

Embedding Sustainability in *Cultural Psychology*



Intro to *Cultural Psychology*

Information about the Unit:

- Final-year optional unit since the 2018-2019 academic year
- Designed to broaden the scope of theoretical thinking and practical knowledge in psychology from a cross-cultural perspective (not just the WEIRD – *Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic* – people)
- Filled the gap of a typical psychological curriculum
- An indispensable part of the “diversifying the curriculum” work within the department in alignment with British Psychological Society

Aims of the Unit:

- Different cultural backgrounds will bring about different perception of the environment and different strategies aligned with this perception to adapt to the surrounding objects and people.
- Covers behavioural and neural differences across populations in different cultures and theories to explain these differences. +
- Urges students to think about the diversity of the human mind and the implausibility of having a simplified standard for human behaviour in a cross-cultural and globalised context.

Embedding Sustainability



SDGs Covered:

- #3, #4, #5, #10, #12, #16
- In the future, add topic “diversity in the climate crisis”
- Introduce all the SDGs, in the sense that to truly address the climate crisis we need to be meeting all those goals

How and Why?

People’s awareness is often a deciding factor for the future

- Actions very often depend on human perception and awareness of situations
- To develop understanding and knowledge instead of judgment
- Knowing the thinking processes behind behaviour can help finding solutions

Meeting the Challenges

Challenge 1:

Covers most research fields in psychology (clinical, cognitive, developmental, forensic, linguistic, neural, social etc.)

Solution:

- A large team with various expertise and ethnic diversity
- Turn the challenge into an opportunity showcasing diversity in the teaching team

Teaching Team:

Bernhard Angele

Ching-Yu Huang

Chloe Skipper

Eleonora Vagnoni

Emma Portch

Jacqui Taylor

John McAlaney

Laura Renshaw-Vuillier

Rachel Skinner

Sarah Hodge

Xun He (unit leader)



Topics:

Close relationships, Cognition and perception, Interpersonal space, Cultural norm and multicultural contact, Cyber behaviours, Dynamic culture, Emotions, Eye movement, Gender differences and equality, Interpersonal behaviour and group processes, Justice, Mental health, Morality, Motivation, Reading, Self and personality, Sexual behaviours, Social and emotional wellbeing issues for aboriginal people, Socialisation and culture in development

Meeting the Challenges

Challenge 2:

Difficult to engage students with such a variety of topics

Solution:

Critical discussion in seminars

- Design a 1-year programme/campaign to mitigate the risks people from minority groups are faced with in the criminal justice system.
- What can we do to improve the learning experience of international students?

Portfolio assignment based on a film about immigration and intercultural contact

Open discussion

- Students shared their own experience.
- Worked best when there were international students or British students who had been abroad.
- More interactive and experience-based.

Overall:

- Embrace diversity
- Critical thinking based on students' own experience
- +
- Learn from the whole cohort, not just from the lecturers

Responses to the Unit

From Students:

“It reminds us that we are all different and we should always keep an open mind with other people.”

“We live in a more culturally diverse world more than ever and this unit is essential for future psychologists to get the most out of their careers in my opinion.”

“The wider context of this is so important and we need to ensure we are doing more in our justice system and society, so despite characteristics like ethnicity, cultural background and class everyone is treated the same.”

“The cultural psychology unit has widened my understanding relating to how environments and culture can influence the social construct, gender.”

From Staff:

“Understanding cross-cultural variations in all aspects of psychology is vital to give students a broader sense of what it means to be human and for them to realise that psychology is not just about White middle-class men. This course is a brilliant way to expose students to this variation.”

+

“A comprehensive and holistic approach to social sustainability in a sector-aware format. The content clearly was made relevant to students so they felt able to act on and engage with it so passionately with a solid knowledge base to apply this to. A fantastic and fascinating unit!”

“Cultural application is so valuable and this module gives students insight which will benefit their careers and future relationships.”