Teaching and Learning Across Cultural Strengths in College

Alicia Fedelina Chávez, Ph.D
Associate Professor
Educational Leadership
University of New Mexico
afchavez@unm.edu

Susan Diana Longerbeam, Ph.D
Associate Professor
Educational and Counseling Psychology, Counseling, and College Student Personnel
University of Louisville
susan.longerbeam@louisville.edu
Multicultural Ecology of Teaching and Learning in College


*Alicia Fedelina Chávez*, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu
Elements of Culture

Artifacts & Behaviors
Visible behaviors, structures, processes, symbols, rituals, policies, physical items

Beliefs
What we accept as true and often set the course for how we teach

Values
The conscious expression of our principles

Norms
Social rules and expectations; often unconscious until one isn’t followed

Underlying Assumptions
Unconscious, taken-for-granted perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, serve as the ultimate source of values


Alicia Fedelina Chávez, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu
Cultural Frameworks

*Individuated ---------------------- Integrated*

In a culturally **INDIVIDUATED** worldview or epistemology, a private compartmentalized, individualized, contextually independent conception of the world is common, assumed, and valued.

In a culturally **INTEGRATED** worldview or epistemology, an interconnected, mutual, reflective, contextually dependent conception of the world is common, assumed, and valued.


*Alicia Fedelina Chávez*, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu
# Cultural Frameworks in Teaching and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Individuated</strong></th>
<th><strong>Integrated</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>In a culturally individuated framework, a private compartmentalized, linear, contextually independent conception of the world is common, assumed, and valued.</em></td>
<td><em>In a culturally integrated framework, an interconnected, mutual, reflective cyclical, contextually dependent conception of the world is common, assumed, and valued.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge, individual competence, to move forward toward goals and the betterment of humanity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wisdom, betterment of the lives of those with whom we are connected - family, tribe, and community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mind as primary, best, or only funnel of knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mind, Body, Spirit/Intuition, Reflection, Emotions, Relationships as important aspects and conduits of knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compartmentalized and separate; belief that understanding how the parts work separately, abstractly, and in isolation will lead to the greatest understanding</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contextualized and connected, belief that understanding how things affect each other within the whole, and within family and community will facilitate understanding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning is a private, individual activity; responsible for one’s own learning so that family and others are not burdened</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning is a collective, shared activity, Responsible for one’s own as well as others’ learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linear, task oriented, can be measured and used, to be on time shows respect</strong></td>
<td><strong>Circular, seasonal, process oriented, dependent on relationships, to allow for enough time shows respect</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provider and Evaluator of Knowledge -- best perspectives and ways of learning, predetermined bounded learning; communication primarily between teacher and students</strong></td>
<td><strong>Facilitator of Learning Experiences -- multiple perspectives and ways of learning, emergent constructivist; wide variety of interactions between students, and between teacher and students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others’ perspectives are optional for learning. Primarily rely on verbal messages; individuals are paramount, predominantly verbal in both written and oral communications</strong></td>
<td><strong>Others’ perspectives and interpretations are important, even essential to learning. High use of nonverbals, collective as paramount, and multiple streams of communication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning by mastering abstract theory first, followed by testing. Unlikely to include application, experience, or doing in real life</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning by doing, listening to others’ experiences, imagining or experiencing first, then drawing out abstract theory</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chávez & Longerbeam* (Stylus, 2016). The earliest version of this model was presented in a paper at the 2009 ASHE Conference and we then developed this model from a later version of in Ke & Chávez (2013).
**Cultural Continua Activity**

First, choose one of the Cultural Frameworks Continua from the gray column on page 5 and reflect here on where you are on this continuum in your teaching as well as how you might balance across cultural frameworks within this construct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Continua in My Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individuated Framework</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a culturally individuated worldview, a private compartmentalized, linear, contextually independent conception of the world is common, assumed, and valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen Continua...In my teaching, am I more individuated in this construct, more integrated...or a balance of the two?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this construct manifest in my teaching practices...in class activities, assignments, evaluations, communications etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To balance my teaching across integrative and individuated cultural frameworks, what are some ways I could modify or add to my teaching....class activities, assignments, evaluations, communications etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Culture & Teaching Worksheet

Culture(s)

Value

Value

Value

Origin

Origin

Origin

Current Reinforcer

Current Reinforcer

Current Reinforcer

Assumption

Assumption

Assumption

Teaching Behaviors

Teaching Behaviors

Teaching Behaviors

Alicia Fedelina Chávez, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu
Tips on Teaching through Natural Cultural Strengths
Hispano/Latino, Native, Northern European, and African American College Students

Though all students learn most effectively through a multiplicity of pedagogies across integrated and individuated cultural frameworks; some elements are especially important to learning naturally among specific populations because of the ways they are taught in their early lives.

**Hispano/Latino College Students** are more likely to learn naturally when the following are part of the learning process:
Learning by doing (application first, theory second)
Comparing and contrasting with peers, learning from peers & peer work
Starting with storytelling, examples, cases (the larger picture & the context)
Feeling cared about by the professor
When content is connected to their lives, families, cultures

**Northern European College Students** are more likely to learn naturally when the following are part of the learning process:
Learning by Reading and Lecture (theory first)
Linear Presentation of Content
Learning Objectives & Outcomes
Definitions & Classifications
Clear Expectations & Goals, Rubrics
Homework/Problem Sets
Exams and Papers
When content is connected to their lives

**African American College Students** are more likely to learn naturally when the following are part of the learning process:
Use of visual symbols, metaphor, story, rhythm, music
Time to make sense of things through discussion
Application to self, family, community, culture
Theory integrated with examples and application
Friendly competition, debate, humor
Very clear expectations, directions, communication
Rationale based in future goals and professions

**Native American College Students** are more likely to learn naturally when the following are part of the learning process:
Use of visual models, symbols, metaphor, drawings,
Time to make sense of things through visual or reflective means
Application to self, family, tribe
Time for reflection before discussion
Learning by Doing
Ongoing access to past learning materials (oral history)

_Alicia Fedelina Chávez_, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu
Top Twelve Things Faculty Can Do to Teach Across Cultures

Self-Reflect Culturally

Modify One Cultural Construct in Your Next Class Session

Talk with Three Students from Different Cultural Origins about How They Learn

Choose One Negative Assumption you have about Students and Reevaluate Culturally then modify your Teaching

Have students evaluate their own ways of learning using the Cultural Frameworks Model – then ask them for suggestions in teaching based in their ways of learning

Share with Students the Value of Complex, Balanced Learning

Develop a New Way to Connect Subject Matter to Student Lives

Partner with Students

Make a Personal Connection with a Student

Develop an Innovative Way to Assess Student Learning

Have Students Self-Assess with the Cultural Frameworks Model

Collaborate Deeply Across Cultures with another Professor
### Balancing Course Design and Facilitation Across Cultural Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design or Facilitation Aspect</th>
<th>Ways to cultivate, bring out our own strengths toward balancing across cultural frameworks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ways to start the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ways to show care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ways to cultivate, bring out, engage student strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings/Learning Materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations/Assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alicia Fedelina Chávez*, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu
Some Ways of Being we find helpful to cross-cultural collaborations with colleagues and students

Focus on the learning benefits of balancing across cultural strengths

Remain willing to be uncomfortable

Process & Stay Fiercely PRESENT with each other (discussions, e-mail reflections)

Abandon Defensiveness

Offer the benefit of the doubt immediately

Develop trust in each other over time

Reengage, Reengage, Reengage…dedicate ourselves to each other, the work together

Ask – Would you help me to understand why do you do it that way?

Engage both of our strengths to get through ‘trauma triggers’ and other challenges

Encourage risk taking in each other…and support it in each other especially when it doesn’t work out so well or feels uncomfortable, or leads to misunderstandings

Use metaphor, visuals to ‘capture’ and share what we mean

Balance work, rest, reflection and play
Additional Resources


**Alicia Fedelina Chávez**, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu


Alicia Fedelina Chávez, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New Mexico, afchavez@unm.edu


