

SOCI 101
INTRODUCTION TO
SOCIOLOGY

社会学概论
 Shèhuì xué gāilùn

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C. What is Culture? 文化

符号 值 行为 Wénhuà
 Fúhào Zhí Xíngwéi

Culture refers to the **symbols, values, behavior and material objects (artifacts) that together form a people's way of life.**
 工件 Gōngjiàn

1. Sociologists like to point out that
"Culture is to people like water is to fish."
 水就是鱼 Shuǐ jiùshì yú

In other words, we take our cultural knowledge and behavior for granted; it remains hidden in plain sight, not a part of our conscious experience. It **seems natural** to us – but it is **not**.
Culture ≠ Nature
 文化 ≠ 性质 Wénhuà ≠ Xìngzhì

Ethnocentrism: centered on one's own ethnicity (or culture), to the point where you cannot judge another culture on their own terms.
 民族中心主义 Mínzú zhōngxīn zhǔyì

Culture Shock: the disorientation experienced when confronted with a new set of norms and values
 文化冲击 Wénhuà chōngkè

Subculture: a smaller cultural group within a larger culture
 亚文化 Yà wénhuà

C. What is Culture?

2. How can we better understand the idea of culture? Culture is BOTH:
 行动 Xíngdòng

a. Material culture – physical cultural artifacts.
 物质文化 Wùzhì wénhuà
 Example: *paper* money

b. Non-material culture – intangible, mental cultural meanings.
 非物质文化 Fēi wùzhì wénhuà
 Example: *value* of a "dollar"

ACTION
 ↑ ↓
CULTURE
 ↑ ↓
THOUGHT
 思想 Sīxiǎng

It is through **CULTURE** that thought and action come together.

C. What is Culture?

3. Elements of Culture 元素 Yuánsù

There are four (4) main elements to culture:

a. Symbols 符号 Fúhào

b. Language 语言 Yǔyán

c. Values and Norms 值 Zhí 社会规范 Shèhuì guānfàn

d. Artifacts 工件 Gōngjiàn

C. What is Culture?

a. Symbols 符号 Fúhào

A symbol is **anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture.**

Each of our social institutions is populated with a vast number of symbols which hold specific meaning to us.

Examples: economic institutions = \$ € £ ¥

religious institutions = ☩ ✠ ☪ ☵

political institutions =    

language = W (i) 𐎠𐎢𐎽𐎢𐏁

people = 

C. What is Culture?

b. Language and Communication 语言 Yǔyán 通讯 Tōngxùn

A system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another.

i. Origins: 3500 BC, Mesopotamia

Written language developed with civilization.

ii. Purpose: cultural transmission (through "memes")

Language passes on cultural ideas. *How?*

SELF ← language → SOCIETY

iii. *Evolutionary linguistics* is the scientific study of the psychosocial development and cultural evolution of languages

C. What is Culture?

c. Values and Norms

值 社会规范
Zhí Shèhuì guānfàn

i. Values are culturally defined standards of desirability, goodness, and beauty, which serve as guidelines for social living. In an open society, values are always being debated. Variation exists in the meaning of values; these differences can lead to "Culture Wars."

文化战争
Wenhua zhànzhēng

ii. Norms = ideals for social behavior

民俗
Mínsù

"Folkways": informal everyday conventions (saying "good afternoon")

社会习俗
Shèhuì xísù

"Mores": deeper ideals (virtue, justice – more strictly enforced)

c. Social Norms

社会规范
Shèhuì guānfàn

chuán mực xã hội

When people interact, social norms develop. Norms are shared IDEALS for behavior.

A norm is a *prescription* for collective action, an agreed upon way of behaving; a *social consensus*.

y kiến

理念

Linián

IDEA = THOUGHT

思想

Sìxiǎng

ngĩ

Norms occur in the "conscience collective" of society
(Source: Emile Durkheim, early French sociologist).

Question:

- Describe some basic social norms.
- Are all norms "good"? Give an example of a norm that leads to social problems.

C. What is Culture?

d. Artifacts are:

工件
Gōngjiàn

the wide range of material human creations that reflect underlying cultural values.

值
Zhí

We place MEANING into artifacts (all material artifacts are also symbolic and hold immaterial value).



Culture transmits meaning between selves through more or less successful memes.



Non-material cultural values are reflected in the material culture we value and possess.

慷慨
Generosity

C.4. Globalization of Culture

Is there a developing "global culture?"

A global culture may be developing thru 3 flows

流
Liú

1. The flow of goods and services

货物与服务
Huòwù yǔ fúwù



- Material product trading has never been as important



2. The flow of information

信息
Xìnxī



- There are few, if any, places left on earth where worldwide communication is not possible



3. The flow of people

人
Rén



- Flow of information means people learn about places on earth where they feel life may be better


