

Psychology 270 - Fall, 1999

Cultural Psychology

Instructor:

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Introduction

This class will explore how culture influences human thought. To what extent are our identities and ways of thinking common to people around the world or unique to our cultural environments? This is a big question – a difficult question – and we will be investigating it from a variety of different approaches. **This class has a heavy reading load** and we will read original articles from a variety of disciplines, including social psychology, cultural psychology, anthropology, and sociology. You will be expected to read the materials **BEFORE** we discuss them in class, and to actively participate in the classroom discussion. We will explore topics such as how culture and self make each other up, what methodologies we can use to study culture in psychology, how various ways of thinking differ across cultures, and what happens when different cultures collide.

Required Texts:

Nisbett, R. E., & Cohen, D. (1996). Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Bulkpack.

The book is available from the bookstore and the bulkpack from Campus Copies.

Topics

Culture and Human Nature

Everyone must read an excerpt from one of the following ethnographies:

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1976). Witchcraft, oracles, and magic among the Azande. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Herdt, G. (1987). The Sambia: Ritual and gender in New Guinea. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Holmberg, A. R. (1969). Nomads of the long bow: The Siriono of Eastern Bolivia. New York: American Museum of Natural History.

Lutz, C. A. (1988). Unnatural emotions: Everyday sentiments on a Micronesian atoll and their challenge to Western theory. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brown, D. E. (1991) Human Universals. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chapter 6. The universal people. Pp. 130-141).

Geertz, C. (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures. (pp. 33-54). New York: Basic Books.

Shweder, R. A. (1991). Cultural Psychology: What is it? In R. A. Shweder (Ed.), Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology. (pp. 73-97). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sears, D. (1986). College sophomores in the laboratory: Influences of a narrow data base on social psychology's view of human nature. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51, 515-530.

Culture and Socialization

Shweder, R. A., Jensen, L. A., & Goldstein, W. M. (1995). Who sleeps by whom revisited: A method for extracting the moral goods implicit in practice. In Goodnow et al. (eds.). Cultural practices as contexts for development. New Directions in Child Development, 67, (Pp. 21-39). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Brislin, R. (1993). Formal educational experiences. In Understanding Culture's Influence on Behavior. (Chapter 5: pp. 131-168). Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Family Dinner Interview Paper – Due October 5.

The American Case

Weber, M. (1958). Religious affiliation and social stratification, and The spirit of capitalism. The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (T. Parsons, Trans.) (Chapters I & II, pp. 35-78). New York: Scribner.

Lipset, S. M. (1996). American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword. (pp. 31-76). New York: W. M. Norton & Company.

Reaction Paper 1 – Due October 12.

Methodological Issues

Nisbett, R. E., & Cohen, D. (1996). Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Hofstede, G. (1982). Dimensions of national cultures. In R. Rath, H. S. Asthana, D. Sinha, & J. B. P. Sinha (eds.) Diversity and unity in cross-cultural psychology (Pp. 173-187). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets and Zeitlinger.

Peng, K., Nisbett, R. E., & Wong, N. Y. C. (1997). Validity problems comparing values across cultures and possible solutions. Psychological Methods, 2, 329-344.

Individualism/Collectivism

Triandis, H. C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. Psychological Review, 96, 506-520.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Cultural variation in the self-concept. In G. R. Goethals & J. Strauss (Eds.), Multidisciplinary perspectives on the self. (pp. 18-48). New York: Springer-Verlag.

The Self-Concept

Sethi, S., Lepper, M. R., & Ross, L. (in press). Independence from whom? Interdependence with whom? Cultural perspectives on ingroups versus outgroups. In D. Miller & D. Prentice (Eds.), Cultural Divides. New York: Sage.

Baumeister, R. F. (1987). How the self became a problem: A psychological review of historical research. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *52*, 163-176.

Cousins, S. D. (1989). Culture and selfhood in Japan and the U.S. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *56*, 124-131.

Self and Motivation

Heine, S. J., Lehman, D. R., Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1999). Is there a universal need for positive self-regard? Psychological Review, *106*, xxx-xxx.

Morling, B., Kitayama, S., & Miyamoto, Y. (1999). Control and adjustment as two modes of constructing social situations: A comparison between Japan and the United States. Manuscript in preparation. Muhlenberg College.

Reaction Paper 2 -- Due November 9.

Culture and Cognition

Morris, M., & Peng, K. (1994). Culture and cause: American and Chinese attributions for social and physical events. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *67*, 949-971.

Peng, K., & Nisbett, R. E. (1999). Culture, dialectics, and reasoning about contradiction. American Psychologist, *54*, 1-12.

Culture and Morality

Haidt, J., Koller, S. H., & Dias, M. G. (1993). Affect, culture, and morality, or Is it wrong to eat your dog? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *65*, 613-628.

Miller, J. G., & Bersoff, D. M. (1992). Culture and moral development: How are conflicts between justice and interpersonal responsibilities resolved? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *62*, 541-554.

Jensen, L. A. (1997). Culture wars: American moral divisions across the adult lifespan. Journal of Adult Development, *4*, 107-121.

Culture and Relationships

Fiske, A. P., Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., & Nisbett, R. E. (1997). The cultural matrix of social psychology. In D. T. Gilbert, S. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Ed.), Handbook of social psychology (4th edition) (pp. 950-954). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Dion, K. K., & Dion, K. L. (1993). Individualistic and collectivistic perspectives on gender and the cultural context of love and intimacy. Journal of Social Issues, *49* (3), 53-69.

When Different Cultures Collide

Phinney, J. S. (1996). When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean? American Psychologist, 51, 918-927.

Steele, C. (1992, April). Race and the schooling of Black Americans. The Atlantic Monthly, 68-80.

Uba, L. (1994). Ethnic identity. Asian Americans: Personality Patterns, Identity, and Mental Health. (Chapter 5, pp. 89-118). New York: The Guilford Press.

Reaction Paper 3 – Due Dec 9.

Final Paper – Due Dec. 16.

Assignments

Family Dinner Interview Paper.

The first assignment is for you to interview someone from a different cultural background than yourself about the typical setting of their dinners with their family. You will contrast their experiences with your own in a short paper (5-6 pages).

Reaction Papers

You are responsible for 3 brief reaction papers. The reaction papers should be short, between 2 - 3 double-spaced pages, and should include ideas of yours that **GO BEYOND** the material presented in the readings. You can discuss future directions for research, how the material relates to other material that you know, criticism of the readings, cultural experiences that you have that relate to the material, underlying big questions and assumptions, etc. Do **NOT** summarize the readings in your reaction papers. Each reaction paper should focus on a topic from the preceding set of readings.

Final Paper

There will be a final paper for you to write on one of a variety of topics that will be given to you later in the term. The paper should incorporate material from the readings, as well as include material from other sources. It should be about 10-20 pages long.

Presentation of Readings

You will be required to present one or two of the readings to the class at some point in the term. These presentations should be very brief (ideally around 3-5 minutes), and should simply summarize the major points of the readings. The purpose of these presentations is to quickly refresh everyone's memory about the key issues before we start the discussions.

Evaluation

The breakdown for your grade will be as follows:

Family Dinner Interview Paper	10%
Reaction Papers (3 papers; 10% each)	30%
Final Paper	40%
Class Participation (regular attendance, keeping up with the readings, presentation of readings, participating in class discussions)	20%