

CULTURE

The values , beliefs, behavior, and material objects that, together, form a people's way of life

Terminology

Culture is the “glue” that holds a society together

- **Nonmaterial culture**
 - The intangible world of ideas created by members of a society
- **Material culture**
 - The tangible things created by members of a society

Terminology

■ ***CULTURE SHOCK***

- **DISORIENTATION DUE TO THE INABILITY TO MAKE SENSE OUT OF ONE'S SURROUNDINGS**
 - **DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TRAVEL**

■ ***ETHNOCENTRISM***

- **A BIASED “CULTURAL YARDSTICK”**

■ ***CULTURAL RELATIVISM***

- **MORE ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING**

SYMBOLS

- ANYTHING THAT CARRIES A PARTICULAR MEANING RECOGNIZED BY PEOPLE WHO SHARE CULTURE
- REALITY FOR HUMANS IS FOUND IN THE MEANING THINGS CARRY WITH THEM
 - THE BASIS OF CULTURE; MAKES LIFE POSSIBLE
- PEOPLE MUST BE MINDFUL THAT MEANINGS VARY FROM CULTURE TO CULTURE
 - WHY AMERICANS ARE AT TIMES CALLED “UGLY”
- MEANINGS CAN EVEN VARY GREATLY WITHIN THE SAME GROUPS OF PEOPLE
 - FUR COATS, CONFEDERATE FLAGS, ETC.

LANGUAGE

A SYSTEM OF SYMBOLS THAT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER

- ***CULTURAL TRANSMISSION***

- the process by which one generation passes culture to the next

- ***SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESIS***

- People perceive the world through the cultural lens of language

- ***NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE***

- BEWARE OF USING GESTURES

VALUES & BELIEFS

■ VALUES

- CULTURALLY DEFINED STANDARDS OF DESIRABILITY, GOODNESS, AND BEAUTY, WHICH SERVE AS BROAD GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL LIVING

VALUES SUPPORT BELIEFS

■ BELIEFS

- SPECIFIC STATEMENTS THAT PEOPLE HOLD TO BE TRUE

Robin Williams' 10 Widespread Values That Are Central to Our American Way of Life

- 1. Equal opportunity**
- 2. Achievement and success**
- 3. Material comfort**
- 4. Activity and work**
- 5. Practicality and work**
- 6. Progress**
- 7. Science**
- 8. Democracy and free enterprise**
- 9. Freedom**
- 10. Racism and group superiority**

Are some of these values inconsistent with one another?

NORMS

Rules and expectations by which society guides the behavior of its members

■ TYPES

- PROSCRIPTIVE
 - Should nots, prohibited
- PRESCRIPTIVE
 - Shoulds, prescribed like medicine

■ FURTHER BREAKDOWN

- FOLKWAYS
 - Norms for routine and causal interaction
- MORES
 - Widely observed and have great moral Significance

Norms

Prescriptive

- Moeres-Must DOs
- Folkways- Should DOs

Proscriptive

- Moeres- Must Not DOs
- Folkways-Should Not DOs

SOCIAL CONTROL

Various means by which members of society encourage conformity to norms

■ GUILT

- A negative judgment we make about ourselves**

■ SHAME

- The painful sense that others disapprove of our actions**

SOCIAL CONTROL

■ Sanction

- Sanctions are the central mechanism of social control
- Sanctions can be positive or negative
 - Positive Sanction– bonus at work, plaques, medals, certificates, etc.
 - Negative Sanction– Fine, being fired, “the look”, etc.
- Sanctions can be formal or informal
 - Formal– part of a permanent record,
 - Informal– being excluded from a group, called down in class, etc.

IDEAL VS. REAL CULTURE

■ *IDEAL* CULTURE

- THE WAY THINGS SHOULD BE
- SOCIAL PATTERNS MANDATED BY VALUES AND NORMS

■ *REAL* CULTURE

- THE WAY THINGS ACTUALLY OCCUR IN EVERYDAY LIFE
- SOCIAL PATTERNS THAT ONLY APPROXIMATE CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

Cultural Diversity

- **High culture**
 - Cultural patterns that distinguish a society's elite
- **Popular culture**
 - Cultural patterns that are widespread among society's population
- **Subculture**
 - Cultural patterns set apart some segment of society's population
- **Counterculture**
 - Cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted within a society

Multiculturalism

- An educational program recognizing the cultural diversity of the United States and promoting the equality of all cultural traditions
 - Eurocentrism – the dominance of European (especially English) cultural patterns
 - Afrocentrism – the dominance of African cultural patterns

INTERDEPENDENCE

■ CULTURE INTEGRATION

- The close relationships among various elements of a cultural system
 - EXAMPLE: COMPUTERS AND CHANGES IN OUR LANGUAGE

■ CULTURE LAG

- The fact that some cultural elements change more quickly than others, which may disrupt a cultural system
 - EXAMPLE: MEDICAL PROCEDURES AND ETHICS

CULTURE CHANGES IN THREE WAYS

- ***INVENTION***- creating new cultural elements
 - Telephone or airplane
- ***DISCOVERY*** – recognizing and better understanding of something already in existence
 - X-rays or DNA
- ***DIFFUSION*** – the spread of cultural traits from one society to another
 - Jazz music or much of the English language

Ethnocentrism & Cultural Relativism

■ Ethnocentrism

- The practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture

■ Cultural relativism

- The practice of judging a culture by its own standards

IS THERE A GLOBAL CULTURE?

■ THE BASIC THESIS:

• THE FLOW OF GOODS

- MATERIAL PRODUCT TRADING HAS NEVER BEEN AS IMPORTANT
- SOME HATE WHAT CAN BE CALLED THE “AMERICANIZATION OF THE WORLD”

• THE FLOW OF INFORMATION

- THERE ARE FEW, IF ANY, PLACES LEFT ON EARTH WHERE WORLDWIDE COMMUNICATION IS NOT POSSIBLE

• THE FLOW OF PEOPLE

- KNOWLEDGE MEANS PEOPLE LEARN ABOUT PLACES ON EARTH WHERE THEY FEEL LIFE MAY BE BETTER

■ PROBLEMS WITH THIS THESIS?

- ALL THE FLOWS HAVE BEEN UNEVEN
- ASSUMES AFFORDABILITY OF GOODS
- PEOPLE DON'T ATTACH THE SAME MEANING TO MATERIAL GOODS

Theoretical Analysis

Structural Functional

- Cultural is a complex strategy for meeting human needs
- **Cultural Universals** – traits that are part of every known culture and include:
 - Family, Funeral Rites & Jokes
- **Critical evaluation**
 - Ignores cultural diversity and downplays importance of change

Cultural Universals

by George Murdock

- age-grading • athletic sports • bodily adornment • calendar • cleanliness
- training • community organization • cooking • cooperative labor •
- cosmology • courtship • dancing • decorative art • divination • division of
- labor • dream interpretation • education • eschatology • ethics •
- ethnobotany • etiquette • faith healing • family feasting • fire making •
- folklore • food taboos • funeral rites • games • gestures • gift giving •
- government • greetings • hair styles • hospitality • housing • hygiene •
- incest taboos • inheritance rules • joking • kin groups • kinship
- nomenclature • language • law • luck superstitions • magic • marriage •
- mealtimes • medicine • obstetrics • penal sanctions • personal names •
- population policy • postnatal care • pregnancy usages • property rights •
- propitiation of supernatural beings • puberty customs • religious ritual •
- residence rules • sexual restrictions • soul concepts • status differentiation
- surgery • tool making • trade • visiting • weaving • weather control

Theoretical Analysis

Social-Conflict

- Cultural traits benefit some members at the expense of others
- Approach rooted in Karl Marx and *materialism* – society's system of material production has a powerful effect on the rest of a culture
- **Critical evaluation**
 - Understates the ways cultural patterns integrate members into society

Theoretical Analysis

Sociobiology

- A theoretical paradigm that explores ways in which human biology affects how we create culture
- Approach rooted in Charles Darwin and *evolution* – living organisms change over long periods of time based on natural selection
- **Critical evaluation**
 - May be used to support racism or sexism
 - Little evidence to support theory, people *learn* behavior within a cultural system

Freedom Vs. Constraint

- **Culture *as constraint***
 - We only know our world in terms of our culture
- **Culture *as freedom***
 - Culture is changing and offers a variety of opportunities