Understanding and Measuring Cultural Concepts

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What is “culture?”

• “I understand culture as an amalgamation of human activity, production, thought, and belief systems. . .

• We ascribe notions of culture to people who are a part of a nation-state, an ethnic group. . .

• [and] learn about static images of cultural histories, customs, and traditional ways of being. However, in reality, culture is always changing” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75).
Advance Organizer: Topics

I. Your Interests in Cultural Concepts or Measures
II. Our Interests – Short Term and Long Term
III. Concerns about Validity and Process
IV. Examples of Cultural Concepts
V. Looking at Some Specific Measures
VI. More Questions than Answers! Time for Sharing Views & Experiences
I. Your Interests in Cultural Concepts and Measures

• Why are you interested in understanding and measuring cultural concepts?
• Any particular cultural concepts or specific measures of interest to you?
II. Our Interests – Short Term and Long Term
Our short term interest:

- We are working on a grant titled *The Role of Native Language and Culture in Decreasing Discipline Problems and Increasing Academic Achievement for American Indian/Alaska Native Students*

- Funded by U.S. Department of Education/Institute of Education Sciences.
- National Indian Education Study (NIES) survey
  http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nies/
  which is linked to
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also called “the nation’s report card” because it is an academic achievement test
  http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/
National Indian Education Study (NIES)survey, continued

• We’re looking at questions used to measure a concept called “Native Language and Culture” (NLC)

• in the context of making instruction more culturally appropriate

• for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students.
An example from the current NIES Teacher Background Questionnaire:

• How often do you integrate materials about the following topics into your reading/language arts lessons?
   a. American Indian or Alaska Native culture or history
   b. Current issues affecting American Indian or Alaska Native people or communities

Our long term interest:

• To assist all involved in creating culturally responsive education for the well-being of all students.
III. Concerns about Validity and Process

• What is the difference between “understanding” and “measuring?”

• We often measure to evaluate efforts to improve something.

• What if the measure(s) we use do NOT capture important aspects of the cultural concept of interest?
Four famous facets of assessment validity:

a) evidence for interpretations
b) evidence of relevance and utility
c) consequences of values implied by interpretations
d) consequences of actual use

(Messick, 1995)

These can be useful in making decisions about which measures to use.
Questions for the Process of Selecting Good Measures for Your Purpose

1. What is the concept of interest?
2. Why do you want to measure it?
4. How can you get that information? [method of data collection – pros & cons of different types]
5. What are you going to do with the results? [Back to 2nd question but how to make the connection?]
• “If the classroom instruction and social organization are compatible with the students’ cultural cognitive style, this may enhance their learning and achievement” (Bui & Fagan, 2013, p. 60, emphasis added).

• “The culturally based education hypothesis is not an alternative to a high-standard academic curriculum” (Demmert & Towner, 2003, p. 17).
Do you want to show change over time as a result of an intervention?

• Cross-sectional data will NOT do that.
• “Such studies offer a snapshot of a single moment in time; they do not consider what happens before or after the snapshot is taken. Therefore, we can’t know for sure if our daily walkers had low cholesterol levels before taking up their exercise regimes, or if the behaviour of daily walking helped to reduce cholesterol levels that previously were high.”

http://www.iwh.on.ca/wrmb/cross-sectional-vs-longitudinal-studies
Do you want to show change over time as a result of an intervention? Continued

Correlational data will NOT do that.

“Correlational research is not causal research. In other words, we can not make statements concerning cause and effect on the basis of this type of research. There are two major reasons why we can not make cause and effect statements. First, we don’t know the direction of the cause. Second, a third variable may be involved of which we are not aware.”

http://www2.webster.edu/~woolfml/statmethods.html
IV. Examples of Cultural Concepts

a) Cultural competence

b) School climate as culture

c) An individual’s culture(s)

d) Culture of a specific tribe, nation, community, or other sub-group

e) Teaching that is “culturally responsive”
“Cultural competence refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75).
School Climate as a Culture?

• Ideally – Unifying students around an agreed upon way of getting along and working toward common academic and other goals?

• Conversely, we have heard some complaining about a “rape culture” at their university: http://www.eugeneweekly.com/20140710/news-features/fighting-rape-culture

• Are these understandable and measurable concepts? How does school culture relate to an individual’s culture?
School Climate as a Culture, continued

- “At grade 4 in 2011, AI/AN students attending schools in suburban locations scored higher in both reading and mathematics than their peers attending rural schools.
- At grade 8 in 2011, AI/AN students attending schools in city and suburban locations scored higher in reading than their peers attending rural schools.”

School Climate as a Culture, continued

• “In 2011, almost half of AI/AN students attended rural schools. . . almost 70 percent of non-AI/AN students attended schools in city or suburban locations . . . while around 30 percent of AI/AN students did so”

• Retrieved from the NCES / NIES report online:

• However, more recent reports are different . . .
School Climate as a Culture, continued

• “Over 60% of American Indians now reside in urban or suburban areas” (Eitle, Johnson-Jennings, & Eitle, 2013, p. 1470)

• “67% of AI/AN people live in urban areas” (Friesen et al., 2012, p. 87).
School Climate as a Culture, continued

• Urban classrooms often have students from several different cultures.
• Can this diversity blend well, like an orchestra where differences are valued?
An Individual’s Culture(s)

• Pride and Participation in Heritage Culture
• Level of Assimilation in Another Culture
An Individual’s Culture(s), continued

- “The number of mixed-race American Indian/Alaska Native children is increasing with over 40% . . . reporting at least one additional racial identification” (Eitle et al., 2013, p. 1471).
Teaching that is “Culturally Responsive”

• “Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106, emphasis added).
Teaching that is “Culturally Responsive” continued

• “Diverse” – often used to mean the students have one culture and the teacher has a different culture – like a White teacher on an Indian reservation

• Or it can refer to a classroom made up of students from several different – perhaps many different – ethnic / racial backgrounds

• How is “culturally responsive teaching” different in these different situations?
Culture of a Specific Tribe, Nation, Community, or Other Sub-group

• Different regions of the country may be said to have different cultures – Oregon is more “laid back” than New York, more liberal than Texas.

• We sometimes speak of a “youth culture.”

• Within broad ethnic / racial cultures are more specific sub-groups . . .
Culture of a Specific Tribe, Nation, Community, or Other Sub-group, continued

- “Native American” -- Navajo, Inuit, Lakota, etc.
- “Hispanic / Latino” – persons who trace their origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spanish speaking Central and South America countries, and other Spanish cultures.
- “White” -- having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- “Asian American” -- having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.
Culture of a Specific Tribe, Nation, Community, or Other Subgroup, continued

• The subgroup may be very different from what is considered the norm or average for the larger category.

• For example, a study in Canada of youth suicide rates for the “First Nation” indigenous population as a whole was very high in comparison to other racial groups.

• When specific bands were compared, there were significant differences, and it was related to what was happening in the communities:
• For over half of the communities studied (111 of 196) there were no known suicides during the targeted 5-year period.

• Other communities had extremely high rates which brought the overall average up.

• **Protective factors:** a community cultural facility -- a single facility was specifically designated for cultural use; land claims; self-government; locally managed education*, police, fire, and health services.

• (Chandler, 2014; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallett, 2003 -- NOTE: summarized on pp. 69-74 of [http://www.turtleisland.org/front/chandler.htm](http://www.turtleisland.org/front/chandler.htm)).

*Could be related to attendance issues if tribal events need to be coordinated with school schedules.
Other Factors to Consider (may be “unexplained variance”)

• Mixed race heritage
• Adoption, foster care, boarding schools
• Unique individual interests:

  “Managing persons by group identity may work in theory, but in practice with real human beings, human relations . . . disintegrate and sour” (Bauerlein, 2015, p. 59).
V. Looking at Some Specific Measures
Measuring Latino & White Students Perceptions of a Teacher’s “Caring”

A large suburban high school in Central Texas (population, 54% Latino, 42% White, and 4% African American students) – half of the survey respondents were Latino, half White

"I feel that my teacher cares about me because . . . (provide specific examples to support your opinion) . . .

My teacher makes me feel a part of the class or included in this class because . . .

I feel comfortable in sharing my thoughts/feelings in class because . . ." (Garza, 2009, p. 319)
Used qualitative analysis to identify themes:

• "Latino high school students commented most frequently on [the theme] *provides scaffolding during a teaching episode*, followed by *provides affective academic support in the classroom setting* . . .

• White high school students referred to [the theme] *actions reflect a kind disposition* most often, followed by *provides scaffolding during a teaching episode*" (Garza, 2009, p. 316).

• Interpretation?
For an Individual: “Cultural Identity”

Whitesell et al. (2014)

• Ethnic Pride
• Cultural Engagement
For an Individual: Ethnic Pride

- Being part of my tribe or cultural group is important to me.
- I have a lot of pride in my tribe or cultural group.
- I feel good about my cultural and tribal background.

Responses: Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (4)
For an Individual: Cultural Engagement

• I speak or am learning to speak my tribal or cultural language.
• I listen, sing, or dance to traditional music.

Responses: Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (4)
Cronbach’s Alpha:
Do the items on the scale fit together well enough to make the scale a good measure of the concept? Does the scale have internal consistency?

• Ethnic Pride = .75 (good)
• Cultural Engagement = .46 (not so good)
Valid for Use and Interpretation?

• Cultural Engagement, but not Ethnic Pride, was related to cigarette use
• but the effect was “nonsignificant in the multivariate analysis . . .
• Tools we have for measuring nascent cultural identity are limited . . . Adolescents were just on the cusp of developing the cognitive wherewithal to explore their identities” (Whitesell, 2014, p. 449, emphasis added).

• Designed to measure acculturation in Native Americans

• Internal consistency of .83 in Yetter & Foutch and .91 in Garrett & Pichette (very good)

• Lower scores mean “stronger acculturation to traditional American Indian ways and higher scores indicate stronger acculturation [assimilation] to mainstream American ways” (Yetter & Foutch, 2014, p. 277, emphasis added)
Levels of Acculturation

1. **Traditional**: Practice only traditional tribal customs
2. **Marginal**: Does not fully accept cultural heritage nor fully identify with mainstream culture [“danger zone”]
3. **Bicultural**: Able to know, accept, and practice both mainstream values/behaviors and the traditional values and beliefs of their cultural heritage
4. **Assimilated**: Embrace only mainstream cultural values, behaviors, and expectations
5. **Pantraditional**: “Assimilated but seek to embrace previously lost traditional cultural values, beliefs, and practices of their tribal heritage” (Garrett & Pichette, 2000, p. 6).
NAAS

• Counselors’ use this to assess formally or informally a Native American client’s level of acculturation.

• “The apparent decline of academic functioning and motivation in Native American students . . . has been attributed, in part, to the difficulty that many Native American students have in reconciling existing cultural differences” (Garrett & Pichette, 2000, p. 7).
NAAS, continued

• Asks about language(s) spoken; how you identify yourself [ethnically, racially], your parents, friends; where you were born and raised; preferences in music and food; participation in “traditions, ceremonies, occasions, and so on?” (Garrett & Pichette, 2000, p. 13).

• NAAS can be used as a formal questionnaire or as an informal interview. Both versions as available in Appendix A (pp. 11-13) of Garrett & Pichette (2000).
Different Ways of Measuring the Concept of “Participation in Traditional Activities”

• Brief example:

• “Attending pow-wows, speaking tribe’s traditional language, engaging in traditional activities such as tribal game playing, spear fishing, or berry picking” (Yoder, 2006, p. 180)
Longer example – 8 items for measuring the concept of “Participation in traditional activities”

1. Games & sports (e.g., stick games, lacrosse)
2. Ceremony, rituals, & ways of acting (e.g., smudging, participating in a talking circle)
3. History, cultural knowledge, & cultural skills (e.g., learning tribal history, knowing the meaning of sovereignty)
4. Traditional forms of living (e.g., horsemanship, telling tribal stories & legends)
Longer example – 8 items for measuring the concept of “Participation in traditional activities” continued

5. Subsistence, food, & medicines (e.g., cooking traditional foods, knowing what wild foods are good to eat, hunting)

6. Music & dance (e.g., drumming, singing, participating in pow-wow)

7. Kinship, family, and gender roles (e.g., participating in extended family culture and learning about family structure and traditions)

8. Tribal crafts (e.g., beading, tanning hides, making jewelry)

(Gowen, Bandurraga, Jivanjee, Cross, & Friesen, 2012, p. 86)
• The detailed measure of participation described above by Gowen et al. (2012) is part of a more comprehensive online measure titled the *NAYA Assessment Tool (NAT)*

• Also presented by Friesen et al. (2012) as “More than a nice thing to do: A practice-based evidence approach to outcome evaluation in Native youth and family programs” (p. 87).

• NAYA stands for “Native American Youth and Family Center”

  [http://nayapdx.org/](http://nayapdx.org/)
The IMPACT Survey
(Culp & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011)

• **Infusing Multicultural Physical Education Attitudes Curriculum for Teachers**

• Urban school district teachers responded; 42% were African American and 58% were White.

• Their students were 58% African American, 32% White, 5% Latino, 3% Asian, and 2% were Native American, Pacific Islanders, and other races.
The IMPACT Survey, continued

• “Are you aware of certain ways to take into account communication, cultural or ethnic differences in teaching students?” (Culp & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011, p. 240).

• “Teachers in general indicated that they practiced culturally diverse teaching in their classes for all learners, but their comments tended to focus on only the needs of African American learners” (Culp & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011, p. 249).
Measuring the Concept of Educational Use of “Native Language and Culture” (NLC)

- NIES surveys for administrators, teachers, and students
  
Examples: Items for School Administrators

• Ways family and community members are involved
• Frequency of involvement of community members, officials, or elders
• Course offerings about AI/AN culture
• Was course required or elective?
• Type of instruction about Native culture
• Availability of materials on Native culture
• Frequency of family involvement
Examples: Items for Teachers

- Frequency of consulting sources of Native culture
- Frequency of attending in-service on Native culture
- Ability to speak Native language
- Teaching core subjects in Native language
- Integrating Native culture into reading lessons
More Examples: More Items for Teachers

- Integrating Native current issues into reading lessons
- Exposure to Native authors, themes, experiences during reading
- Integrating Native culture into math lessons
- Integrating Native current issues into math lessons
- Exposure to Native situations, symbols, traditions, contexts during math
Examples Of Items for Students

• Frequency of Native language use in school
• School visits from Native community members
• Field trips to places of Native culture
• Use of materials about Native culture
• Checking out materials on Native culture
• Enjoyment of reading about Native people

They are concerned that the results showing racial gaps might be misunderstood and misused to go back to trying to repress Native language and culture, as has been done in the past.
Published Research on NIES, continued

“There have been numerous calls to increase quantitative studies examining the role of culturally responsive schooling [CRS]. . . We then examined NIES against a CRS framework and found that NIES could inform policy to the detriment of AIAN students” (López, Heilig, & Schram, 2013, p. 513, emphasis added).

- "On average, school-identified American Indians score 60 percent of a standard deviation lower than school identified whites on the NAEP math exam in 4th grade, increasing . . . by 8th grade" (Fischer & Stoddard, 2013, p. 142).
Fischer & Stoddard (2013) offer 3 explanations for racial gaps in reading and math achievement:

“First, American Indian students on average come from more disadvantaged family and socioeconomic backgrounds than many other students. Second, schools for American Indian students are more likely to be located in more geographically isolated communities [this]. . . may affect performance. Third, the unique history of formal education for American Indians makes it more probable that conflicts related to group identification and academic achievement are salient for this population” (p. 148).
VI. More Questions than Answers!
Time for Sharing Views & Experiences
References for Measuring and Understanding Cultural Concepts


The Do You Know Scale

Please answer the following questions by circling "Y" for "yes" or "N" for "no." Even if you know the information we are asking about, you don't need to write it down. We just wish to know if you know the information.

1. Do you know how your parents met?   Y   N
2. Do you know where your mother grew up?   Y   N
3. Do you know where your father grew up?   Y   N
4. Do you know where some of your grandparents grew up?   Y   N
5. Do you know where some of your grandparents met?   Y   N
6. Do you know where your parents were married?   Y   N
7. Do you know what went on when you were being born?   Y   N
8. Do you know the source of your name?   Y   N
9. Do you know some things about what happened when your brothers or sisters were being born?   Y   N
10. Do you know which person in your family you look most like?   Y   N
11. Do you know which person in the family you act most like?   Y   N
12. Do you know some of the illnesses and injuries that your parents experienced when they were younger?   Y   N
13. Do you know some of the lessons that your parents learned from good or bad experiences?   Y   N
14. Do you know some things that happened to your mom or dad when they were in school?   Y   N
15. Do you know the national background of your family (such as English, German, Russian, etc)?   Y   N
16. Do you know some of the jobs that your parents had when they were young?   Y   N
17. Do you know some awards that your parents received when they were young?   Y   N
18. Do you know the names of the schools that your mom went to?   Y   N
19. Do you know the names of the schools that your dad went to?   Y   N
20. Do you know about a relative whose face "froze" in a grumpy position because he or she did not smile enough?   Y   N

Score: Total number answered Y.

See also: http://www.marial.emory.edu/faculty/profiles/duke.html
