EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN CYBERSPACE:
USING INTERNET TO CONNECT STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES IN A COURSE ON CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Intro

- Globalization: challenges for higher education
  - The increasing importance of inter-cultural skills and awareness
  - The value of experience to understand culture
  - The potential of modern information technology
  - To create intercultural meetings without travelling
  - To include students outside "the comfort zone"
The concept of the course

- A course about culture in form and contents
- Theoretical and experiential
- A virtual international class room with students from different cultures
- To create a learning environment through cooperation and comparisons
How the concept can be applied for other disciplines

- Whenever culture has relevance for any topic, e.g.
  - Culture and Sports
  - Culture in International Relations
  - Cross-cultural marketing
  - Leadership across cultures
  - Happiness and the meaning of life across cultures
  - ....
How it was planned

- The importance of a well-synchronized teacher team
- Teachers come from different cultures, too
- The need to plan together and get to know each other
Consideration of different conditions in the countries

- Internet connection speeds
- Computer literacy
- Support systems
- Poverty and access to computers
Consideration of different academic cultures

- Grading systems
- Semester periods
- Expectations and values concerning teaching and learning objectives
- Views on copyright and the need to buy literature
- Values concerning structure, dead-lines and punctuality
Decisions and compromises

- Introductory "getting-started" activities
  - To make a self-presentation
  - To join a group
  - To fill in a questionnaire
  - To participate in an easy discussion

- A simple and logical/self-explanatory design of the page
- Free online literature to a great extent
- Downloadable articles
- Scanned parts of books within copyright limits
- No audio-visual material
  - PPT lectures with text
Module 1
Introduction
Feb 19 to March 8

Module 2
March 9-April 5

Module 3
April 6-May 3

Integration/Conclusions
May 5-15

Getting Started
Jan 31 to Feb 18

Help!
This is where you can get help with Blackboard - and help others. If you get stuck, check if someone already posted a solution here. If not, present your problem and wait for assistance!

Present yourself!
Don't forget to tell the others who you are! Here you can enter information about yourself that you want others to know. Which country do you come from? Interests, age, whatever you want to reveal about yourself. You can also post a photo (use attach if you can't enter it directly into the message) of yourself if you want! If you regret something you wrote, you can go back and change or add at any... more

1 think...
Here you can contribute with your suggestions and thereby continuously evaluate and develop this course. Or comment on someone else's suggestions.

Group 1 forum
This is a unique and private discussion forum for your group. Here you can discuss and develop ideas without being online at the same time. Everything you write will be there for others to see and respond to when they enter into the forum. (It is a more flexible alternative to the group chat, where you all need to be present and discuss simultaneously.)
General pedagogical tools

- General discussions
  - "Why am I taking this course?"
  - My Culture/Psychology Question
  - Manifestations of cultural values in my country (e.g. of individualism or power distance)
  - What did I learn in this course?

- Discussions on articles
  - Globalization - a road to happiness?
  - Typical and appreciated leadership styles in your country - comparisons

- Exercises in groups
  - Collecting data for comparisons
    - Mate selection values
    - Beliefs about health promoting behaviour
    - Analysis and interpretation of a movie (Babel)
The structure of the course

- Three main modules
  - 1. Introduction
    - Globalization
    - The concept of culture
    - Cultural values
    - Culture and Identity
  - 2. Culture and Psychological processes
    - Cognition
    - Personality
    - Self, family and groups

- 3. Applications
  - Health, Well-being and Culture
  - Cultural diversity at the workplace
  - + a final Integration module
    - Course evaluation
    - Retake of the ethnocentrism test
    - Discussion: What did I learn?
For each module

- Literature
- Lectures
- Student activities
  - Discussions
  - Group exercise
  - Exam

  - Students collect points from each activity
    - The total number of points determines the grade
MODULE 1 Introduction to Cross cultural Psychology, and Methodology

Module 1 overview

Module 1 Assignment overview

Module 1 group project

Module 1 readings

Module 1 Lectures

Module 1 Exam: Culture and Globalization
For each question, choose the alternative you think is the best answer. When you are done, save and go to the next question. You cannot go back to a previous question after you have left it. There are altogether six questions to answer.
The exam period closes March 13, 01:00 AM Greenwhich time.

Module 1 Exam
This is the module 1 exam, especially reopened for Patricia, Tessa and Pernilla as you missed to do it the first time. You can do it any time before June 8. Good luck!

Begin February 16, 2009 - end March 8, 2009
The results

Fig 1. Summary of student ratings (mean values) of the different learning tools in the course. For each item the lowest rating was 1, the highest 5. N= 21.
Discussions were most appreciated

- …very interesting and made me use a great deal of thought
- It was good, it helped give you an inside to others countries and how much different their lives are than mine
- I kept all for reference as I was not able to read and digest all. I will read them again and again.

Group projects were least appreciated

Interesting but complicated. Wouldn’t change it, though.
I wound up doing the lion’s share of the work in my group
Different time zones and motivation of students make it very difficult to work on group projects
I think this was a great course but communicating with the other students in my group was often a difficult task.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean Whalen</td>
<td>March 1, 2009 10:02 AM</td>
<td>I would like to make a comment regarding what Luci and Ronald have to say. I think the proliferation of guns and the use of nuclear weapons are two good examples of people abusing their freedom to create other people's unhappiness. Freedom without ethics is a dangerous thing. Regarding Ronald's comments about homosexuality, I have to admit that while I don't completely understand homosexuality, I do understand that there is a biological basis for it and that it has been with people who are gay and have some gay friends. I don't think that these people are sick, but they are sick, and that no one has the right to judge them as fellow human beings who have rights to happiness. I agree that this is a serious problem, and I do not have time to judge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pernilla Palmqvist</td>
<td>March 1, 2009 10:10 AM</td>
<td>I agree with Sharon that the globalization is forcing the earth's population to work really hard. There are big demands on people (especially young people) to compete with others who have greater opponents. As we succeed it leads to temporary happiness while the globalization catch is up. We have to work even harder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fillo Karlsson</td>
<td>March 1, 2009 10:46 AM</td>
<td>I do not agree with the statement &quot;happiness seems to increase constantly in most parts of the world&quot;. I think it can and will increase in those poor countries that don't have their basic needs like for example water and food. But happiness will just increase to a point where all basic needs are satisfied. I don't think that there will always be an increasing happiness. If you have what you need you feel happy. And that feeling stays (for like a month) until you want more. That will of wanting more in life just makes us unhappy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malena Gunnarsson</td>
<td>March 2, 2009 10:42 AM</td>
<td>Thank you very much, Whalen it is very brilliant expression that I quote you &quot;But there is much about human nature that is too self-centered. We are destroying our fragile environment because of greed and the desire to always want more&quot;. Yes we need people to know that if we destroy our contemporary world today, it will not exist tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abere Mekonin</td>
<td>March 4, 2009 4:37 PM</td>
<td>I can't help but think about the Buddhist way of life when we are trying to statistically analyze happiness. I'm 100% positive you will find people in third world countries that don't have the materialistic things that make some people happy, however, they can find happiness with what they have. There are a lot of societies that are more group and community based that find happiness in just having a family. I've also read (I'll have to cite the source later) that money doesn't necessarily make people happier, that happiness is a baseline feeling. So however you felt before you won the lottery is the same way you will feel once the &quot;rush&quot; from getting a lot of money goes away. Happiness seems to average itself out based on life events, and it will usually go back to the baseline.</td>
</tr>
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| Patrick Hiland | March 4, 2009 5:15 PM | Discussion statistics
- 17 topics
- 1054 posts in total
- 25% of the total log in time |
Analysis of final discussion

- ALL (41 posts) said
  - Noticing
  - Understanding
  - Respecting
    - Cultural differences
The inter-cultural challenge

- We often underestimate the relevance of culture
- What is it?
- How do we differ?
- How can we deal with the differences?
Definitions of culture

- A set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.
- A set of values that underlie attitudes and actions of members of social groupings.
Dimensions of cultural variability

- Individualism-collectivism
- Power distance
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Masculinity-femininity
- Long term orientation
Masculinity for 9 countries
Power Distance for 9 countries

- Russia
- Japan
- United States
- Mexico
- Australia
- Poland
- Sweden
- Germany
- East Africa
Individualism for 9 countries
Individualism is related to:

- Self perception
- Social attribution
- Perception of time (high-low context)
- Universalism vs Particularism

And many other things of relevance for having an international course together
Self perception in different cultures

- Independent (I am a …)
- situation-specific (When I am with… I am)
- The false uniqueness effect: Statistically impossible self images
False uniqueness effect

- Everybody thinks they are being special
  - More intelligent than average
  - More creative
  - Better leaders
- Overestimation of self in relation to others
- Statistically impossible self-images
- Culturally relative effect
Perception of others

- Attribution: to explain behaviour in terms of outer or inner causes
- "Fundamental attribution error": underestimating situational effects
"It was not my fault..."

The fundamental attribution error and its reversal

Self-serving attributions and self justification

The need to miscredit others to enhance one´s self image

In individualistic cultures:
- Give blame
- Take credit

In collectivist cultures:
- Take blame
- Give credit
The ethnocentric challenge

- How do we get around it?
  - In the student group
  - In the teacher team?
- Can a course of this kind make us less ethnocentric?
Measuring ethnocentrism

- 21-item scale
  - "I prefer parties with a cultural mix rather than the ones where all come from my own culture"
  - "I would prefer to work in a company where the managers have a similar cultural background as myself"
  - "I think that the quality of products made in my country in general are better than those from most other countries"

- Cronbachs alpha 0.78-0.82
Ethnocentrism changes during the course

- No significant difference between pre- and posttest scores
- Activity on the course was correlated with change in ethnocentrism
  - Spearman correlation -0.56 (P=0.04)
    - (Higher degree of activity was associated with decreased ethnocentrism)
- Number of posts was the strongest predictor of the different activity measures
- No correlation between grades and change in ethnocentrism
The major future challenge

- How to manage group projects better?
- Group projects addresses the core objective of the course, but...
  - The problem with free riders
  - The problems to find efficient ways to interact
- The necessity of simple tools for intra-group communication
  - "The group room" worked fine
  - The parallell chat room confused the students
  - The different time zones contributed to its failure
Conclusions

- Challenging, but possible
  - A challenge for both students and teachers
  - with a great potential
- The challenges need to be anticipated and dealt with in a flexible and non-ethnocentric way
- Ethnocentrism cannot be easily changed
  - But the more intensively the students can be made to interact, the greater chance
And what about the teachers?

- Experiential learning and personal development
- A great fun potential
- A way to make your job more meaningful
- Greetings from Aydin and Peter who could not be here (inspecting a tea plantation in Uganda).