

The Concept of Culture – Group 6

2. Expanded Definition (a&b)¹²

Culture includes beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and behaviours shared by a community or group. It shapes their identity and affects how they interact with each other and the world. Culture changes over time and has a big impact on how people see the world and the choices they make.

Culture can bring people together and help them understand each other, but it can also create divisions when people have negative views and stereotypes about other cultures. In extreme cases, this can lead to prejudice and racism, causing discrimination and hostility in society.

In summary, culture is a powerful and ever-changing force that both unites and divides people. It influences how individuals interact and can lead to serious problems like prejudice and racism. This highlights the need for understanding and respect among different cultural groups.

3. Our Definition of Culture

Culture doesn't just affect how we talk and behave; it also shapes how we understand each other. Our cultural backgrounds play a big role in how we see and make sense of the world. Different cultures have unique beliefs, customs, and values that influence how we interpret things. This can lead to misunderstandings when we interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. In short, culture influences our communication, behavior, and our basic understanding of the world and each other.

4. Simons Story

a) Universal Level

Concern for Freedom of Speech: In the text, Simon, who originally comes from Egypt but is temporarily working in Canada, really admires something about Canadian culture. He thinks it's great that Canadians can freely express their thoughts without worrying about getting into trouble. This is important because it means people in Canada can openly discuss their ideas and opinions. Simon finds this inspiring because it allows people to talk about important issues without fear. It's like everyone has a right to speak their mind, and he finds this aspect of Canadian life really inspiring.

b) Collective Level³

I heard that a lot of people got arrested because they were looking suspicious or traveling with a lot of bags. Just by hearing that it sounds horrible strict, right? But we need to look further inside to understand what the culture of Egypt means. We should start with the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 but we will keep it short. The public wasn't happy with the president. The president was later found guilty of several crimes and got arrested. The people were suppressed and weren't allowed to speak critically of Egypt society. But after the president had to resign, the society grew up. So we need to keep in mind that Egyptians had problems with the government and were suppressed in many forms before.

Because of the influence of other countries, cultures and its history the topic „freedom of speech“ is really complicated in Egypt. For example Islam (Religion) has a deep influence in Egyptians Culture & Lifestyle. Because I'm muslim too, I can understand that. Islam is telling us how the whole life works and how we need to handle things. Things like dirty-jokes or jokes about Religion can hurt feelings or can be taken as an insult. Especially when you are a foreigner. I wouldn't say that the freedom of speech isn't guaranteed but because of the things for example I mentioned before, it's more strict. I think that Egyptians themselves are really friendly and do a lot of jokes or are hospitable. I've watched a lot of videos from Africa (like Egypt, Morocco or Ghana) where you could see that the people talk normally and laugh a lot. It isn't all about prejudice.

¹ G. Hofstede, G. J. Hofstede, M. Minkov. 2010. Cultures and Organizations: Software of Mind, third edition (3rd ed.). Part 1: The Concept of Culture (Chapter 1). Pp 3 to 12. Available from:

https://aalen.instructure.com/courses/7864/files/764156/download?download_frd=1 [Accessed 28 October 2023]

² M. Nguyen-Phuong-Mai. 2014-2015. Intercultural Communication. Chapter 1. Pp 1 to 17. Available from:

https://aalen.instructure.com/courses/7864/files/764147/download?download_frd=1 [Accessed 28 October 2023]

³ Chara Scroope. 2017. Core Concepts. Available from: <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/egyptian-culture/egyptian-culture-core-concepts#egyptian-culture-core-concepts> [Accessed 28 October 2023]

c) Individual Level

Because Simons background is Egyptian and he is also born & raised in Egypt, his values are high. He seems to feel like being „home“. Because in Egypt everything is more strict and things like alcohol are frowned upon (because of the influence of Islam). We can see that he drinks with his host family and wishes that the Egyptians would be more open for such things. But that doesnt mean that Simon doesnt love Egypt. He cooks for friends and his host family which means that hes also proud of his culture. In the text we see that he admires the way canadian people are open to speak but loves to show his hospitality too.

d) Pyramid model in the text

Universal: This is the human nature and shows us characteristics which are typical or possible to have. For example values or symbols.

Collective: Egypts culture as in the text mentioned has the characteristic „hospitality“. Most people are muslims & things like alcohol are forbidden. The „freedom of speech“ is more strict and complicated.

Individual: Simon loves to show his hospitality from Egypt personally by cooking for friends & family in Canada.

With Simons Hospitality, he performs a cultural exchange. The host family gains a greater understanding of what the Egyptian Culture is or means. Its more then a characteristic, its the key to understand each other. They can build a connection between different cultures and individuals. His behavior shows that Egyptians are warm and open. The Canadian host family had to be hospitable too because he wasnt afraid to spend his time their and wished the Egyptian would be more like that in some ways. So maybe he influence the Canadian people aswell as they did. Maybe the Canadians wish themselves too that they could be more hospitable or more in a different way.

We can see that the Inverted Pyramide can summarize the text, so we can have a view of what the text is about in short sentences or words. But its not all about the model. We need to discuss & show our values in good ways aswell.

Simon as an Egyptian, born and raised there, showed his view of hospitality to the Canadians while he accepted some values of the Canadians about „freedom of speech“ aswell. Something like Hospitality can lead to a deeper connection between different people.

e) What does Simon think about it?

Simon is typical in a way to demonstrate his hospitality from Egypt. And not typical in a way to drink with his host family (which isnt normal in Egypt or atleast frowned upon). That means that he is open to different cultures and open to „adopt“ other characteristics. These cultures may influence his values or his perspective and he can also be a part of both cultures. The problem is that he cant live both cultures in Egypt because of the strict rules. He needs to emigrate to live this lifestyle sadly. There is a chance that Egypt could be more open in the future, but I wouldnt bet on it.

f) Bridge the differences

First we need to be respectful and open to speak (dont interrupt for example). Everybody has a different view on different things. Both sides need to have the chance to express their viewpoints. Simon could explain his hospitality with his experiences in Egypt. We have seen that hospitality is important to Simon. They can collect their differences and can put characteristics that are similiar together. If both sides know about similarities, the whole conversation could be more friendly for a good result. A good way to demonstrate their viewpoints is to show pictures/videos or go for activities together (cooking for friends aswell).