Culture

Instructor Manual

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The culture module introduces students to basic definitions, concepts, cultural research, and culture as a social process. This instructor's manual module provides some information to help you craft a class lesson for your students to help keep them interested and engaged in this material. The accompanying PowerPoint presentation provides material which includes content, activities, and a video. This instructor's manual also contains other outside resources and information that may help you create a great unit of your course about culture.

Learning Objectives

Content Specific Learning Objectives:

- Appreciate culture as an evolutionary adaptation common to all humans
- Understand the difference between cultural and cross-cultural research methods.
- Understand cultural processes as variable patterns rather than as fixed scripts
- Appreciate cultural awareness as a source of personal wellbeing, social responsibility, and social harmony
- Explain the difference between individualism and collectivism.
- Define "self-construal" and provide a real life example.

Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)

- Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (1.1)

- Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains (1.2)

- Describe applications of psychology (1.3)

- Incorporate sociocultural factors in scientific inquiry (2.5)

- Adopt values that build community at local, national, and global levels (3.3)

Abstract

Culture is more than food, dress, and religion. It is the shared learning of a group of people that is transmitted from one generation to the next. Viewed this way, culture is a psychological rather than a material phenomenon. In this module, readers will explore a variety of ways to understand what culture is and how it influences us. Perhaps most importantly, readers will be challenged to develop cultural intelligence: using knowledge about culture to promote self-awareness, increase the quality of intercultural dialogue and to preserve valuable cultural traditions.

Class Design Recommendations

This material could be covered in a single 50-75-minute class period. Please refer to the Noba PowerPoint and the Lecture Framework below for specific details.

- Warm-Up Activity: Consider your culture

- What is culture?

  - Definitions (culture, cultural intelligence)

  - Aspects (versatile, shared, cumulative, pattern)

  - 3 common ways to think about culture (progressive cultivation, way of life, shared learning)

- Studying culture

  - Cultural v. cross-cultural psychology

  - Advantages and disadvantages of each approach

- The self and culture

- ○ Individualism v. Collectivism

- ○ The independent v. the interdependent self

- ○ Activity: compliments I receive

- Culture is learned

- Cultural relativism

- CAT: The Muddiest Point

Module Outline

- **Introduction of culture**: Culture is a topic of interest to most students. It offers a fresh opportunity for self-insight and reflection as well as a chance to learn about new research and concepts. One aspect of teaching about culture is the many readily available examples you can use drawn from the students' own personal experiences. It is easy to relate this topic to real life.

- **Defining and thinking about culture:** Most students think about culture as being a "way of life." They are aware of the most visible aspects of culture such as food, dress, language, religion and architecture. There are two elements to culture that are less intuitive and are sometimes an "aha" for students: 1) culture is a shared pattern of thinking and behaving, and 2) culture is learned.

- **Research methods in cultural studies**

  - ○ *Cultural v. cross-cultural research*-- cultural psychology is an approach to researching culture that emphasizes an "inside" approach. It relies on interviews, observation, and the cultural members' own language to define and explain important concepts and behaviors. By contrast, cross-cultural psychology is an approach to researching culture that emphasizes the use of standardized measures and scales to allow for easier comparisons between cultures.

  - ○ *Cultural similarities and differences*—it can be easy to notice cultural differences. Variation in dress, gender roles, language, and emotional expression stand out. It may be helpful to remind students that cultural similarities also exist.

- **The self and culture**

  - The self, as it is affected by cultural processes, is—perhaps—the most researched of all cultural phenomena in psychology. Here, two core concepts are presented:
  - Individualism v. collectivism:

    - *Individualism*: Individualistic cultures consider the individual the basic unit of measurement. Individuals are considered to be unique and these societies are more likely to celebrate the diversity that comes with uniqueness. The cultural task of the individual is to develop their own uniqueness. Individuals are expected to pursue their own goals and are seen as capable of creating their own happiness. They are free to express their own opinions and take credit for successes. Examples of these cultures include the United States, Canada, Australia and Germany.
    - It is possible that individualism is the result of affluence (less need to share resources), less agrarian lifestyles, and smaller family systems.
    - *Collectivism*: Collectivist cultures consider the group to be the basic unit of measurement. Individuals are considered to be group members and these societies are more likely to celebrate group harmony and collective well-being. The cultural task of the individual is to fulfill duties and responsibilities and to preserve group harmony. Individuals are expected to put personal goals aside if they come into conflict with group goals. People are more likely to express humility, to defer to authority, and to withhold their own opinions. Examples of these cultures include South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan.
    - It is possible that collectivism is the result of agrarian lifestyle, population density, extended family kinship systems, and fewer resources that necessitate more sharing.

- Independent self v. interdependent self:

  - The *Independent self* and the *Interdependent self* are both *self-construals*; that is, they are ways that people define themselves. People with an independent orientation are likely to see themselves as a collection of stable traits, and these traits guide decisions and behavior. By contrast, people with an interdependent orientation are likely to see themselves as a collection of fluid relationships and it is situations that guide decisions and behavior.

- This can be a unique opportunity for students to gain self-awareness through reflecting on their own sense of self and the forces that contribute to it.

- **Culture as a learned process**

    - The central thesis behind this portion of the learning is the idea that culture is learned. For many students this is an "aha!" insight. Many people have not taken the time to reflect on the fact that many of the thoughts and behaviors that seem so natural to them are, in fact, the products of cultural learning.

- **Cultural Relativism**

    - It is difficult to discuss culture, and especially cultural differences, without making moral judgments of good and bad associated with cultural practices. People commonly criticize gender roles, religious beliefs, and other cultural differences as being inferior. This can lead to conflict and—in the case of research—can interfere with valid conclusions.

Difficult Terms

Collectivism
Cultural intelligence
Cultural relativism
Cultural v. Cross-cultural psychology
Enculturation
Ethnocentricity/ Ethnocentric bias
Ethnography
Independent v. Interdependent self
Individualism
Self-construal
Situational identity
Standard scale
Value judgment
Value-free research

Lecture Frameworks

Overview: This material can be presented with a combination of direct instruction, discussion,

and activities. The suggested warm up activity gets students to think about culture by considering their own culture from an outsider's point of view. Time and again in this unit, students are asked to reflect on their own cultural experiences. This is a way to make the content relevant to daily life and to increase understanding of the core research and concepts.

- **Warm-up Activity: Take a fresh look at your culture:**The purpose of this activity is to get students to gain self-awareness by taking a look at their own cultures, and to prime concepts for the lesson. Begin by having them imagine their own culture (it could be school culture, family culture, or national culture) by imagining themselves as a tourist who has never before visited. What would they be likely to notice? See below in 'Activities/Demonstrations' and in the Noba PowerPoint for more details.

- **Direct Instruction of Definitions of culture:**There are multiple slides associated with this portion of the lesson.

  - First, explain the definition of culture. It is more than the visible signs most people think of such as dress, language, and religious rituals. Culture is a shared pattern of meaning or acting that is passed from one generation to the next. Culture is learned, and includes invisible characteristics such as how people think they ought to feel and the value they place on duty and obligation. See below in 'Activities/Demonstrations' and in the Noba PowerPoint for more details.

  - Next, explain cultural intelligence. This is the ability and willingness to apply cultural awareness to practical uses. Cultural intelligence is the applied justification for studying this unit. You can engage students in a discussion of how high cultural intelligence might benefit groups and individuals.

  - Next, explain 4 aspects of culture. Culture is versatile, shared, cumulative, and a pattern. Provide examples of each and ask the students to do the same.

  - Finally, present 2 common ways to think about culture: progressive cultivation ("high culture"), ways of life (the most common way people think about culture), and shared learning (culture is a psychological process that is learned).

- **Direct Instruction "studying culture":**Because cultural research represents a unique set of methodological challenges it makes sense to spend time re-visiting the idea of research methods; especially those that are specific to culture. This can be additionally helpful because some students will see cultural differences as a fundamentally political idea (eg. Is it racist or insensitive to draw similarities between Chinese and Japanese people?). A focus on research is an opportunity to stress that these topics are viewed as values-neutral,

exploratory topics rather than political in nature.

- Begin by explaining the difference between cultural and cross-cultural psychology. Note that these two approaches to studying culture differ in their fundamental approach. One is interested in an insider's view of culture and one seeks to make comparisons using a neutral standard of comparison. Both cultural psychology research methods (ethnography, interview, observation) and cross-cultural research methods (survey) have advantages and disadvantages.

- There is also an opportunity to explain the difference in focus on cultural similarities and differences. See below in 'Activities/Demonstrations' and in the Noba PowerPoint for more details.

- **Direct Instruction of "The self and culture":** In many ways, this is the core of this lesson. It is here that students will be exposed to specific research and concepts from the psychological study of culture.

  - *Individualism/Collectivism*: Here, you can explain the differences between these two concepts. Triandis refers to both as examples of "cultural syndromes" (Triandis, 1995). Cultural syndromes are dimensions of culture that are variable and predict behavior.

  - *Independent/Interdependent Self*: Here, you can explain the differences between these two concepts. If Individualism and Collectivism are how a society views the unit of measurement independent and interdependent orientations are how the individual views the self.

  - There is an optional activity in which students can list compliments they commonly receive as a means of identifying the degree to which they endorse an independent or interdependent orientation. See below in 'Activities/Demonstrations' and in the Noba PowerPoint for more details.

- **Direct Instruction of "culture is learned":** The central thesis behind this portion of the learning is the idea that culture is learned. For many students this is an "aha!" insight. Many people have not taken the time to reflect on the fact that many of the thoughts and behaviors that seem so natural to them are, in fact, the products of cultural learning. To help illustrate this point you can focus on:

  - *Identity*

- *Emotions*

- *Etiquette*

- *Values/Morals*

See below in 'Activities/Demonstrations' and in the Noba PowerPoint for more details.

- **Direct Instruction of "cultural relativism":**You can conclude the unit on culture with a discussion of cultural relativism. Relativism is the acceptance of cultural differences without moral judgment. The advantage of relativism is that it appreciates the maturity and uniqueness of each culture. The disadvantage of relativism is that it prevents occasional valid critique from cultural outsiders of practices or traditions that may be harmful.

- **Cool Down Activity: In One-Minute paper:**This activity is an opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning. See below in 'Activities/Demonstrations' and in the Noba PowerPoint for more details.

- **CAT: Muddiest Point:**This activity is a classroom assessment technique (CAT), which will help you assess your students' understanding of the material.

Activities & Demonstrations

Warm up and Cool-down Activity—Reflect on your own culture: The purpose of this activity is to get students to think broadly about culture.

- Materials: Paper and pen

- Time: 5 minutes at the beginning of class.

- Directions: Begin by having them reflect silently and write down notes on a piece of paper. Alternately, they can work in small groups. Discussion should then shift to the larger class so that students can share their ideas. Student ideas might include:

  - **physical objects**(eg. money, architecture, flags, climate, plants)

  - **visiblesocial differences**(eg. dress, cuisine, religion, language)

- **norms** (eg. etiquette, common greetings, driving habits)
- **Other**

- *Discussion Questions*: During the large class discussion try to highlight the wide range of ways that people think about culture. This is one of the main take-home messages from this unit: culture is more than physical artifacts; it is also psychological and affects our identity, feelings, and behavior.

"Studying culture" Research Activity: The purpose of this activity is to have students think critically about research methods.

- Time: 15 minutes including discussion
- Materials: pen and paper for notes
- Directions:

  - Time: (10 minutes) Divide students into pairs or into small groups. Instruct them to imagine that they are researchers wanting to investigate culture. Specifically, they want to explore possible differences and similarities between small town and large city culture. Given what they have learned in this unit, how would they proceed? Have them design a specific study. Considerations:
  - **Sampling and measures** This is an important way to gauge their research acumen. Guide them to choose target samples (both cities and towns) and sampling methods (representativeness is important).
  - **Cultural/cross-cultural methods** Which measures might they use? Standard scales or interviews? They should reflect on the costs and benefits of each.
  - **Similarities v. differences** What types of variables are they on the look out for? Do they expect certain variables to be similar across groups? To be different?

- (5 minutes) Ask students to discuss the following questions as a large group:

  - **1) What ideas did you have for this study?**

    - Hopefully, students will be able to create a study proposal. They may identify specific locations that represent distinct cultures.

- **2) Which did you prefer: cultural or cross-cultural approaches? Why?**

- ○ Students might consider the costs and benefits of various approaches. *Interviews*: culturally sensitive because captures the cultural participants own words and meanings but also difficult to compare across cultures and more time consuming to conduct and necessitates smaller samples. *Standard scales*: Can be used with broad samples quickly and easily. Might miss out on important local definitions and experiences.

- **3) How does the idea of focusing on similarities versus differences affect your proposed research?**

Cultural similarities and differences activity:

- *Time*: 10 minutes

- *Instructions*: Have students pair off to conduct interviews about "family culture." In their pairs they will learn about each other's family culture (from their family of origin). During the interview the "interviewer" should take notes. Also, the interviewer should be on the lookout for points of similarity with his or her own family of origin. To help them in this you can use the following question prompts:

  - ○ Describe how emotions are expressed in your family. Are some emotions more acceptable than others? What about the intensity of emotions?

  - ○ Describe your parents/caregivers gender roles. How traditional versus non-traditional were they? Division of childcare duties, earning an income, household chores, etc.

  - ○ Describe your family's conversational style. How talkative are your family members when getting together, for example, for the holidays. How would a stranger see their communication style?

  - ○ What does your family like to eat? Snacking habits? Eating out versus cooking?

  - ○ Describe your family's preferences for physical touch. How close do they like to stand to one another? What types of displays of physical affection do they use?

- **Variation**: Assign half your class to the "differences" condition and the other half to the "similarities" condition. Come back together in a large group and discuss your "findings." Did looking for similarities lead to a greater sense of similarity? Did looking for differences lead to a greater sense of difference? How might this affect the research process? How did it affect people's feelings of closeness toward the person they interviewed?

Independent/Interdependent Self Activity:

- *Time:* 5 minutes

- *Instructions:* Here you want to engage students in a variation of the classic fill in the sentence activity ("I am ……"). In the original version – the one discussed in the Noba text – people with an **independent** sense of self were likely to list personal traits and those with an **interdependen**t sense of self were likely to list relationships. In this version of the activity students list five compliments they are most likely to receive from others. Again, people with an independent orientation are likely to hear and remember compliments in terms of traits (e.g. I am kind, I am athletic, I am empathic) even if these are traits that are used in a social capacity, such as forgiveness. Those with a more interdependent orientation will report more relational or role based compliments (e.g. "I am a good friend" "I am a leader"). It should be noted that some students will report both types and this is okay. This is an opportunity to emphasize that culture is not a hard and fast set of rules but a variable pattern of thinking, feeling and behavior.

CAT: Muddiest Point: This activity is a classroom assessment technique (CAT), which will help you assess your students' understanding of the material. CATs also often help students remember the material (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

- Time: 5 minutes

- Materials: A piece of paper for students to turn in their responses.

- Directions:

  - Ask students what their muddiest point is.

    - What was the muddiest point in today's class? (FYI: "Muddiest" means "most unclear" or "most confusing.")

    - Be sure to answer any questions the students have at the beginning of the next class. If you have time, you can answer some questions during the current class session.

    - If you do not conclude with this Classroom Assessment Technique (CAT), it would helpful to use another CAT. For more information on CATs click here: **http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/cats/.** Also refer to Angelo and Cross's (1993) book.

Discussion Points

1. Most people think of culture in terms of a "way of life." This is because the most visible

aspects of culture—dress, cuisine, language, architecture, religion and rituals—are associated with how people behave. Understanding that culture is a learned process can shed light on the idea that there are many less visible aspects of culture. It may be an "aha" for students to realize that the way they value various emotions, feel entitled to pursue their own goals, or what guides their actions (traits or situations) are learned from their culture.

2. Culture can be a tricky concept to measure. This is because: A) people are prone to making value judgments—appraisals of the moral goodness of cultural practices—and these judgments can interfere with objectivity; B) although standard scales are easier to use and may lead to easier comparisons between cultural groups they also might miss important local insights.

Outside Resources

Articles: International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) [Wolfgang Friedlmeier, ed] Online Readings in Psychology and Culture (ORPC)
http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/orpc/

Database: Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) 'World Cultures' database
http://hraf.yale.edu/

Organization: Plous, Scott, et al, Social Psychology Network, Cultural Psychology Links by Subtopic
https://www.socialpsychology.org/cultural.htm

Study: Hofstede, Geert et al, The Hofstede Center: Strategy, Culture, Change
http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html

Evidence-Based Teaching

Zamboanga, B., Ham, L., Tomaso, C., Audley, S. & Pole, N. (2016). "Try walking in our shoes": Teaching acculturation and related cultural adjustment processes through role-play. *Teaching of Psychology, 43*, 243-249.

- This paper presents a novel role-play game that divides the class into 3 distinct cultures. The experiential component of the game can lead to increased student understanding of cultural processes and concepts.

PowerPoint Presentation

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/217/Culture.pptx?1475526481.

About Noba

The Diener Education Fund (DEF) is a non-profit organization founded with the mission of re-inventing higher education to serve the changing needs of students and professors. The initial focus of the DEF is on making information, especially of the type found in textbooks, widely available to people of all backgrounds. This mission is embodied in the Noba project.

Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials. The goals of Noba are three-fold:

- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award- winning university teachers.

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