## What is culture anyways?

1. What is culture, anyways?
   1. Culture
      1. Fluidity
         1. It is hard to define exactly
      2. Constant evolution
      3. Movement
         1. There are lots of different cultures around the world
      4. Integration
   2. Symbols and Symbolic Classification
      * 1. Symbolic Classification
           1. Symbolic classification: The attempt to create worlds and webs of meanings.

Language, age, sex, ethnic and cultural features, health, disability are all used as markers in classifications

In each of these markers we are not solely dealing with biology, but with classification – it is what these *mean* or *represent* to us that determines behavior toward others

We are “meaning makers”

* + - * 1. Meaning that is not intrinsic to an object or an occurrence
        2. Meaning that is created and agreed upon, or disputed, by a group
        3. Symbols’ meaning can shift over time and space
      1. Symbols
         1. The complexity of human culture is made possible through the ability of humans to create and use symbols
         2. Symbols permit people to discuss abstract topics and to talk about things in the past, in an envisioned future, or even in an abstract, unknown time or place. The world of culture is a symbolic word.
         3. Symbols: Cultural constructs that often do not have universally recognized meanings. They are arbitrary-most having no direction to what they refer.

Symbols can stand for emotions and complex philosophical concepts that exist only in our minds. Symbols do not have to be physical. Language is a system of symbols

* + - * 1. Displacement: The ability to use symbols to refer to things and activities that are remote from the user.

The meaning of a symbol is no intrinsic, it does not emanate from the symbol itself, as if it were a quality that it inherently possesses.

* + - * 1. Symbols are important elements in religious practices, and religious rituals center on symbols and the manipulation of symbols
  1. Culture is learned and shared
     1. Enculturation = socialization
        1. Example: How all of us Americans are the same, how we teach what it is like to be an American and what it is like to be Texan
     2. Authority figures
        1. Parents, teachers, religious leaders, older brother, politicians, etc
     3. Cultural patterns are adaptations
        1. Behavioral adaptation to changing environments and circumstances
        2. Cultures are constantly changing
     4. Culture is produced, practiced, and circulated
        1. Example: “Chicken Maharaja Mac”
        2. Example: “The New Yorker”
     5. Culture is integrated
        1. In America men and women are split 50/50 in food preparation, however worldwide it is stereotyped with women
  2. Ethnography
     1. To write culture
     2. Core method of cultural anthropology
     3. Method entails participant observation and interviews – lived experience and social relationships with those we write about
     4. Account of a group of peoples, lifeway’s, patterns, practices, and beliefs
  3. Ethnocentrism
     1. Thinking of your own way of doing things as THE right way
     2. Disparaging other’s worldviews and practices because they are simply different from one’s own
     3. Inability to “put yourself into someone from another culture’s shoes”
     4. More than simple bias
     5. Everyone is ethnocentric in some way.
     6. Ethnocentrism when not understood nor resisted, leads to racism, classism, stereotyping, and essentializing.
  4. Cultural Relativism
     1. Understanding worldviews and practices of people from other cultures from within their own way of thinking and acting. To “walk in their shoes”
     2. Enculturation: The *process* of learning culture
     3. “Every judgment… good/bad, moral/immoral, normal/abnormal, valuable/valueless, is made from a cultural point of view” (Jack Eller)
  5. Representation
     1. The act of placing or stating facts in order to influence or affect the action of others
     2. Representations are never natural, but always constructed.
     3. When representations of an other are constructed to serve the purposes of the powerful (the one doing the construction), those being represented are oppressed.
  6. Essentialism
     1. A generalization stating that certain properties possessed by a group (e.g. people, things, ideas) are universal, and not dependent on context.
     2. A way of discounting variation among group members as secondary
     3. Examples:
        1. Asians can’t drink well
        2. All Asians are good at math
        3. White people who wear designer handbags are fascists