

Culture

SOC 1101

- Culture is distinct from society
 - Society = ppl
 - Culture = what ppl create (clothing, music)
- Often have cultural misunderstandings
- No objectively correct way to act/eat/speak
- Culture : system of behaviours + beliefs + knowledges + practices + values + material artifacts (buildings, tools, sacred items)
- Culture gave our lives order and stability
- Cultures consist of:
 - Material elements (eg. tools)
 - Nonmaterial elements (habits, customs, norms)

Characteristics of Culture :

- Culture's 5 defining features
 - It's learned (internalize norms as child)
 - It's shared (members of a group)
 - It's symbolic (unique + crucial to humans)
 - It's taken-for-granted (daily practices aren't thought of)
 - It varies across time + place but is cumulative
- It varies from time & place + changes + mix of past & present (result of many generations of cultural change)

Symbols + Language

- **Symbols** = cultural items that take on meaning in a culture/subculture of a society
 - Tangible symbols /material objects (food, clothing, flag) (no real meaning, but attach meaning to flag)

- Intangible symbols / nonmaterial objects (songs, events)
- **Language** = complex system of symbols shared + agreed upon
 - Conveys culture
 - When language dies, so does the culture behind it
 - Sapir-Whorf hypothesis : ppl perceive world through cultural lens of language
 - “Linguistic determinism”

Norms

- Rules / standards of behaviour expected of a group, society, culture
 - Expressed including cultural customs + symbols
- W. G. Sumner’s 3 kinds of norms:
 - Folkways:
 - Informal norms on day-to-day matters
 - Shouldn’t be violated + are weakly sanctioned
 - Mores:
 - More serious than folkways
 - Formalized norms mustn’t be violated + serious consequences (theft, murder)
 - Taboos:
 - When spoken about = immediate discomfort (incest, pedophilia)
 - Deeply ingrained in social consciousness
 - Might be a taboo here but not a taboo elsewhere
- Norms change over time

Sanctions

- Legal : stand too close to someone
- Illegal : drive on left lane
- Sanctions : rewards + punishment in response particular behaviour
 - Positive sanction : rewards (

- Negative sanction
 - informal : staying away from you, speak in degrading way
 - Formal : sentenced to prison, getting a ticket

Values

- Standards used by culture to describe abstract qualities (goodness, beauty, justice)
 - Guide our behaviour + our assessment of others'
 - Values + behaviour = not always congruent
 - Idea culture: values we espouse about how we think we should act (support environmentalism)
 - Actual culture: how we act (drive SUV)
 - Ethnocentrism:
 - When someone holds up one culture (their own) as standard
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What is Canadian Culture

- *LIPSET : Values and institutions of the US and Canada*
 - Despite many overt similarities, Americans + Canadians have significant diff. Values
 - Individualist + achievement oriented vs law-abiding, statist collectively oriented
 - Results in differences in views on areas of social life such as :
 - Religion (more catholicism in Canada, more atheism and protestants in US)
 - Law & deviance (Americans more likely to be violent, do protests)
 - Economy
 - Elitism (Canadians have respect for authority, US has distrust w/ authority) & egalitarian
 - Mosaic & melting pot (preservation of subnational loyalties, support multiculturalism)

- *ADAMS : Fire & Ice: The US, Canada, and the myth of converging values*
 - Despite globalization of culture, some elements of American + Canadian values are diverging more

What Kinds of Cultures are there

- Types of cultures distinguished along 2 central oppositions
 - Dominant vs subculture and counterculture
- **Dominant culture:**
 - Through political + economic power, is able to impose its values, lang, + ways of behaving + interpreting behaviour on a given society
 - Infuses our everyday life in institutions
 - Canada's dominant culture? : white, straight anglo-saxon men
 - How we know: representation in media, business, politics, etc.
- **Subculture**
 - Group of ppl who share distinctive set of beliefs + practices that differ in some significant way from dominant culture w/o directly opposing it
 - Aren't interested in changing their culture
 - Subcultures + countercultures = minority cultures fall outside of cultural mainstream
 - Groups organized around occupations/hobbies : e.g. Fandoms, gamers
- **Counterculture**
 - Groups reject elements of dominant culture (eg. clothing style, sexual norms)
 - e.g. hippies, kkk, biker gangs, goths
- **Cultural capital**
 - Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)
 - Introduced this concept : set of skills + knowledge needed to acquire sophisticated tastes that mark someone from a high culture

- **High culture:**
 - Culture of *elite* (opera, classical music, expensive food and cars, etc)
 - Canadians = “cultural omnivores”
 - Nobody ignores popular culture to only focus of high culture
 - Feel uncomfortable if not part of that social group, not have the knowledge about their activities
- **Popular culture:**
 - Culture of the majority (esp. those w/ no power)
 - e.g. tv programs, youtube, MV, fast food : part of pop culture
- **Global culture:**
 - Increasing homogenization
 - Increasing similarity of lang, values, norms around the globe
 - Intensification + expansion of cultural flows across globe
 - “americanization” of the world / danger of a 1-directional flow of culture could be problematic
 - will make cultures gradually disappear
 - Ex.: globalization of food
 - Spread of global chains (mcdonald’s, Coke, Starbucks)
 - Food = synonymous w/ culture
 - Cultural homogenization / “McDonaldization” (Ritzer, 1993) & (Chomsky, 2002)
 - Akin to “cultural imperialism”
 - “Cultural Heterogenization & hybridity” (Tomlinson, 1991) & (Robertson, 1992)
 - Increased global pressure results in both assertion local identities + cultural practices + creation of new forms of culture
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