

Ch. 2: Culture

The Power of Society

- Is how we feel about as "personal" an opinion as we may think?

What is Culture?

- Culture: ways of thinking, acting, and material objects that form a person's way of life
- Kinds of culture
 - Material
 - Nonmaterial
- Culture shock
 - Involves personal disorientation when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life
 - May occur within domestic and foreign travel
- Ethnocentrism
 - The practice of judging another culture by the standards of ones own culture
- Cultural relativism
 - The practice of judging a culture by its own standards
- Culture and human intelligence
 - 12,000 years ago: birth of civilization
 - Today: efficient survival scheme fashions natural environment resulting in cultural diversity
- Culture, nation and society
 - Culture: shared way of life
 - Nation: Political entity
 - Society: people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture

Elements of culture: symbols

- Humans transform elements of the world into symbols
- Symbols are anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture
- Meanings vary within and between cultures
- Societies create new symbols all the time

Language: what is it?

- Language: system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another
- Cultural transmission: process by which one-generation passes culture to the next
(In the Bible, the first thing Adam and Eve do is name things)

Values and Beliefs

- Values: Culturally defined standards that people use to decide what is desirable, good, and beautiful and that serve as broad guidelines for social living
- Beliefs: Specific ideas that people hold to be true
- Values
 - Are sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict
 - Change over time
 - Vary from culture to culture

What are Norms?

- Norms: rule and expectations by which society guides member behaviors
- Mores and folkways
 - Mores: Norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance
 - Folkways: Norms for routine or casual interaction

Norms: Ideal vs. real culture

- Ideal culture
 - Is the way things should be
 - Involves social patterns mandated by values and norms
- Real culture
 - Is the way things actually occur in everyday life
 - Involves social patterns that only approximate cultural expectations

Technology and Culture

- Every culture
 - Possesses wide range of physical human creations (artifacts)
 - Uses artifacts that reflect underlying cultural values
 - Societal level of tech. determines cultural ideas and emerging artifacts
 - Four major levels of technological development
 - Hunting and gathering societies
 - Horticulture and Pastoralism
 - Agrarian societies and Industrial societies
 - Postindustrial Information Technology
- Hunting and gathering societies
 - Use simple tools to hunt animals and gather vegetation
 - Have no formal leaders
 - Egalitarian
- Horticultural and Pastoralism
 - Horticultural Societies
 - Hand tools use to raise crops
 - Material surplus that allows expansion of societal roles
 - Increased belief in one God
 - Pastoralism Societies
 - Domestication of animals
 - Nomadic lifestyle
 - More unequal social structure; ruling elites
- Agrarian and Industrial societies
 - Agrarian societies
 - Dawn of civilization
 - More powerful energy sources and large food supplies; use of money as common exchange
 - Social life more individual and impersonal; more social inequality
 - Industrial societies
 - More advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery
 - Higher living standard and life expectancy; more individualism but less sense of community

-Postindustrial Information Technology

- More economic production use new information technology
- Capacity to create symbolic culture increases

Cultural Diversity

- High culture: Cultural patterns that distinguish a society's elite
- Popular culture: Cultural patterns that are widespread among a society's population
- Many ways of life in one world
 - Subculture: culture patterns that set apart some segment of a society's population
 - Multiculturalism: perspective recognizing the cultural diversity of the U.S. and promoting equal standing for all cultural traditions
 - Counterculture: cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted within a society
 - Cultural change
 - Change in one societal dimension of cultural system usually precipitates changes in others
 - Cultural integration
 - Cultural lag

Functions of culture

- Structural-Functional Theory
 - Culture is a strategy for meeting human needs
 - Values are core of a culture
 - Every culture has cultural universals
- Social conflict theory
 - Cultural traits benefit some members at the expense of others
 - Cultural values of competitiveness and material success are tied to our country's capitalist economy
- Sociobiology
 - Explores ways in which human biology affects how we create culture
 - Is rooted in Charles Darwin and evolution
 - Proposes living organisms change over long periods of time based on natural selection