

Activity and Author Name:

Marriage customs in Africa and Latin America by Cate Shiles, Caldwell Community College & Technical Institute (correspondence: cshiles@cccti.edu)

Activity Description:

The formation of a family unit is a cultural universal. However, the form these families take, and the process by which they are formed, varies greatly from culture to culture. In this activity, students will be asked to consider some variations in the formation of family (through both courtship and marriage rituals), as well as differences in the “typical” family structure.

Objectives:

This assignment is designed to introduce students to examples of family formation in Africa and Latin America. At the completion of this assignment, students should have an understanding that who people marry is often times more a matter of social laws, norms, and expectations than it is of notions of romantic love. Also, students should understand that the familiar, western version of dating and marriage is only one of many ways in which families are formed.

The larger goals of these modules are to help students develop a sociological perspective and knowledge pertaining to....

- a. The world that exists outside of America
- b. The examination of social phenomena from another’s perspective
- c. How cultures appear very different, but in many ways, are quite similar
- d. The social patterns that exist within various cultures

How the everyday, lived experiences and larger culture of a society are patterned and influenced by the social structure and constraints within that given society.

Global Learning Outcome(s):

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Global Learning Outcome 1:

Students will identify the demographic profile of a particular country, including standing on various measures of human development.

- a. *Level of learning:* IDENTIFICATION/KNOWLEDGE
- b. *Recommended prerequisite knowledge/Assign this activity AFTER having taught:* METHODS

Global Learning Outcome 2:

Students will examine how specific cultural universals related to the social institutions of family,

religion, and the criminal justice system are conceptualized and expressed in a particular country.

- a. *Level of learning:* IDENTIFICATION/KNOWLEDGE
- b. *Recommended prerequisite knowledge/Assign this activity AFTER having taught:*
CULTURE

Global Learning Outcome 3:

Students will interpret the norms that are reinforced by specific cultural universals related to the social institutions of family, religion, and the criminal justice system.

- a. *Level of learning:* INTERPRETATION
- b. *Recommended prerequisite knowledge/Assign this activity AFTER having taught:*
CULTURE

Global Learning Outcome 4:

Students will justify how variations in the expression of cultural universals are influenced by the larger social structure.

- a. *Level of learning:* EVALUATION/JUSTIFICATION/ANALYSIS
Recommended prerequisite knowledge/Assign this activity AFTER having taught: All previously mentioned prerequisites AND social INSTITUTIONS.

Time:

Two class periods if done in class; one if given as an out-of-class assignment

Materials:

1. Internet access (preferably computer-based but may be able to access some resources using mobile device).
2. One worksheet for each group (provided in the resources section)
3. Colored pencils, glue sticks, scissors
4. Old magazines for finding illustrations

Procedure:

1. Identify marriage and the formulation of family as a cultural universal you will be investigating in-depth. What are the functions of family?
 - a. Sexual regulation
 - b. Socialization
 - c. Social Class placement
 - d. Provide care & protection
2. Ask students to consider what social forces influence marriage partners. If teaching this section after teaching stratification systems, students may be familiar with the ideas that race and social class influence who we marry. Introduce the idea of how laws influence marital choices by reminding them that interracial marriage was not legalized in the US until 1967. Expand by saying that incest taboos are another example of how laws influence marital choices. A good way to do this is by considering cousin marriage in the United States (see resources section).

3. While the formation of family through marriage is a cultural universal, the form this takes also varies greatly from culture to culture. What is the “accepted process in the US?” (Write the steps on the board) **Some US statistics that may be useful for this assignment:**
- Average age at first marriage; men 29, women 27
 - Average length of dating before engagement; 2.5 years
 - Average length of engagement before marriage; 15 months

Cohen, P.N. (2015). *The family: Diversity, inequality, and social change*. New York; W.W. Norton & Company.

Seecombe, K. (2016). *Families and their social worlds*. Boston; Pearson.

Show one or two of the video clips that demonstrate dating and marriage around the world (see resources section).

For your activity for this section, complete the worksheet provided in the resources section.

1. Assessment

You will be graded on the following:

- Each question in the worksheet is assigned a point value. Points should be awarded for accuracy of information, and the detail in which it is presented. Points for the picture of a typical family should also be given for creativity of the visual representation as well as the accuracy of information.
- The detail and creativity of your wedding planning. Have all the recommended topics been addressed? Can it be interpreted by someone who is unfamiliar with the information?

Resources:

- **Incest Taboos**
 - The National Conference of State Legislatures. (2010). *State laws regarding marriages between first cousins*. Retrieved April 29th from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/state-laws-regarding-marriages-between-first-cousi.aspx>
- **Marriage Customs**
 - If your college has access to CultureGrams, this is a wonderful resource for students to use to find this information, for both within the US and in other societies. If your college does not have CultureGrams, here are some links to older data sets:
 - CultureGrams World Edition (2016). *Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Retrieved May 11, 2016 from <http://sennclasslinks.wikispaces.com/file/view/Nigeria+CultureGram.pdf>
 - CultureGrams World Edition. (2010). *Oriental Republic of Uruguay*. Retrieved May 11, 2016 from <http://www.culturegrams.com/products/Uruguay.pdf>

- World, T. P. (2010). *Nigeria Society and Culture Complete Report*. Petaluma, CA, USA: World Trade Press. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- World, T. P. (2010). *Uruguay Society and Culture Complete Report*. Petaluma, CA, USA: World Trade Press. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com>
- Central Intelligence Agency. (2016). Nigeria. *The world factbook*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>
- Central Intelligence Agency. (2016). Nigeria. *The world factbook*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uy.html>

- **Marriage custom videos (can be found on *Films on Demand*)**

- *Will you marry me? Marriage customs in Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, and Senegal* [Video file]. (2004). In *Films On Demand*. Retrieved May 11, 2016, from <http://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=103789&xtid=39452>
- *Marriage* [Video file]. (1998). In *Films On Demand*. Retrieved May 11, 2016, from <http://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=103789&xtid=10339>

Marriage Laws and Customs

What are the general courtship practices in your country? If you are interested in someone, how do you let them know? (4 points)

When you find someone you want to marry, how do you go about doing so? (2 points)

At what age can you expect to marry in your country? (2 points)

Male

Female

Are same sex marriages legal in your country? (2 points)

Briefly describe a typical wedding. Is it a celebration or a solemn event? Are marriages typically a religious, civil, or traditional ceremony? (5 points)

Where will you live after marriage? Who else will be in your household? Draw a picture, or use magazine cut outs, to illustrate a "typical" family in your country. (10 points)