

# Culture and Human Development

HDFS 766-2

Fall 2004

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## *Introduction*

The goal of this seminar is to examine a wide set of issues related to the role of culture in processes of human growth and maturation. Throughout the course we will address issues of epistemology and power, namely, how all social and psychological theories and research paradigms are socially constructed, historically situated, and granted legitimacy based on relative social and institutional status or support. We will examine these issues conceptually (theorizing culture and human development), as well as empirically (the implications of culture for developmental research, policy, and practice).

## *Course work*

1. **Group Presentations:** Working in groups of two or three, each of you will present course readings periodically throughout the semester. Presentations are to consist of a *brief* summary of the readings (no more than 15 minutes), your critique or responses to the readings (identifying underlying assumptions, and implications for theory, research, and practice); and two or three questions that can serve as the basis for class discussions. Interactive, participative presentations are encouraged.
2. **Journals:** You are expected to constructively engage the readings and each other with an open, inquiring mind, using your own scholarly interests and personal experiences as the basis for your critique and questions. You will keep a journal of your weekly responses to the readings, with a focus on the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of each. The journal is to help prepare you for class discussions, as well as provide you with an opportunity to develop ideas or issues related to your final paper. Please keep an electronic copy. These will be collected twice during the semester.
3. **Final Paper:** Using the following quotes and questions, you are expected to write a 20-page critique and discussion of a major theory in your research area, focusing on the implications of cultural context and cultural processes/practices for your theory.

**I.** In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Clifford Geertz defines cultures as “an historically transmitted **pattern of meanings embodied in symbols**, a system of **inherited conceptions** expressed in symbolic forms by means of which individuals communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitude toward life.” According to Geertz, culture is:

- 1) Historically contingent;
- 2) Involves patterns of meanings and behaviors;
- 3) Is ‘transmitted’ and ‘communicated’;
- 4) And is the basis for knowledge and attitudes.

**II.** In *Culture, Self, and Meaning* (2000), Victor de Munck states that the Western concept of the self is “**a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe**, a

dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole, and **set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background.**” He also states that such a concept of the self is “a rather **peculiar idea** within the context of world cultures.”

**III.** In *The Cultural Nature of Human Development* (2003), Barbara Rogoff introduces the importance of **cultural activities** in human development, suggesting that development occurs through **meaningful participation** in changing community-based cultural practices. These, in turn, lead to variability in how childhood and maturational processes are socially influenced and enacted.

Identify a major theory in your research area, along with no less than three exemplary studies based on the chosen theory. Use these as a basis for a discussion of the topics listed below:

1. First, briefly summarize and evaluate the basic assumptions and claims of the theory. How does the theory (as used in the studies) acknowledge cultural contexts and processes, explicitly or implicitly?
2. Identify what you consider to be some of the key theoretical and methodological issues or challenges that the explicit introduction of culture raises with respect to the theoretical framework and the exemplary studies.
  - i. Consider the extent to which the 3 statements regarding culture are or are not compatible with the theory you are addressing as the theory now stands. What is this theory’s implicit or explicit stance toward the nature of the self?
  - ii. Describe and discuss any changes in or extension to the theory suggested by the 3 statements above.
  - iii. What contributions does your theoretical framework and exemplary studies make to the conceptions to culture proposed in the 3 statements above?

### ***Grading***

1. Presentations	20%
2. Journals	20%
3. Final Paper	60%

Group presentations and journals will not receive a letter grade. If you complete the assignment, you will receive full credit. Failure to complete any of the assignments will result in a lowering of your grade by the value of the assignment. Presentations and journals must be done on the day assigned. There will be no extensions granted for these assignments.

### ***Readings***

- de Munck, Victor (2000) Culture, Self, and Meaning
- Rogoff, Barbara(2003) The Cultural Nature of Human Development
- Roopnarine, J. L. & Gielen, U. P. (2005). Families in Global Perspective
- READER available in the social science copy shop.

## CALENDAR

### September 3 **Overview and Introductions**

### September 10 **Culture and Human Development: Issues and Critiques**

- Lewis & Watson-Gegeo, "*Fictions of Childhood*"
- Sharma & Fischer, "*Socioemotional Development Across Cultures: Context, Complexity, and Pathways*"
- Smith Chapter 1, "*Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory*"(R)

### September 17 **Culture, Self, and Meaning**

- de Munck, Chapter 2, "*Where is Culture Located?*"
- Rogoff, Chapter 1, "*Orienting Concepts and Ways of Understanding the Cultural Nature of Human Development.*"
- Shonkoff & Phillips, Chapter 3, "*The Challenge of Studying Culture*"(R)

### September 24

- de Munck, Chapter 3, "*What (or Who) is the Self?*"
- Rogoff, Chapter 2, "*Development as Transformation of Participation in Cultural Activities*"

### October 1 (Group 1)

- de Munck, Chapter 4, "*What is Meaning?*"
- Smith,
  - Chapter 2, "*Research Through Imperial Eyes*"(R)
  - Chapter 3, "*Colonizing Knowledges*"(R)
  - Chapter 4, "*Research Adventures on Indigenous Lands*"(R)

### October 8 (Group 2) **The Cultural Nature of Human Development**

- Rogoff,
  - Chapter 3, "*Individuals, Generations, and Dynamic Cultural Communities*"
  - Chapter 4, "*Child Rearing in Families and Communities*"

#### ASSIGNMENT

Virtual writing groups meet. Send copies of your work-in-progress to each of your committee members with instructions as to what kind of feedback you would like. Feedback is due by October 17. Papers and responses should be copied to me.

**October 15** (Groups 3)

- Rogoff,
  - Chapter 5, “*Developmental Transitions in Individuals’ Roles in their Communities*”
  - Chapter 6, “*Interdependence and Autonomy*”

**ASSIGNMENT**

Send me your journal as an email attachment by the end of today.

**October 22** (Group 4)

- Rogoff
  - Chapter 7, “*Thinking with the Tools and Institutions of Culture*”
  - Chapter 8, “*Learning through Guided Participation in Cultural Endeavors*”
- Serpell, “*Participatory appropriation in sociocultural context: a multi-level strategy for applied developmental science*” **(R)**

**October 29** **Film: “Wind Will Carry Us” (Iran)**

- Rogoff
  - Chapter 9, “*Cultural Change and Relations among Communities*”
- **International Families, Part 1 “Introduction”**

**ASSIGNMENT**

Virtual writing groups meet. Send copies of your work-in-progress to each of your group members with instructions as to what kind of feedback you would like. Feedback is due by November 5. Copy the assignment (paper and responses) to me.

**November 5** (Group 1)**International Families, Part 2 “Asia and Oceania”**

Chaudhry, L. (2004) “Reconstituting Selves in the Karachi Conflict: Mohajir Women Survivors and Structural Violence,” *Cultural Dynamics* 16(2&3). (*email attachment*).

**November 12** (Group 2)**International Families, Part 3 “The Middle East”**

Joseph, S. (1993). “Gender and Relationality Among Arab Families in Lebanon.” In *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 19, no. 3 (Fall 1993) (*email attachment*).

**ASSIGNMENT**

Send copies of your work-in-progress to each of your group members with instructions as to what kind of feedback you would like. Feedback is due by November 19. Copy the assignment (paper and responses) to me.

**November 19** (Group 3)**International Families, Part 6 “Africa”**

Swadener, B. B. (2000) *Does the Village Still Raise the Child? : A Collaborative Study of Changing Child-Rearing and Early Education in Kenya*, selected chapters TBA. **(email attachment)**

**November 26****THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY****December 3** (Group 4)**International Families Part 5 “The Americas”**

*Readings TBA*

**ASSIGNMENT**

Send me your journal as an email attachment by the end of today.

**December 10****The Future of Culture and Human Development**

- **Poortinga**, “*Toward Convergence?*”
- **Sinha**, “*Indigenizing Psychology*”

**FINAL PAPERS DUE**