Title: What is My Culture

Narrator: When you were posed this question, what was the first thing that came to your mind? Did you immediately start thinking about your racial ethnic origin, or nations of origin, your spirituality or religion, your family and societal beliefs, or did you go blank and say to yourself “self, how do I answer that question? What does that even mean? What am I supposed to say?”

When many of us are first confronted with thinking about our own personal culture, we are often times caught a bit off guard, as we have not spent much time thinking about it before. I can recall when I was in graduate school in a class not unlike this one and my instructor asked this very same question and mentioned that we were going to share responses aloud. I was awestruck. I had no idea what to say. Many of my peers immediately started scribbling notes on their papers, but I was at a complete loss for words. I knew that I was of multinational descent, primarily from Western Europe, but I really had no idea beyond that what my culture meant to me.

If we were to think about the ways in which people are different from one another, and the reasons that people and societies have developed differently based on culture, then we must first start with ourselves and think about what our culture means to us. If you are able to respond quickly and easily to this question; excellent. I’m glad that you’ve been able to get acquainted with your cultural background to some extent. But if you had trouble answering this question, as I once did, then it’s time during this class to really start thinking about who you are and what values and beliefs are important to you.

Title: Introduction

Narrator: We started this course by just viewing the few ways in which people can actually differ from one another. Were you surprised by any of the images? Did any move you? Disturb you? Anger you? Sadden you? The dimensions selected represent the ways in which most people think that people differ; racial ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, but there are many more facets to being human than just these main ways.

What about the manner in which we express emotion, the development of personality, our unique temperament, ideas about health and wellness, ability to solve problems, our thoughts about the importance of nuclear extended families? As you can see, there are myriad aspects of our respective cultural backgrounds that go into making us the people we are today, and many of us have actually not stopped to think about the relationship between our cultural background and the people we’ve become at this point in our lives.

Simply put; our culture, our background, our heritage have shaped us in important and meaningful ways with or without our conscious awareness.
**Title:** The Four “Forces” in Psychology

**Slide Content:**
- Psychodynamic
- Behavioral
- Humanistic/existential
- Multicultural/transpersonal

**Narrator:** No other specialty is better equipped to study culture than psychology. Remember from your reading that psychology has two main goals; number one: to create a body of knowledge about the similarities, differences and tendencies of people, and two: to use the aggregated body of knowledge to improve the lives of all people.

Consider for a moment Sigmund Freud’s early work on psychopathology. Certainly today we take many of his observations as a matter of fact. But when he first described and labeled hysterical reactions in some of his patients, this was an exceedingly novel idea. An idea others had not postulated before him. Given that psychology is a fairly young science, we often talk about the four forces that have governed the development of the field from the beginning of psychology as a science with the founding of the psychology laboratory in Leipzig Germany in 1879 to today.

The early driving force in psychology was the Freudian psychodynamic viewpoint in which the intentionality of the human being was discovered primarily through unconscious drives and motivations. However, after John Watson, B.F. Skinner and other prominent behaviorists conclusively demonstrated that humans respond to stimulus response relationships just like other animals; remember Pavlov’s dogs and Little Albert for example, a second force started to govern the movement within the field.

The second force in psychology was the behavioral viewpoint in which the intentionality of the human being was covered primarily by reinforcement contingencies, or lack thereof, from the surrounding environment. However, as researchers began to understand and research the importance of memory and started to recognize that some behaviors existed independent of external reinforcement or conditioning, suggesting that some actions are based on intrinsic motivation, cognitivism began to overtake behaviorism as the guiding force in the field.

In the 1950’s and 1960’s researchers and theorists again began emphasizing the importance of human natured intentionality and action, but this time rather than conceptualizing human nature as bad or pathological, theorists began to suggest that humans naturally gravitate towards health, wellness, and self-fulfillment.

Researchers such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers heavily influenced the thinking of the time, and this third force in psychology was the humanistic existential movement. The final four scouting the field started to rise to prominence in the late 1960’s and 1970’s when researchers began to suggest that culture and individual differences played a more significant role in human nature than previously thought. Guided by such researchers as Derald Wing Sue and others, this multicultural or transpersonal fourth force has resulted in theorists exploring the unique influence of culture on human behavior, and research has suggested that we must recognize that individuals from different cultures often have different world views, values, and beliefs.

**Slide 4**

**Title:** Cross-Cultural Research in Psychology

**Slide Content:**
- Critical Thinking Point: Given the critiques of the psychology research literature, is what we know about human behavior true for all humans regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, class or lifestyle?
- Why or why not?
Narrator: When learning about the broad field of psychology it is imperative to bear in mind that most early theories of psychology were developed primarily by white, European-descent men and tested on white, European-descent college students. In fact, researchers have criticized much of the psychological research literature because many scholars have elected to use samples of convenience. That is, college students, as the participants in much of the theory-building research in the field. Indeed, we can feel confident that the research generated is likely true for college students and white European college students more specifically, but generalizability beyond those groups is problematic.

Critical thinking point: Given the critiques of the psychology research literature, is what we know about human behavior true for all humans regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, class or lifestyle? Why or why not?

Slide 5

Title: Cross-Cultural Research in Psychology

Slide Content:
- Are noted differences the result of:
  - Culture?
  - Physiology?
  - Environment?
- What causes this difference:
  - Genes?
  - Culture?
  - Access to opportunities?
  - Socialization?

Narrator: Research using a cross-cultural paradigm is inherently different than much of the previous research in the field. Cross-cultural research intentionally includes representative groups of individuals from various racial ethnic and cultural backgrounds so that differences between and among groups can be detected.

Take, for instance, a heavily researched area of psychology; the assessment of human intelligence. Very early studies suggested that differences in intelligence in men and women were the result of physical differences in neural anatomy. Later research has debunked these theories and the notion that there are differences between IQ scores in men and women, but certainly current research has suggested differences in certain intellectual abilities of men and women. For instance, each gender tends to excel in certain intellectual functions but overall, IQ is about even.

Are noted differences the result of culture, physiology, environment? Also consider the influence of racial ethnic background on intelligence. Research in the field of psychology has found that IQ scores differ by about one standard deviation or about 15 IQ points where an IQ of 100 is considered average, between whites and blacks with whites tending to score higher.

What causes this difference? Genes? Culture? Access to opportunities? Socialization? A controversial 1994 book by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray entitled The Bell Curve suggested that differences in intellectual functioning between whites and blacks were the result of both genes and sociocultural influences. As you can imagine, this book and its contentions resulted in a media frenzy. So much so that the American Psychological Association investigated the claims in the book. At present, the official report from the American Psychological Association task force in 1996, published in the American Psychologist, simply stated that there are differences in IQ scores between whites and blacks, but at present we do not know what causes differences, but they do not appear to be the influence of genes, environment, or the construction of the test measures themselves.
End of Presentation