

# Cultural Mindedness, Dialogue, and Action Planning Model

## Module Two: Levels of Culture Conceptual Tool



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## Introduction to Module Two:

**Module Two** introduces participants to the multilevel properties of the culture concept.

Recognizing that culture is multilevel is fostered by engaging participants in learning activities on **four levels**:

the personal level,

the ethnic/culture group level,

the national level,

and the organization/institutional level.



# 1. Conceptual Tool: Levels of Culture in the United States:

## 1.1 Personal Culture Level

As individuals grow up, each develops a personal identity, a personal system of meanings which underlie behavior

One's personal identity is formed through interacting within one's social groups (for example, interacting within one's family, neighborhood, school, work)

How we view the world, construct reality, ascribe meaning and value to our lives are intimately connected to our position within the social and historical hierarchies of dominance and subordination of our society, starting in our family, schools, churches, and other institutions common to everyday life. The perception and recognition of the dominance hierarchies that we live in may not be conscious because they are the norm, and are often not talked about.



## 1.2 Ethnic Subculture/Culture Group Level

The term **ethnic or culture group** refers to the cultural heritage a group shares that relates to aspects of culture such as: language, values, family life processes, religion, food, clothing, social status factors, (and more) and their associated beliefs, assumptions and customs and behaviors.

The term **racial group** is also relevant. As a result of historical social developments, among groups in the United States based in settler colonialism, “race” is a 500 year old belief that ascribes differential status to groups of people within the society based on physical differences (skin color, eye shape).

Although race is defined, perceived, and believed by many to be a biological classification of human groups based on heredity and genetic differences, it has **no scientific base**. Science has demonstrated there are no “pure” races; all human groups are mixtures due to migrations throughout the world for millennia.



## 1.3 Mainstream U.S. National Culture Level

The United States society is composed of a mainstream or national culture and many subcultures, such as Irish American, Mexican American, African American, Korean American, Navajo American, Armenian American (and many more).....

U.S. Mainstream culture, originally based on the core culture of England, is commonly referred to as "dominant" or hegemonic. With its origins in settler colonialism and the slavery economic system, white supremacy became the structuring logic for the hierarchies of power in all U.S. institutions. White supremacy is simultaneously intertwined with the other structures of power based on age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, immigration status, social economic status, physical abilities, and more.

## 1.3 Mainstream U.S. National Culture Level

Researchers have identified five themes or narratives of Mainstream National Culture about cultural diversity that mask the structures of power based on white supremacy, as follows:

- ❖ Americans do not have a culture (they are individuals)
- ❖ U.S. society is fair (color-blind, level playing field/meritocracy)
- ❖ If it is different, it is wrong
- ❖ Don't talk about cultural diversity
- ❖ Never admit to prejudice



## 1.4 Organization /Institution Culture

**Organizational culture** refers to the hierarchical policies, procedures, programs, and processes that organizations employ that influence opportunities for promotion and the relational climate in the organization—how employees treat each other daily and the structured status hierarchies that influence employee promotions and relations.



## 2. Learning Activities for Module Two: Introduction

Participants engage with the 4 levels of culture by writing or discussing how they personally experience the Aspects of Culture on the four levels, starting with their personal level of culture. Participants then write their responses to the questions in the Debrief section after applying the Aspects of Culture to the Four Levels of Culture.

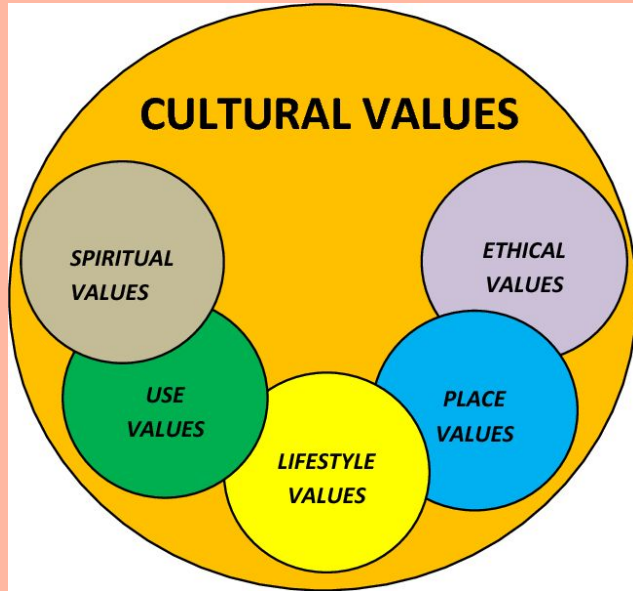




## Aspects of Culture to be applied to the personal level, a culture /subculture /ethnic group level, the U.S. mainstream culture level, & an organization/institution level

1. History
2. Social Status Factors
3. Social Group Interaction Patterns
  - Intra group relations
  - Intergroup relations
4. Value Orientations
5. Language and Communication
  - Verbal
  - Nonverbal
6. Family Life Processes
7. Healing Beliefs and Practices
8. Religion
9. Art and Expressive Forms
10. Diet/Foods
11. Recreation
12. Clothing

## 2. 1 Cultural Level One Activity: Personal Level Culture



**Purpose:** Practice identifying three aspects of culture in their personal experience to increase awareness and understanding of the how culture operates at the personal level.

**Instructions:** Choose three aspects of culture from the following list and discuss or write individually how each aspect is realized in your daily life.



## 2.2 Cultural Level Two Activity: Culture Group/Subculture Level (also called ethnic group level)

**Purpose:** To demonstrate culture group/subculture-level aspects of culture.

**Instructions:** Choose three aspects of culture from the following list and apply them to a member of a subculture or ethnic group (it can be your own culture group). Discuss or write individually an example of each of the three aspects.

## 2.3 Cultural Level Three Activity: Mainstream U.S. Culture

**Purpose:** to demonstrate Aspects of U.S. Mainstream cultural level.

**Instructions:** Discuss or write individually any three of the aspects of culture as they relate to mainstream national culture. For each aspect you select, write an example of how it is realized in life, as you have experienced it.





## 2.4 Cultural Level Four Activity: Organization or Institutional Level Culture

**Purpose:** To demonstrate aspects of organization culture level .

**Instructions:** Discuss or write individually three aspects of culture from the following list that characterizes an organization in which you or someone else works.

**SAMPLE:** The social status factors in the hospital in which Mary Mercedes works as a nurse reflects the gender stratification that exists in the society at large. The top administrators are primarily white males, and middle and lower- management is primarily comprised of women, persons of color and of diverse cultures.



## 2.5. Debrief Questions:

**Answer after the Aspects of Culture are applied to the Four Levels of Culture. Write the answers to the following questions to reflect on what you have learned.**

1. Describe your feelings and thoughts when discussing or writing about the Aspects of Culture in relation to four levels of culture
2. What did you learn about yourself in the course of this exercise?
3. What did you learn about others in the course of this exercise?
4. Name two ways you can use what you've learned in your daily life at home, in your community or at work/school.

★ **3.1-3.4: You may refer to the samples of student responses on pages 9-12.**

## 4. Glossary of Terms



**Culturally inclusive organizations** are those that have congruent structures, policies, programs, protocols, and processes that enable the entire system to work inclusively with culturally diverse people.

**Teamwork** refers to collaborative and interdependent relationships in performing a task. It can be called synergistic because the collaborative combined effort increases each other team members' effectiveness. Teamwork (or synergy) is possible when people treat one another with respect and communicate with one another in ways that form bonds of mutual trust.

**Synergistic organizations** are capable of producing inclusive strategies on an ongoing basis that proactively respond to diverse and changing economic, social, and political environmental conditions.

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