

Embodied Culture: Discovering the Feeling of Self and Other in Cultural Context.

While the idea of “culture” is an abstraction, the actual experience we have of culture is a very concrete one: it is, in the words of Humberto Maturana “the praxis of living of a coordinated group of people.” Whatever kind of group it is – national, ethnic, professional, etc. – coordination depends on people having a shared experience of everyday life. Like all organisms, human beings experience life via their bodily senses, both literally and, through language, metaphorically. So, to understand the actual experience of culture, we need to tap into that embodiment of our individual and collective sensory experience.

Culture frames experience in a particular way so that we give meaning, attribute value, and feel emotion in resonance with other members of our group(s). As we become more conscious of constructing cultural identity, how aware are we that it is inscribed in our body? By increasing our awareness of cultural embodiment, this course will show how ethnocentrism can be counteracted more effectively and how multicultural identity can be achieved more deliberately. For business applications, it will suggest more productive alternatives to the commonly used teamwork approaches, and for social applications it will suggest more viable alternatives to traditional prejudice reduction efforts. Overall, the course will activate this long journey of discovery that leads to incorporating intercultural consciousness into one’s praxis of living.

Intended for

The course is intended for participants who have attended the IDRAcademy foundation course “Intercultural Consciousness: Applying the New Paradigm” or a close equivalent (to be negotiated with IDRInstitute directors before enrollment). Expected participants are interculturalists, counselors, educators,

coaches and people with a multicultural background who wish to deepen their cultural self-awareness as part of developing intercultural consciousness for themselves and facilitating it with others.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn the evolution of the embodiment concept
- Reflect on the construction of cultural identity and its embodiment
- Become aware of the daily experience of the body in cultural context
- Contact embodied resistance to alternative perception
- Understand how other people may embody culture differently
- Integrate embodied awareness into intercultural communication
- Learn strategies for intentionally shifting embodied cultural perception

The course is designed like a workshop in which theoretical contents are blended with sharing of experience, physical exercises (integration of deep breathing and easily accessible physical movements) and individual reflections. Please wear comfortable clothing and cotton socks. A “dinner in the dark” or other shared activity the first evening will be integral part of the workshop.