

## Chapter 3

### Culture and society

#### **Culture**

- values, norms and material culture characteristic of a given group.
- one of the most distinctive properties of human social association.
- ways of life of individual members of group.

#### **Cultural universals**

- values or modes of behavior shared by all human cultures. (ex language, family system, marriage etc)
- incest: sexual relations between members of the immediate fam.

#### **Society**

- system of interrelationships that connects individuals.
- group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups.

#### **Values**

- abstract ideals, ideas held by individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good and bad.
- what you value is influenced by culture in which you live.

#### **Norms**

- principles or rules of social life that everyone is expected to observe.
- rules of conduct that specify appropriate behavior in a given range of social situations.

#### **Material culture**

- physical objects a society creates that influence the ways in which ppl live.
- consumer goods, clothes, cars, houses, tools, technology to make those goods.

#### **Language**

- primary vehicle of meaning and communication in a society, language is a system of symbols that represent objects and abstract thoughts.
- demonstrates both unity and diversity of human culture.

#### **Linguistic relativity hypothesis**

- Sapir and Whorf, language influences our perceptions of the world.
- we are more likely to be aware of things if we have words for them.

#### **Symbols**

- items used to stand for or represent another.

#### **Signifier**

- any vehicle of meaning and communication
- any sets of elements to communicate. (ex sounds made in speech, marks made on paper, visual signs)

#### **Semiotics**

- the study of the ways in which nonlinguistic phenomena can generate meaning.

#### **Cultural turn**

- sociology's recent emphasis on the importance of understanding the role of culture in daily life.
- Ann Swidler "tool kit" from which ppl select different understandings and behaviors.
- includes variety of "scripts" that we draw on and improvise on to shape beliefs, values and actions.
- (ex: the good Samaritan)

\*types of human societies\*

#### **Hunting and gathering societies**

- societies whose mode of subsistence is gained from hunting animals, fishing and gathering edible plants.

-usually participatory rather than competitive, little interest in developing material wealth, main concern were religious values and ritual activities.

#### **Pastoral societies**

-societies whose subsistence derives from the rearing of domesticated animals.  
-found in regions of dense grassland, deserts or mountains.

#### **Agrarian societies**

-societies whose subsistence are based on agricultural production (crop growing).

#### **Industrialized societies**

-strongly developed nation-states in which the majority of the population works in factories or offices rather than in agriculture and most ppl live in urban areas.  
-18<sup>th</sup> century in Britain, industrial revolution  
-industrialization: process of machine production of goods.  
-in the city social life becomes impersonal and anonymous.

#### **Nation States**

-first were industrialized cities  
-particular types of states, characteristic of modern world, gov has sovereign power within defined territorial areas and populations have citizens who know themselves to be part of a single nation.

#### **Colonialism**

-the process whereby western nations established their rule in parts of the world away from their home.  
-17<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> western colonies  
-global north (advanced) and global south

#### **The global south**

-areas that underwent colonial rule, south asia, Africa, and south America.  
-Haiti first to gain independence  
-poverty worst in rural areas, lack of education, low life expectancy, low agricultural productivity, women disadvantaged of men.

#### **Emerging economies**

-formerly impoverished countries that over the past two or three decades have begun to develop a strong industrial base.  
-singapore and india

#### **Subcultures**

-values and norms distinct from those of the majority, held by a group within a wider society.  
-different cultural backgrounds, languages, cultural patterns  
-ex: goths, computer hackers, hippies.

#### **Assimilation**

-process by which different cultures are absorbed into mainstream culture.

#### **Multiculturalism**

-respecting cultural diversity and promoting equality of different cultures.

#### **Ethnocentrism**

-tendency to look at other cultures through the eyes of one's own culture and thereby misrepresent them.

#### **Cultural relativism**

-practice of judging a society by its own standards.

#### **\*Nature vs Nurture\***

#### **Sociobiology**

-attempts to explain the behavior of both animals and humans in terms of biological principles.  
-genes influence physical traits and behavior.

**Instincts**

-fixed patterns of behavior that have genetic origins and that appear in all normal animals within a given species.

**Nationalism**

-a set of beliefs and symbols expressing identification with a national community.