

Any questions? Probably ... Strategies for improving student-centered learning in virtual seminars.

Jonathan Racster, M.A.
(he/him/his)

Full-Time Faculty
Humanities and Social Sciences Department
School of General Education
Purdue University Global



Learning Outcomes

- Discuss the importance of questions in student-centered learning.
- Identify best practices for concept checking during seminar.
- Apply strategies for improved student engagement through the art of asking questions.



Image Source: <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-sustainable-tactics-you-dont-know-but-should/>

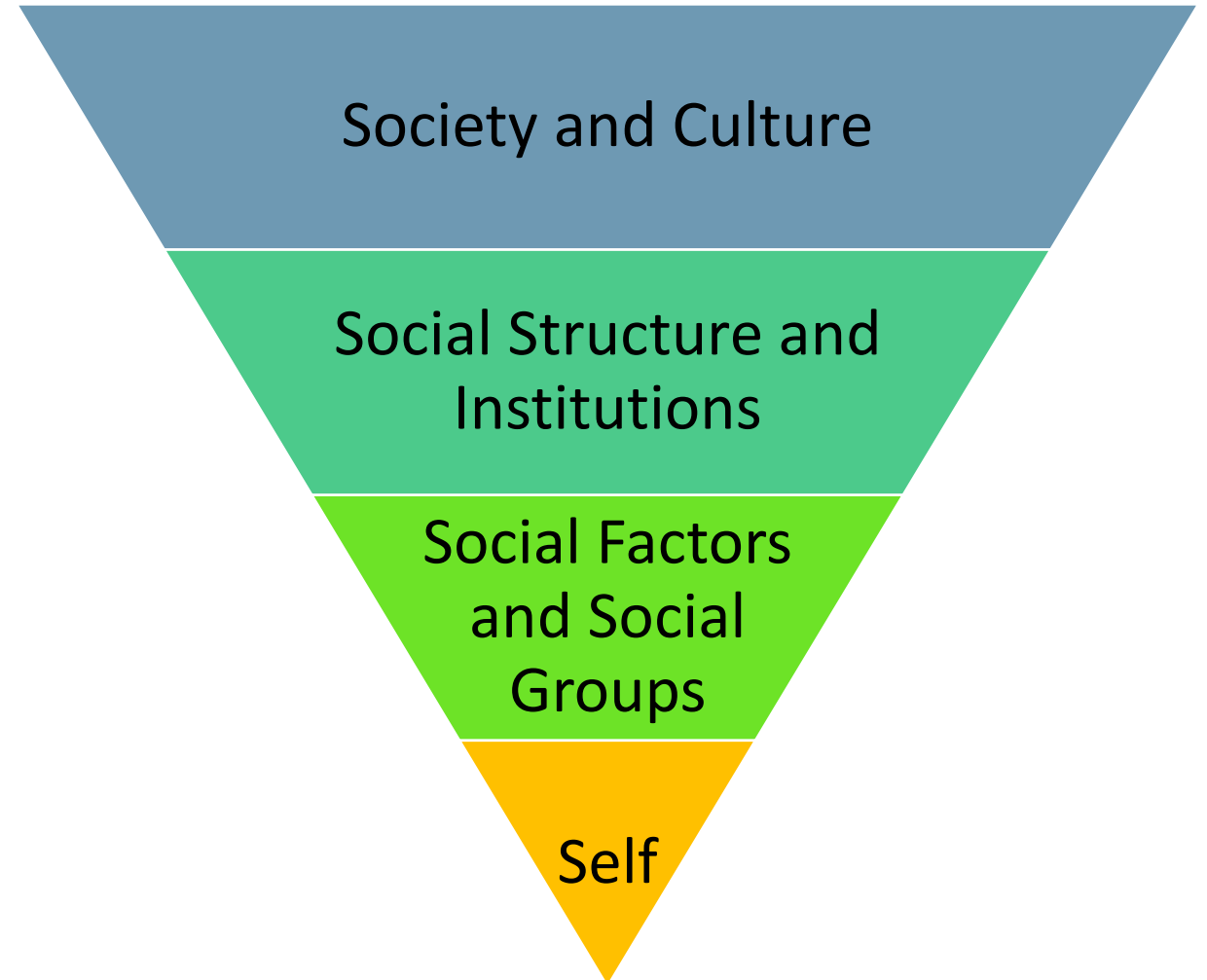
Any Questions Before We Start?



Image Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-images-3d-man-quest-sign-image13403094>

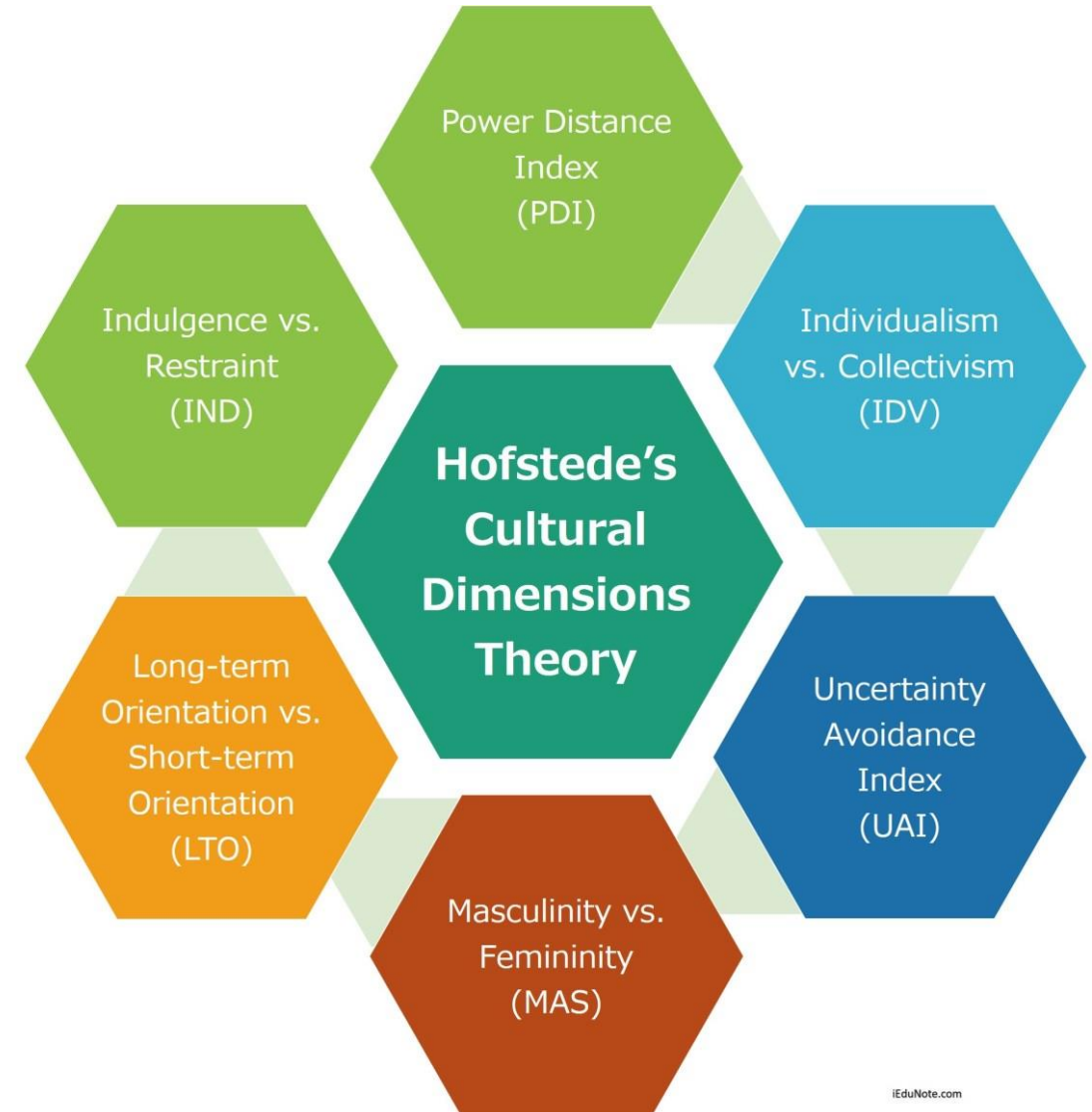
What Impacts Interrogative Behavior

- Culture
- Institutional knowledge/experience
- Social factors
- Individual traits and circumstances



Cultural and Subcultural Influences

- Dimensions of Culture
 - Power Distance
 - Individualism/Collectivism
 - Uncertainty Avoidance
 - Indulgence/Restraint
 - Hofstede, et al., 2010
- These factors may not influence everyone in the same way but often manifest in patterned behavior such as the reticence to ask or answer question.



Source: <https://www.iedunote.com/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory>

Social Factors And Institutional Influences

- **Social Factors: Example Gender**
 - Girls tend to learn linguistic patterns that promote rapport.
 - Boys tend to learn linguistic patterns that focus on status.
 - Men may avoid asking/answering questions to avoid the “one-down” position.
 - Women may avoid asking/answering questions to maintain group harmony.
- Tannen (2005)
- **Institutional Knowledge**
 - Students may not be used to collegiate interrogative practices
 - E.g., the Socratic Method
 - Students may not know the agency in their position.

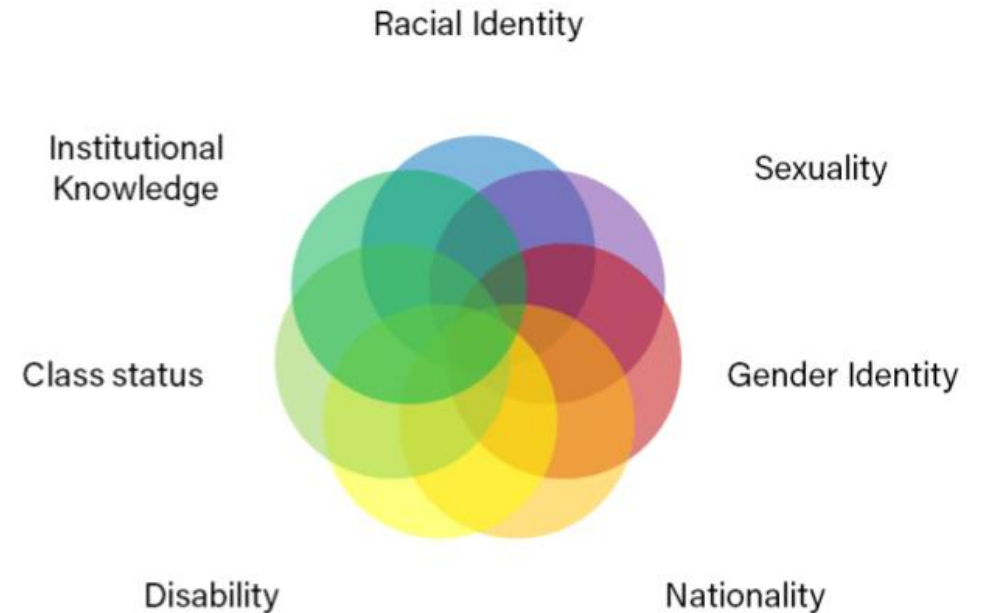


Image Source: Purdue University LGBTQ Center

Meet Them Where They Are

- **Foster a student-centered classroom**
- Use questions to understand your learners
 - Assess their prior knowledge
 - Assess their experiences with the topic
 - Nunneley, et al. (2021)
- Virtual seminars have less time. Consider:
 - Use introductory discussions to gain some of these insights.
 - Start the seminar with targeted questions or polls
- This also improves the student's acquisition of new knowledge by activating their previous knowledge.
 - Nunneley, et al. (2021)



Time To Be Honest ...

Ask yourself or answer in the chat:

- Do you find yourself saying “Any questions?”
- Do you take the time to ask questions during your seminar?
 - What is the nature of your questions?
 - Procedural, content-related, conceptual?
- Do you get any questions in response?
 - What is the nature of their questions?



Image Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-images-3d-man-quest-sign-image13403094>

Common Issues Among Novice Teachers

- Study by Ralph (1999) exploring oral-questioning skills of novice teachers using a Likert-like scale of 1-5:
 - Importance of asking questions as very high (4.7 out of 5)
 - Extent of using questions (3.6 out of 5)
 - Lowest scores were:
 - Question Clarity (3.2 out of 5)
 - Questions that thinking vs recall (2.9 out of 5)
 - Mix of questions that use both thinking and recall (2.9 out of 5)
 - All scores did improve over time.

Improving Your Questions

- Are you checking in with your student's learning?
 - Using questions
- What are you really asking?
 - Clarity
- Why are you asking the question?
 - Recall or thinking?
- Could a concept be better explored with a question as opposed to a statement?
 - Promote Thinking



Image Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-images-3d-man-quest-sign-image13403094>

Example: Assignments And Discussions

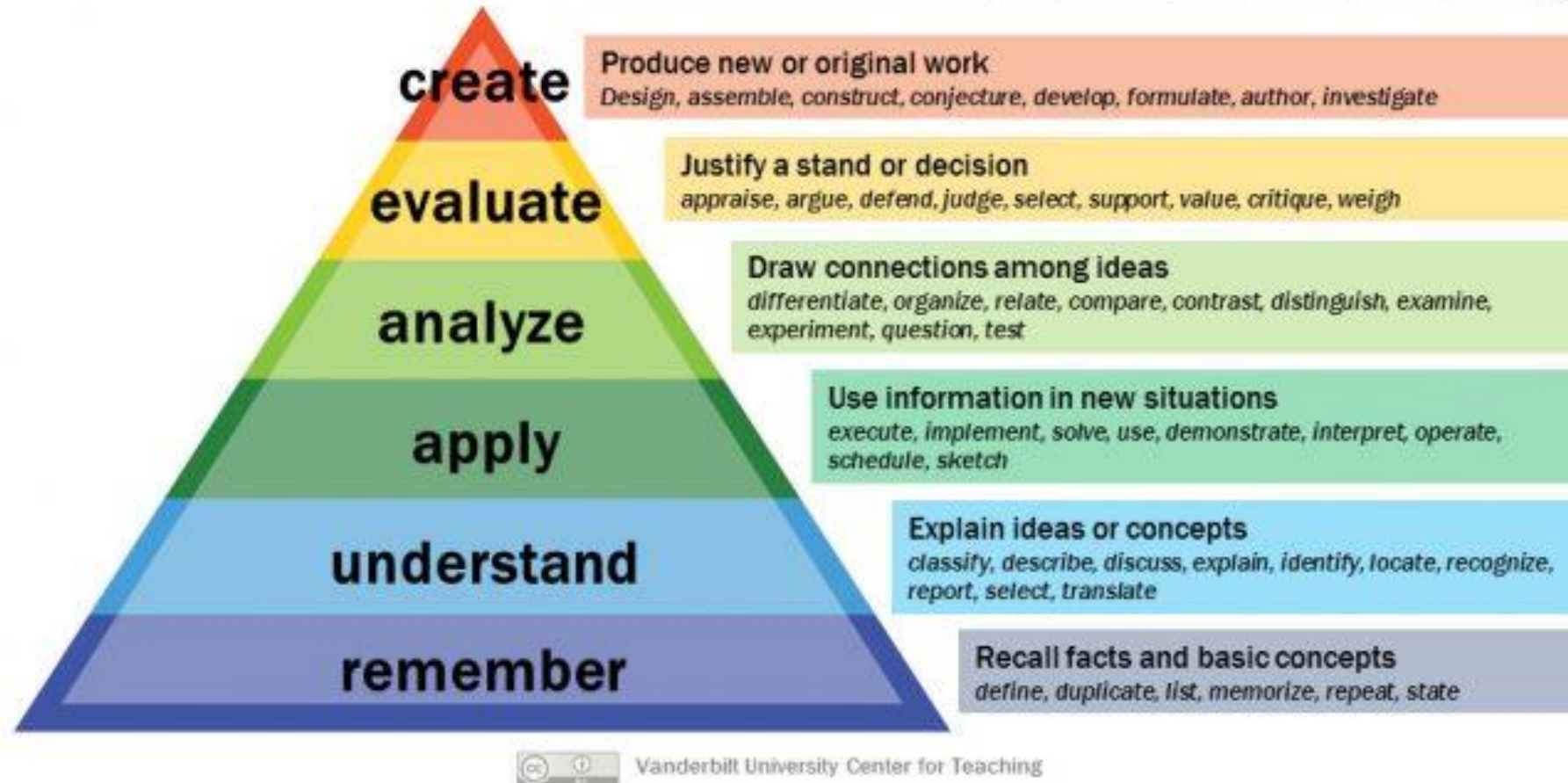
- I used to ask “Any Questions” about these...
- **I realized two things:**
 - They understood me in the moment but may not retain that understanding later.
 - I really wanted to know is if there were any stumbling blocks for completion.
- **Now I ask:**
 - *Any concepts or terms that need further exploration before you begin?* - Thinking
 - *Any red flags? Or things that may prevent you from completing it?* - Clarity



Image Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-images-3d-man-quest-sign-image13403094>

Use Bloom's To Improve Your Questions

Bloom's Taxonomy



Source: Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001

Improving Student Questions

Student Centered Learning

- Jacobs & Renandya (2021)
- Lead by example.
- Help them grow the skill.
- Use Starters (w/ Bloom's)
 - What criteria will we use to assess...?
- Let them ask about you.
- Respond mindfully.



Source: <https://dr-padmamurali.medium.com/question-strategies-for-a-learner-centered-education-eb0f1d8055e>

Any Questions? Just Kidding!

- Is there a slide you wish to see again?
- Is there a concept you wish to be discussed further?
- Would you like further examples of common practices?
- Do you want to share an example from your experiences?
- Do you have any ideas to help improve our interrogative skills?



Image Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-images-3d-man-quest-sign-image13403094>

References:

- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational outcomes: Complete edition*, New York: Longman
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., and Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: software of the mind: intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival: Third edition*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Jacobs, G. M. and Renandya, W. A. (2021). Any Questions? Ideas for encouraging more and better student questions. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, 22(2), 349 – 363. DOI: 10.24071/llt.v24i2.3819
- Nunneley, C. E., Fishman, M., Sundheim, K. M., Korus, R. E., Rosen, R. H., Streater, B. A., O'Donnell, K. A., Newman, L. R., & Marcus, C. H. (2021). Leading synchronous virtual teaching sessions. *The Clinical Teacher*, 18(3), 231–235. <https://doi-org.libauth.purdueglobal.edu/10.1111/tct.13282>
- Ralph, E. G. (1999). Oral-Questioning Skills of Novice Teachers: ... Any Questions? *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 26(4), 286. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A62980777/HRCA?u=anon~46755fdc&sid=googleScholar&xid=720eb6f3>
- Tannen, D. (2005). *Conversation Style: Analyzing Talk Among Friends: Revised Edition*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780195221817