THE NEUROSCIENCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY

~ OPENING OUR MINDS ~

cultureSEast, May 17th, 2018. Tabor Great Hall
“Exploring the Human Brain and Perceptions of Culture”
By Dan Wells  (daniel.wells1@pcc.edu)
OPENING EXERCISE:
(Introduction will following shortly)

1.) You will need a BLANK Sheet of Paper & something to write with. (available on nearby tables/desks)

2.) You need to label your paper with numbers #1-10, down the page.

3.) You will write your responses to a series of questions. (NOTE: you may find this difficult, unpleasant and/or uncomfortable, BUT THERE IS A REASON FOR THIS. You will find out after the questions – during the INTRODUCTION.

NOTE: I’m intentionally asking you questions BEFORE the Introduction.
OPENING QUESTIONS #1 - 5:
Who do you think I am?

• #1. How OLD do you think I am? 50 55 60 65 70
• #2. What content do I teach here at PCC? My Department? Psychology, Sociology, Computer Applications (CAS), Physics
• #3. What is my Annual Salary? Approx. $25K, $50K, $75K, $100K
• #4. What is my Nationality and Ethnic origin? Ancestry?
• #5. Am I married or single? Do I have children? House, Car?
OPENING QUESTIONS #6 - 10:
What are you feeling?

• #6. What is the temperature in this room? Are you comfortable?
• #7. Did you eat Breakfast or Lunch? Are you currently hungry? Thirsty?
• #8. Is there anything or anybody in this room that makes you feel **UNSAFE**?
• #9. If you were **ALONE** with **ME** in this room, would you feel **SAFE**? Do I seem like somebody you would like to get to know? Trust?
• #10. Is there anybody in this room that you find **attractive** or **interesting** & would **like to meet them**? If so, how many are there?
INTRODUCTION

• **Who am I?** Dan Wells, CAS/OS Dept., Part-time Instructor.

• **Why am I presenting?** I am NOT an expert in this field. I have read a lot about Brain-research and Neuroplasticity. I am a member of the PCC Community and I want to support & be involved in the activities that are important to us, to be part of and support the process of LEARNING.

• I will use a Brain-based research and a discussion process called ARIA to facilitate our learning. It stands for Awareness, Reflection, Insight and Action.
INTRODUCTION
Continued

• **AWARENESS** — I will explain why I asked those 10 questions. Then I will introduce some information about current Brain-research (Limbic-system, Neuroplasticity, Neurogenesis, Behavior modification).

• **REFLECTION** — Video: Brain Plasticity and learning. Summarize and discuss Brain research and your ideas/application.

• **INSIGHT** — What is significant to you? **Discussion** — How can you/we use this information in PRACTICAL WAYS?

• **ACTION** — **Discussion/Work:** What PLAN of ACTION do you have in mind?
• Why did I ask **Questions #1-5**: They are based upon possible Prejudicial views and Judgement. We **NATURALLY** try to make sense of our surroundings. My questions were trying to deal with Ageism, Educationalism or judgement of my Intelligence or what you think of different departments/content mean, Classism, Nationalism or Race/Ethnicity, Gender-Sexism/Sexual Orientation.
• Why did I ask Questions #6-10: They are based upon your Limbic system processing. This system is the most basic part of our brain. It is focused on survival and basic needs. Your body comfort is something that is important to it. It also keeps track of Long-term memory. It remembers what you think is Attractive or Interesting (sex drive). What you learned as a kid and any traumatic experiences has been deeply recorded in this region of your brain. Our Limbic region does 96% of our daily thinking. **Conscious thought = 4%!!!**
Some of the most well-known types of prejudice include:

- Racism.
- Sexism.
- Classicism.
- Homophobia.
- Nationalism.
- Religious prejudice.
- Ageism.
- Xenophobia.

“Understanding Prejudice: How It Forms and How to Prevent It”
by Kendra Cherry, Updated February 11, 2018
https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-prejudice-2795476
Prejudice and Stereotyping

- When prejudice occurs, stereotyping, discrimination, and **bullying** may also result. In many cases, prejudices are based on stereotypes.
- A stereotype is a simplified assumption about a group based on prior experiences or beliefs. Stereotypes can be positive ("women are warm and nurturing") or negative ("teenagers are lazy"). Stereotypes can not only lead to faulty beliefs, but they can also result in both prejudice and discrimination.
According to psychologist Gordon Allport, prejudice and stereotypes emerge in part as a result of normal human thinking. In order to make sense of the world around us, it's important to sort information into mental categories. "The human mind must think with the aid of categories," Allport explained. "Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudgment. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends upon it."
Prejudice and Stereotyping Are Mental Mistakes

• In other words, we depend upon our ability to place people, ideas, and objects into different categories in order to make the world simpler and easier to understand. We are simply inundated with too much information to sort through all of it in a logical, methodical, and rational fashion. Being able to quickly categorize information allows us to interact and react quickly, but it also leads to mistakes.
Prejudice and Stereotyping Are Mental Mistakes

• Prejudice and stereotyping are just two examples of the mental mistakes that result from our tendency to quickly categorize information in the world around us.

• This process of categorization applies to the social world as well as we sort people into mental groups based on factors such as age, sex, and race.
AWARENESS
~ Summary ~

• 1.) Exercise ???’s
• 2.) Stereotyping is NATURAL
• 3.) Limbic system is background and Dominant!
  Fight, Flight or Freeze,
  Limbic-system Hijacks the brain!

• Do you agree with this? Does it make sense?
  Discussion: on Paper or Neighbor(s).
REFLECTION
~ New Info, Brain Info ~

• VIDEO: Dr. Lara Boyd, “Your brain will not be the same after watching this” (14:24 min.) we’ll watch first 5 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNHBMFCzznE

• Due to our understanding of Neuroplasticity, we can change the way we THINK about things. New THINKING PATTERNS create new neural pathways - Which changes our brain structure!
REFLECTION

• Due to our understanding of **Neurogenesis**, we can change the way we THINK about things. Our brains create new nerve buds every day, which can create new neurons and new neural pathways -

Which changes our brain structure!
INSIGHT

• If we can change our brain structure by the way we think (consistently), then we can be INTENTIONAL about what we think and change our behaviors.

• We WILL / DO become what we choose to think about!!

• How can we use this knowledge to change our behaviors and/or influence others?
Prejudice is an unjustified or incorrect attitude (usually negative) towards an individual based solely on the individual's membership of a social group. For example, a person may hold prejudiced views towards a certain race or gender etc. (e.g. racist, sexist).
PERCEPTION and CULTURE

• Our behaviors that HONOR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion MUST be INTENTIONAL. We must be “aware” of our pre-existing biases and have a plan to address them.

• We are “trained” by our Parents, Families, Communities what is CULTURALLY acceptable. We may not even be aware of what is part of our Limbic-memory and opinions until they are triggered.
I believe a good approach to address potential areas of concern would be to expose ourselves to information or activities that increase our AWARENES, then REFLECT on what we see and feel is important, then gain the necessary INSIGHT to build a PLAN for ACTION.
Pause for ....

REFLECTION and INSIGHT

• **DISCUSSION**: (3-5 minutes)

• 1.) **Clarify Brain Info**: Neuroplasticity, Neurogenesis, Limbic region and it’s influences on human behavior.

• 2.) **Perception, Culture and being Intentional**: YOUR THOUGHTS?
PLAN for ACTION

• IF you have gained any INSIGHT today, then you can REFLECT on how you might PLAN to take ACTION. DISCUSSION or WORK TIME?

• CONSIDER: Plans for change for YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY and/or YOUR COMMUNITY. Are your plans inward or outward?

• What ideas do you have about how to PROMOTE certain kinds of THINKING PATTERNS to improve or increase EQUITY and/or INCLUSION?

How can WE increase JUSTICE in Education at PCC Southeast?
~ THANK YOU ~

for Listening and for your Interest in this topic

• Contact Information: Dan Wells, PCC CAS/OS Instructor, daniel.wells1@pcc.edu

• Documentation & Resources HANDOUTS are available on desks/tables around this room.

• BEST WISHES on your Adventure for Growth and Change !!!