

CHAPTER 3: CULTURE

Section 1: The Basis of Culture

culture - knowledge, values, customs and physical objects that are shared by members of a society

society - a specific territory inhabited by people who share a common culture

instincts - innate (unlearned) patterns of behavior

reflexes - automatic reactions to physical stimuli

drives - impulses to reduce discomfort

sociobiology - study of the biological basis of human behavior

- behaviors contributing to the survival of the human species: parental affection and care, friendship, sexual reproduction, education of children

Section 2: Language and Culture

symbol - a thing that stands for or represents something else

hypothesis of linguistic relativity - also known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis - our idea of reality depends largely upon language

Section 3: Norms and Values

norms - rules define appropriate/inappropriate behavior

- help to explain why people in a society or group behave similarly in similar circumstances

folkways - norms that lack moral significance (sleeping in a bed vs. on the floor, men removing their hats in church)

mores - norms that have moral dimensions and that should be followed by members of the society (people shouldn't use loud profanity during a religious service)

taboo - a norm so strong that its violation calls for punishment (Hindus - cows are sacred animals -> killing them is forbidden - all societies - incest)

law - norm that's formally defined and enforced by officials

- over time, a society's folkways can become mores, mores can become laws (smoking)

sanctions - rewards and punishments used to encourage people to follow norms

formal sanctions - imposed by persons given special authority (judges, police officers, teachers) - can be positive or negative

informal sanctions - rewards or punishments that can be applied by most members of a group (thanking someone for his/her help = positive - telling someone who's speaking during a movie to be quiet = negative)

values - broad ideas about what is good or desirable shared by people in a society

Section 4: Beliefs and Material Culture

nonmaterial culture - ideas, knowledge, and beliefs that influence people's behavior

beliefs - ideas about the nature of reality - can be true or false

material culture - the concrete, tangible objects of a culture

ideal culture - cultural guidelines that group members claim to accept (honesty)

real culture - actual behavior patterns of members of a group (cheating on tests, tax evasion)

Section 5: Cultural Diversity and Similarity

social categories - groupings of people who share a social characteristic (teenagers, women, Catholics)

subculture - group that's part of the dominant culture but differs from it in some important aspects (Chinese immigrants in Chinatown, circus people, musicians)

counterculture - subculture consciously opposed to certain central beliefs or attitudes of the dominant culture (hippies, punks, hackers)

ethnocentrism - judging others in terms of one's own cultural standards (Olympic games, regional rivalries in the U.S.)

cultural universals - general cultural traits that exist in all cultures (family, education, govt., housing, language)

cultural particulars - ways in which a culture expresses universal traits (mother or father is primary caregiver for children)