



UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

Introductory to Social Science and Culture

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CONTENT:

- Origin of the term: Culture
- What's Culture?
- Culture and Social Action
- Culture and Materialism
- Cultural Stratification
- Cultural Reproduction
- Sub-Culture

ORIGIN OF THE TERM: CULTURE

- Latin: Cultura, literally Cultivation (cultivation of the soul)
- The betterment or refinement of individuals, especially through Education
- The common reference points of whole peoples, and discussion of the term was often connected to national aspiration or ideals
- A universal human capacity to develop and overcome natural/social challenges

WHAT'S CULTURE?

- In American Anthropology:
 1. the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively; and
 2. the distinct ways that people living differently classified and represented their experiences, and acted creatively

... CULTURE? (CONT)

- Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour, acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts;
- The essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values;

(Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 181 cited in Jenks, 2005)

... CULTURE? (CONT)

- Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action
- Part of culture consists in norms for or standards of behaviour
- Part of culture consists of ideologies justifying or rationalising certain selected ways of behaviour
- Every culture includes broad general principles of selectivity and ordering in life of its people.

(Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 181 cited in Jenks, 2005)

CULTURE AND SOCIAL ACTION

- The socio-cultural realm is not a tangible material force, nor a reflection of such materiality; it resides in action, choice and value, all of which are subjective, intersubjective and volatile – but real, tangible and material in their consequences

(Jenks, 2005)

... SOCIAL ACTION (CONT)

- First: Culture is transmitted (through socialisation), it constitutes a heritage or a social tradition;
- Second: Culture is learned (through internalisation), it is not a manifestation, in particular content, of man's genetic constitution; and
- Third: Culture is shared by and belonged to all members of the society
- Culture: product of; and determinant of, systems of human social interaction.

Parsons, 1951: 15)

CULTURE AND MATERIALISM

- The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life.
- Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.
- Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and existence of men in their actual-life process.
- Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life

(Marx and Engels, 1970: 47)

CULTURAL STRATIFICATION

- High culture vs Popular culture? Elites vs Mass?
- Cultural Conquest or Invasion: Americanisation, Arabisation, Japanisation, Indonesianisation?
- Mass Culture and Culture Industry in the capitalist society
- Popular Culture and Cultural Pluralism

CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

- Considering Power and Hegemony? State, Religious Elites, Public Figures
- The Role of Education: family, community, school
- Critics and Challenges: Evaluating and Modifying Culture
- Chaos or Anomie: the state of cultural transition

SUB-CULTURE

- Examining the Social Class of the Society
- Sub-culture as Cultural variants displayed by different segments of the society
- Positive/negative; upper/lower class; old/young; male/female; ethnicity/race/religion
- Long-term/temporal; local/national; etc