Welcome to Unit 2.

Agenda

In this lesson we will...

- Examine the concept of culture:
  - Definitions
  - Facets
  - Components
  - Types

Audio:
In order to become cross-culturally competent in our work and interactions with individuals and families from diverse backgrounds, we need to understand the concept of culture: what it is, who has it, how do you get it, and what it might look like. Often American students who are Anglo-European by descent say they don't have a culture or say their culture is “American.” Everybody has a culture, and we'll look at yours. So here is what we'll do today: first we will look at three definitions of culture which are related but focus on slightly different aspects of culture. So we’ll look at those. Second, there are many facets of culture that include both material and nonmaterial components and we’ll talk about those. Third, we’ll look more closely at the material and non-material components of culture. And fourth, we’ll discuss various types of cultures. So let’s get started.

What is culture?

- A customary manner in which human groups learn to organize their behavior and thought in relationship to their environment

The first definition of culture is one that Michael Howard uses in his book, *Contemporary cultural anthropology*, and he defines culture as, “A customary manner in which human groups learn to organize their behavior and thought in relation to their environment.” So, it’s a way people learn to organize what they think and what they do.

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What is Culture? (Cont.)
- A set of rules shared by members of a society which, when acted upon, produce behavior that falls within the range that members consider acceptable


**Audio:**
Second, William Haviland in his book called *Cultural anthropology* defines culture as, “A set of rules shared by members of a society, which when acted upon, produce behavior that falls within the range that members consider acceptable.” So culture is a set of shared rules of behavior that is acceptable to the group.

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What is Culture? (Cont.)
- The way of life of a group of people.
- Everything that people do and believe that identifies them as members of a group and which distinguishes that group from other groups.


**Audio:**
Third, in her book *Breaking the ice: A guide to understanding people from other cultures*, Daisy Kabagarama defines culture as, “The way of life of a group of people,” and “Everything that people do and believe that identifies them as members of a group and which distinguishes that group from other groups.” So for her, culture is a way of life, a world-view and behavior that identifies and distinguishes people as a group. These are three similar definitions of culture, as we said, that focus on particular beliefs, behavior, a way of being in the world that distinguished one group from another. Now let’s look at the multiple aspects of culture.

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The Many Facets of Culture
This model of “The Many Facets of Culture” is adapted from Kabagarama. There are many sides of culture that include both material and non-material components. These include the symbols of culture, the values, beliefs, emotions, laws, attitudes, norms, perceptions, aspirations, and material possessions. The double arrows in the model between culture and these various facets, say the basic values people hold who are part of that culture, means that culture is dynamic and ever-changing. Culture shapes values and values shape culture. So, there are a number of two-way streets between a particular culture and the various parts of that culture.

Audio:
While culture at the moment is our focus, let’s not forget that culture is only one of the characteristics that determine individuals and families’ attitudes, values, beliefs, and ways of behaving. As the authors of our texts remind us, families and individual family members are also part of a larger sociocultural and sociopolitical context. As such, values and beliefs are also affected by other important political and structural variables such as socioeconomic
status or social class, educational level, the degree of affiliation and identity with various social groups, the languages spoken in the family and the degree of fluency, the length of time a person or family has been in the United States, the reasons for emigrating from their home countries to the United States, and institutionalized racism.

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The Many Facets of Culture

![Diagram of Culture Components]

**Audio:**  
So it’s important that we not make assumptions about a family’s concerns, priorities, and resources. While culture may be considered as the personality of a group, each member within the group also has a personality that must be considered. So the bottom line is that while culture can give us insights about a particular group, we must get to know each family or family member with whom we work as individuals as well. With that said now, let's look at the components of culture.

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Components of Culture
- Material components
- Nonmaterial components


**Audio:**  
Culture has two major components: the material components and the non-material components.

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Components of Culture (Cont.)

- Material components
  - Tangible items
  - Symbols

Audio:
Material components of culture include tangible items and symbols. Some tangible items for our culture might be: cars, watches, TV sets, cell phones, washers, dryers, and that sort of thing. Symbols in our culture include the flag, the bald eagle, wedding ring, and things like that. So you might think about what adjectives you would use to describe your culture. What are some of the tangible items in your culture? What are the symbols in your culture, for example religious symbols such as a cross or a menorah.

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Components of Culture (Cont.)
- Nonmaterial components – (Intangible)
  - Values: characterize what is desirable to the culture
  - Norms: rules that guide behavior
    - Proscriptive – what you can’t do
    - Prescriptive – what you can do

Audio:
Nonmaterial components are the intangibles of a culture: values, beliefs, attitudes. The first is values, which characterize what is desirable to the culture. Values of one culture may clash with the values of another culture. A value of “individual achievement” for example in the west may clash with values of eastern and Asian cultures where concern for the group, social relationships, helping others is emphasized. A second is norms, and norms are rules that guide behavior. These can be proscriptive, what you can’t do, for example in our culture, it’s usually not acceptable for a many to wear a skirt. In Saudi Arabia, it’s unacceptable for women to drive. And then prescriptive norms are what you can do. For example in Scotland it’s acceptable for a man to wear a kilt. In the U.S., it’s perfectly acceptable for women to drive. Non-material components of culture are complex because they are not tangible – they are pervasive and affect daily life. Values, beliefs, aspirations are hidden from the naked eye. How do we know what’s beautiful in a culture? For example thin in one culture might mean beauty while in another culture thin might mean sickly or unhealthy.

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Components of Culture (Cont.)
- Nonmaterial components
  - Beliefs: dictate what is right/wrong
o Emotions: intense mental states that arise subjectively
o Attitudes: beliefs, behaviors, feelings, and outlook on life

Audio:
A third nonmaterial component is beliefs. Beliefs dictate what is right and wrong, for example, in the U.S. we may believe in freedom of speech, press, association, but the Chinese may believe that these freedoms are highly divisive and dangerous. Mutual dependence, compliance, subordination of one’s will to that of the family may be core beliefs in Chinese culture. Beliefs are the core of forming the world-view, for example the idea of rugged individuals in one culture and the belief of collectivism in another culture form a way of being, of viewing the world. A fourth nonmaterial component of culture is emotions, which are channels for self-expression. When and how to show emotion is regulated by culture. Many cultures allow females, for example, less restraint in showing emotions, for example crying than it does for men. Kissing on a college campus, for example, is acceptable for the most part in the United States, but taboo in Japanese and Arab cultures. Fifth, attitudes. Attitudes are beliefs, behaviors, feelings, and outlook on life. The dominant U.S. culture has a futuristic attitude about life, for example, “I’ll see you tomorrow.” Many other cultures have what some see as a fatalistic attitude – “I’ll see you tomorrow, God willing.”

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Components of Culture (Cont.)
- Nonmaterial components
  - Aspirations: goals, dreams
  - Laws; institutionalized social customs

Audio:
A sixth nonmaterial component of culture is aspirations – goals and dreams. If a culture stresses family and cooperation, goals and dreams will likely focus on what’s good for the family or organization. If a culture stresses competition and individualism, the focus of a family’s or a person’s goals and dreams may be to become monetarily successful. A seventh component of culture are laws. These are institutionalized social customs. A social custom in one culture may be law in another, for example a marriage license in the United States is legal bond, while in other cultures approval of elders may be what matters to seal a marriage. So you might want to think about what are some of the facets and components of your culture. Now that we’ve looked at facets and components of culture, let’s consider some types of culture.

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Types of Culture
- Racial and Ethnic Cultures
Race: large groups of people who are distinguished from each other mainly by their physical appearance

Ethnic group: people sharing a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic, and/or cultural heritage

Audio:

First, let's look at racial and ethnic cultures. Race. Race is historically associated with biological features – physical characteristics, such as color, eye, nose, mouth shape that distinguishes groups of people from each other. Now seen by social scientists as a “social construction,” with different meanings in different societies and at different times in history. For example, the “one-drop-rule” in American society that designated who would be considered and treated as “Negro” and upon which Jim Crow laws of this country were based. Ethnicity refers to a person’s cultural heritage, for example language, religion, and other values and beliefs: dress, food, music, traditions, holidays and the like. Frequently, but not always derived from a territorial association, such as Italians from Italy, Australians from Australia, Brazilians from Brazil. Both race and ethnicity are now seen by social scientists as “social constructions,” with different meanings in different societies.

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Types of Culture (Cont.)
- Cultures of gender and sexual orientation
- Social Cultures – groups of people who share a common interest or activity

Audio:

A second type of culture is that of gender and sexual orientation. A third type is social cultures – groups of people who share a common interest or activity, such as an interest and/or activity in a certain sport.

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Types of Culture (Cont.)
- Occupational Cultures – based on involvement in a common profession
- Organizational Cultures – based on involvement in some larger organization

[Images of men wearing kilts, people observing a swim meet, and people in church]

Audio:

Occupational cultures – based on involvement in a common profession, such as lawyers, loggers, miners, teachers, doctors. Fifth, organizational cultures – based on involvement in some larger organization, such as organized religions.
Dominant/Minority Cultures
- Dominant Culture
  - In a society with several ethnic cultures, one is usually dominant and sets the norms for language and cultural expectations
  - Disproportionately greater political and economic power

Audio:
Sixth is dominant culture, and we’ve talked about this. In a society with several ethnic cultures, one is usually dominant and sets the norms for language and cultural expectations. And the dominant culture disproportionately has greater political and economic power. The dominant cultural group in a given society may or may not be in the minority numerically. In this country as we’ve said, the dominant culture is white, male, Christian, and heterosexual.

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Dominant/Minority Cultures (Cont.)
- Minority Culture – the culture of a group that is subordinated socially, politically, and/or economically

Audio:
A seventh cultural type is the minority culture, and we’ve talked about this. The culture of a group that is subordinated socially, politically, and/or economically. This group may or may not be in a minority numerically.

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Dominant/Minority Cultures (Cont.)
- Assimilation – the push for the minority culture to become more like the dominant culture
- Acculturation – different cultures adapt to each other
- Interactional – Transactional

Audio:
Let’s look at some of the important terms associated with dominant and minority cultures. First is assimilation. Assimilation is the push for the minority culture to become more like the dominant culture – the idea that the U.S. is a “melting pot” where lots of different cultures are melting into one new and homogeneous society. Everyone assimilates into the dominant culture. The second concept is that of acculturation. Acculturation is where different cultures adapt to each other. This recognizes the many and varied contributions of all members of society. A third is interactional – transactional. This is a situational approach that examines the relationships between individuals and the larger society. Cultural modifications and mixing will occur as groups recognize value in each other’s practices. And
this type is the focus in our Lynch and Hanson text. The approach views each child and family as individuals with unique characteristics, strengths and needs. These characteristics are dynamic, constantly changing, and evolving.

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Possible Reflections Questions
- What is my culture?
- What are my own values & beliefs?
- How might my culture, values & beliefs influence my interactions with people who are culturally different?
- How can I increase my cultural competence?

Audio:
As we complete our discussion about culture and its facets and components, here are some reflection questions that you might want to consider about your own life. What is my culture? What are my own values and beliefs? How might my culture, values and beliefs influence my interactions with people who are culturally different? How can I increase my cultural competence?

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TAKE CARE AND STAY SAFE!

[Image of cartoon children]

Audio:
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