# Culture



# Culture is a social construction

SSSocC1

- Values, beliefs, behavior & material objects that together form a people's way of life.
- Material (tangible, stuff) vs non-material (intangible, ideas)
- "human nature" doesn't really exist! You're shaped by your culture.
- Culture shock: personal disorientation when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life
- Only humans rely on culture rather than instinct to ensure survival of their kind!



# **Components of culture**



- Symbols: anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture
- Language: systems of symbols that allows people to communicate. Key to culture.
- Values: culturally defined standards that determine desirability, goodness, & beauty, & serve as broad guidelines for living.
- Beliefs: specific statements that people hold to be true (more abstract)

## **US values**

- 1. Equal opportunity
- 2. Competition → success ("winners")
- 3. Material success \$\$\$
- 4. Action over reflection ("Just do it!")
- 5. Celebrate progress: "very latest"="very best"
- 6. Scientific, rational
- 7. Practicality & efficiency
- 8. Democracy/free enterprise
- 9. Freedom
- 10. Racism/group superiority (male above female, white above color, European above others)



### **Behavior**

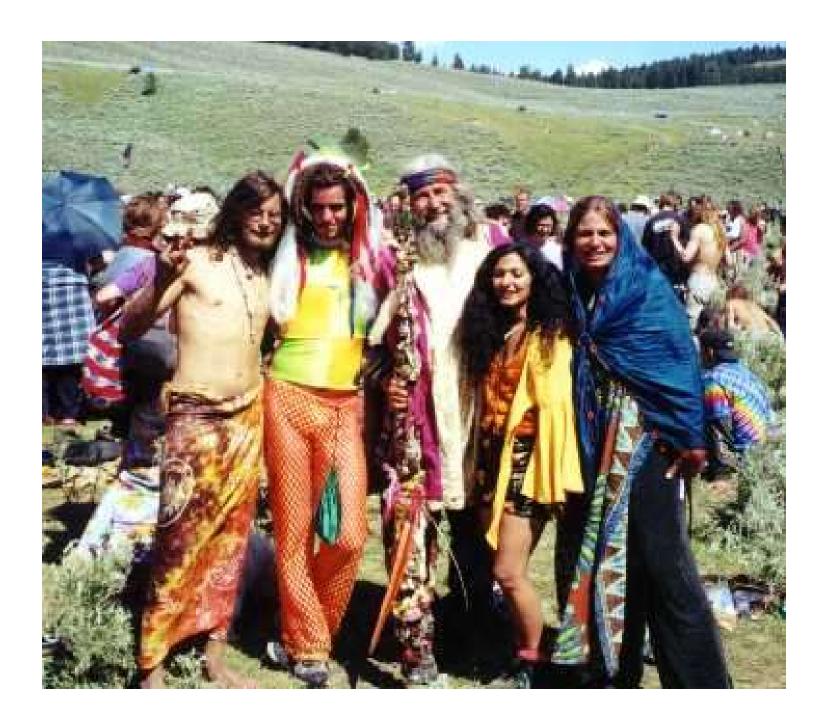
- Norms: rules & expectations by which society guides the behavior of it's members
- Mores: norms that are widely observed & have great moral significance (incest, molestation)
- Folkways: norms for routine or casual interaction (not wearing a tie at a formal dinner)
- Social control: attempts by society to regulate people's thoughts & behavior (shame, guilt, disapproval embarrassment, praise)

#### **Evolution of culture**

SSSocC2

- Cultural diversity: various ethnicities, languages, religions, accents.
- US is most diverse country in the world, Japan the least.
- Subculture: cultural patterns that set apart some segment of society's population. (nerds, poets, surfers, skaters)
- Multiculturalism: educational attempt to recognize the US' cultural diversity & promote equality of all cultural traditions

- Eurocentrism: dominance of European (especially English) cultural patterns
- Afrocentrism: dominance of African cultural patterns
- Ethnocentrism: practice of judging another culture by the standard's of one's own culture
- Counterculture: cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted in society (hippies/free love, religious militants)
- Popular culture: cultural patterns that are widespread among a society's population
- Folk culture: a culture traditionally practiced by a small, homogeneous, rural group living in relative isolation from other groups









### Globalization

- English is becoming the preferred 2<sup>nd</sup> language worldwide (Chinese is 1<sup>st</sup>).
- Societies have more contact that ever before.
  Why?
- 1. Global flow of goods
- 2. Global communication
- 3. Global migration
- Flow of above is uneven: can't afford, interpreted differently, more influence from West than others
- Cultural universals: traits that are part of every known culture (family, funerals, jokes)