

# Culture

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# Topics

- Definition of Culture.
- Functions of Culture:
- Elements of Culture.
- Characteristics of Culture.
- Core values of Culture.
- Culture and Identity.
- Communication and Culture

First topic:

# Definition of Culture



# Culture is

- The way of life.
- Our continent, our collective identity.
- It is the "glue" that binds a group of people together.
- It is the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others.
- A "blueprint" that "guides the behavior of people in a community and is incubated in family life.
- The ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time.
- Establishes for each person a context of cognitive and affective behavior, a template for personal and social existence.
- A dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors, shared by a group but harbored differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time.



- A set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past
  - ✓ have increased the probability of survival
  - ✓ and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche,
  - ✓ and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and place.

# “Human-made”

- Culture is concerned with **non-biological** parts of human life.
- This distinction allows for explanations of **behavior** that must be learned while at the same time eliminating innate acts that are not learned (such as eating, sleeping, crying, speech mechanisms, and fear).

<b>It is not</b>		
<b>Natural</b>	<b>Exist apart from human</b>	
	<b>History</b>	<b>Experience</b>

# “Subjective”

## Your views about:

- The American flag,
- Work,
- Immigration,
- Freedom,
- Aging,
- Ethics,
- Dress,
- Property rights,
- Healing and health,
- Death and mourning,
- Bodily adornment
- Etiquette,
- Play,
- Law,
- Individualism,
- Magic and superstition,
- Modesty,
- Sexual taboos,
- Status differentiation,
- Courtship,
- Formality and informality,

**are all part of your cultural membership.**

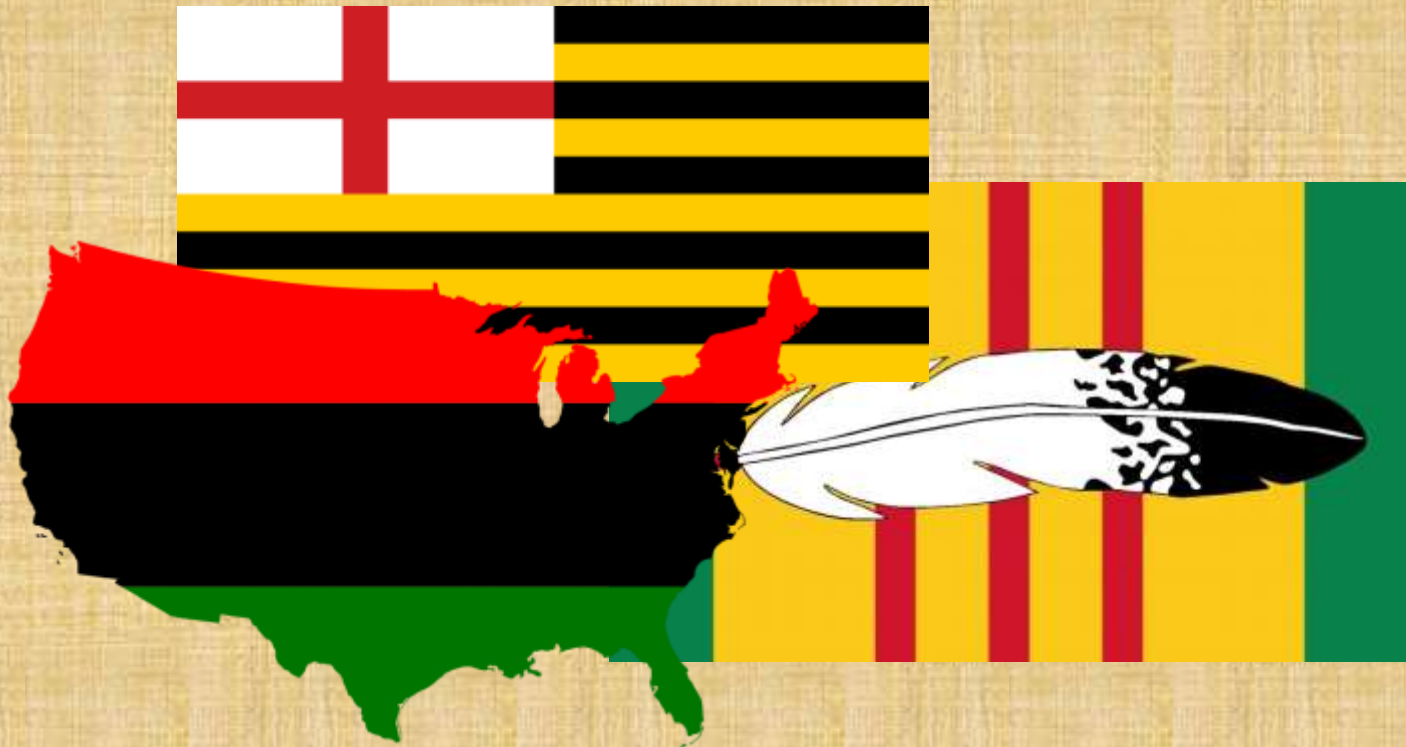
# “Common Language”

- Language is a symbol system that allows culture to be transmitted and shared.
- This means that a collection of people has established not only a set of **symbols**, but **rules** for using those symbols.



Second topic:

# Functions of Culture



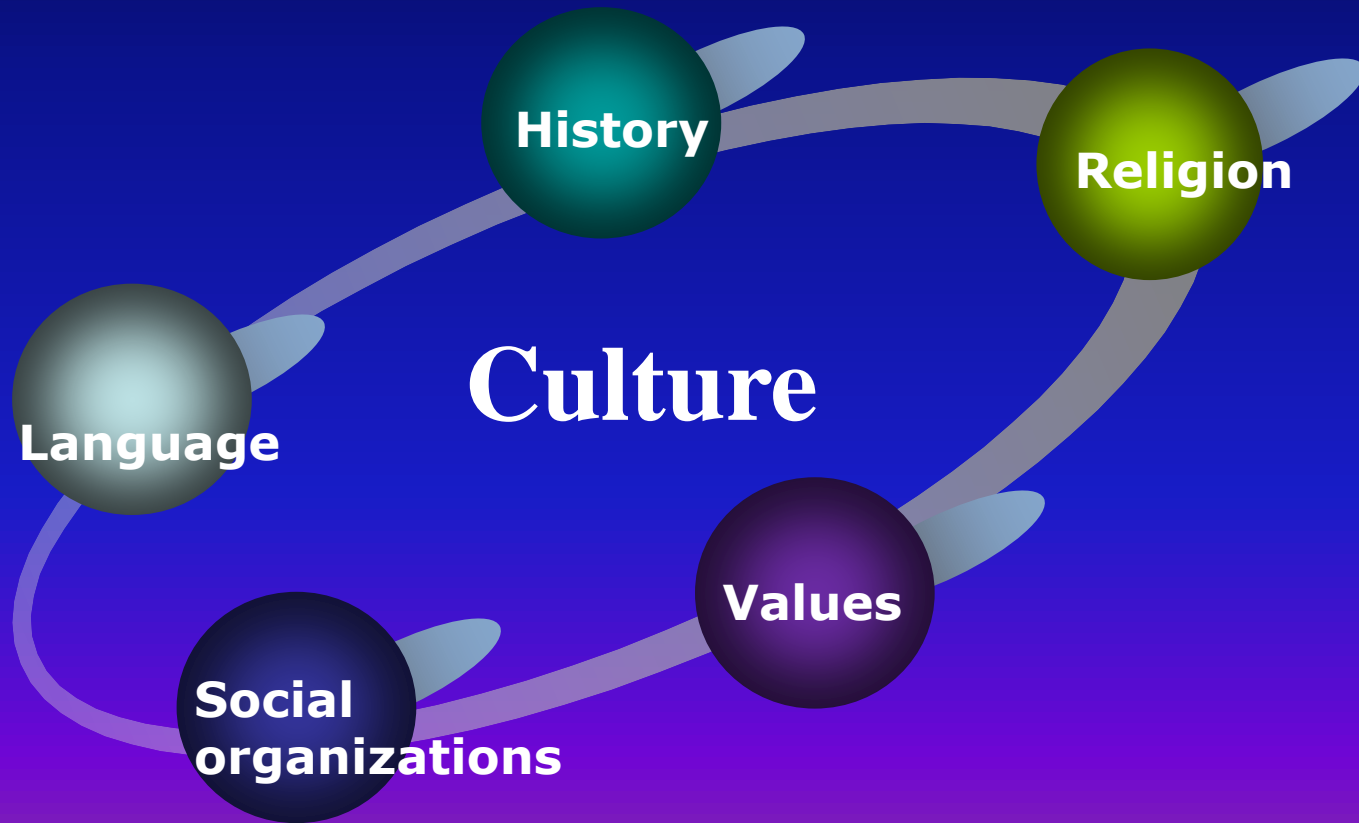
# Why do we need culture?

Culture enables people to:

- Adapt to surroundings.
- Function effectively in their social environment.

Third topic:

# Elements of Culture



# Elements of culture

- Food,
- Shelter,
- Work,
- Defense,
- Social control,
- Psychological security,
- Forms of governing,
- Social harmony,
- Purpose in life,

and so on.



# 1- Religion (Worldview)

## Cultural Explanations of Life and Death

Dominant, organized belief system  
influencing:

- Social,
- Political,
- Business,
- Individual behavior

# 2- History

## Our Antecedents.

- Highlights culture's origins.

# **3- Values**

## **Guidelines for Behavior**

- Culturally defined standards; guidelines of behavior

# 4- Language

## Exchanging Ideas Through Language

- Allows members to share information; chief method of transmission of culture



# 5- Social Organizations

- Various social units within the culture.
- They form the core of deep structure, establish communication networks, and regulate norms of conduct.
- These are institutions or organizations such as:
  - **Schools**
  - **Family** (tribes and clans)
  - **State** (community or government) Cultural History:
  - **Religion**

# Deep Structure

- The conscious and unconscious assumptions that a culture makes about the world and the source of insight by which they base life.

## **Social institutions carry:**

- The culture's most important messages:
  - Right and wrong
  - Fate of power or free choice
  - Loyalties
  - Where you should reside
  - Preparing for death
- Enduring messages.
- Messages that are deeply felt.
- Messages that deal with personal identity:
  - Variety of identities (based on “I” / based on “we”)
  - Ethnic and cultural identities (views we share with our in-groups)
  - Membership in family, faith, community identifies us

# Nitza Hidalgo's Concept of Culture as an Iceberg

Surface level  
(Concrete)

Technology,  
music, foods, and  
artistic works and  
materials

**Surface Culture**

Unspoken Rules  
(Behavioral)

How we define our social roles, the languages we speak, the rituals we practice, and the form taken by our nonverbal communication.

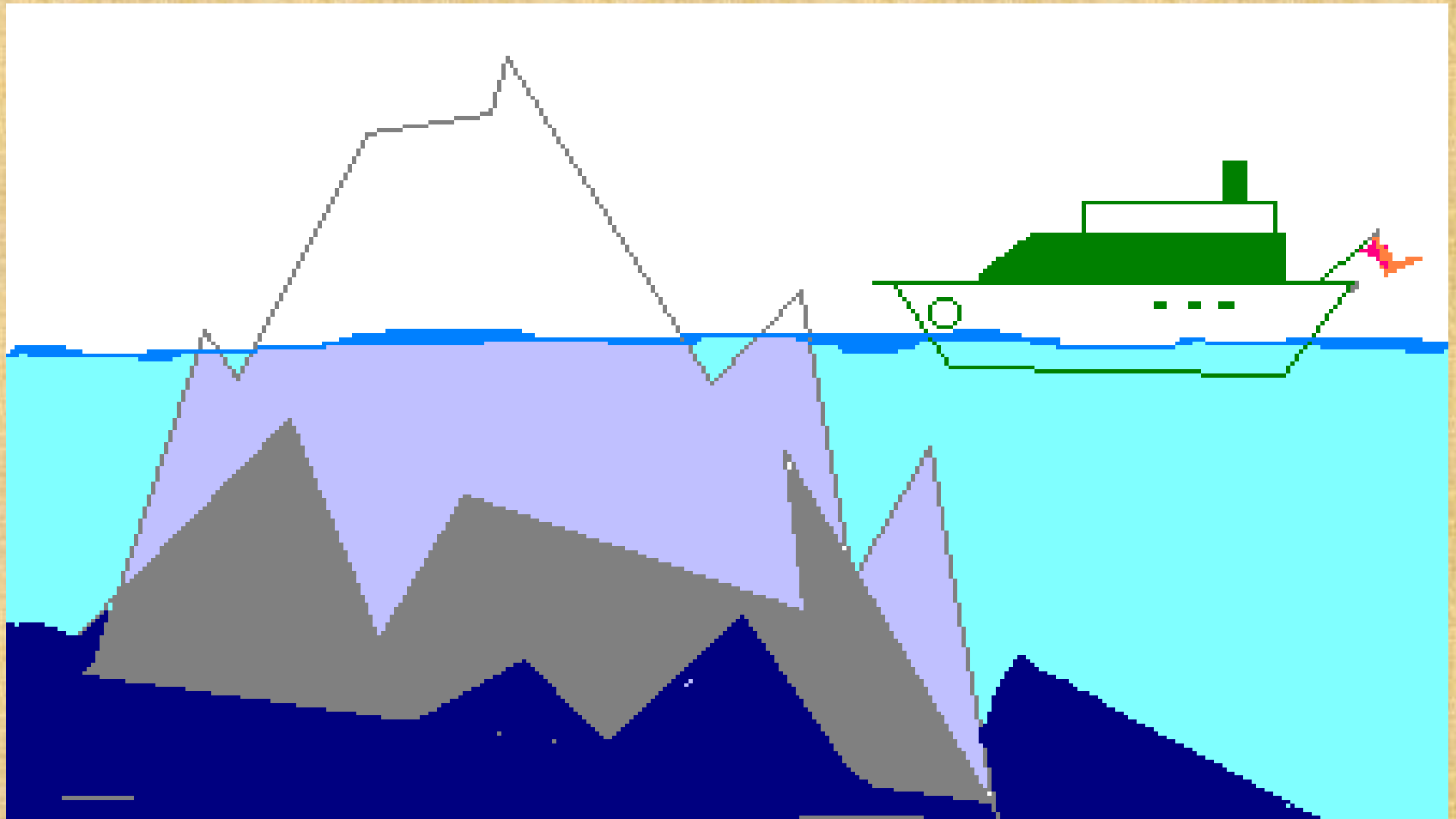
**Deep Culture**

Unconscious Rules  
(Symbolic)

Our values and beliefs lie on the symbolic level. How we ascribe meaning to our experiences depends on the values we hold and the beliefs that we may have

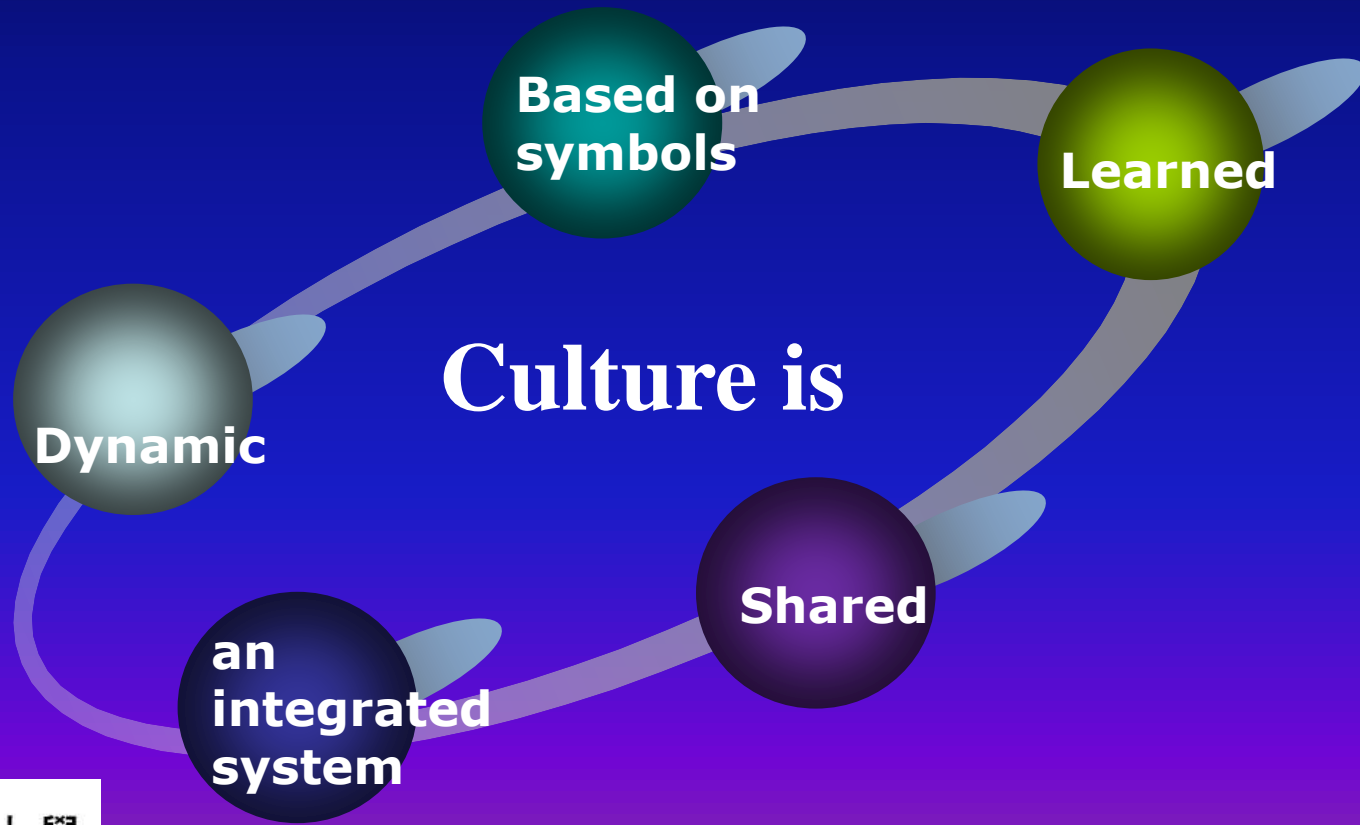


# What sunk the Titanic?



Fourth topic:

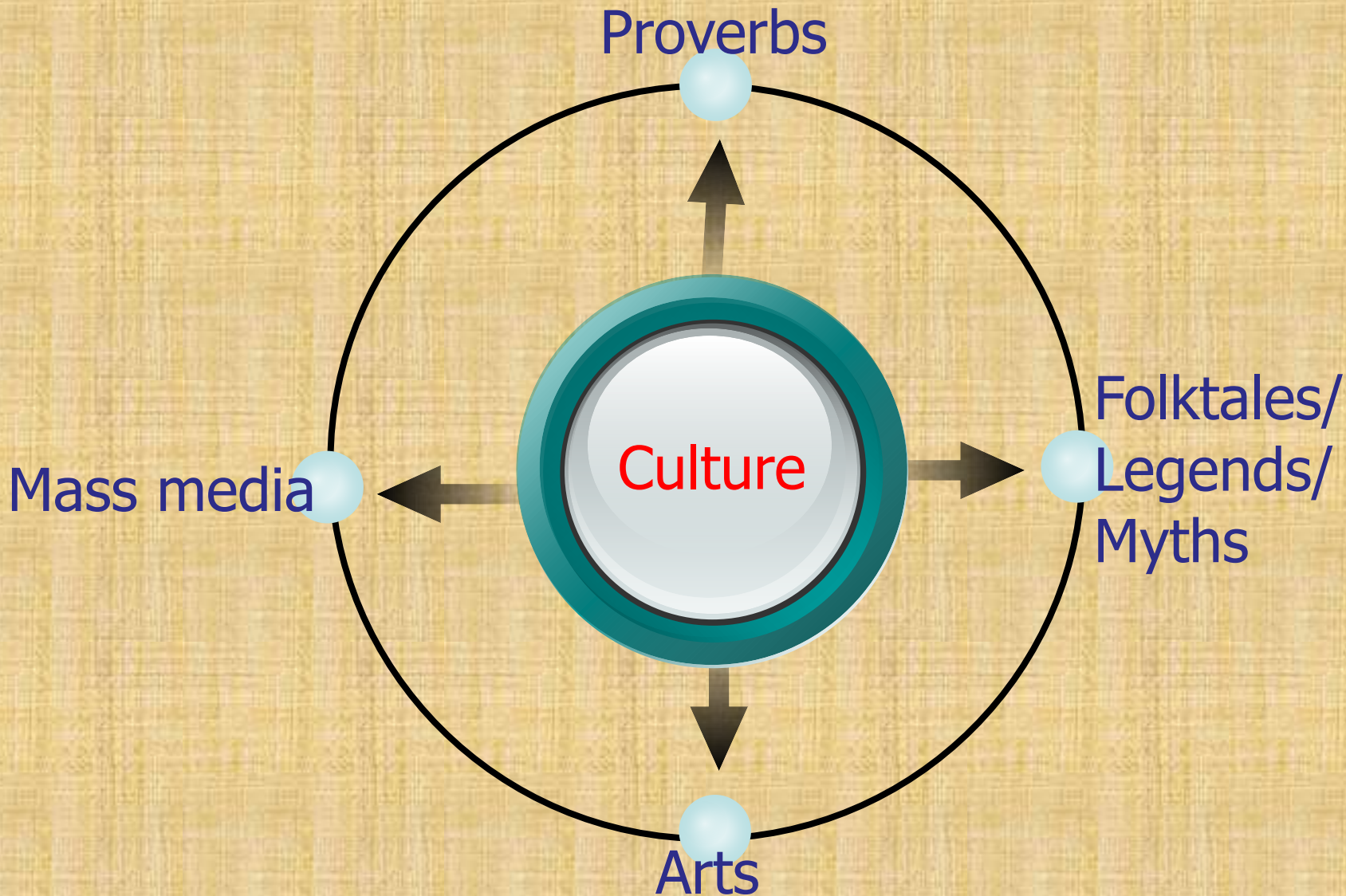
# Characteristics of Culture



# 1- Culture is Learned

- And transmitted from one generation to the next.
- This transmission maybe carried on:

Formally	Informally
Through institutions designed for instructional purposes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Schools.</li><li>- Churches.</li></ul>	By: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Parents.</li><li>- Relative.</li><li>- Peers.</li></ul>





# 2- Culture is Shared

It is the:

- Knowledge.
- Beliefs.
- Skills.
- Behaviors.
- Values

Of a social group:

Nation	Subgroups
U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Social:</b> City, Suburb, and Urban</li><li>○ <b>Political:</b> Republican and Democratic.</li><li>○ <b>Intellectual:</b></li><li>○ <b>Economic:</b> Rich and poor.</li><li>○ <b>Educational:</b> Blue collar and white collar.</li><li>○ <b>Religious:</b> Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</li><li>○ <b>Racial:</b> African American, Caucasian, and Native American.</li><li>○ <b>Ethnic:</b> Hebrews and Arabs are two different ethnics of one race (Semitic).</li><li>○ <b>Generational (chronological):</b> adolescents and elders.</li></ul>

## Co-culture

### Sub-culture

- The perceptions and communication patterns found within the larger, dominant culture
- Groups or social communities exhibiting perceptions, values, beliefs, communicative behaviors, and social practices that are sufficiently different as to distinguish them from other groups and communities and from the dominant culture.
- Co-cultural affiliation can be based on ethnic heritage, gender, age cohort, sexual preference, or other criteria.

## The dominant culture

### Mainstream or umbrella culture

- The group generally exercises the greatest influence on the beliefs, values, perceptions, communication patterns, and customs of the culture.
- This collective of people possesses those instruments of power that allow it to set the broad societal agenda the majority of others will commonly follow.
- The power we are referring to does not necessarily reside in numerical dominance but in the ability to control the major institutions within the culture—governmental, educational, mass media, economic, military, religious, and the like.

# 3- Culture is Dynamic

- Cultures are changed as:

- Situations.

- The needs.

Of a people change.

- The deep structure of a culture resists major alterations.

## **4- Culture is an integrated system**

- Culture is composed of parts that are related to each other.
- All aspects of culture must be reasonably well integrated in order to function properly.



# 5- Culture is Based on Symbols

- The symbols allow people to package and store them as well as transmit them.
- Language is the most important symbolic aspect of culture.

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graph LR; A[Certain experiences have enabled a group of people to successfully solve the problems of daily living.] --> B[dominant worldview of a society is a source of]; B --> C[Symboling]
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**Symboling**

# Symboling

People bestow (assign/ originate/determine):

- Meanings.
- Values.
- Worth.
- Significance.

Of :

- Objects.
- Things.
- Events.
- Actions/ acts.
- Behaviors.

Fifth topic:

# Core Values of Culture





# Core values of culture

Certain patterns of behavior and attitude that:

- A society develops to meet human needs and resolving conflict between individuals and groups.
- Become well defined, institutionalized, and accepted by the dominant group within a society.
- Become the basis for the standard with which the major institutions of the dominant society evaluate their members.
- Become the criteria for giving people opportunities for advancement and other rewards.
- Are surrounded by other alternative (minority) patterns that challenge (differ from) the norms of the dominant group.

# The core value of American culture

- The American conception of the good life traditionally referred to as the **WASP** (**W**hite **A**nglo-**S**axon **P**rotestant) perspective.

# The traditional values that make up the core of WASP:

- Puritan morality.
- Work-success ethic.
- Individualism.
- Achievement orientation.
- Future time orientation.

# DOMINANT UNITED STATES CULTURAL PATTERNS

- Individualism
- Equal Opportunity
- Material Acquisition
- Science and Technology
- Progress and Change
- Work and Play
- Competitive Nature



# 1- Individualism

- The seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke:
  - ✓ Each person is unique, special, completely different from all other individuals, and the basic unit of nature.
  - ✓ The interests of the individual are or ought to be paramount, and all values, rights, and duties originate in individuals.

# 2- Equal Opportunity

- Although of many examples of discrimination (based on gender, skin color, ethnic group membership, level of education, social class, sexual preference, and even choice of religion) the social class system of a landed and hereditary aristocracy did not develop in the United States.
- Declaration of Independence: “All men are created equal.”
- The Constitution: “No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States.”
- Most of the primary social relationships within a family tend to promote equality rather than hierarchy, and un formality rather than formality.

# 3- Material Acquisition

- To consider it is almost a right to be materially well off and physically comfortable.
- The acquisition of material possessions, such as a large home, a variety of clothes for every occasion, convenient personal transportation, and a large selection of foods, is considered the just reward for hard work.

# 4- Science and Technology

## The value of know how

- Science and technology take on the qualities often associated with a god.
- Scientific and technical knowledge is linked to their very survival.
- Nothing is impossible when scientists, engineers, and inventors put their minds to a task.
- All problems (from fixing interpersonal relationships to exploring outer space) can be solved by science.
- Reality can be rationally ordered by humans.
- Using the scientific method can enable people to predict and control much of life.
- The values of the rationality, objectivity, empirical evidence, and the scientific method are so deeply embedded in Western civilization.
- It explains our cultural tendency to devalue emotion and intuition as sources of knowledge.
- It often clash with those of cultures that value and believe in fatalism, subjectivity, mysticism, and intuition.



# 5- Progress and Change

- Americans:
  - Believe in change, newness, progress, a better future, an ability to control all phases of life. - Do not value the status quo.
  - Are optimism, - Are receptivity to change.
  - Emphasis on the future rather than the past or present,.
  - Confidence in the perceptual ability of the common person.
  - Alter their personal appearance even through cosmetic surgery.
  - Change where they live at a faster rate than any other people.
- This belief contrasts sharply with the fatalistic attitude and reverence for the past in other cultures that consider future is to be in the hands of “God”, do not easily embrace change, progress, and daring and often have difficulty understanding the American disregard for history and tradition.

# 6- Work and Play

- work occupies an important position, both past and present, in the United States.
- The primary American cultural beliefs derive from the initial experience of European settlers in the future United States. That began the process of distinguishing American behavior from European behavior.
- work represents a cluster of moral and affective conditions of great attractiveness, while voluntary idleness often is seen as a severely threatening and damaging social condition.
- A major reward for this hard work, and an important American value, is leisure.

# 7- Competitive Nature

- A competitive nature is encouraged among children in the United States.
- People are ranked, graded, classified, and evaluated so that everyone will know who the best is.
- The many “Top 10” lists of people, schools, hospitals, and vacation locations provided by the media illustrate our competitive nature.



# HOFSTEDE'S VALUE DIMENSIONS

- 1- Individualism/collectivism
- 2- Uncertainty Avoidance: cultures vary in their ability to tolerate ambiguity and unpredictability.
- 3- Power Distance: how societies manage the fact that people are unequal.
- 4- Masculinity/Femininity: There is maximal distinction between what men are expected to do and what women are expected to do.
- 5- Long- and Short-term Orientation



# 1- Individualism/collectivism

## Individualistic cultures

- Emphasize personal rights and responsibilities, privacy, voicing one's own opinion, freedom, innovation, and self-expression.

## Collectivistic cultures

- Emphasize community, collaboration, shared interest, harmony, tradition, the public good, and maintaining face.

# 2- Uncertainty Avoidance

## High Uncertainty Avoidance

- Cultures endeavor to reduce unpredictability and ambiguity through intolerance of deviant ideas and behaviors, emphasizing consensus, resisting change, and adhering to traditional social protocols

## Low Certainty Avoidance

- Cultures accept the inherent uncertainty in life, tend to be tolerant of the unusual, not as threatened by different ideas and people; prize initiative; willing to take risks; flexible; less constrained by social protocol

# 3- Power Distance

## High Power Distance

- Individuals accept power as a part of society; system of hierarchy - people are not equal in these cultures and they adhere to the established lines of authority

## Low Power Distance

- Guided by laws and behaviors that minimize power distinctions; subordinates and superiors consider each other as equals.

# 4- Masculinity/Femininity

## Masculinity

- Emotional gender roles are clearly distinct and the characteristics associated with men are emphasized: assertiveness, focused on acquisition of money and material success; these take precedence over interpersonal relationships.

## Femininity

- Emotional gender roles overlap and nurturing behaviors are emphasized: modest, tender, concerned with the quality of life; promotes sexual equality; places importance on people and the environment



# 5- Long- and Short-term Orientation

## Long-term orientation

- Emphasizes the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards: perseverance and thrift

## Short-term orientation

- Emphasizes the fostering of virtues related to the past and present: respect for tradition, preservation of "face," and fulfilling social obligations

Sixth topic:

# Culture and Identity



# Situating the Individual

- Social identity sets you apart from other in-group members and marks you as special or unique.
- Social identity include the following:
  1. Racial Identity
  2. Ethnic Identity
  3. Gender Identity
  4. National Identity
  5. Regional Identity
  6. Organizational Identity.
  7. Personal Identity
  8. Cyber and Fantasy Identity.

# 1- Racial Identity

- Social construct categorizing people into different groups.
- Tied to biological heritage that produces similar, identifiable physical characteristics.
- Modern science finds very little genetic variation among humans; intercultural marriage further challenges this social construction.



## 2- Ethnic Identity

- Shared heritage, history, traditions, values, similar behaviors, area of origin, and in some cases, language.
- Frequently transcends national borders; grounded in common cultural beliefs.
- In U.S., hyphenated ethnic identity (e.g. Mexican-American) separates and connects two cultural traditions.
- Passage of time, relocation, and interethnic marriage can dilute strong ties.

# 3- Gender Identity

- How particular culture differentiates masculine and feminine social roles.
- Different from biological sex or sexual identity.
- Distinctions may include appearance/fashion, language.

# 4- National Identity

- Where born, or immigrated/naturalized.
- National character: resemblance in fundamental matters of belief and conduct more than resemblance to members of other nations.

# 5- Regional Identity

- Varying cultural traits within a country.
- May be manifested through ethnicity, language, accent, dialect, customs, food, dress, or historical/political legacies



# 6- Organizational Identity

- Occupational affiliation.
- Stronger in collectivist cultures where group membership stressed.

# 7- Personal Identity

- Different cultures give rise to different construals of self, others, and interdependence between the two
- Individualists work to exemplify differences from others; collectivists emphasize membership, connection to others.

# 8- Cyber and Fantasy Identity

- Internet constructed best, alternate version of self.

Seventh topic:

# Culture and Communication





# The Voice and the Echo

- Culture is communication and communication is culture.
- Culture is learned through communication.
- Communication reflects culture •

# The uses of Communication

- Identity: Self is not innate, but is acquired in the process of communication with others. Communication allow gathering information about personal and cultural identity.
- Person Perception: It assists in collecting data about other people.
- Interpersonal Needs
- Persuasion

# Characteristics of Communication

- Communication is a Dynamic process
- Symbolic (**verbal, nonverbal; varies culture to culture**): There is no direct mind-to-mind contact between people.
- Contextual.
- Most Communication behavior is learned.
- Communication has a consequence.

# Intercultural Communication

- It occurs when a member of one culture produces a message for consumption by a member of another culture.
- It involves interaction between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems differ enough to influence the communication event.



# Intercultural Communication

## International

- New technology and information systems
- Evolving populations
- The global economy

## Domestic

Between dominant culture and co-cultures.

# Improving Your Intercultural Communication Skills

- Be Aware of Your Culture
- Examine Your Personal Attitudes
- Understand Your Communication Style
- Monitor Yourself
- Be Empathic
- Practice Effective Listening
- Develop Communication Flexibility

# **Studying intercultural communication**

**(Problems inherent to studying  
intercultural communication)**

# Individual Uniqueness

- People are more than their cultures.
- People are not subject to all lessons of their culture.



# Objectivity

- It is a state of being just, unbiased, and not influenced by emotions or personal prejudices.
- It requires to eliminate the cultural orientations and negative behavior.

# Generalizing

- No rule is so general, which admits not some exception.
- Stereotypes - collection of false assumptions that people in all cultures make about characteristics of members of various groups.
- Be cautious about cultural generalizations!
- Ethnocentrism found in all cultures (belief that one's own culture is superior to others). -

## **Generalizing**

When we generalize, we are allowing a few instances to represent an entire class of events, people, or experiences.

It is easy to fall into the trap of employing generalizations since they are easy to arrive at.

Generalizations are based on a limited amount of data and then applied to a larger population.

Records indicate that Asian students are likely to make good grades.

## **stereotypes**

They may not be based solely on conjecture and usually appeal to the audience's positive or negative emotions.

All Asian students make good grades

# Certain precautions to minimize the misleading effects of generalizing

- Cultural generalizations must be viewed as approximations, not as absolute representations.
- When you do make generalizations, they should deal with primary values and behaviors of a particular culture.
- When employing generalizations try to use those that can be supported by a variety of sources.
- Conclusions and statements about cultures should be qualified so that they do not appear to be absolutes, but only cautious generalizations.



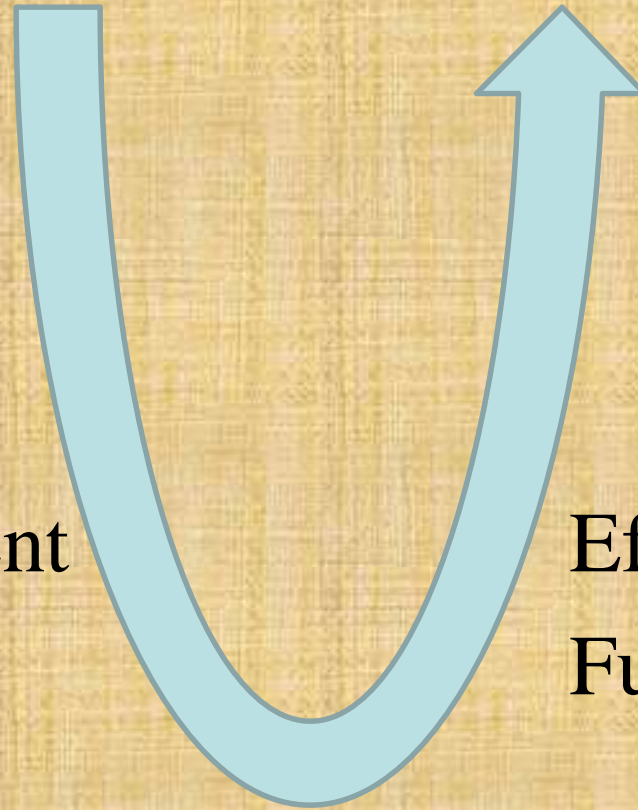
# Stages of Culture Acquisition (The U-Curve)

Excitement  
Phase.

Beginning  
Resolution Phase.

Disenchantment  
Phase.

Effective  
Functioning



- Stage 1: is a period of excitement and euphoria over the newness of the surroundings.
- Stage 2: culture shock emerges as individuals feel the intrusion of more and more cultural differences into their own images of self and security. Individuals need support from their fellow countrymen in the second culture to seek escape from their predicament.
- Stage 3: is one of gradual, and at first tentative and vacillating, recovery. It is “culture stress.” Progress is made, slowly but surely, as individuals begin to accept the differences in thinking and feeling the surround them, slowly becoming more empathetic with other persons in the second culture.
- Stage 4: represents near or full recovery, either assimilation or adaptation, acceptance of the new culture and self-confidence in the “new” person that had developed in this culture.

# SOCIAL DISTANCE

- it is An affective construct to give explanatory power to the place of culture learning in second language learning.
- it refers to the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures that come into contact within an individual.
- "Distance" is obviously in metaphorical sense to depict dissimilarity between two cultures.
- On a very superficial level one might observe, for example, that people from the United states are culturally similar to Canadians, while U.S. natives and Chinese are, by comparison, relatively dissimilar.
- We could say that the social distance of the latter case exceeds the former.



**John Schumann (1976c, p. 136) described social distance as consisting of the following parameters:**

1. **Dominance.** In relation to the TL (target language) group, is the L2 (second language learning) group politically, culturally, technically, or economically dominant, nondominant, or subordinate?
2. **Integration:** Is the integration pattern of the L2 group assimilation, acculturation, or preservation?
3. **Cohesiveness:** Is the L2 group cohesive? What is the size of the L2 group?
4. **Congruence:** Are the cultures of the two groups congruent—similar in their value and belief systems? What are the attitudes of the two groups toward each other?
5. **Permanence.**