

Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition

26 Cultural Psychology

- 1 01:28:36:24 >> ZIMBARDO: How does the culture around us shape our sense of self and the way we view the world?
- 2 01:28:44:08 From how we interpret behavior to the way we experience psychological distress, "Cultural Psychology" this time on *Discovering Psychology* .
- 3 01:29:29:05 >> ZIMBARDO: What is culture?
- 4 01:29:31:26 Is it the clothes we wear?
- 5 01:29:35:14 Or the languages we speak?
- 6 01:29:39:16 Is it the foods we eat?
- 7 01:29:43:10 Or the foods we don't?
- 8 01:29:47:10 Is it the way we worship?
- 9 01:29:50:24 Or the art we create?
- 10 01:29:56:13 Is it where we live?
- 11 01:30:00:19 Or the ways we play?
- 12 01:30:05:00 Culture is all of these things and more.
- 13 01:30:07:23 Beyond rituals, dances, and dialects, it is the very scaffolding of our psyches.
- 14 01:30:13:27 How we think, what we feel, how we relate to others, and who we think we are all depend on the culture around us.
- 15 01:30:23:22 Even how we interpret behavior can reveal how culture shapes us.
- 16 01:30:29:13 What do you see happening in this aquarium?
- 17 01:30:33:09 Is this fish a brave fish going along on her own, or has she has been kicked out of school for not following the rules?
- 18 01:30:43:20 Kaiping Peng of the University of California at Berkeley and his colleague Michael Morris of Stanford University study

- how people from East Asia and North America interpret behaviors differently.
- 19 01:30:58:05 They have developed a method which uses cartoons of fish to represent social interactions.
- 20 01:31:06:06 In one study, American and East Asian subjects were asked why the fish moved as they did.
- 21 01:31:14:22 >> American subjects pay more attention to the individual fish, individual's movements, and individual's desires; and Asian subjects pay more attention to the movement of the group fish.
- 22 01:31:29:00 >> ZIMBARDO: Next they were asked to pay attention to the blue fish on the right, then to describe the reasons for the blue fish's behavior.
- 23 01:31:37:14 >> Americans always talk about the individual fish wanting to get away from the group, tired of group, hate the group, wanting to be the leaders of the group.
- 24 01:31:47:01 Whereas the Chinese and the Japanese students were more likely to say the individual fish couldn't get along with group fish and that the group fish kick out the individual fish and they just don't like this individual fish.
- 25 01:31:59:25 >> ZIMBARDO: These cultural differences in how we interpret behavior can lead to starkly different versions of events, a fact that Dr. Peng learned by tragic coincidence.
- 26 01:32:12:02 >> One night I got a phone call from a friend who said, you know, turn on the TV.
- 27 01:32:16:07 >> A disgruntled graduate student walked into the department of physics with a .38-caliber revolver and shot...
- 28 01:32:22:19 >> And suddenly I saw a familiar face on the screen.
- 29 01:32:27:15 I knew the guy because he dated by wife's roommate in China.
- 30 01:32:31:20 >> Those shots killed rival student...
- 31 01:32:34:17 >> I talked to my wife about this, and we thought that, well, if he married my wife's roommate, then he probably won't become such a... you know, a mass murder.

- 32 01:32:45:24 And we thought that too bad that they didn't get married.
- 33 01:32:50:20 >> ZIMBARDO: Peng's American friends and the press responded quite differently to the crime, saying that Gang Lu was a time bomb and would have killed the woman along with himself.
- 34 01:33:03:29 But the Chinese papers had another point of view.
- 35 01:33:07:29 >> The Chinese media report was basically about how he had a terrible relationship with other people, how he couldn't adjust to the American cultures, and how easy to get a gun in the United States.
- 36 01:33:21:17 Basically if he were in China, he would not have commit the crime.
- 37 01:33:26:01 (*siren wails*) >> ZIMBARDO: If we have fundamental differences in how we interpret others' behavior, how do we view our own behavior, our own sense of self?
- 38 01:33:38:12 Research suggests that how we make sense of the world depends in large part on who we think we are and what we think we're supposed to be doing in this life as we engage with our culture's social meanings and practices.
- 39 01:33:52:24 Hazel Markus of Stanford University and Shinobu Kitayama of Kyoto University investigate how the self and culture continually create each other.
- 40 01:34:05:18 >> We think about people as culturally shaped shapers.
- 41 01:34:11:00 So they're shaped by culture as they engage with these patterns of meanings and practices, ways of doing everyday life.
- 42 01:34:19:12 But they also shape the culture in the course of behaving, in the course of talking to other people, in the course of acting, in the course of making products and putting them into the world.
- 43 01:34:35:04 Human nature and the ways of being human, ways of being a person, the ways of having a mind are very much tied to the patterning of those social worlds that you are a part of.
- 44 01:34:50:06 >> ZIMBARDO: Markus and Kitayama call this process of shaping and being shaped mutual constitution.

- 45 01:34:58:03 Within different cultural settings, it can produce very different psychological processes.
- 46 01:35:04:14 They have described two of these possible modes of being as independent and interdependent.
- 47 01:35:16:15 The independent mode of being can be seen most clearly in the United States and Western Europe.
- 48 01:35:24:19 The interdependent way is more characteristic of East Asian societies.
- 49 01:35:31:17 >> In European American cultural settings, individuals think about themselves as responsible for behavior, as in control.
- 50 01:35:43:05 They control their worlds by influencing other people.
- 51 01:35:48:25 It's important to say what's important to you.
- 52 01:35:51:00 If someone asks you what you like, say, "I... I want a diet Coke and a turkey sandwich," and say it very directly and be sure of yourself and make quick decisions.
- 53 01:36:05:11 >> ZIMBARDO: For many European Americans, making choices defines the self as unique and positive.
- 54 01:36:14:13 It even influences how Americans treat their guests.
- 55 01:36:18:22 At a party, American hosts will often say, "Help yourself."
- 56 01:36:23:00 This statement would seem odd to many East Asians.
- 57 01:36:29:07 >> In Japanese cultural practice, greeting a guest wouldn't involve anything like offering a choice.
- 58 01:36:36:26 You have to be attentive to your guest as a host, and if you are attentive enough, if you're a good enough person, morally adequate, then you ought to be able to tell and be prepared enough to offer what is good for this particular person.
- 59 01:36:52:26 >> ZIMBARDO: This attunement to other's needs emanates from many sources in East Asian culture.
- 60 01:36:59:10 One of these sources is Buddhism.
- 61 01:37:03:08 Buddhism emphasizes sympathy, compassion, and transcendence beyond individual desire.

- 62 01:37:11:21 Over the centuries, this powerful spiritual value has created a tendency to emphasize the well being of others.
- 63 01:37:19:18 (*bell ringing*) (*drums beating*) Religion also contributes to the independent way of being in mainstream American culture through the Protestant ethic.
- 64 01:37:36:05 It emphasizes individual achievement, personal responsibility, self- sufficiency, and control over the environment.
- 65 01:37:46:25 >> I'm pretty intelligent.
- 66 01:37:48:12 I am somewhat athletic.
- 67 01:37:50:09 I can sing.
- 68 01:37:51:28 >> ZIMBARDO: The different understandings of the self can be seen in how people talk about themselves.
- 69 01:37:56:18 >> I'm stubborn.
- 70 01:37:58:12 >> ZIMBARDO: Markus and Kitayama videotaped students describing themselves at Stanford University and at Kyoto University.
- 71 01:38:06:20 >> I would say that I am hard working and optimistic and pretty organized.
- 72 01:38:12:14 >> American students in describing themselves give about four positive attributes to every one negative attribute.
- 73 01:38:18:27 >> I try to be friendly.
- 74 01:38:20:21 >> She says she's friendly, which implies her relations to others.
- 75 01:38:24:11 But it's as if the characteristic is inside her.
- 76 01:38:27:02 She carries the friendliness with her.
- 77 01:38:29:12 It's *her* point of view on herself.
- 78 01:38:31:28 >> I'd like to have an impact on something important other than just my immediate family.
- 79 01:38:37:13 >> People characterized by an independent model of self talk about the way they will make a difference in the world, have an impact in the world.

- 80 01:38:43:23 They'll be responsible for some action or be in control.
- 81 01:38:49:18 >> ZIMBARDO: Japanese individuals hold many different views of the self.
- 82 01:38:53:26 It's a way to meet the high standards of the group.
- 83 01:38:57:19 >> She describe herself very, very *ganbaru* kind of person.
- 84 01:39:01:25 *Ganbaru* involves persevering, expanding effort, working hard, and so on.
- 85 01:39:08:09 And then move quickly to so many negative things: pessimistic, lazy, slow.
- 86 01:39:15:28 The focus on negative aspects may be the beginning of self-improvement.
- 87 01:39:20:18 You have to find something negative to correct and get better on.
- 88 01:39:29:04 >> ZIMBARDO: By fostering a focus on the negative aspects of the self, Japanese culture encourages people to try to improve themselves to avoid letting others down, rather than to get ahead of others.
- 89 01:39:45:16 We need not travel to exotic lands to see different cultures in action and interacting with one another.
- 90 01:39:52:19 Among Americans there are many ways to be a person and to live a life.
- 91 01:39:55:14 The current dynamic cultural mix reflects the beliefs and practices of indigenous American Indians, West Africans who came to America as slaves, and a wide array of immigrant populations.
- 92 01:40:09:06 This pluralism also reflects the varied experiences that different ethnic groups have had in the United States.
- 93 01:40:18:18 Some were welcomed, and assimilated easily into the dominant European American mainstream; others were not, and had to be more ingenious in the project of becoming an American.
- 94 01:40:33:21 James Jones of the University of Delaware shows how West African influences and the harsh experiences of slavery are apparent in some African- American settings, especially in

- conceptions of time, rhythm, improvisation, orality, and spirituality.
- 95 01:40:54:24 Jones' theory is designated as "trios" to highlight this special pattern of five capacities that characterize the ways of being of some African Americans.
- 96 01:41:07:25 (*countdown beeping*) Time, for example, in mainstream America is a commodity used to control the future, regulate our economy, and shape our behavior.
- 97 01:41:27:16 But time ticks differently in West African cultural contexts, where time is often focused on the present.
- 98 01:41:37:18 >> The closer you get to the equator, the more you describe people in terms of present time orientation.
- 99 01:41:44:03 In some cases, people call it social time; that is, time is defined by behavior and by feelings and by being in the world.
- 100 01:41:53:26 So, time doesn't have an independent meaning that imposes itself on our behavior from moment to moment.
- 101 01:41:59:01 Our behavior actually determines time.
- 102 01:42:06:19 >> ZIMBARDO: The West African understanding of time is apparent in contemporary African-American cultural patterns, such as the emphasis on improvisation.
- 103 01:42:18:03 Jones explains how present time orientation and improvisational skills can help African Americans navigate the undercurrents of racism.
- 104 01:42:29:04 >> Racism is potentially present in every situation.
- 105 01:42:32:27 How am I going to cope with that?
- 106 01:42:34:24 How do I know whether a situation will value me as a person or not?
- 107 01:42:41:02 And how do I create value for myself in a situation?
- 108 01:42:49:06 Improvisation is really about problem solving in uncertain and difficult conditions and being able to express who I am, how I feel in any given moment.
- 109 01:43:03:18 (*jazz playing*) >> ZIMBARDO: African-American cultural

- contexts have long been a source of exquisite word craft, storytelling, preaching, speech-making, and song.
- 110 01:43:23:06 >> They're all manifesting the same combination of rhythm and orality and improvisation and style.
- 111 01:43:30:25 >> § People say I'm maverick call me Mav for short... § >> And so it becomes a way of expressing the experiences that people have of understanding it and organizing and preserving it.
- 112 01:43:41:18 And so it becomes a part of the legacy of a people.
- 113 01:43:46:24 >> ZIMBARDO: An important part of that legacy is spirituality: the belief that higher powers influence human affairs.
- 114 01:43:56:05 Spirituality has imparted serenity and strength to many African Americans to help cope with the injustices of their society.
- 115 01:44:06:17 >> They can live with circumstances that others would find depressing and demoralizing.
- 116 01:44:13:01 They don't hold onto themselves responsibility for everything that happens.
- 117 01:44:19:09 So in a sense, they're free and they're at peace.
- 118 01:44:22:15 They can be at peace.
- 119 01:44:26:23 (*American Indians chanting*) >> ZIMBARDO: American Indians have also had to adjust to overwhelming adversity.
- 120 01:44:35:20 (*American Indians chanting*) In the 19th century, the tidal wave of western expansion resulted in a genocide that decimated native cultures.
- 121 01:44:52:08 Despite the many hardships that American Indians have faced, over 500 American Indian tribes are still in existence in the United States.
- 122 01:45:01:14 (*American Indians chanting*) Dr. Joseph Trimble of Harvard University is a psychologist and an American Indian who studies how American Indians have adapted to and influenced mainstream American culture.
- 123 01:45:18:29 >> Historically all tribes were collective cultures, organized

along very, very elaborate clan systems.

- 124 01:45:26:27 Everyone was given a role and responsibility, and that role and responsibility was an integral part of keeping life alive, keeping the community alive, keeping the village alive.
- 125 01:45:45:02 >> ZIMBARDO: This special sense of community is common to most American-Indian cultural contexts and is expressed in many Indian spiritual understandings and practices.
- 126 01:45:58:29 >> Spirituality is respect for all things, for all that is, for all that lives: the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the winged, the plants, the trees, the clouds, the Earth that we live in, Earth we live on.
- 127 01:46:17:22 And with that respect is this understanding that we're all connected.
- 128 01:46:25:09 >> ZIMBARDO: One way to honor that connectedness is through a tradition of sharing.
- 129 01:46:31:14 Unconditional giving honors the universe and maintains life's balance, but it was a tradition that confused other peoples.
- 130 01:46:42:23 >> A lot of non-Indian people have real difficulty with that because they feel like they're now obligated, that they're now owned, because they have been the recipient of this gift.
- 131 01:46:57:16 >> ZIMBARDO: When Columbus came to America, he was showered with gifts.
- 132 01:47:03:01 When he refused them, the native leaders were insulted.
- 133 01:47:07:14 >> It got to be such a problem that he actually prevented his troops from receiving gifts, which in turn insulted the people themselves.
- 134 01:47:18:25 You're not just insulting this individual.
- 135 01:47:21:23 You're insulting that individual's family; you're insulting that clan.
- 136 01:47:26:03 So here's this very deep-seated value that has never gone away.
- 137 01:47:31:06 >> ZIMBARDO: Those first uneasy interactions foreshadowed the tragic history that unfolded between European colonizers and indigenous peoples.

- 138 01:47:42:00 The history of how American Indians were forced to adapt to European American culture is horrific.
- 139 01:47:50:22 The melting pot ideology assumed that native peoples should assimilate readily and completely to dominant cultural patterns.
- 140 01:47:59:21 >> It was the whole idea behind sending young Indian people off to boarding schools, forbidding them to speak their language, forcing them to cut their hair, forcing them to wear clothing that were totally foreign to them, forcing them to deal with people who were from different tribes, who they didn't know or understand, all of them in that setting being forced to change.
- 141 01:48:26:00 >> ZIMBARDO: Today psychologists understand that the melting pot is a myth.
- 142 01:48:30:05 Adapting to a new culture is a stressful process made all the more difficult when the host culture does little to welcome, appreciate, or even acknowledge that different ethnic and cultural groups have different ideas about what is real, right, and good.
- 143 01:48:46:07 Clinical psychologists, like Dr.
- 144 01:48:47:23 Ricardo Munoz of the University of California, San Francisco, are on the front lines in the struggle to understand the psychology of acculturation.
- 145 01:48:58:28 Munoz explains why working with Latinos is challenging, especially in getting them to use available mental health services.
- 146 01:49:08:20 >> There are about 35 million Latinos in the U.S.
- 147 01:49:11:05 It's one of the largest Latino countries in the world actually.
- 148 01:49:14:26 But about half of Latinos in the U.S. don't speak English well.
- 149 01:49:18:29 And so unless you have Spanish speaking services, you're not going to have good utilization of these services.
- 150 01:49:26:03 There are a couple of other reasons.
- 151 01:49:27:28 One of them is that there's a lot of a stigma attached to mental health services in general, but in the Latino population, the stigma is probably greater.

- 152 01:49:35:18 And so there's this belief that only people with really severe disorders -- people who are crazy, if you will -- are the ones who use mental health services.
- 153 01:49:52:00 >> ZIMBARDO: Because Latinos are less likely to rely on psychologists, Munoz takes psychology to the people, rather than waiting for the people to come to psychology.
- 154 01:50:04:11 Such community outreach is becoming vitally important for the Latino community.
- 155 01:50:12:20 A recent California study has shown that among Mexican Americans the incidence of clinical or major depression is climbing rapidly, especially for those who have been in the United States for more than 13 years.
- 156 01:50:30:05 >> For the recent immigrants, the rate of major depression was about 3%.
- 157 01:50:35:04 For those who had been here more than 13 years, it went way over 7%.
- 158 01:50:40:13 For those who had born in the U.S., it was 14.4%.
- 159 01:50:47:00 In the general population, the rate is about 17%.
- 160 01:50:50:26 So it looks like the longer that people stay here, the more like the U.S. population they become in terms of depression.
- 161 01:51:00:19 >> ZIMBARDO: Why are rates of depression among Latinos increasing over time?
- 162 01:51:06:07 Cultural psychology offers two explanations.
- 163 01:51:11:13 The first is that the longer immigrants stay in the United States, the more psychologically distressed they become.
- 164 01:51:20:14 >> When immigrants come into the U.S., they still have strong ties to their country of origin, they have contact with their families and so on.
- 165 01:51:26:26 As they stay here longer and longer, those contacts become fewer and fewer.
- 166 01:51:32:09 One of the things that may be happening is that their support system starts to break down.
- 167 01:51:39:23 >> ZIMBARDO: Social support is vital to everyone's mental

- health, but having friends and family may be even more crucial to well-being in Latino contexts.
- 168 01:51:51:13 The family is sacred, and many cultural practices revolve around sustaining deep familial ties.
- 169 01:52:00:18 But this emphasis on human relationships sometimes doesn't fit with the mainstream American values of independence and individuality.
- 170 01:52:11:22 Having conflicting sets of cultural values may create confusion and feelings of rejection among Latinos, especially for the first generation born in the United States.
- 171 01:52:24:03 >> That generation has lost a lot of their cultural and certainly their linguistic roots, and yet they may not be accepted sufficiently in the United States yet.
- 172 01:52:34:24 They have this feeling that they should be just like anybody else born here, but they're not treated that way.
- 173 01:52:43:22 >> ZIMBARDO: A second explanation for the rise in depression rates is that, ironically, U.S.-born Latinos are becoming more American.
- 174 01:52:52:21 They may be showing psychological distress in ways that are now recognizable in the larger society.
- 175 01:53:02:25 Like other psychological processes, psychological distress varies across time and cultural contexts.
- 176 01:53:11:10 The ways of being distressed in contemporary United States' culture differ from those of Freud's hysterical patients in 19th-century Vienna, from trance states in Bali, or from the disorder of running amok among males in Malaysia.
- 177 01:53:29:09 These varying ways of distress indicate the many shapes human psychologies can take.
- 178 01:53:37:21 As the Earth's population explodes and technology connects us in new ways, cultural contexts are colliding with unpredictable consequences.
- 179 01:53:46:01 To negotiate this multicultural world, the insights of cultural psychology will be vital for exploring how cultures both shape and are shaped by individual minds.
- 180 01:53:56:05 For *Discovering Psychology*, I'm Philip Zimbardo.

- 181 01:54:01:19 [Captioned by The Caption Center WGBH Educational Foundation]
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