

INSIGHTFUL CONCEPTS ON CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

According to many anthropologists, culture can be defined as the set of learned behaviors and beliefs that characterize a people group. Putting it simply, it's what makes a population into a people group. It's their beliefs, attitudes, and ideals. From their diet, to their religion, to their family structure, to their jobs, to even their entertainment, it's what makes them. Unlike culture, which encompasses the tangible and intangible things of a people group, society is defined as a group of people who occupy a particular territory and who share a culture. Stating it simply, we would say that a society is a people of a culture. Whereas culture is what makes them them, society is, for lack of a better way of saying it, the actual them. It's the people living and interacting with one another in order to create a culture. It's people bonded together by their shared beliefs, attitudes, languages, and institutions; in other words, by their culture.

Popularly speaking, **being cultured** means being well-educated, knowledgeable of the arts, stylish, and well-mannered. **High culture**—generally pursued by the upper class—refers to classical music, theater, fine arts, and other sophisticated pursuits. Members of the upper class can pursue high art because they have cultural capital, which means the professional credentials, education, knowledge, and verbal and social skills necessary to attain the “property, power, and prestige” to “get ahead” socially. **Low culture**, or popular culture—generally pursued by the working and middle classes—refers to sports, movies, television sitcoms and soaps, and rock music. Sociologists define society as the people who interact in such a way as to share a common culture. The cultural bond may be ethnic or racial, based on gender, or due to shared beliefs, values, and activities. The term society can also have a geographic meaning and refer to people who share a common culture in a particular location. For example, people living in arctic climates developed different cultures from those living in desert cultures. In time, a large variety of human cultures arose around the world. This article deals with some attributes related to culture.

Key-words: society, culture, characteristics.

Societies are formed of social groupings at varied levels, from small towns, through countries, to broader cultural groupings such as a Western society. Within such societies people tend to form particular cultures, formed of the ideas, customs, and social behaviours that make one society distinct from another.

Culture and society are intricately related. A culture consists of the “objects” of a society, whereas a society consists of the people who share a common culture. When the terms culture and society first acquired their current meanings, most people in the world worked and lived in small groups in the same locale.

Characteristics of Culture

According to Phatak, Bhagat, and Kashlak, “Culture is a concept that has been used in several social science disciplines to explain variations in human thought processes in different parts of the world.” ‘

According to J.P. Lederach, “Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them”.

According to R. Linton, “A culture is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society”.

Characteristics of Culture

All organizations have the culture in the sense that they are embedded in specific societal cultures and are part of them. Some values create a dominant culture in the organizations that help guide the day to day behaviour of employees.

Culture has various characteristics. They are as under

Learned Behaviour

Not all behaviour is learned, but most of it is learned; combing one’s hair, standing in line, telling jokes. Sometimes the terms conscious learning and unconscious learning are used to distinguish the learning. Some behaviour is obvious. People can be seen going to football games, eating with forks, or driving automobiles. Such behaviour is called “overt” behaviour. Other behaviour is less visible.

Culture is Abstract

Culture exists in the minds or habits of the members of society. Culture is the shared ways of doing and thinking. There are degrees of visibility of cultural behaviour, ranging from the regularized activities of persons to their internal reasons for so doing. In other words, we cannot see culture as, such we can only see human behaviour. This behavior occurs in regular, patterned fashion and it is called culture.

Culture Includes Attitudes, Values, and Knowledge

There is a widespread error in the thinking of many people who tend to regard the ideas, attitudes, and notions which they have as “their own”. It is easy to overestimate the uniqueness of one’s own attitudes and ideas. When there is an agreement with other people it is largely unnoticed, but when there is a disagreement or difference one is usually conscious of it.

Culture also Includes Material Objects

Man’s behaviour results in creating objects. Men were behaving when they made these things. To make these objects required numerous and various skills which human beings gradually built up through the ages. Man has invented something else and so on.

Culture is Shared by the Members of Society

The patterns of learned behaviour and the results of behaviour are possessed not by one or a few people, but usually by a large proportion. Thus, many millions of persons share such behaviour patterns as the use of automobiles or the English language. Persons may share some part of a culture unequally. Sometimes the people share different aspects of culture.

Culture is Super-Organic

Culture is sometimes called super organic. It implies that “culture” is somehow superior to “nature”. The word super-organic is useful when it implies that what may be quite a different phenomenon from a cultural point of view. For example, a tree means different things to the botanist who studies it, the old woman who uses it for shade in the late summer afternoon, the farmer who picks its fruit, the motorist who

collides with it and the young lovers who carve their initials in its trunk. The same physical objects and physical characteristics, in other words, may constitute a variety of quite different cultural objects and cultural characteristics.

Culture is Pervasive

Culture is pervasive it touches every aspect of life. The pervasiveness of culture is manifest in two ways. First, culture provides an unquestioned context within which individual action and response take place. Not only emotional action but relational actions are governed by cultural norms. Second, culture pervades social activities and institutions.

Culture is a Way of Life

Culture means simply the “way of life” of a people or their “design for a living.” Kluckhohn and Kelly define it in his sense”, A culture is a historically derived system of explicit and implicit designs for living, which tends to be shared by all or specially designed members of a group”. Explicit culture refers to similarities in word and action which can be directly observed .For example, adolescent cultural behaviour can be generalized from regularities in dress, mannerism, and conversation. Implicit culture exists in abstract forms which are not quite obvious.

Culture is Idealistic

Culture embodies the ideals and norms of a group. It is sum-total of the ideal patterns and norms of behaviour of a group. Culture consists of the intellectual, artistic and social ideals and institutions which the members of the society profess and to which they strive to confirm.

Culture is Transmitted among Members of Society

The cultural ways are learned by persons from persons. Many of them are “handed down” by one’s elders, by parents, teachers, and others. Other cultural behaviours are “handed up” to elders. Some of the transmission of culture is among contemporaries.

Culture is Continually Changing

There is one fundamental and inescapable attribute (special quality) of culture, the fact of unending change. Some societies sometimes change slowly, and hence in comparison to other societies seem not to be changing at all. But they are changing, even though not obviously so.

Language is the Chief Vehicle of Culture

Man lives not only in the present but also in the past and future.

He is able to do this because he possesses language which transmits to him what was learned in the past and enables him to transmit the accumulated wisdom to the next generation. A specialized language pattern serves as a common bond to the members of a particular group or subculture. Although culture is transmitted in a variety of ways, language is one of the most important vehicles for perpetuating cultural patterns.

Culture is Integrated

This is known as holism, or the various parts of a culture being interconnected. All aspects of a culture are related to one another and to truly understand a culture, one must learn about all of its parts, not only a few.

Culture is Dynamic

This simply means that cultures interact and change. Because most cultures are in contact with other cultures, they exchange ideas and symbols. All cultures change, otherwise, they would have problems adapting to changing environments. And because cultures are integrated, if one component in the system changes, it is likely that the entire system must adjust.

Culture is Transmissive

Culture is transmissive as it is transmitted from one generation to another. Language in different forms makes it possible for the present generation to understand the achievement of earlier generations. Transmission of culture may take place by imitation as well as by instruction.

Culture Varies from Society to Society

Every society has a culture of its own. It differs from society to society. The culture of every society is unique to itself. Cultures are not uniform. Cultural elements like customs, traditions, morals, values, beliefs are not uniform everywhere. Culture varies from time to time also.

Culture is Gratifying

Culture provides proper opportunities for the satisfaction of our needs and desires. Our needs both biological and social are fulfilled in cultural ways. Culture determines and guides various activities of man. Thus, culture is defined as the process through which human beings satisfy their wants.

So we can easily say that culture has various features which embodied it in an important position in organizations and other aspects too.

Conclusion

Society and culture are highly inter-woven. The values, attributes of a society are highly connected with the culture it possesses.

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