Title: Culture and Problem Solving

Narrator: The manner in which we go about solving problems is influenced by our cultural background. Researchers have contended that logical reasoning (for example employing a scientific method to solving a complex problem) is likely an artifact of education and not a basic skill that all people possess.

Think about how you actually go about solving a difficult problem.

Do you employ a logical, rational, and scientific approach to the situation?

Do you abstractly think of possible hypotheses to test or ways to manipulate objects in the problem?

Or, do you use trial and error to solve such problems?

Researchers have suggested that problem solving can depend on the context of the problem and whether the individual solving the problem is familiar with the context.

For instance, most people educated in the United States in the last 50 years or more could solve complex addition, subtraction or multiplication tasks by using a handheld calculator.

However, if you were seated in a room and given an abacus (an ancient machine used to count), would you know how to use it or where to begin to solve those math problems?

Unless your culture contained training on an abacus, you likely would not be able to use the machine nor learn from trial and error how to even solve the problem. Thus, when we ask people to solve problems that are not indigenous to their cultural experience, it may be very difficult or impossible for them to do so.

Title: Culture and Time

Narrator: In the perspective section of this module, you were asked to indicate how long you would be willing to wait for someone who was running late before you called him or her.

Research has indicated that cultures vary in their emphasis on punctuality and time orientation, and these differences are often reflected in how people in those cultures ultimately behave.

A study by Hofstede is one of the largest studies of temporal orientation across cultures.

In this study, Hofstede differentiated between short-term oriented cultures (those cultures in which members act more in the present, here and now) and long-term oriented cultures (those cultures in which gratification is delayed and thoughts are future-oriented).

Which culture do you think would describe contemporary American culture?
Given the fast-paced lifestyle led by most Americans at this point in time, long-term oriented culture might best describe contemporary American culture.

Think about your life and the life of those around you.

Do you find that you are constantly rushing to complete one task so that you can begin another?

Have you had the experience of having to rise early or stay up late to finish work or have time for your family?

Does it seem like there is never enough time to “do it all?”

The emphasis we place on hard work and time orientation can have a profound effect on mental, emotional and physical health, and it can vary in myriad ways.

For instance, workers in French culture typically work no more than 40 hours a week and receive six to eight weeks of vacation a year, much more than the 2 weeks received by most Americans.

Similarly, some cultures actually close shops, schools, and workplaces in the middle of the day so that workers and families can reconnect, share a meal, and ostensibly be more productive later in the day.

Thus, many cultures do not place the same emphasis on time orientation, and living in a long-term oriented versus short-term oriented culture can have a significant impact on our physical health and longevity.

Slide 3

Title: Culture and Intelligence

Slide Content:
[image of a computer generated picture of a human and digits running across a screen]

Narrator: How would you define intelligence?

Think for a moment about someone you have known who you considered to be very intelligent. What characteristics did he or she possess?

Was this person "all around gifted" or did he or she have significant strengths in one area and weaknesses in another?

For well over 100 years, researchers have struggled with the definition and measurement of intelligence. Sir Francis Galton, one of the first researchers to struggle with measuring intelligence, believed that heredity played a significant role in determining intellectual functioning. As you can imagine, Galton was significantly influenced by his cousin Charles Darwin’s book Origin of Species.

In fact, he is the first researcher to use the terms nature and nurture to describe the differences between people inheriting mental ability and developing it through interaction with the environment. Subsequent work has continued to focus on whether intelligence is a biologically determined characteristic or whether intelligence is reflected in the unique interplay of both heredity and environment.

Pay careful attention to the research findings presented on both the nature and nurture. This debate has been a contentious one in the field, one that is often emotionally charged and filled with problematic methods of research. Some of the most promising research, however, has involved the definition of intelligence as much more than verbal, mathematical or spatial abilities and includes intelligence in areas such as bodily-kinesthetic abilities, interpersonal abilities, verbal-linguistic abilities, logical-mathematical
abilities, visual-spatial abilities, musical abilities, and others. Indeed, taking a much broader perspective on intelligence has been the most important gain of over one hundred years of research on this important but controversial topic.

End of Presentation