

Exploring Culture: Part 1

OBJECTIVE

To understand that we all have a culture and that our culture influences the way we look at and interpret the world around us.

GROUP AGREEMENTS

Remind participants of the Group Agreements

INTRODUCTION (5-10 minutes)

Let participants know that today we're going to explore the topic of culture. Give each participant a sticky note and give them 1-2 minutes to jot down aspects of their own culture that are meaningful to them. They can jot down as many answers as they want. When time is up, invite people to share their responses.

Ask Participants:

1. Did you find it difficult to come up with answers to jot down on the sticky note? Why or why not?
2. What do you see your culture as?

VIDEO (10- 15 minutes)

Watch: How Do We Understand Our Own Culture By Tom Verghese

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouhStVMCpmY>

Afterwards discuss:

1. Tom describes culture as: The lens through which we look out at the world. Why is it important for us to grow our awareness of our own culture?
2. At the end of the video Tom says "When we look at the behaviors of another culture, we view it through our own cultural values, our norms, our biases - because we interpret behavior in another culture based on our own understanding of it." What potential pitfalls can this lead to? How can we seek to understand the cultural context of the behaviors of others?

REFLECTION (15-20min)

Distribute copies of the [Iceberg Concept of Culture](#)⁴ image or pull it up on a screen. In the 1970's Edward T. Hall developed the iceberg concept of culture². From the surface only about 10% of an iceberg is visible, the other 90% is below the surface. Similarly, culture has some aspects that are immediately visible (surface culture). However, many aspects of a particular culture may be more difficult to see and are learned over time (deep culture). Surface culture usually includes behaviors, customs, traditions and things you can see, whereas deep culture touches on values, beliefs, attitudes, morals, codes of conduct, and other less visible aspects of culture. Consider using the image to pull out examples of both surface culture and deep culture. Ask the group:

1. I want you to look back at the responses you wrote down earlier about what aspects or parts of your culture are most meaningful to you. Where would you say your responses fall when you look at this image? Are they part of surface culture or deep culture? As you look at the iceberg image, do you typically view the elements of deep culture as aspects of culture? Why or why not?
2. We just talked about how we interpret the behaviors of others through our own cultural lens. Often we are interacting with surface culture but the deep culture provides the meaning. So we might experience a particular custom or behavior of another individual to be rude, or respectful, or inconsiderate or gracious based on our own values and beliefs and morals. How can we check our assumptions of others? And how do we balance impact vs. intent?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Valuing Diversity: Developing a Deeper Understanding of All Young Children's Behavior:<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/dec2019/valuing-diversity-developing-understanding-behavior>
- Family Engagement and Cultural Perspectives: Applying Strengths-based Attitudes https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/family_engagement_and_cultural_perspectives-508_2-20-18.pdf
- Understanding the Influence of Culture on Caregiving Practices...From the Inside Out<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/understanding-the-influence-of-culture-on-caregiving-practices-from-the-inside-out/>

EVALUATION & CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS

1. The Strengthening Diversity Community of Practice would love to hear your thoughts on how well the content supported your learning. Please complete the [PD Mini Feedback Form](#). A link to the training certificate will be made available upon submission. Facilitators are encouraged to provide participants with the link to the feedback form.
2. Participants who are a part of the Wisconsin Registry can receive credit for completing a PD Mini. Refer to the [Registry Credit Instruction Document](#) for further details.

FACILITATOR SUGGESTIONS

1. The questions are just ideas. Feel free to follow the lead of the conversation and spend more time in one section and less time in another.
2. If participants are having a hard time identifying meaningful aspects of their own culture because they struggle to know how to define culture, encourage them to use the term broadly for the purposes of the initial activity. They can identify aspects of American culture, or midwestern culture, or meaningful elements of their ethnic heritage or even aspects of their individual family culture. Basically whatever comes to mind when they think of what their culture is.
3. Try to carry this theme through the entire conversation: we all have a culture and we interpret the cultures of others through our own cultural values and beliefs.

Sources:

1. PBS Learning Media: Iceberg Concept of Culture Images and PDFs
<https://thinktv.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/a353a4ba-cd56-4999-97dd-0e40e11a7211/iceberg-concept-of-culture-images-and-pdfs/>
2. Peace Corps: Short explanation of “The Culture Iceberg” theory
https://adeaconsmusing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/151015.ucc_culture.iceberg.pdf