

Culture, Health, and Human Development
A Research Workshop Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health
and the University of Connecticut School of Family Studies
Mystic, Connecticut, May 12-20, 1998

As a precursor to the founding of the Center for the Study of Culture, Health, and Human Development at the University of Connecticut, we conducted an ten-day, NIH-sponsored workshop, with the specific aim of providing scientists in a formative early stage of their careers in social/behavioral and biomedical sciences: (1) an appreciation of the role of culture in regulating the development of health and dysfunction; (2) a theoretical framework for understanding culture, health, and human development which they can apply to their specific topical interests; (3) familiarity with a range of research methods to assess culturally organized features of development and health, sufficient for engaging in collaborative projects with experts from the collateral disciplines; and (4) introductory skill in personally using selected cultural methodologies which are applicable to a variety of research problems in the field of health and development.

The theoretical frameworks chosen for emphasis in the proposed workshop have been developed in the last decade specifically to facilitate the integration of knowledge from several related disciplines (psychology, anthropology, public health and human biology) and across several levels of analysis (organ systems, psychological, social, and cultural). By focusing on these integrative frameworks, we workshop participants were provided with the intellectual orientation to pursue further cross-disciplinary exploration and collaboration with colleagues in related areas.

At the same time, by imparting specific skills that participants themselves can use to assess cultural factors in their research, we prepared participants to undertake innovative projects from the moment they leave the workshop and return to their home institutions. At the completion of this workshop, participants were be able to (1) structure and analyze interview or narrative data in order to identify reliably culturally relevant themes and cultural models; (2) identify cultural-cognitive domains relevant to their focal interests, select items, structure and analyze data in order to reveal systems of shared meaning and their relationship to behavioral organization; (3) recognize and resolve problems in the adaptation of standard questionnaires and behavioral procedures for specific ethnic groups; (4) identify and manage cultural issues in the collection of health and nutritional indices; (5) identify and operationalize the critical components of "cultural context" as they affect development; (6) design research procedures to identify and quantify cultural forces which shape the demographic and health parameters of a community; and (7) recognize cultural assumptions which underlie public health and policy-based interventions and which can undermine successful implementation in culturally diverse settings.

The long-term outcome we foresaw for, therefore, was to influence the degree and quality of interdisciplinary knowledge on healthy development, specifically by expanding the corps of researchers who have the sophistication and the skills to include cultural factors in their project designs and policy analyses. The practical value of health research that integrates a cultural perspective is increasingly evident to both the scientific community and the wider public. National goals included in "Healthy People 2000," like

Saturday, May 16

Continental breakfast
Note: Saturday meeting in the Flood Tide restaurant
 8:00 - noon Lecture: Psychometrics and the adaptation of questionnaires (Bernal)
 (With break) Lecture: Integration of interview and questionnaire data: the case of
 Italian temperament (Axia)
 Afternoon free
 6:00 clambake at the Boat Shed (15 min. walk; cab can be arranged if needed)

Sunday, May 17

Morning free (optional brunch, reservations required)
 2:00 meet in parking lot for bus ride to Avery Point campus of UConn
 Lecture and demonstration: Culturally sensitive categories in interviews
 and behavior (Harwood)
 Review of individual projects (Super *et al.*)
 6:00 picnic dinner, followed by individual project consultations on the lawn
 9:00 bus return to the Inn

Monday, May 18

Continental breakfast
 9:00 - noon Lecture and demonstration: Biological measures and developmental
 (With break) processes (Worthman & Stallings)
 Noon lunch
 1:00 - 5:00 Lecture: Biological measures of state regulation and psychosocial
 (With break) processes (Granger)
 Lab: Nutrition, diet, and culture (Stallings & Worthman)
 6:00 dinner at Flood Tide restaurant
 Evening individual project consultations

Tuesday, May 19

Continental breakfast
 9:00 - noon Lecture: Cultural models and health choices (Ryan)
 (With break) Lab: Diet and culture revisited (Worthman & Stallings)
 Noon lunch
 1:00 - 5:00 Lecture: Culture and population-level outcomes (Worthman)
 (With break)
 6:00 dinner at Flood Tide restaurant
 Evening individual project consultations

Wednesday, May 20

Continental breakfast
 9:00 - noon Lecture: How culture regulates responses to well-intentioned interventions
 (With break) (Worthman, Weisner, Harkness, & Super)
 Noon lunch
 1:00 - 5:00 Lecture: Summary and discussion
 (With break) Lab: Evaluation of the workshop as a culturally organized intervention
 6:00 dinner
 Evening optional departure, or individual consultations

Thursday, May 21

Morning final departures