

Culture

I. Meaning of Culture

Culture is one of the most important concepts within sociology because sociologists recognize that it plays a crucial role in our social lives. It is important for shaping social relationships, maintaining and challenging social order, determining how we make sense of the world and our place in it, and in shaping our everyday actions and experiences in society. It is composed of both non-material and material things.

Culture has been defined in number of ways. There is no consensus among sociologists and anthropologists regarding the definition of culture. One of the most comprehensive definitions of the term culture was provided by the British anthropologist Edward Tylor. He defined culture as” that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.

II. Elements of Culture

- 1. Symbols:** Anything that carries particular meaning recognized by people who share the same culture
- 2. Language:** A system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another
- 3. Values:** Culturally defined standards of desirability, goodness, beauty and many other things that serves as broad guidelines for social living
- 4. Beliefs:** Specific statements that people hold to be true
- 5. Norms:** Rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members. The two types of norms are mores and folkways. Mores are norms that are widely observed and have a great moral significance. Folkways are norms for routine, and casual interaction

6. **Behavioral patterns:** The typical manner in which people perform production (*e.g., manual manufactured, automated in various degrees*), communicate (*e.g., language content, technology choices*), mark significant events (*e.g.; rituals of endorsing values and of punctuating steps in personal life*), satisfy basic needs (*e.g.: for dwelling, feeling, security, sex, reproduction, entertainment*), and the like
7. **Artifacts:** Distinct material objects, such as architecture, technologies, and artistic creations.
8. **Social institutions:** Patterns of organization and relationships regarding governance, production, socializing, education, knowledge creation, arts, and relating to other cultures.

III. Examples of Culture:

- **Youth culture:** Each generation of youths, create their own cultures. This makes many people of previous generations nervous, leading to a sense of moral panic. They feel as if the norms and values of the traditional culture are being eroded. Youths will create their own music, words and euphemisms, and even dance moves, that may seem strange to older people. As young people all cross a culture are feeling connected by their shared set of new values of their parents, they are widely changing to dominant culture.
- **Traditional culture:** We explain a traditional culture as the one that has been the longstanding dominant way of life in previous years. It is also often a more conservative cultural orientation. For example, before **globalization**, cultures were much more defined within geographical areas. Traditional ways of living might have been oriented around cooking over open fires, wearing more traditional clothes, and listening to traditional music. While today many people do not celebrate their traditional culture, they may be able to identify it as the way of life of their grandparents and great grandparents.
- **Media culture:** In the 20th century, mass media has taken over the western world and beyond. Mass media transmitted images to the masses, promoted nationalist identities, and often

concentrated the power of the elite to transmit their narratives to the masses. In cultural studies, we use the term “media culture” to refer to how mass media changed the western world. In the mid-20th century, it cohered western nations around a capitalist and consumerist way of life.

- **Internet culture**: It grew with the rise of the internet in the late 1990s and still heavily influences the world today. We use this term to refer to the ways the internet has changed how people interact and relate to one another. Social media, for example, allows us to be “publishers”, sharing our beliefs with others. It has led to the rise of conspiracy theories and misinformation but has also allowed us to communicate with people who shared our values across the world.
- **Islamic Culture**: Islam is one of the world’s great religions and has a very long, rich cultural history. Islam brought us coffee, universities, surgery, and algebra. However, it also has very popular music and dress, two elements of culture that can help define an in-group identity. Today, Islamic culture remains very popular in all over the world like parts of Asia and the Arabian Peninsula.