Culture and Society

- The culture you live in refers to the knowledge, language, values, customs and physical objects that are passed from generation to generation among members of a group.
- Material aspects of our culture include skyscrapers, computers, cell phones and cars.

Culture and Society (cont.)

- Nonmaterial aspects include beliefs, rules, customs, family systems and a capitalist economy.
- Culture and society are interwoven.
- A society is a group of people who live in a defined territory and participate in a common culture.

Discussion Question

From the following list, what is the example that best represents your culture?

A. Literature
B. Music
C. Government
D. Values

Culture and Heredity

- Instincts are genetically inherited patterns of behavior. Humans, unlike animals, cannot rely on instinct alone for survival, so we rely on our culture.
- However, culture is not the only influence on our behavior.
Culture and Heredity (cont.)

• Other factors include:
  – Heredity—genetically inherited traits
  – Reflexes—simple, biologically inherited automatic reactions to physical stimuli.
  – Drives—impulses
• These expressions of such biological factors can vary depending on the culture.

Sociobiology

• **Sociobiology** is the study of the biological basis of human behavior.
• Darwin’s theory of natural selection + modern genetics = Sociobiology
• Sociologists believe that behaviors that best help people and animals are biologically based and transmitted in the genetic code.

**Discussion Question**

The following are behaviors that help us further develop as the human race EXCEPT
A. Parental affection
B. Education
C. Shopping
D. Sexual reproduction

**Polling Question**

Which symbol do you think best represents the culture of the United States?
A. Flag
B. Eagle
C. Apple pie
D. Statue of Liberty

Symbols, Language, and Culture

• **Cultural transmission** defines the transmission and creation of culture—or the idea that each generation must be taught about their culture.
• **Symbols** are things that stand for or represent something else. The most important symbols are those that create language.

Symbols, Language, and Culture (cont.)

• Language and culture are related because language frees humans from the limits of time and space.
• Language allows us to create culture.
**Discussion Question**

Do you agree that language frees us from the limits of time and space?

A. Agree
B. Disagree
C. Not sure

---

**The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis**

- The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis or the hypothesis of linguistic relativity—Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf believe that our perceptions of the world depend in part on the particular language we have learned.
- For example, when something is important to a society, its language will have many words to describe it.

---

**Discussion Question**

Native American languages that are spoken in the Arctic Circle most likely include many words describing which of the following?

A. Money
B. Snow
C. Oil
D. Trees

---

**Polling Question**

In your opinion, which of the following values most closely identifies with American culture?

A. Belief in God
B. Achievement and success
C. Democracy
D. Equality

---

**Norms: The Rules We Live By**

- **Norms** are rules defining appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Norms are so engrained in humans that they guide behavior without awareness.

---

**Discussion Question**

Which of the following is a norm that affects behavior in the classroom?

A. Showing respect
B. Completing classwork
C. Sitting still
D. All of the above
Folkways, Mores, and Laws

• There are three types of norms:
  – **Folkways**—rules that cover customary ways of thinking, feeling and behaving but lack moral overtones.
  – **Mores**—norms of great moral significance.
  – **Taboo**—a norm so strong that its violation demands punishment by the group.

Folkways, Mores, and Laws (cont.)

• **Laws** are norms that are formally defined and enforced by officials.

Enforcing the Rules

• **Sanctions** are rewards and punishments used to encourage conformity to norms, either formally or informally.

• **Formal sanctions** are sanctions that may be applied, for positive or negative reasons, only by officially designated persons, such as judges and teachers.

Enforcing the Rules (cont.)

• **Informal sanctions** can be applied by most members of a group, also for positive or negative reasons.

Values—The Basis for Norms

• **Values** are broad ideas about what most people in a society consider to be desirable.

• Different groups in the same society can have different norms based on the same value.

Values—The Basis for Norms (cont.)

• Values have a tremendous influence on human social behavior because they form the basis for norms.
Basic Values in the United States

• According to sociologist Robin Williams (1970), some of the important values that guide the values of most people in the United States are as follows:
  – Achievement and success
  – Activity and work
  – Efficiency and practicality
  – Equality
  – Democracy
  – Group superiority

Basic Values in the United States (cont.)

• Although many of these values have remained the same over the years, some have changed.

Discussion Question

Which of Williams’s values do you feel is the least influential in American society?

A. Achievement and success
B. Activity and work
C. Efficiency and practicality
D. Equality