Chapter 2
Cultural Markers and Their Impact on Teaching in Higher Education

Jim I. Berger
Western Kentucky University, USA

Kenneth Kungu
Clayton State University, USA

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this chapter is to describe, in detail, cultural values as they can impact learning in higher education, describe cultural markers found within the classroom, and provide readers with a collection of exercises that can be utilized to discover the larger cultural values present within their learners. Research regarding cultural values and their differences among various international students will be described within general cultural values. Readers will be provided with a table of cultural markers, activities to discover their presence in the classroom, and questions to ask of learners to accommodate those cultural values. Implications for the higher education classroom and directions for future research are included.

INTRODUCTION
Teaching, while often carried out in a structured environment, is flush with cultural components that impact effectiveness with adult learners. A careful examination of the classroom points to cultural values that can impact a student’s ability to learn. Likewise, a difference in cultures between the instructor and students can cause a strain in the learning process. Learners may expect the instructor to have certain views on time, how one shows respect, how knowledge is developed, or how they approach learning. When these expectations are not met, students can become frustrated and disengage from the learning process. While there have been many studies on teaching techniques and fewer on classroom culture, little research has been done examining how culture can impact learning in a higher education classroom environment. The purpose of this chapter is to explore various cultural processes that take place within higher education classrooms and suggest a means for assessing their presence within the classroom/
learning environment. This chapter will define culture, focus on components of classroom culture, describe cultural markers and their impact on learning among various cultural groups. Finally, readers will be provided with questions and activities designed to discover cultural values present in the classroom along with accommodations to support those values.

**COMPONENTS OF CLASSROOM CULTURE**

Culture has many meanings and is likened to the proverbial elephant described by the five wise men, each with his own perspective. Barker defines culture as “... shared social meanings, that is, the various ways we make sense of the world” (2004, p. 45). Kluckhohn writes “Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups ...” (1951, p. 86). Hofstede, a strong researcher in business culture, describes culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group ... from another” (2001, p. 9). Three frameworks to study cultural values are presented by Geert Hofstede (2001), the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) Study (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), and Edward T. Hall (1959). Hofstede’s work has focused on the impact of a society’s culture on its members and their behaviors in the workplace. He examined cultural values across more than 70 countries on the following dimensions: Power Distance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Time Orientation, and most recently, Indulgence. Hofstede developed surveys to assess the presence and degree of these cultural values and their impact on the workplace. Using factor analysis, he was able to show how society impacts employee behaviors within an organization. Taking a similar approach, the GLOBE study examined the impact culture has on management behaviors for 951 organizations in 62 countries. The nine dimensions include Future Orientation, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Humane Orientation, In-Group Collectivism, Institutional Collectivism, Performance Orientation, Power Concentration/Decentralization, and Uncertainty Avoidance. Hall (1959) wrote about communication within various cultures across ten dimensions: Interaction, Association, Subsistence, Bisexuality, Territoriality, Temporality, Learning, Play, Defense and Exploitation. These three groundbreaking manuscripts have highlighted the importance of understanding culture and its impact on the workplace and society. However, similar approaches have rarely been undertaken for the higher education classroom.

Dimmock and Walker (2000) proposed a cultural model of teaching and learning in K-12 settings that focused on six areas of culture. Nature of knowledge, the first area, examines how students and society view knowledge and the purveyors of knowledge. Some Eastern cultures tend to value knowledge highly and instructors are given more respect than in Western cultures. As a result, the second area shows that the relationship between teachers and students are more hierarchical in Eastern cultures than in Western cultures. The third concept relates to how parents and the community are encouraged to be involved in the learning process. Whereas in some cultures, parents are encouraged to be involved with their children’s learning, other cultures see learning as more school-based activities and, as such, the purview of the school alone. Teaching methods, the fourth area, identifies cultures surrounding teaching methods and approaches. In some cultures, teaching uses more didactic versus more student-centered approaches that rely on more collaborative concepts. The fifth area of Dimmock and Walker’s model examines the expectation of the role of the teacher/instructor. Teachers may be expected to be content experts or they