

Intro to Cultural
Anthropology
Social Customs,
Manners, Values

Today's Class

- © What is culture?
 - Importance of customs, manners, values
- © Cultural Relativism & Case Study Reading

Learning Goals

- © Understand how values, norms, and customs can shape and influence human behaviour and culture
- © Understand how to apply cultural relativism approach to analyzing culture

Cultural Anthropology

Key Questions

- © What are the most important beliefs/customs of a culture? What does that tell us about its members?
- © How does language affect and express culture?
- © What purposes do different elements of culture serve?
- © What causes a culture to change?

To answer all of these, we need to know what **culture** is!

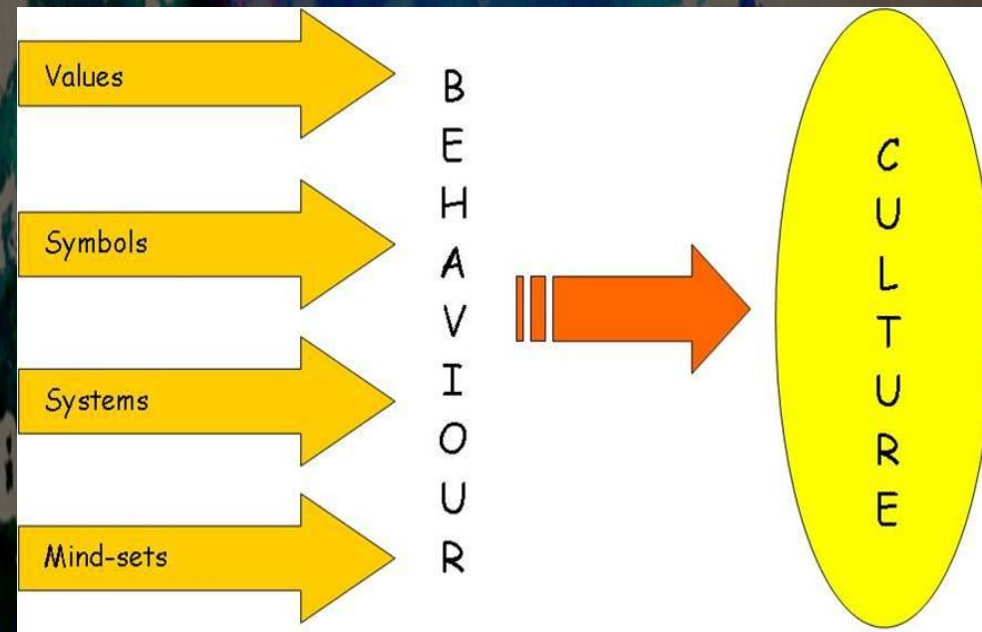


What is culture?


How is it demonstrated?

Culture

- © Culture:
 - What people do
 - What people make
 - What people believe



- © Culture is a way of living learned over time and shared by groups of people
 - **Beliefs** - from the concrete (political systems, gender roles) to the abstract (concept of time, supernatural)
 - **Customs**
 - **Values**
 - **Language**
 - **Art**
 - **Religion and Ritual**



Culture – Values

Values: shared standards or benchmarks of what people consider to be right and morally acceptable

- © **Religion** promotes certain types of values
- © **Morals:** things that people consider to be right
- © **Institutions** (eg. schools, government): promote values that they strive to achieve on a daily basis

Culture – Values

- ◎ Significant aspect of culture
 - Values & beliefs influence what people do and what they make

TDSB's Mission Statement:

"To enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and well-being and to acquire the knowledge, skills and values they need to become responsible, contributing members of a democratic and sustainable society."

- ◎ What are the underlying beliefs about students?
- ◎ Going beyond what is written in the mission statement, how would you describe the values of the TDSB?

Culture – Norms/Customs

- © **Norms**: rules (usually unofficial) that indicate what people should do, how they should act or react to a situation
 - If you break a norm, you will often get a reaction from people around you (but not necessarily illegal)
 - *Eg. If you stand still in the middle of the hall between classes, what might happen?*
- © **Customs**: One of the most obvious differences among cultures (usual/somewhat predictable ways of behaving)
 - All cultures have customs around eating, but these vary by culture (*which hand to use, what utensils to use, what you say before, during and after meals*)

Values & Norms/Customs

Belief & Action

Values are sets of beliefs an individual has to guide his behaviour

Norms are codes of conduct set by a society

Customs are how those beliefs and norms are demonstrated

Significance:

When anthropologists go into a culture to study it, they must learn the basic social etiquette of that society

- © This will allow them to 'fit in'
- © This will allow them to better understand their values and beliefs

Brainstorm

- © Brainstorm a 3 **norms** (and their associated **customs**), that your culture follows. Describe them and explain the consequences (sanctions) for breaking that norm.
- © Analysis: What **values** do those norms and customs reflect? Explain.
- © Be prepared to share with the class!

Values, Norms, Customs

&

Cultural Relativism

Cultural Relativism

It is difficult to compare two cultures because each culture has its own internal rules that must be accepted

- © ***It is important to understand a culture on their own terms*** to avoid snap value judgments about other practices based on the lens of your society
- © **Cultural Relativism** was a response to '**Cultural Evolutionism**', the view that 19th century European culture was superior to all others
 - Cultural Evolutionism - all cultures evolve from:
savage → barbarian → civilized

Ethnocentric! Racist! Ignorant!