• One can make plans but one shouldn’t depend too much on them.

Values Outlined

• Achievement Oriented
  – Where there is a will there is a way
• Self-Determination
• Monochronic vs. Polychronic
  – Compartmentalization
  – Linear thinking
• Focus on Future vs. Past/Present
Helping Miss Thomas

• Roberto: Miss Thomas! How nice to see you.
• Miss Thomas: How are you, Roberto?
• Roberto: Fine, Fine. Thank you. What can I get for you?
• Miss Thomas: Well, to start with I’d like half a dozen eggs.
• Roberto: Yes
• Miss Thomas: And then I’d like 500 grams of butter.
• Roberto: Yes. Ah, Octavio! Good to see you. Como estas?
• Octavio: Bien, gracias. And you?
• Roberto: Bien. How can I help you?
• Octavio: I need some bananas.
• Roberto: Of course. Rosita! Como estas? I haven’t seen you in a long time. How is that little boy of yours?
• Rosita: He’s very well.
• Roberto: What can I do for you?
• Miss Thomas: Roberto, I thought you were helping me.
• Roberto: But I am helping you, Miss Thomas.

• Miss Thomas is used to getting undivided attention from store clerks.
• Roberto comes from a culture that is less linear and more dynamic; several transactions are carried out at the same time.
• For Roberto it would have been rude to not greet someone when they walked in. He is used to helping multiple people at once.

Values Outlined

• Monochronic vs. Polychronic
  – Linear vs. circular thought
Falling Behind

• COL. GARCIA: Yes, we know that, Colonel Wilson.
• COL. WILSON: This battalion has not been doing as much as it could.
• COL. GARCIA: Yes, yes.
• COL. WILSON: I’ve told Sergeant Diaz that if we don’t get a few projects started before the end of the year, we’ll be falling behind some of the other units.
• COL. GARCIA: Yes, some units have fewer projects

• Colonel Wilson is trying to appeal to Colonel Garcia’s sense of competition.

• Colonel Garcia sees things rather differently. If some other units are doing quite well in the area of projects, then his unit need not work so hard. They’re all in the same army, after all; why should they compete against each other?

• For its part, perhaps his unit can distinguish itself in some other regard.

Values Outlined

• Collectivism vs. Individualism
  – Group harmony vs. competition
A Possible Candidate

- MS. MILLER: Have you finished writing that job advertisement yet?
- MRS. DeJESUS: Not quite.
- MS. MILLER: Don’t take too long. Filling that vacancy is a priority.
- MRS. DeJESUS: I agree. Actually, I think I know of a possible candidate.
- MS. MILLER: You do? Who?
- MRS. DeJESUS: He’s my youngest nephew, Eduardo. A good boy.
- MS. MILLER: Great! Tell him to apply

Mrs. DeJesus thinks that filling a position through a job advertisement is risky. After all, anyone can respond and how can you know if the applicant is trustworthy?

For Mrs. DeJesus, the main thing is the boy’s personal qualities; whatever skills he needs can always be trained into him.

For Ms. Miller, the issue is the skills; the boy’s character, though important, is secondary.

In many American organizations the DeJesus approach smacks of favoritism at best and discrimination at worst—and may even be illegal.

Values Outlined

• Uncertainty Avoidance
  – Less willing to trust others

• Individualism/Collectivism
  – Hiring of Individuals based on pre-existing relationships
The Flu

• SARAH: I was hoping we could have that meeting of the sales team tomorrow morning.
• FELICE: Actually, my daughter has some kind of flu and I was going to take her to the doctor tomorrow morning.
• SARAH: I see. Well, let me check with Bob and see if he can sit in for you. Shouldn’t be any problem. I’ll let you know.
• FELICE: Thank you.
• SARAH: Don’t mention it.

• To a Latin, one’s family comes before one’s work (and one’s boss would understand this).
• The least Sarah could have done was to express her concern about Felice’s daughter.
• Depending on the importance of the meeting Sarah could have postponed it.
• To Felice, Sarah was communicating that the real emergency was the one here at work by arranging for her to miss the meeting.

Values Outlined

• Masculinity Index
  – U.S. tendency of living to work
  – Argentine Tendency of working to live

• Collectivism vs. Individualism
  – Collectivist cultures have a greater obligation to family and in-groups
An Opportunity in Monterey

- HECTOR: Thank you, Mr. Martin.
- MR. MARTIN: I’ve got a little proposition for you. A friend of mine up in our Monterey branch needs a production supervisor. He asked me if I knew of anyone who might be interested.
- HECTOR: I can ask. We don’t have any relations up in Monterey, but I know a few people.
- MR. MARTIN: I was thinking of you.
- HECTOR: Me?
- MR. MARTIN: Yes. It would be a nice promotion for you. We’d miss you down here, but we wouldn’t want to stand in your way.
- HECTOR: In my way? Are you not satisfied with my work?
- MR. MARTIN: Are you kidding? I wouldn’t recommend you if I didn’t think you were the best

• For Mr. Martin, he is offering Hector an opportunity of a lifetime.

• For Hector, it is not appealing to uproot his family to a place unknown without relatives.

• The notion is so foreign to Hector that he now begins to suspect that Mr. Martin must be trying to tell him something. All Hector can think of is that Mr. Martin is not pleased with his work and wants to get rid of him or worse asking him to quit.

Values Outlined

• Collectivism vs. Individualism
  – American achievement orientation
  – Familial Relationships

• Masculinity Index
  – Work Centrality to Life

• High Context vs. Low Context
Dr. De Leon

- MS. PORTER: I heard the board has chosen a new CEO.
- MR. DOMINGO: Yes, they’ve appointed Dr. Manuel Cabeza de Leon of the de Leon family.
- MS. PORTER: Who is he?
- MR. DOMINGO: It’s an old family with large landholdings in Guadalajara Province.
- MS. PORTER: But what’s his background?
- MR. DOMINGO: I just told you.
- MS. PORTER: I mean does he know anything about the textile industry.
- MR. DOMINGO: I don’t know.
- MS. PORTER: Do you think he’s a good choice?
- MR. DOMINGO: Dr. de León? I’m sure.
• Ms. Porter assumes the CEO will at least know something about the textile business or have a similar background.
• But that doesn’t seem to be the case in this culture, at least not at the top levels of a company. What matters here is who Dr. de Leon is, not what he knows.
• In a culture with a strong class system, the most important qualification for an executive position is one’s personal background.

Values Outlined

• Power Distance
  – Status given vs. achieved

• Collectivism vs. Individualism
  – Relationship vs. Skills based hiring
  – Who a person is in a collectivist society has more to do with their in-group than personal attributes.
A Call to Personnel

- HAROLD: I was wondering if we could hire two temporary people for the next month, to get through this peak period?
- RICARDO: I think we’ll have to.
- HAROLD: I could speak to personnel today.
- RICARDO: Did you mention this to Señor Ramos?
- HAROLD: The chief? I didn’t want to bother him. He’s got his hands full with those buyers from Japan. Besides, it’s your division. He’ll agree to anything you say.
- RICARDO: Yes. I’m sure he’ll approve.
- HAROLD: Good. Then I’ll call Miss Garcia in personnel.

• Ricardo sees the importance of respecting the chain of command, especially the need to defer to one’s superiors.

• Señor Ramos will more than likely agree with Ricardo’s recommendation however it isn’t so much the substance of the decision that matters, but the form.

• Harold’s priority is not the chain of command but getting these people on board so he can get the job done. If he were in Señor Ramos’s position, he would expect Ricardo to seize the initiative and take decisive action. And he would certainly not appreciate being interrupted in the midst of sensitive discussions with Japanese buyers.

Values Outlined

• Power Distance
  – Hierarchy within organizations
  – Centralized vs. Decentralized decision making
LETICIA: What did you think of the new design?
BILL: Very nice. I’m quite pleased.
LETICIA: It’s good then?
BILL: Yes. There’s one drawing that needs to be worked on a little, but that’s about it.
LETICIA: I see.
BILL: What about that other piece you were working on? Any chance I could see it soon?
LETICIA: We can make it a priority, if you’d like.
BILL: Great. Thanks.
LETICIA: So you want us to scrap this design then?

• Latinos are inclined to be indirect so as not to embarrass one another. Criticism, accordingly, has to be handled with the utmost delicacy. In practice, criticism comes in the guise of faint or insufficient praise or avoidance of topic.

• Bill’s mistake, was not to be effusive in his praise. In a culture where faint praise is damning, slightly exaggerated praise is simply the norm.

• Most Americans are suspicious of effusive praise and take faint praise for what it is.
Values Outlined

• Low vs. High Context
  – Face saving techniques
  – Verbal vs. Nonverbal cues

• Individualism vs. Collectivism
  – Wanting to maintain group harmony by avoiding overt criticism
The Workers Speak

• MS. PARKER: Efficiency is falling in the quality-control division. What can we do?
• MISS RAMIREZ: The workers may have some ideas.
• MS. PARKER: Good. Why don’t we call a meeting and ask them.
• MISS RAMIREZ: A meeting?
• MS. PARKER: Yes. And I’ll run it myself and let them know how much we value their input.
• MISS RAMIREZ: You’ll go to the meeting?

• Ms. Parker wants to get to the bottom of things, and as quickly as possible. That means going directly to the workers in quality control and asking for their ideas.

• Miss Ramirez delicately questions the idea of having a meeting because she knows the workers will be reluctant to present their suggestions/criticisms in such a public setting.

• When Ms. Parker then goes on to state that she will chair the meeting herself, Miss Ramirez is even more surprised, for she knows that even if the workers could get up the courage to criticize the company in public, they certainly wouldn’t do it to the boss’s face.
Values Outlined

• Power Distance
  – Reluctance to correct boss

• Individualism vs. Collectivism

• Low vs. High Context
  – Face saving techniques
Overview

• What have we learned from these situations?
  – Misunderstandings often go unnoticed
  – The problems are culturally based
  – Misconceptions happen easily
  – Importance of reading into the context and not just content of the conversation
  – Avoid assumptions that the other understands exactly what you are trying to say
Workbook

- Everything Argentina
- Do’s and Don'ts
- Key Cultural Differences
- Negotiation Styles
- Exercises
- Spanish Study Guide
- Further Reading Recommendations
Works Cited