

Moulay Ismail University
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Readings in culture
Dr. BOUZEKRI
Gr: 5

Dear students,

First, stay safe by staying home. Second, with its extensive and heterogeneous selection of topics from a variety of articles, journals, magazines, websites and books, this online course on 'Readings in culture' aims to reflect the theoretical and methodological fluidities of cultural studies. By being exposed to the broad meaning of culture and cultural studies, you will be able to shift your attention from the text itself to the broader socio-cultural context of its production, distribution and consumption. Moreover, during this difficult, anti-COVID-19 seclusion phase of our lives, and through eLearning, you need to take personal responsibility and become autonomous learners. The online classes are guidelines to help you develop learning strategies. Success is also determined by each individual's cognitive development, i.e. "the construction of thought processes". To be able to develop this, you need to connect successfully what you are reading to prior knowledge of the subject you are reading about. You have a myriad of texts this semester, in addition to the booklet available at the Xeroxing place at the university (contact Najat). The booklet is a supplementary material to help during this coronavirus pandemic.

Again, I can't urge you strongly enough, stay safe by staying home.

General Introduction To Culture (I)

I. Definition of culture

Generally speaking, culture is defined as the system of shared beliefs, values, rituals, customs, behaviors, art, artifacts, technology, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, religion, and political and economic systems that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. Culture distinguishes one human group from others. It also distinguishes humans from other animals. The earliest physical evidence of culture is crude stone tools produced in East Africa over two millions ago.

According to Brooks we should distinguish between two types of culture: 'Olympian culture' or 'culture MLA' understood to mean the great music, literature, and art of the country and what he called 'Hearth-stone culture' or culture 'BBV'. However Seelye, another anthropologist, defines culture as a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life, 'from folktales to carved whales'. It includes everything that people learn. This definition refers to both MLA and BBV cultures. With the advent of ALM in the 1960s hearthstone culture (also called 'little-c' culture) began to be emphasized over formal or ('big-c') culture. Many educators believe that knowing the language, as well as the patterns of everyday life, was a prerequisite to appreciating the fine arts and literature.

II. The characteristics of culture

Culture has several distinguishing characteristics:

1. **It is based on symbols** – abstract ways of referring to and understanding ideas, objects, feelings or behaviors –and the ability to communicate with symbols using language. In fact, Symbols allow people to develop complex thoughts and exchange those thoughts with others to convey new ideas. People constantly invent new symbols, such as for mathematical formulas. In addition, people may use one symbol, such as a single word, to represent many different ideas, feelings, or values. Thus, symbols provide a flexible way for people to communicate even very complex thoughts with each other. For example, only through symbols can architects, engineers, and construction workers communicate the information necessary to construct a skyscraper or bridge.

2. **Culture is shared.** People in the same society share common behaviors and ways of thinking through culture. For example, almost all people living in the United States share the English language, dress in similar styles, eat many of the same foods, and celebrate many of the same holidays.

All the people of a society collectively create and maintain culture. Societies preserve culture for much longer than the life of any one person. They preserve it in the form of knowledge, such as scientific discoveries; objects, such as works of art; and traditions, such as the observance of holidays.

Since no human society exists in complete isolation, different societies also exchange and share culture. In fact, all societies have some interactions with others, both out of curiosity and because even highly self-sufficient societies sometimes need assistance from their neighbors. Today, for instance, many people around the world use similar kinds of technology, such as cars, telephones, and televisions. Commercial trade and communication technologies, such as computer networks, have created a form of global culture. Therefore, it has become increasingly difficult to find culture that is shared within only a single society.

3. Culture is learned. While people biologically inherit many physical traits and behavioral instincts, culture is socially inherited. A person must learn culture from other people in a society. People use culture to flexibly and quickly adjust to changes in the world around them. People are not born with culture; they have to learn it. For instance, people must learn to speak and understand a language and to abide by the rules of a society. In many societies, all people must learn to produce and prepare food and to construct shelters. In other societies, people must learn a skill to earn money, which they then use to provide for themselves. In all human societies, children learn culture from adults. Anthropologists call this process enculturation, or cultural transmission.

Enculturation is a long process. Just learning the intricacies of a human language, a major part of enculturation, takes many years. Families commonly protect and enculturate children in the households of their birth for 15 years or more. Only at this point can children leave and establish their own households. People also continue to learn throughout their lifetimes. Thus, most societies respect their elders, who have learned for an entire lifetime.

4. Culture is adaptive. People use culture to flexibly and quickly adjust to changes in the world around them. Cultural adaptation has made humans one of the most successful species on the planet. Through history, major developments in technology, medicine, and nutrition have allowed people to reproduce and survive in ever-increasing numbers. The global population has risen from 8 million during the Ice Age to almost 6 billion today.

General Introduction To Culture (II)

III. CATEGORIES OF CULTURE

Anthropologists have described a number of different categories of culture. For example, a simple distinction can be made between cultural objects, such as types of clothing, and cultural beliefs, such as forms of religion. Many early anthropological definitions of culture are essentially descriptions of categories of culture or cultural items. For them, culture includes socially acquired knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs, and habits.

British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor gave one of the first complete definitions of culture in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871). His definition stated that **culture includes socially acquired knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs, and habits.**

Later anthropologists came up with simpler categorizations of culture. A common practice is to divide all of culture into three broad categories: material, social, and ideological. A fourth category, the arts, has characteristics of both material and ideological culture.

- a. Material culture includes products of human manufacture, such as technology.
- b. Social culture pertains to people's forms of social organization—how people interact and organize themselves in groups.
- c. Ideological culture relates to what people think, value, believe, and hold as ideals.
- d. The arts include such activities and areas of interest as music, sculpture, painting, pottery, theater, cooking, writing, and fashion.

Anthropologists often study how these categories of culture differ across different types of societies that vary in scale (size and complexity). They have identified several distinct types of societies by scale. The smallest societies are known as **bands**. Bands consist of nomadic (not settled) groups of fewer than a hundred, mostly related people. A **tribe**, the next largest type of society, generally consists of a few hundred people living in settled villages. A larger form of society, called a **chiefdom**, binds together two or more villages or tribes under a leader who is born into the position of rule. The largest societies, known as **civilizations**, contain from several thousand to millions of mostly unrelated people, many of whom live in large cities. Some anthropologists characterize the world today as a single global-scale culture, in which people are linked together by industrial technology and markets of commercial exchange.

a. Material Culture

All societies produce and exchange material goods so that people can feed, clothe, shelter, and otherwise provide for themselves. This system is commonly known as an economy. Anthropologists look at several aspects of people's material culture. These aspects include (1) the methods by which people obtain or produce food, known as a pattern of subsistence; (2) the ways in which people exchange goods and services; (3) the kinds of technologies and other objects people make and use; and (4) the effects of people's economy on the natural environment. We will only deal with number 2 to illustrate one aspect of culture categories i.e. Forms of Exchange.

a.2. Forms of Exchange

People in small societies commonly exchange goods with each other and with people in other small societies through systems of barter, ceremonies, and gifts. For example, the people of the Trobriand Islands in Papua New Guinea, practice an elaborate form of inter-island exchange known as the kula. Through the kula, people living on different islands continually exchange prestige goods, such as beautiful shell necklaces, as well as food, clothing, weapons, and other items. Such systems of ongoing exchange of goods, common to all societies, create long-lasting bonds between people. Contemporary industrial societies have organized markets for land, labor, and money, and virtually everything is a commodity. People buy and sell goods and services using money. This form of economy, known as capitalism, disconnects the value of goods and services from the goods and services themselves and the people who produce or provide them. Thus, the exchange of goods and services for currency is not particularly important for creating social bonds. Today most nations have their own system of money and print their own currency made of paper. The paper bills represent a specific monetary value decreed by the government and accepted by the people.

b. Social Culture

People in all types of societies organize themselves in relation to each other for work and other duties, and to structure their interactions. People commonly organize themselves according to (1) bonds by kinship and marriage, (2) work duties and economic position, and (3) political position. Important factors in family, work, and political relations include age and gender (behaviors and roles associated with men and women).

General Introduction To Culture (III)

c. Ideological Culture

In every society, culturally unique ways of thinking about the world unite people in their behavior. Anthropologists often refer to the body of ideas that people share as ideology. Ideology can be broken down into at least three specific categories: beliefs, values, and ideals. People's beliefs give them an understanding of how the world works and how they should respond to the actions of others and their environments. Particular beliefs often tie in closely with the daily concerns of domestic life, such as making a living, health and sickness, happiness and sadness, interpersonal relationships, and death. People's values tell them the differences between right and wrong or good and bad. Ideals serve as models for what people hope to achieve in life.

c.1. Religion

Religion allows people to know about and communicate with supernatural beings—such as animal spirits, gods, and spirits of the dead. Religion often serves to help people cope with the death of relatives and friends, and it figures prominently in most funeral ceremonies.

Peoples of many small band and tribal societies believe that plants and animals, as well as people, can have souls or spirits that can take on different forms to help or harm people. Anthropologists refer to this kind of religious belief as animism. In hunting societies, people commonly believe that forest beings control the supply of game animals and may punish people for irresponsible behavior by making animals outwit the hunt.

In larger, agricultural societies, religion has long been a means of asking for bountiful harvests, a source of power for rulers, and an inspiration to go to war. In early civilized societies, religious visionaries became leaders because people believed those leaders could communicate with the supernatural to control the fate of a civilization. This became their greatest source of power, and people often regarded leaders as actual gods.

Aztec rulers thus inspired great awe by regularly conducting human sacrifices.

For example, in the great civilization of the Aztec, which flourished in what is now Mexico in the 15th and 16th centuries, rulers claimed privileged association with the powerful god Huitzilopochtli. They said that this god required human blood to ensure that the sun would rise and set each day. Aztec rulers thus inspired great awe by regularly conducting human sacrifices. They also conspicuously displayed their vast power as wealth in luxury goods, such as fine jewels, clothing, and palaces. Rulers obtained their wealth from the great numbers of craftspeople, traders, and warriors under their control.

c.2. Secularism

Many societies today interpret the natural world and form beliefs based on science and logic. Societies in which many people do not practice any religion, such as the United States, may be known as secular societies. However, no society is entirely secular.

During the period in 17th- and 18th-century Europe known as the Age of Enlightenment, science and logic became new sources of belief for many people living in civilized societies. Scientific studies of the natural world and rational philosophies both led people to believe that they could explain natural and social phenomena without believing in gods or spirits. Religion remained an influential system of belief, however.

Both religion and science drove the development of capitalism, the economic system of commerce-driven market exchange. Capitalism itself influences people's beliefs, values,

and ideals in many present-day, large, civilized societies. In these societies, such as in the United States, many people view the world and shape their behavior based on a belief that they can understand and control their environment and that work, commerce, and the accumulation of wealth serve an ultimate good. The governments of most large societies today also assert that human well-being derives from the growth of economies and the development of technology.

In addition, many people have come to believe in the fundamental nature of human rights and free will. These beliefs grew out of people's faith in their ability to control the natural world—a faith promoted by science and rationalism. Religious beliefs continue to change to affirm or accommodate these other dominant beliefs, but sometimes the two are at odds with each other. For instance, many religious people have difficulty reconciling their belief in a supreme spiritual force with the theory of natural evolution, which requires no belief in the supernatural.

d. Art

Art is a distinctly human production, and many people consider it the ultimate form of culture because it can have the quality of pure expression, entirely separate from basic human needs. But some anthropologists actually regard artistic expression as a basic human need, as basic as food and water. Some art takes the form of material production, and many utilitarian items have artistic qualities. Other forms of art, such as music or acting, reside in the mind and body and take expression as performance. The material arts include painting, pottery, sculpture, textiles and clothing, and cookery. Nonmaterial arts include music, dance, drama and dramatic arts, storytelling, and written narratives.

People had begun making art by at least 30,000 years ago, painting stylized animal figures and abstract symbols on cave walls (see Paleolithic Art). For thousands of years people have also adorned their bodies with ornamentation, such as jewelry, pigments, and stylized scars.

In most societies people establish their personal and group identity through such forms of artistic expression as patterns of dress and body adornment, ceremonial costumes and dances, or group symbols. For example, many Native American groups in the Pacific Northwest carve massive wooden totem poles as symbols of their group identity and history. The stylized figures carved into totem poles represent important clan ancestors and stories of important historical events.

Smaller societies also use art as a primary form of storing and reproducing their culture. Ceremonial dances and performances, for example, commonly tell legends of creation, stories about ancestors, or moral tales containing instructive lessons.

In large societies, governments may hire artisans to produce works that will support the political structure. For example, in the Inca Empire—which dominated the Andean region of Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina in the 15th and 16th centuries—the elite hired metalworkers and textile makers to make exclusive gold and silver jewelry or create special clothing and adornments for them. These royal items displayed insignia that indicated high status. In contrast, non-elites wore coarse, ordinary clothing, reflecting their low status.

In present-day large societies, many people produce art for commercial and political purposes in addition to social, personal, and spiritual reasons. A great number of artists make a living by working for businesses that use art to advertise commercial products. Most large societies today also have laws that protect the content of artworks such as books, films, songs, dances, and paintings as intellectual property, which people own and can sell.

Readings in culture

Semester 2 G.5

Dr. Bouzekri

Acculturation

Written By: The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica and adapted

Acculturation, the processes of change in **artifacts**, customs, and beliefs that result from the contact of two or more **cultures**. The term is also used to refer to the results of such changes. Two major types of **acculturation** involve incorporation and directed change. This may be distinguished on the basis of the conditions under which cultural contact and change take place.

Incorporation refers to the free borrowing and modification of cultural elements and occurs when people of different cultures maintain contact as well as political and social self-determination. It may involve two concepts:

- a. **syncretism**: ✓ a process through which people create a new conception of phenomena that differs from either original culture;

- ✓ adoption, in which an entirely new phenomenon is added to a cultural repertoire.

As an example: religious beliefs are often incorporated in a syncretic manner.

adaptation: happens when a new material or technology is applied to an **extant** phenomenon.

For instance, technology is often subject to adoption, as with the rapid **diffusion** of new metalworking techniques and weapon types that marked the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age, and later to the Iron Age in Asia, Africa, and Europe. This implies that adoption or incorporation is a product of free choice, the changes it engenders are often retained over the long term.

In contrast, directed change occurs when one group establishes dominance over another through military conquest or political control; thus, **imperialism** is the most common precursor to directed change. Like incorporation, directed change involves the selection and modification of cultural characteristics. However, these processes are more varied and the results more complex because they derive from the interference in one cultural system by members of another. The processes that operate under conditions of directed change include forced assimilation—the complete replacement of one culture by another—and resistance against aspects of the dominant culture. Because directed change is imposed upon the members of the recipient culture, often quite harshly, the changes it engenders are less likely to be maintained over the long term.

This article was most recently revised and updated by Elizabeth Prine Pauls, Associate Editor.

Glossary: Online Merriam-Webster

Definition of *artifact*

1a : a usually simple object (such as a tool or ornament) showing human workmanship or modification as distinguished from a natural object especially : an object remaining from a particular period caves containing prehistoric artifacts

b : something characteristic of or resulting from a particular human institution, period, trend, or individual ... morality is an artifact of human culture, devised to help us negotiate social relations.— Michael Pollan

c : something or someone arising from or associated with an earlier time especially when regarded as no longer appropriate, relevant, or important ... that over-simplified but eloquent quality that keeps Jefferson alive for us while Washington and Adams, his superiors in so many other respects, are artifacts of a quaint and lost world.— Jack Rakove

2a: a product of artificial character (as in a scientific test) due usually to extraneous (such as human) agency

b: an electrocardiographic and electroencephalographic wave that arises from sources other than the heart or brain

c: a defect in an image (such as a digital photograph) that appears as a result of the technology and methods used to create and process the image ... can produce a very good picture, but there will be some loss of detail and some color artifacts such as adjacent colors bleeding into each other.

Definition of *culture*

(Entry 1 of 2)

1a: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group also : the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time popular culture Southern culture

b: the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization a corporate culture focused on the bottom line

c: the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic studying the effect of computers on print culture Changing the culture of materialism will take time ...— Peggy O'Mara

d: the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

2a: enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training

b: acquaintance with and taste in fine arts, humanities, and broad aspects of science as distinguished from vocational and technical skills a person of culture

3: the act or process of cultivating living material (such as bacteria or viruses) in prepared nutrient media also: a product of such cultivation

4: cultivation, tillage We ought to blame the culture, not the soil.— Alexander Pope

5: the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties especially by education

6: expert care and training beauty culture

Definition of *acculturation*

1: cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture the acculturation of immigrants to American life also : a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact

2: the process by which a human being acquires the culture of a particular society from infancy

Definition of *extant*

1a: currently or actually existing the most charming writer extant— G. W. Johnson

b: still existing : not destroyed or lost extant manuscripts

Definition of *diffusion*

1: the state of being spread out or transmitted especially by contact: the action of diffusing the diffusion of knowledge

2: prolixity, diffuseness

3a chemistry: the process whereby particles of liquids, gases, or solids intermingle as the result of their spontaneous movement caused by thermal (see thermal entry 1 sense 1b) agitation and in dissolved substances move from a region of higher to one of lower concentration

b physics

(1): reflection of light by a rough reflecting surface

(2): transmission of light through a translucent material: scattering

4: the spread of cultural elements from one area or group of people to others by contact

5: photography: the softening of sharp outlines in an image

Imperialism, state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas. Because it always involves the use of power, whether military or economic or some subtler form, imperialism has often been considered morally reprehensible, and the term is frequently employed in international propaganda to denounce and discredit an opponent's foreign policy.

(Source: Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica)

Assimilation

Written By: Elizabeth Prine Pauls

Assimilation, in anthropology and sociology, the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society. The process of assimilating involves taking on the traits of the dominant culture to such a degree that the assimilating group becomes socially indistinguishable from other members of the society. As such, assimilation is the most extreme form of acculturation. Although assimilation may be compelled through force or undertaken voluntarily, it is rare for a minority group to replace its previous cultural practices completely; religion, food preferences, proxemics (e.g., the physical distance between people in a given social situation), and aesthetics are among the characteristics that tend to be most resistant to change. Assimilation does not denote "racial" or biological fusion, though such fusion may occur.

Attempts to compel minority groups to assimilate have occurred frequently in world history. The forced assimilation of indigenous peoples was particularly common in the European colonial empires of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. In North and South America, Australia, Africa, and Asia, colonial policies toward indigenous peoples frequently compelled their religious conversion, the removal of children from their families, the division of community property into salable, individually owned parcels of land, the undermining of local economies and gender roles by shifting responsibility for farming or other forms of production from women to men, and the

elimination of access to indigenous foodstuffs. Forced assimilation is rarely successful, and it generally has enduring negative consequences for the recipient culture.

Voluntary assimilation, although usually effected under pressure from the dominant culture, has also been prevalent in the historical record. One such case dates to the Spanish Inquisition of the late 14th and 15th centuries, when many Muslims and Jews responded to religious persecution by voluntarily converting to Roman Catholicism. Known as Moriscos and Marranos, respectively, they secretly continued to practice their original religions.

Another example of voluntary assimilation occurred during the 18th and 19th centuries, when millions of Europeans moved to the United States. In this case, being able to “pass” as a member of the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture was an important hedge against violent nativist groups such as the Know-Nothing Party (*see* United States: The people). Although popular notions generally presume that complete assimilation occurred among immigrants of European descent, research in the late 20th and early 21st centuries advocated a more nuanced and pluralistic view of historical culture change among American ethnic groups.

Online Merriam-Webster

Definition of *acculturation*

1 : cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture the acculturation of immigrants to American life also : a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact

2: the process by which a human being acquires the culture of a particular society from infancy

What is the difference between acculturation, assimilation, and amalgamation?

Acculturation is one of several forms of culture contact, and has a couple of closely related terms, including *assimilation* and *amalgamation*. Although all three of these words refer to changes due to contact between different cultures, there are notable differences between them. *Acculturation* is often tied to political conquest or expansion, and is applied to the process of change in beliefs or traditional practices that occurs when the cultural system of one group displaces that of another. *Assimilation* refers to the process through which individuals and groups of differing heritages acquire the basic habits, attitudes, and mode of life of an embracing culture. *Amalgamation* refers to a blending of cultures, rather than one group eliminating another (*acculturation*) or one group mixing itself into another (*assimilation*).

Hidden Aspects of Communication

Communication is far more than speech and writing. Most of us are unaware that we are communicating in many different ways even when we are not speaking. The same goes for other social animal species. We are rarely taught about this mostly non-verbal form of human communication in school even though it is very important for effective interaction with others. Growing up in a society, we informally learn how to use gestures, glances, slight changes in tone of voice, and other auxiliary communication devices to alter or emphasize what we say and do. We learn these highly culture bound techniques over years largely by observing others and imitating them.

Linguists refer to all of these auxiliary communication methods as **paralanguage**. It is part of the redundancy in communication that helps prevent ineffective communication. It can prevent the wrong message from inadvertently being passed on, as often is the case in a telephone call and even more so in a letter. The paralanguage messages that can be observed through face to face contact also makes it more difficult to lie or to hide emotions. Paralanguage is often more important in communication than what is actually being said orally. It has been suggested that as much as 70% of what we communicate when talking directly with others is through paralanguage.

Kinesics

The most obvious form of paralanguage is **body language** or **kinesics**. This is the language of gestures, expressions, and postures. In North America, for instance, we commonly use our arms and hands to say good-bye, point, count, express excitement, beckon, warn away, threaten, insult etc. In fact, we learn many subtle variations of each of these gestures and use them situationally. We use our head to say yes or no, to smile, frown, and wink acknowledgement or flirtation. Our head and shoulder in combination may shrug to indicate that we do not know something.

While the meaning of some gestures, such as a smile, may be the same throughout the world, the meaning of others may be completely different. For example, spitting on another person is a sign of utmost contempt in Europe and North America but can be an affectionate blessing if done in a certain way among the Masai of Kenya.



Tone and Character of Voice

The meaning of speech can also be altered significantly by **tone and character of voice**. In English, the simple sentence "I'm here." can have very different connotations depending on whether it is spoken with a voice that is high, low, quick, slow, rising, falling, whispering, whining, yelling, or sighing. Similarly, the sentence "Are you here?" has a different meaning if it spoken in a rising tone in contrast to a descending one.

Language and Thought Processes

Language is more than just a means of communication. It influences our culture and even our thought processes. During the first four decades of the 20th century, language was viewed by American linguists and anthropologists as being more important than it actually is in shaping our perception of reality. This was mostly due to Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf who said that language predetermines what we see in the world around us. In other words, language acts like a polarizing lens on a camera in filtering reality--we see the real world only in the categories of our language.

you → your language → "reality"

Cross cultural comparisons of such things as color terms were used by Sapir and Whorf as evidence of this hypothesis. When we perceive color with our eyes, we are sensing that portion of electromagnetic radiation that is visible light. In fact, the spectrum of visible light is a continuum of light waves with frequencies that increase at a continuous rate from one end to the other. In other words, there are no distinct colors like red and green in nature. Our culture, through language, guides us in seeing the spectrum in terms of the arbitrarily established categories that we call colors. Different cultures may divide up the spectrum in different ways. This can be seen in Tamazight and especially in Tashlhit. The adjective 'azgzaw' refers to both blue and green, the verb is 'izgzaw'. So, we say 'ignna izgzaw' = the sky is blue and 'rbi3 izgzaw' = the grass is green.



Sapir and Whorf interpreted these data as indicating that colors are not objective, naturally determined segments of reality. In other words, the colors we see are predetermined by what our culture prepares us to see. This example used to support the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** was objectively tested in the 1960's. That research indicated that they went too far. All normal humans share similar sense perceptions of color despite differences in color terminology from one language to another. The physiology of our eyes is essentially the same. People all over the world can see subtle gradations of color and can comprehend other ways of dividing up the spectrum of visible light. However, as a society's economy and technology increase in complexity, the number of color terms usually also increases. That is to say, the spectrum of visible light gets subdivided into more categories. As the environment changes, culture and language typically respond by creating new terminology to describe it.

***NOTE:** In 1976 Paul Kay, a University of California, Berkeley linguistics professor, led a team of researchers in collecting color terms used by 110 different languages around the world. Reexamining these data in 2006, Delwin Lindsey and Angela Brown of Ohio State University, Columbus discovered that most languages in this study do not make a distinction between green and blue. Further, the closer the homeland of a language group is to the equator the less likely they are to distinguish between green and blue. Lindsey suggests as a possible explanation that people in intensely sunny environments, such as open country near the equator, have had their ability to see color altered due to the yellowing of the eye lens caused by excessive ultraviolet radiation.*



It is now clear that the terminology used by a culture primarily reflects that culture's interests and concerns. For instance, Indians in Canada's Northwest Territories typically have at least 13 terms for different types and conditions of snow, while most non-skiing native Southern Californians use only 2 terms--ice and snow. That does not mean that the English language only has 2 terms. Quite the contrary, there are many more English words that refer to different states of frozen water, such as blizzard, dusting, flurry, frost, hail, hardpack, powder, sleet, slush, and snowflake. The point is that these terms are rarely if ever used by people living in tropical or subtropical regions because they rarely encounter frozen water in any form other than ice cubes. The distinctions between different snow conditions are not relevant to everyday life and children may not even have the words explained to them. However, people in these warmer regions make fine distinctions about other phenomena that are important to them. For instance, coastal Southern Californians often have dozens of surfing related words that would likely be unknown to most Indians in the Northwest Territories or to people living in Britain for that matter.

People in Rachidia and all the region have different names for different types of dates.

The number of terms related to a particular topic also may be greater or smaller depending on such social factors as gender. For example, North American women generally make far more color distinctions than do men. This may be largely due to the fact that subtle color differences are important factors in women's clothing and makeup. Parents and peers usually encourage and train girls early to be knowledgeable about these distinctions.



The cultural environment that people grow up in can have surprising effects on how they interpret the world around them. This became apparent during a Washington D.C. murder trial in 2002. A deaf man was convicted of stabbing to death two of his classmates at Gallaudet University. At his trial, the defendant said that he was told to do it by mysterious black-gloved hands. His delusions did not come in the form of spoken language. He was told to commit these brutal murders through sign language--his mode of communication. Another example is provided by Guugu Timithirr language speakers of the Cape York Peninsula in northeastern Australia. This group of Aborigines do not have words for left, right, front, or back. They use absolute rather than relative directions. When they refer to people or objects in their environment, they use compass directions. They would say "I am standing southwest of my sister" rather than "I am standing to the left of my sister." Critics of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would point out that the Aborigines who speak this language also usually learn English and can use left, right, front, and back just as we do. However, if they do not learn English during early childhood, they have difficulty in orienting themselves relatively and absolute orientation makes much more sense to them.

front, or back. They use absolute rather than relative directions. When they refer to people or objects in their environment, they use compass directions. They would say "I am standing southwest of my sister" rather than "I am standing to the left of my sister." Critics of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would point out that the Aborigines who speak this language also usually learn English and can use left, right, front, and back just as we do. However, if they do not learn English during early childhood, they have difficulty in orienting themselves relatively and absolute orientation makes much more sense to them.

Ethnoscience

Anthropologists have found that learning about how people categorize things in their environment provides important insights into the interests, concerns, and values of their culture. Field workers involved in this type of research refer to it as ethnoscience. These ethnoscienceists have made a useful distinction in regards to ways of describing categories of reality. Visitors to another society can bring their own culture's categories and interpret everything in those terms. However, there will be little understanding of the minds of the people in the society being visited. In contrast, the visitors can suspend their own culture's perspective and learn the categories of reality in the new society. By doing this, they gain a much more profound understanding of the other culture. Ethnoscienceists define these two different approaches as being *etic* and *emic*. **Etic categories** involve a classification according to some external system of analysis brought in by the visitor. This is the approach of biology in using the Linnaean classification system to define new species. It assumes that ultimately, there is an objective reality and that is more important than cultural perceptions of it. In contrast, **emic categories** involve a classification according to the way in which

members of a society classify their own world. It may tell us little about the objective reality but it is very insightful in understanding how other people perceive that reality through the filter of their language and culture.

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Retrieved and adapted: <http://anthro-palomar-edu/language/glossary-http>

Glossary: Merriam Webster

Anthropology

1 : the science of human beings especially : the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture

2 : theology dealing with the origin, nature, and destiny of human beings

The person who teaches anthropology is called anthropologist.

Electromagnetic radiation

: energy in the form of electromagnetic waves also : a series of electromagnetic waves

Aborigine

1: a member of the original people to inhabit an area especially as contrasted with an invading or colonizing people

2: often capitalized: a member of any of the indigenous peoples of Australia

Ethnoscience

: the study of a culture's system of classifying knowledge (such as its taxonomy of plants and animals) also : such a system in a particular culture.

Etic

(Entry 1 of 2)

: of, relating to, or involving analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who does not participate in the culture being studied.

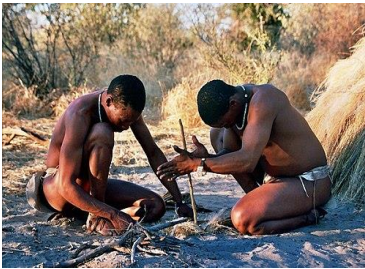
Emic

: of, relating to, or involving analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who participates in the culture being studied.

Enculturation

Growing up in any culture, all humans go through the process of **enculturation**. This process is the way in which we obtain and transmit culture. It describes how each individual comes to terms with the already set ideals that their culture has established, and how each person adapts to prohibited behaviors and beliefs, which are ‘proscribed’, versus encouraged behaviors and beliefs, which are ‘prescribed’.

Parents and other authority figures in young children’s lives are usually the initiators of this process, steering the children toward activities and beliefs that will be socially accepted in their culture. Through this process these authority figures definitely shape the child’s view on life. Enculturation results in the interpretation of these ideals established by our culture and the establishment of our own individual behaviors and beliefs.



The !Kung People diligently work on making a fire

For example the !Kung Bushman who live in the Kalahari were raised quite differently than someone who grew up in Washington State or the States in general. In the United States, we tend to tolerate arrogance more so than the !Kung people. For example, when we give people gifts and they thank us graciously for it, we acknowledge their acceptance by saying “It was no big deal”, which by accepting their gratitude makes us in a way arrogant because we accept the fact the receiver appreciates the gift. Growing up in another culture, there are different guidelines that people have to follow in order to be socially accepted. In the !Kung Bushman tribe they look down upon people who think highly of themselves and who are arrogant. To avoid these characteristics, each child was raised to put down and mock others when they do things such as hunting and other activities. Their view is that by telling someone who had just hunted a huge ox, that the ox is a “bag of bones” or “thin, sick, and dead,” then they are preventing this person from being arrogant and full of them self.

In contrast, enculturation in the United States teaches people to see this behavior as mean and wrong. Often in the United States culture arrogance is also viewed as a negative quality, but it is not discouraged in the same way. A common way members of the United States culture discourage displays of arrogance is simply by telling the younger generation that it is a bad quality. The !Kung people use enculturation strongly to impress their cultural value of humility; in United States culture, it is emphasized less and it shows in the much wider acceptance of arrogance. In the US, a hunter might have been praised for doing good things such as hunting large game and providing food for everyone else. All of the members of these two cultures went through the process of enculturation but just into different cultures with different established ideals.

Cultural Transmission



Barack Obama shows multi-cultural respect by hosting a Sedar dinner. Sedar is a Jewish tradition passed down through families for generations.

Cultural Transmission is the passing of new knowledge and traditions of culture from one generation to the next, as well as cross-culturally. Cultural Transmission happens everyday, all the time, without any concept of when or where. Everything people do and say provides cultural transmission in all aspects of life. In everyday life, the most common way cultural norms are transmitted is within each individuals' home life. Each family has its own, distinct culture under the big picture of each given society and/or nation. With every family, there are traditions that are kept alive. The way each family acts, communicates with others and an overall view of life are passed down. Parents teach their kids everyday how to behave and act by their actions alone.

Another big influence on **cultural transmission** is the media. The distinct way the media portrays America to other countries and themselves. One example is the way that hip-hop has formed all over the world, each with its own distinct way of interpretation formed by any such culture. Each, separate translation of the meaning of hip-hop is an example of cultural transmission, passed from one culture to the next. In Japanese culture, hip-hop for instance, has become quite a popular aspect as more of an underground scene and has made its own concepts of what hip-hop is, but still has similar characteristics of original hip-hop. Cultural transmission cross culturally happens very easily now with Globalization. For example, hip-hop is not just music; it's a lifestyle, an image, and a culture of its own. Cultural transmission is what keeps cultures alive and thriving.

Dakar, the capitol of Senegal located in Western Africa, has also seen its media become influenced through cultural transmission and Hip-Hop. As shown in the film "Democracy in Dakar," Dakar's 2007 elections were heavily influenced by underground Hip-Hop. The documentary shows how the youth of Dakar have used their musical talents to encourage everyone to vote, in an attempt to void the corruption present within the government.

Cultural Universals



Cinco de Mayo dancers greeted by former Pres. George W. Bush. "The holiday, which has been celebrated in California continuously since 1863, is virtually ignored in Mexico."

Cultural universals (which has been mentioned by anthropologists like George Murdock, Claude Levi-Strauss, Donald Brown and others) can be defined as being anything common that exists in every human culture on the planet yet varies from different culture to culture, such as values and modes of behavior. Examples of elements that may be considered cultural universals are gender roles, the incest taboo, religious and healing ritual, mythology, marriage, language, art, dance, music, cooking, games, jokes, sports, birth and death because they involve some sort of ritual ceremonies accompanying them, etc. Many anthropologist and socialists with an extreme perspective of cultural relativism deny the existence or reduce the importance of cultural universals believing that these traits were only inherited biologically through the known controversy of “nurture vs. nature”. They are mainly known as “empty universals” since just mentioning their existence in a culture doesn’t make them any more special or unique. The existence of these universals has been said to date to the Upper Paleolithic with the first evidence of behavioral modernity.



A woman dancing folklorico in the traditional dress of Jalisco

Among the cultural universals listed by Brown are:

- Language and cognition – All cultures employ some type of communication, symbolism is also a universal idea in language.
- Society – Being in a family, having peers, or being a member of any organized group or community is what makes society.
- Myth, Ritual, and aesthetics – Different cultures all have a number of things in common, for example: a belief system, celebration of life and death, and other ceremonial events.
- Technology – There are worldwide variations in clothing, housing, tools and techniques for getting food through different types of technology.



Residents of Vanuatu making fire. The use of fire for cooking is a human cultural universal

Dance is a great example of a cultural universal because it exists in every culture as form of expression, social interaction, or presented in a spiritual or performance setting. Traditional dances found in Mexico are quite different from those found in the United States. American style dancing includes Flat Foot Dancing, Hoofing, Buck Dancing, Soft Shoe, Clogging, Irish Sean-Nós Dance, and Irish Jig. Because these forms of dance are not commonly found on stage, in the media, or taught in the dance schools, it has received minimal attention and its practice has significantly decreasing compared to its past popularity. Mexico on the other hand had a traditional style of dance called Ballet Folklórico which reflects different regions and folk music genres. These dances are widely known and are constantly being taught in schools and performed during festivities such as Cinco de Mayo.

Culture Change



Elwood Hayes in his first automobile.

Cultures change in a number of ways. The only way new cultural traits emerge is through the process of **discovery** and **invention**. Someone perceives a need and invents something to meet that need. Seems a simple enough concept; however, it often takes a long time for a new invention to be fully integrated into a culture. Why? Because often other elements of the culture have to change to meet or maintain the needs of the new invention. This is referred to as **culture lag**. The automobile is a good example of discovery and invention and culture lag. The auto was invented as a mode of more efficient transportation. Many things had to change in order for the automobile to become a fixture in a culture. People had to be persuaded that the automobile was a better form of transportation. Roads had to be constructed; a way to procure fuel needed to be developed; mechanics were needed to fix cars; efficient production of cars had to be developed to meet supply demands; safety concerns, rules of the road, insurance, and numerous other elements of culture had to catch up with the invention of the automobile.

Another way cultures change is through **diffusion**. Diffusion is simply the borrowing of traits. There is a long laundry list of things in US culture that were borrowed from other cultures. Pajamas made their way to the US from India. Spaghetti was borrowed from China by way of Italy, and corn came from Mesoamerica. Ralph Linton, a noted anthropologist, wrote a short article entitled “One Hundred Percent American” in which he outlines numerous things that U.S. culture borrowed from other cultures. You can read Linton’s article here: http://staffwww.fullcoll.edu/jmcdermott/Cultural%20Anthropology_files/One%20Hundred%20Percent%20American.pdf.

Yet another way cultures change is through the process of **acculturation**. Acculturation is also the borrowing of traits; however, there is a **superordinate**, or dominant, and **subordinate**, or minority, relationship between cultures. The dominant culture picks and chooses those traits from the subordinate culture that it deems useful, i.e., diffusion. The subordinate culture is pressured to adopt the traits of the dominant culture. It is the element of pressure that differentiates acculturation from diffusion.

Acculturation manifests itself in multiple ways. One way is called the **Melting Pot**. The melting pot refers to a blending of cultures. This primarily occurs through intermarriage of people from the two cultures. What frequently happens is that one of the two cultures is dominant and the other subordinate within the relationship so that only some of its traits are practiced.

Another form of acculturation is called the Salad Bowl, or **cultural pluralism**. This occurs when people immigrate and keep as many original cultural traits as possible. Chinatown in San Francisco is a good example of the salad bowl. The different types of acculturation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Even in the case of cultural pluralism people must adopt certain traits of the host country; i.e., the laws, in order to thrive, but they do keep as many traditions as possible.

Host conformity occurs when an individual has fully assimilated into the host culture.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is an experience a person may have when one moves to a cultural environment which is different from one's own; it is also the personal disorientation a person may feel when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life due to immigration or a visit to a new country, a move between social environments, or simply transition to another type of life. One of the most common causes of culture shock involves individuals in a foreign environment. Culture shock can be described as consisting of at least one of four distinct phases: honeymoon, frustration, adjustment, and mastery.

Common problems include: information overload, language barrier, generation gap, technology gap, skill interdependence, formulation dependency, homesickness (cultural), infinite regress (homesickness), boredom (job dependency), response ability (cultural skill set). There is no true way to entirely prevent culture shock, as individuals in any society are personally affected by cultural contrasts differently.

Four phases

Honeymoon

During this period, the differences between the old and new culture are seen in a romantic light. For example, in moving to a new country, an individual might love the new food, the pace of life, and the locals' habits. During the first few weeks, most people are fascinated by the new culture. They associate with nationals who speak their language, and who are polite to the foreigners. Like most honeymoon periods, this stage eventually ends.

Negotiation

After some time (usually around three months, depending on the individual), differences between the old and new culture become apparent and may create anxiety. Excitement may eventually give way to unpleasant feelings of frustration and anger as one continues to experience unfavorable events that may be perceived as strange and offensive to one's cultural attitude. Language barriers, stark differences in public hygiene, traffic safety, food accessibility and quality may heighten the sense of disconnection from the surroundings.

While being transferred into a different environment puts special pressure on communication skills, there are practical difficulties to overcome, such as circadian rhythm disruption that often leads to insomnia and daylight drowsiness; adaptation of gut flora to different bacteria levels and concentrations in food and water; difficulty in seeking treatment for illness, as medicines may have different names from the native country's and the same active ingredients might be hard to recognize.

Still, the most important change in the period is communication: People adjusting to a new culture often feel lonely and homesick because they are not yet used to the new environment and meet people with whom they are not familiar every day. The language barrier may become a major obstacle in creating new relationships: special attention must be paid to one's and others' culture-specific body language signs, linguistic faux pas, conversation tone, linguistic nuances and customs, and false friends.

In the case of students studying abroad, some develop additional symptoms of loneliness that ultimately affect their lifestyles as a whole. Due to the strain of living in a different country without parental support, international students often feel anxious and feel more pressure while adjusting to new cultures—even more so when the cultural distances are wide, as patterns of logic and speech are different and a special emphasis is put on rhetoric.

Adjustment

Again, after some time (usually 6 to 12 months), one grows accustomed to the new culture and develops routines. One knows what to expect in most situations and the host country no longer feels all that new. One becomes concerned with basic living again, and things become more “normal”. One starts to develop problem-solving skills for dealing with the culture and begins to accept the culture's ways with a positive attitude. The culture begins to make sense, and negative reactions and responses to the culture are reduced.

Adaption

In the mastery stage individuals are able to participate fully and comfortably in the host culture. Mastery does not mean total conversion; people often keep many traits from their earlier culture, such as accents and languages. It is often referred to as the bicultural stage.

Reverse culture shock

Reverse culture shock (“re-entry shock” or “own culture shock”) may take place — returning to one's home culture after growing accustomed to a new one can produce the same effects as described above. These are results from the psychosomatic and psychological consequences of the readjustment process to the primary culture. The affected person often finds this more surprising and difficult to deal with than the original culture shock. This phenomenon, the reactions that members of the re-entered culture exhibit toward the re-entrant, and the inevitability of the two are encapsulated in the following saying, which is also the title of a book by Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*.

Reverse culture shock is generally made up of two parts: idealization and expectations. When an extended period of time is spent abroad we focus on the good from our past, cut out the bad, and create an idealized version of the past. Secondly, once removed from our familiar setting and placed in a foreign one we incorrectly assume that our previous world has not changed. We expect things to remain exactly the same as when we left them. The realization that life back home is now different, that the world has continued without us, and the process of readjusting to these new conditions as well as actualizing our new perceptions about the world with our old way of living causes discomfort and psychological anguish.

Outcomes

There are three basic outcomes of the Adjustment Phase:

- Some people find it impossible to accept the foreign culture and to integrate. They isolate themselves from the host country's environment, which they come to perceive as hostile, withdraw into a “ghetto”

and see return to their own culture as the only way out. These “Rejecters” also have the greatest problems re-integrating back home after return.

- Some people integrate fully and take on all parts of the host culture while losing their original identity. This is called cultural assimilation. They normally remain in the host country forever. This group is sometimes known as “Adopters” and describes approximately 10% of expatriates.
- Some people manage to adapt to the aspects of the host culture they see as positive, while keeping some of their own and creating their unique blend. They have no major problems returning home or relocating elsewhere. This group can be thought to be somewhat cosmopolitan. Approximately 30% of expats belong to this group.^[citation needed]

Culture shock has many different effects, time spans, and degrees of severity. Many people are handicapped by its presence and do not recognize what is bothering them.

Transition shock

Culture shock is a subcategory of a more universal construct called transition shock. Transition shock is a state of loss and disorientation predicated by a change in one’s familiar environment that requires adjustment. There are many symptoms of transition shock, including:

- Excessive concern over cleanliness
- Feelings of helplessness and withdrawal
- Irritability
- Anger
- Mood swings
- Glazed stare
- Desire for home and old friends
- Physiological stress reactions
- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal
- Getting “stuck” on one thing
- Suicidal or fatalistic thoughts
- Excessive sleep
- Compulsive eating/drinking/weight gain
- Stereotyping host nationals
- Hostility towards host nationals

Food habits

In most of the world, food distribution patterns depend on such factors as local growing conditions, distance between farm and market, speed of transportation, perishability of produce and availability of refrigeration. In fact, The term *eating habits* (or *food habits*) refers to why and how people eat, which foods they eat, and with whom they eat, as well as the ways people obtain, store, use, and discard food. Individual, social, cultural, religious, economic, environmental, and political factors all influence people's eating habits.

Why and how people eat

All individuals must eat to survive –but what people eat, when they eat and the manner in which they eat are all patterned by culture. They also eat to express appreciation, for a sense of belonging, as part of family customs, and for self-realization. For example, someone who is not hungry may eat a piece of cake that has been baked in his or her honor.

People eat according to learned behaviors regarding etiquette, meal and snack patterns, acceptable foods, food combinations, and portion sizes. *Etiquette* refers to acceptable behaviors. For example, for some groups it is acceptable to lick one's fingers while eating, while for other groups this is rude behavior. Etiquette and eating rituals also vary depending on whether the meal is formal, informal, or special.

A meal is usually defined as the consumption of two or more foods in a structured setting at a set time. Snacks consist of a small amount of food or beverage eaten between meals. A common eating pattern is three meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) per day, with snacks between meals. The components of a meal vary across cultures, but generally include grains, such as rice or noodles; meat or a meat substitute, such as fish, beans, ect.; and accompaniments, such as vegetables. Various food guides provide suggestions on foods to eat, portion sizes, and daily intake. However, personal preferences, habits, family customs, and social setting largely determine what a person consumes. In other words, no society views everything in its environment as edible and might provide nourishment as food: certain edibles are ignored, others are tabooed.

Three main ancient pattern of getting food are: hunting/gathering, pastoralism and agriculture

The ways in which human beings obtain their food is one of culture's most fascinating stories. Food getting has gone through several stages of development in the hundreds of thousand years of humanity's existence on earth. For most of this time on earth, people have supported themselves with the pattern called hunting and gathering. It includes the hunting of large and small animals, fishing and the collecting of various plant foods. Today, only about 30,000 of the world's people live solely by hunting and gathering.

Another ancient pattern of obtaining food is pastoralism, which is the raising of domesticated herd animals such as goats, sheep, camels, or cattle, all of which produce both milk and meat. Pastoralism is a specialized adaptation to a harsh or mountainous environment that is not productive enough to support a large human population through agriculture. Pastoralism alone cannot support a human population, so additional food grain must either be produced or purchased by trade with other groups.

The third major type of acquiring food is through agriculture, or the planting, raising and harvesting of crops from the land. Agriculture, which is only about 10,000 years old, may range from simple, non-mechanized horticulture to farming with the help of animal-drawn plows, to the extensively mechanized agriculture of industrialized nations. Anthropologists generally agree that it was the gradual transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture that opened up new possibilities for cultural development.

Cultural pattern of getting food are generated primarily by the natural, or physical environment of the group. All human groups, like other animal species, have developed special ways of making their environment nurture and support them. Where several groups share the same environment, they use it in different ways, so they can live in harmony. In a study of northern Pakistan, for example, Kohistanis, Pathans and Gujars inhabit the same mountainous area. These three groups are able to coexist peacefully because each utilizes a different aspect of the land. The Pathans are farmers, sing the valley regions for

raising wheat, corn, and rice. The kohistanis live in the colder mountainous regions, herding sheep, goats, cattle, and water buffalo and raising millet and corn. The Gujars provide milk and meat products to the Pathan farmers and also work as agricultural laborers during the busy season. These patterns of specialized and harmonious relationships among different cultures in a local environment are typical of pastoral, or herding people.

As a conclusion, people acquire, store, and discard food using a variety of methods. People may grow, fish, or hunt some of their food, or they may purchase most of it from supermarkets or specialty stores. If there is limited access to energy sources, people may store small amounts of foods and get most of what they eat on a day-to-day basis. In homes with abundant space and energy, however, people purchase food in bulk and store it in freezers, refrigerators, and pantries. In either case there must also be proper disposal facilities to avoid environmental and health problems.

Exposure to Foods

There are innumerable flavors and food combinations. A liking for some flavors or food combinations is easily acceptable, but others must develop or be learned. Sweetness is a universally acceptable flavor, but a taste for salty, savory, spicy, tart, bitter, and hot flavors must be learned. The more a person is exposed to a food—and encouraged to eat it—the greater the chances that the food will be accepted. As the exposure to a food increases, the person becomes more familiar and less fearful of the food, and acceptance may develop. Some persons only eat specific foods and flavor combinations, while others like trying different foods and flavors.

Influences on Food Choices

There are many factors that determine what foods a person eats. In addition to personal preferences, there are cultural, social, religious, economic, environmental, and even political factors.

Individual preferences

Every individual has unique likes and dislikes concerning foods. These preferences develop over time, and are influenced by personal experiences such as encouragement to eat, exposure to a food, family customs and rituals, advertising, and personal values. For example, one person may not like couscous, despite the fact that couscous is a cultural icon in Morocco like spaghetti in Italy.

Cultural influences

A cultural group provides guidelines regarding acceptable foods, food combinations, eating patterns, and eating behaviors. Compliance with these guidelines creates a sense of identity and belonging for the individual. Within large cultural groups, subgroups exist that may practice variations of the group's eating behaviors, though they are still considered part of the larger group. For example, a hamburger, French fries, and a soda are considered a typical American meal. Vegetarians in the United States, however, eat "veggie-burgers" made from mashed beans, pureed vegetables, or soy, and people on diets may eat a burger made from lean turkey. In the United States these are appropriate cultural substitutions, but a burger made from horsemeat would be unacceptable.

Social influences

Members of a social group depend on each other, share a common culture, and influence each other's behaviors and values. A person's membership in particular peer, work, or community groups impacts food behaviors. For example, a young person at a basketball game may eat certain foods when accompanied by friends and other foods when accompanied by his or her teacher.

Religious influences

Religious proscriptions range from a few to many, from relaxed to highly restrictive. This will affect a follower's food choices and behaviors. For example, in some religions specific foods are prohibited, such as pork among Jewish and Muslim adherents.

Economic influences

Money, values, and consumer skills all affect what a person purchases. The price of a food, however, is not an indicator of its nutritional value. Cost is a complex combination of a food's availability, status, and demand.

Environmental influences

The influence of the environment on food habits derives from a composite of ecological and social factors. Foods that are commonly and easily grown within a specific region frequently become a part of the local cuisine. However, modern technology, agricultural practices, and transportation methods have increased the year-round availability of many foods, and many foods that were previously available only at certain seasons or in specific areas are now available almost anywhere, at any time.

Political Influences

Political factors also influence food availability and trends. Food laws and trade agreements affect what is available within and across countries, and also affect food prices. Food labeling laws determine what consumers know about the food they purchase.

Eating habits are thus the result of both external factors, such as politics, and internal factors, such as values. These habits are formed, and may change, over a person's lifetime.

Marriage as a cultural icon

Marriage, socially recognized and approved union between individuals, who commit to one another with the expectation of a stable and lasting intimate relationship. It begins with a ceremony known as a wedding, which formally unites the marriage partners. A marital relationship usually involves some kind of contract, either written or specified by tradition, which defines the partners' rights and obligations to each other, to any children they may have, and to their relatives. In most contemporary industrialized societies, marriage is certified by the government.

In addition to being a personal relationship between two people, marriage is one of society's most important and basic institutions. Marriage and family serve as tools for ensuring social reproduction. Social reproduction includes providing food, clothing, and shelter for family members; raising and socializing children; and caring for the sick and elderly. In families and societies in which wealth, property, or a hereditary title is to be passed on from one generation to the next, inheritance and the production of legitimate heirs are a prime concern in marriage. However, in contemporary industrialized societies, marriage functions less as a social institution and more as a source of intimacy for the individuals involved.

Marriage is commonly defined as a partnership between two members of opposite sex known as husband and wife. However, scholars who study human culture and society disagree on whether marriage can be universally defined. The usual roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife include living together, having sexual relations only with one another, sharing economic resources, and being recognized as the parents of their children. However, unconventional forms of marriage that do not include these elements do exist. For example, scholars have studied several cultural groups in Africa and India in which husbands and wives do not live together. Instead, each spouse remains in his or her original home, and the husband is a "visitor" with sexual rights. Committed relationships between homosexuals (individuals with a sexual orientation toward people of the same sex) also challenge conventional definitions of marriage.

Debates over the definition of marriage illustrate its dual nature as both a public institution and a private, personal relationship. On the one hand, marriage involves an emotional and sexual relationship between particular human beings. At the same time, marriage is an institution that transcends the particular individuals involved in it and unites two families. In some cultures, marriage connects two families in a complicated set of property exchanges involving land, labor, and other resources. The extended family and society also share an interest in any children the couple may have. Furthermore, the legal and religious definitions of marriage and the laws that surround it usually represent the symbolic expression of core cultural norms (informal behavioral guidelines) and values.

Selecting a partner

Although practices vary from one culture to another, all societies have rules about who is eligible to marry whom, which individuals are forbidden to marry one another, and the process of selecting a mate. In most societies, the mate-selection process involves what social scientists call a marriage market. The husband and wife come together out of a wide range of possible partners. In many non-Western societies the parents, not the prospective marriage partners, do the "shopping." In Western societies social rules have gradually changed to permit more freedom of choice for the couple and a greater emphasis on love as the basis for marriage.

Dating, Courtship, and Engagement

In societies in which individuals choose their own partners, young people typically date prior to marriage. Dating is the process of spending time with prospective partners to become acquainted. Dates may take place in groups or between just two individuals. When dating becomes more serious it may be referred to as courtship. Courtship implies a deeper level of commitment than dating does. During courtship the

individuals specifically contemplate marriage, rather than merely enjoy one another's company for the time being.

Courtship may lead to engagement, also known as betrothal—the formal agreement to marry. Couples usually spend some period of time engaged before they actually marry. A woman who is engaged is known as the man's fiancée, and the man is known as the woman's fiancé. Men typically give an engagement ring to their fiancée as a symbol of the agreement to marry.

In the past, dating, courtship, and engagement were distinct stages in the selection of a marital partner. Each stage represented an increasing level of commitment and intimacy. Although this remains true to some degree, since the 1960s these stages have tended to blend into one another. For example, modern dating and courtship often involve sexual relations. Studies indicate that more than three-quarters of young people in the United States have had sexual intercourse by the age of 19. Furthermore, the contemporary mate-selection process frequently includes the practice of cohabitation—living together in an unmarried sexual relationship. Cohabitation has a long history among poor people, but has become popular among young, middle-class adults only since the 1960s. Cohabitation often precedes marriage, but in some cases, people continue to cohabit without marrying.

In general, people tend to date and marry people with whom they have characteristics in common. Thus, mate selection typically results in homogamous marriage, in which the partners are similar in a variety of ways. Characteristics that couples tend to share include race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, age, and the level of prestige of their parents.

In the United States, marital similarity has increased for some traits and decreased for others in recent years. People seek partners who are similar in attributes that result from individual achievement. For example, an individual is more likely to marry someone who has a similar amount of education. At the same time, Americans are less likely to require similarity of factors present at a person's birth, such as religion and social class. However, the tendency to marry someone of the same race persists. For instance, marriages between African Americans and whites make up less than 1 percent of all marriages in the United States. Until the Supreme Court of the United States ruled the practice unconstitutional in the late 1960s, laws in some states prohibited certain types of interracial marriage, also known as miscegenation.

Arranged Marriage

Historically parents have played a major role in choosing marriage partners for their children, and the custom continues in the world's developing countries today. Parental influence is greatest when the parents have a large stake in whom their child marries. Traditionally, marriage has been regarded as an alliance between two families, rather than just between the two individuals. Aristocratic families could enhance their wealth or acquire royal titles through a child's marriage. Marriage was also used as a way of sealing peace between former enemies, whether they were kings or feuding villagers.

The most extreme form of parental influence is an arranged marriage in which the bride and groom have no say at all. For instance, in traditional Chinese practice, the bride and groom meet for the first time on their wedding day. In some upper-caste Hindu marriages, children are betrothed at a very young age and have no voice in the decision. In a less extreme form of arranged marriage, parents may do the matchmaking, but the young people can veto the choice. Some small cultures scattered around the world have what social scientists call preferential marriage. In this system, the bride or groom is supposed to marry a particular kind of person—for example, a cousin on the mother's or father's side of the family.

In many traditional societies, marriage typically involved transfers of property from the parents to their marrying children or from one set of parents to the other. These customs persist in some places today and are part of the tradition of arranged marriages. For example, in some cultures the bride's parents may give property (known as a dowry) to the new couple. The practice of giving dowries has been common in countries such as Greece, Egypt, India, and China from ancient times until the present. It was also typical

in European societies in the past. Although the giving of dowries has been part of the norms of marriage in these cultures, often only those people with property could afford to give a dowry to the young couple.

Families use dowries to attract a son-in-law with desirable qualities, such as a particularly bright man from a poor but respectable family or a man with higher status but with less money than the bride's family has. In societies in which the giving of dowries is customary, families with many daughters can become impoverished by the costs of marriage. For this reason, in Europe in earlier times some families sent "extra" daughters to convents. In India and China, where it is expected that every woman will marry, families have sometimes tried to limit the number of daughters born to them through *infanticide* (the killing of infants).

In some societies, the groom's family gives property (known as bridewealth or brideprice) not to the new couple but to the bride's relatives. Particularly in places where bridewealth payments are high, the practice tends to maintain the authority of fathers over sons. Because fathers control the resources of the family, sons must keep the favor of their fathers in order to secure the property necessary to obtain a bride. The custom of giving bridewealth occurs primarily in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Anthropologists characterize bridewealth as compensation to the bride's family for the transfer to the groom's family of the bride's reproductive capacities or her ability to work. They debate whether the practice should be seen as the actual sale of a daughter or whether it is a ritual—that is, a symbolic act—rather than an economic transaction.

Although arranged marriage persists in many cultures today, as modernization proceeds and many areas become part of the global economy, parental influences on marriage continue to decline. Young people who work for wages rather than on the family's land no longer depend as highly on their parents' resources. As Western popular culture—including motion pictures, television, music, and fashion—spreads around the world, many young people are drawn to Western notions of love, romance, and individual choice. In some places, such as Japan, people combine modern Western and older cultural practices. For instance, parents and computer matchmaking services help find prospective mates, and the individuals can accept or reject the proposed match.

Conventions and Taboos

Marriage is part of a society's kinship system, which defines the bonds and linkages between people. The kinship system also dictates who may or may not marry depending on those bonds. In some cultures people may only marry partners who are members of the same clan—that is, people who trace their ancestry back to a common ancestor. This practice of marrying within one's group is called endogamy. Exogamy, on the other hand, refers to the practice of marrying outside of one's group—for example, marrying outside one's clan or religion.

One rule shared by virtually all societies is the taboo (social prohibition) against incest—sexual relations between two closely related individuals. Definitions of which relationships are close enough to trigger this taboo vary a great deal, depending on the society. In most cases the prohibition applies to relationships within the biological nuclear family: mother and son, father and daughter, or brother and sister. In many cultures, the taboo applies to relationships created by divorce and remarriage (step relationships) as well as to those based on biology. The prohibitions on incest and the rules for marriage do not necessarily coincide. In Britain, for example, steprelatives are not allowed to marry one another, but sexual relations between them are not legally forbidden. A few societies constitute exceptions to the general rule against incest. In ancient Egypt brother-sister marriage and sexual intimacy was permitted in the royal family, probably to maintain the "purity" of the royal bloodlines.

As we said in the preceding course, marriage refers to the customs, rules, and obligations that establish a special relationship between an adult male and female who have a sexual union, between the adult couple and any children they produce, and between the kinship groups of the husband and wife. Both marriage and the family are cultural patterns.

Monogamy and Polygamy

In the United States and in other Western societies, both law and longstanding tradition dictate that marriages are monogamous—that is, an individual is married to only one other person. This form of marriage exists in all cultures and is the most common form, even in places where other arrangements are recognized. People in monogamous cultures may not have more than one marriage partner at a time. However, if a marriage ends due to the death of a partner or divorce (legal termination of marriage), remarriage is acceptable. Thus, people in monogamous cultures may have more than one spouse during their lifetimes.

Where polygamy exists, in almost all cases it means polygyny is practiced. The Old Testament of the Bible describes the practice of polygyny among the ancient Hebrews. The early Christians outlawed polygyny, which had existed among the pre-Christian tribes of Europe as well as among Hebrews. During the 19th century in the United States, members of the Mormon religion practiced polygyny. Although the church officially rejected the practice of polygyny in 1890, some Mormons still engage in plural relationships. Under Islamic law today, a man may legally have as many as four wives. Polygyny is also practiced in some African nations. Even where polygyny is an approved form of marriage, it is a relatively rare occurrence. In reality, most men cannot afford more than one wife. Anthropologists believe that polygyny reflects the male desire for prestige and paternity rather than the sex drive. It is generally practiced in societies in which wealth, status, and even immortality depend on having many children.

Polyandry is extremely rare. Where it does exist, it seems to be associated with groups who live in extremely impoverished environments. Polyandry is also associated with areas in which there is a shortage of women in comparison to men. In certain areas of Tibet, a woman may marry the eldest son of a family and take his brothers as husbands also. This practice reduces competition among heirs and ensures transmission of land with minimal fragmentation.

Wedding Ceremonies and customs

The ceremony that signifies the beginning of a marriage is known as a wedding. Weddings may be simple or elaborate, but they occur in virtually all societies.

Ritual Aspects

Anthropologists characterize wedding ceremonies as rituals of transition, or rites of passage. These rites occur when people cross boundaries of age or social status. Any social transition, such as the birth of a child or the death of a person, sets off changes in the lives of all those connected with the individual. Weddings and other rites of passage dramatize these changes for all involved and also allow for the expression of emotions brought on by the events. Weddings announce to the community the union of the individuals marrying and allow the community to express its approval of and support for that union.

Wedding rituals throughout the world share several common features. An essential element of nearly all wedding ceremonies is the symbolic expression of the union between the individuals marrying. This union may be signified by the exchange of rings, the tying of the bride and groom's garments together, or simply the joining of hands. Other rituals emphasize the function of the marriage as the foundation of the family. For instance, in Hindu wedding ceremonies the bride and groom circle a sacred fire to promote the fertility of the union. Feasting and dancing at weddings by family and friends signifies the community's blessing on the marriage.

In the United States and Canada

Until the middle of the 19th century, weddings in Western society were modest events that took place in homes. By 1900 formal weddings and their attendant rituals had become major events in middle-class

families. The white wedding—a formal affair with the bride dressed in white—is now the standard throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, and its practice has spread to Asia and Africa as well.

Many weddings involve a religious ceremony. These ceremonies vary depending on the religion of the bride and groom. Various religions or denominations have distinctive wedding customs. Roman Catholic ceremonies involve a nuptial mass, during which many scriptural texts concerning marriage are read. The presence of a priest and at least two witnesses is essential, as is the expression of consent by the bride and groom. In Orthodox Jewish celebrations, the bride and groom stand under a chuppah—a canopy that symbolizes the home the couple will establish. Following the ceremony the groom smashes a wineglass. Most scholars believe this act commemorates the destruction of the first Jewish temple (the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem) by the Babylonians in 586 BC. In ceremonies governed by the Greek Orthodox Church, the “best man” places crowns attached by ribbon on the heads of the bride and groom, signifying divine sanction of their marriage.

Some American and Canadian couples prefer a nonreligious, or civil, wedding ceremony. Such weddings typically occur in commercial wedding chapels or reception halls, courthouses or other governmental offices, or outdoors. These events tend to be smaller and less formal affairs than traditional religious ceremonies. A government-certified, secular official administers the ceremony in the presence of at least two witnesses. Other couples elope—that is, they have a private wedding ceremony that does not involve a gathering of family and friends.

Most couples exchange some sort of marriage vows (promises). Vows may be prescribed by the church or written by the couple. Traditional Protestant vows include the promise to love and to cherish, for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, until parted by death. The minister asks the bride and the groom if they each make this promise to the other and each responds “I do.”

Following the wedding ceremony, religious or civil, many couples hold a reception. At the reception friends and family gather to eat, drink, listen to music and dance, make toasts, and give gifts to the bride and groom. During the reception, the couple typically cut a special, large cake that is shared with all the guests. The bride and groom may also conduct a receiving line where they greet and thank each guest for attending their wedding.

Many newlyweds take a honeymoon trip after their wedding. During the honeymoon, the couple can spend time by themselves exploring their new status as husband and wife. Popular honeymoon destinations for U.S. and Canadian couples include Hawaii, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

Marriage patterns throughout the world vary according to custom, tradition, religion, and economic factors. The age at which people marry for the first time, the proportion of adults who marry at some point in their lives, and the likelihood that marriages will end in divorce differ among cultures.

In the United States and Canada: Marital status by age and sex

The dominant patterns of marriage in the United States and Canada are based on those of the countries in northwestern Europe that were the main sources of immigration until the beginning of the 20th century. Historically this European marriage pattern has included a relatively late age of marriage, a relatively large proportion of people remaining single, and an emphasis on the nuclear family (husband, wife, and children) rather than the kin group or clan. During the 20th century, however, marriage and family arrangements have become increasingly diverse.

The United States has historically had higher rates of marriage than those of other industrialized countries, as well as higher rates of divorce. The annual marriage rate in the United States—about 9 new marriages for every 1,000 people—is substantially higher than it is in other industrialized democracies.

However, marriage is no longer as widespread as it was several decades ago. The proportion of American adults who are married declined from 72 percent in 1970 to 60 percent in 1998. This does not mean that large numbers of people will remain unmarried throughout their lives. About 90 percent of Americans marry at some point in their lives. Marriage rates in Canada have also declined during the past few decades. In the mid-1940s the annual marriage rate in Canada was 11 new marriages for every 1,000 people. Today 5 new marriages take place each year for every 1,000 people. About half of the current adult population of Canada is married.

Age at first marriage

The timing of marriage has fluctuated over the past century. In 1995 the median age of women in the United States at the time of their first marriage was 25. The median age of men was about 27. Men and women in the United States marry for the first time an average of five years later than people did in the 1950s. However, young adults of the 1950s married younger than did any previous generation in U.S. history. Today's later age of marriage is in line with the age of marriage between 1890 and 1940. Moreover, a greater proportion of the population was married (95 percent) during the 1950s than at any time before or since. Experts do not agree on why the "marriage rush" of the late 1940s and 1950s occurred, but most social scientists believe it represented a response to the return of normalcy and prosperity after 15 years of severe economic depression and war. In Canada the median age at first marriage is nearly identical to that in the United States—just over age 24 for women and nearly 27 years of age for men.

Although the divorce rate in the United States has leveled off in recent years, it remains the highest in the industrialized world. In 1997, 4.3 divorces took place for every 1,000 people in the United States. This is the lowest figure since the late 1970s. The median duration of marriage in the United States has increased since 1970, rising from 6.7 years to 7.2 years in 1990. In Canada, each year 2.2 divorces take place for every 1,000 people. Remarriage after divorce has also been common in the United States, with a majority of both men and women remarrying within ten years. Since the 1970s the rate of remarriage has dropped in the United States and Canada. However, cohabitation has become widespread.

In Other Countries

Marriage and divorce rate

The average age at which men and women first marry varies tremendously throughout the world. For instance, in India marriages tend to take place at a significantly earlier age than they do in the United States and Canada. The median age of Indian women at the time of their first marriage is just under 19, while for men it is just over 23. Nearly 44 percent of women in India between the ages of 15 and 19 are married. In Jamaica, on the other hand, men and women marry much later in life. The median age of first marriage for both Jamaican women and men is 31. Less than 1 percent of men and women in Jamaica between the ages of 15 and 19 are married.

Rates of marriage and divorce also fluctuate widely throughout the world. For instance, in Cuba the annual marriage rate is 15 new marriages for every 1,000 people, while in South Africa only 3 new marriages take place each year for every 1,000 people. Many of the countries of Western Europe share an annual rate of marriage of roughly 5 for every 1,000 people. Divorce rates in many countries in Western Europe are also similar. In France, Germany, Austria, and Italy approximately 2 divorces take place annually for every 1,000 people. Spain is a notable exception with an annual divorce rate of only 0.6 for every 1,000 people. Higher rates of divorce are found in Eastern European countries—Estonia, Ukraine, and Belarus each have an annual rate of about 4 divorces for every 1,000 people.

Roles and Relationships in Marriage

Over the past several hundred years, social, economic, religious, and cultural changes have dramatically altered the institution of marriage, especially the roles of husbands and wives, in Western societies. Many factors contribute to the transformation, including the shift from a rural and agricultural society to an urban industrial economy; the increasing emphasis on individual freedom following the 18th-century Age of Enlightenment; and changes in population characteristics, such as the decline of mortality (death) rates and the increase in average life expectancy.

Scholars have identified two primary themes that influence marital change. First, the trend both in society and within marriage has been toward an increase in equality between men and women. Second, individuals have placed greater emphasis on love as the motivation for—and basis of—marriage. In recent decades, these influences have spread beyond Western societies.

Increased Equality

Historically the roles of men and women within marriages have reflected their roles within society. Laws and customs have traditionally restricted women's opportunities, limited their legal rights, and required them to be under the protection and control of a man. For example, under the legal doctrine of *coverture*, developed in England during the Middle Ages, the law viewed the husband and wife as one person—and that person was the husband. In the 18th century, English legal scholar Sir William Blackstone summed up the laws of marriage by stating that “the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated” into that of the husband. English colonists in North America brought their legal traditions with them and the common law of the United States and Canada incorporated the legal disabilities of women. As a result of *coverture*, a married woman lost many of the legal rights she may have possessed before marriage. For example, a single woman who owned property lost her rights over that property upon marriage. A bride's wealth became her husband's.

The tradition of legal patriarchy (male authority) is reflected in social practices related to weddings and marriage. For example, in many cultures the bride's father “gives” his daughter to the groom. During the wedding, the father may physically walk the bride to the groom and transfer her to the groom's arm or he may verbally state that he gives her to be married. Traditionally the woman's loss of her maiden name after marriage signified that her identity was absorbed by that of her husband. It also signified her subordination to him in many matters. For example, a wife was legally obliged to live wherever her husband chose, as well as to maintain the home and submit to her husband's sexual demands. The husband also had the right to control and physically discipline the wife. In return, the husband was obliged to financially support the family. Wives had no control over property, even if they had owned it before marriage.

In the late 1800s reformers challenged this patriarchal legal tradition and secured passage of Married Women's Property Acts in the United States and elsewhere. These laws gave women control over property they had owned and brought into marriage, as well as earnings they made outside the home. But these laws did not make husbands and wives legal equals. For instance, a husband could still legally forbid his wife from working outside the home. Laws in Western countries did not begin to reflect marriage as a bond between equals until the middle of the 20th century.

Even as women's legal status gained parity with that of men, other factors increased the distinction between the roles of husbands and wives. During the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries society began to shift away from a household-based economy. In preindustrial times the family worked together as an economic unit—for example, running a farm. Although the man was considered to be the head of the family, husband and wife both contributed their labor to the family enterprise. The development of the factory system and the growth of cities led to the separation of work and family. This division in turn led to a sharp contrast between the roles of men and women. The pattern of man as breadwinner and woman as housewife subsequently became the cultural ideal of marriage.

Many scholars believe that the central issue in marriage in Western countries today is the redefining of gender relations. Society is in the midst of a difficult transition away from older patterns of marriage, especially male dominance and the division of labor that prevailed in the industrial era. In the United States and other industrialized democracies, one of the most striking social and political developments of the 20th century is the rise in status of women. Both economic and political trends have undermined gender inequality. The shift to a post-industrial, service- and information-oriented economy has drawn increasing numbers of women into the workplace. Modern democracies no longer deny basic rights to women on account of gender.

In response to these changes, analysts expect marriage to become increasingly symmetrical, with greater equality of partners and less stereotypical gender roles. Already women are no longer confined to the role of homemaker and men are not solely defined as the breadwinners. However, women's lives have changed more than men's have thus far. The shift of women into the workplace has not been accompanied by comparable change in men's roles inside the home. Studies indicate that although men have increased the amount of housework and childcare they do, an imbalance remains.

Importance of Intimacy

The transition from traditional to modern society has increased society's emphasis on love as the basis for marriage. The concept of romantic love exists in all cultures but is usually not linked to marriage. Love is often portrayed as a dangerous emotion that can end in tragedy. Historically many people in Western societies have also been suspicious of marriages based on love, despite the glorification of love in songs and stories. Passion and romance would quickly fade, many people believed, leaving the couple with a lifetime of regret.

After 1800 a new ideology of marriage gradually took hold. It arose as the result of a variety of social and economic factors associated with the rise of modern society: the shift of work out of the home, the growth of urban living, and the spread of democratic ideals of equality and individual rights. Companionship and emotional satisfaction came to be seen as the criteria for successful marriage. The companionship model of marriage also results from demographic shifts—that is, changes in the characteristics of the population. As the average life span increased and people had fewer children than they had in the past, couples began to experience a prolonged period during which marriage continued without the presence of young children. Compatibility with one's partner became increasingly important.

As companionship marriage became the norm, people who failed to find satisfaction in their marriages became more likely to consider divorce. Divorce rates in the United States began to rise in the mid-1800s. Each succeeding generation since then has had a higher proportion of marriages end in divorce. The trend has only recently leveled off. A majority of divorced persons remarry, however, suggesting that divorce does not reflect a rejection of the institution of marriage but rather a preference for a different marital partner.

Legal Aspects

Looked at in historical perspective, the role of government in marriage is a relatively recent development. In Western Europe before the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, the Catholic Church presided over marriage. Under traditional pre-Christian practices, in some parts of northern Europe weddings took place in private homes, with elder family members or local officials presiding.

Under the federal system of government in the United States, the individual states regulate marriage. Virtually all states require that individuals must be 18 years of age before they can marry. Persons below that age must obtain parental permission. To obtain a marriage license, most states require individuals to undergo a blood test for rubella and syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease. Many states also require a waiting period of one to five days between the issuing of the license and the wedding ceremony. The marriage must be formalized before a qualified official in either a religious ceremony or a civil wedding. The couple must register a marriage certificate with the government after the wedding ceremony.

Virtually all states ban marriages between certain blood relatives, such as between parent and child or brother and sister. All states prohibit bigamy—that is, a marriage in which either partner is already married. In the 1967 decision of *Loving v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that laws prohibiting interracial marriage were unconstitutional.

Although marriage in contemporary industrialized societies usually requires religious or legal recognition, or both, some couples may live together as if they are married and not seek formal approval of their union. In recent years, living together as an unmarried couple, known as cohabitation, has become a widespread practice. In the United States roughly half of all newlyweds have lived together before marriage. Some jurisdictions legally recognize common law marriage. Laws in such places consider couples married if they have lived together for a certain length of time.

Same-Sex Unions and Gay Marriage

Several countries have passed legislation to recognize homosexual unions. Such legislation generally refers to homosexual unions as civil unions or registered partnerships rather than as marriages. These unions usually do not entail the full array of rights to which heterosexual married couples are entitled. Four countries currently legalize gay marriage. They are Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, and Spain.

In 2001 the Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex marriages. The new Dutch law eliminated references to a person's sex in the legal definition of marriage and granted same-sex married couples the same rights that heterosexual married couples have in areas such as inheritance, taxes, divorce, and pension benefits. The law permitted same-sex couples to adopt Dutch children, but not children from other countries. In 2003 Belgium legalized same-sex marriages. The Belgian law gave married homosexual couples most of the same rights as married heterosexual couples have, although it did not allow gay couples to adopt children. In 2005 Spain legalized same-sex marriages. The new law eliminated all legal distinctions between same-sex and heterosexual marriages, including the right to adopt children.

Canadian courts began legalizing gay marriage in a number of provinces in 2002. The courts ruled that a ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional because it violated the equal rights provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In July 2005 the Canadian government approved legislation making such unions legal throughout the country. Canada thus became the fourth country to allow gay marriage.

In late 2005 two other countries took steps to allow same-sex civil unions or gay marriage. In the United Kingdom a law allowing civil partnerships went into force in December 2005. The law gives same-sex couples in civil partnerships many of the same financial and legal benefits as married heterosexual couples enjoy. In South Africa the Constitutional Court ruled in December 2005 that the country's Marriage Act was unconstitutional because it did not allow same-sex marriages. The court stayed its ruling for one year so that parliament could amend the act, but the court said that its ruling would automatically go into force in December 2006 if parliament failed to act.

In most of the United States, marriage between partners of the same sex is not legally recognized and the issue of homosexual marriage provokes controversy. Religious conservatives who believe that the Bible forbids same-sex relationships constitute the most outspoken opponents of gay marriage in the United States. These critics, who fear that the recognition of gay partnerships threatens the institution of marriage, have spearheaded legislative efforts to explicitly restrict the definition of marriage to heterosexual couples.

In 1996 the Congress of the United States adopted the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which (1) allows states to enact laws that deny recognition of same-sex marriages obtained in other states, and (2) defines marriage, for purposes of federal law, as the legal union of one man and one woman. By 2004, 39 states had adopted legislation similar to DOMA. However, gay-rights activists continue to work toward legal recognition of same-sex unions. In 2000 Vermont became the first state to allow gay partners to join in a civil union that grants them the same rights under state law that married heterosexual couples have. Connecticut legalized civil unions in 2005.

In 2003 the Supreme Judicial Court, the highest court in the state of Massachusetts, ruled that same-sex marriages are permitted under the state's constitution. The court clarified its ruling in February 2004 by saying that civil unions were not a permissible substitute for marriage. On May 17, 2004, authorities in Massachusetts performed the first legal same-sex marriages in the United States. Massachusetts legislators pledged to amend the state constitution to ban gay marriages but permit civil unions. State voters would need to approve such an amendment.

Following the Massachusetts court decision authorizing gay marriages, some U.S. cities and counties—including San Francisco, California, and Portland, Oregon—began issuing marriage licenses and performing weddings for thousands of gay couples. Opponents argued that these marriages violated state law and immediately challenged them in court. In August 2004 the California Supreme Court invalidated nearly 4,000 same-sex marriages performed earlier in the year in San Francisco. In April 2005 the Oregon Supreme Court similarly nullified nearly 3,000 marriage licenses issued to Portland-area gay couples. The courts ruled that local officials improperly disregarded state law in granting marriage licenses and certificates to same-sex couples. During 2004, partly in reaction to the Massachusetts decision, citizens in 13 states approved state constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriages. As of 2005, 18 states had changed their constitutions to ban same-sex marriages.

Although same-sex marriages faced considerable political and religious opposition in the United States, an increasing number of local governments and private corporations recognize domestic partnerships for both homosexual and heterosexual unmarried couples. This recognition allows members of a committed but unmarried couple to enjoy some of the practical benefits enjoyed by married couples, such as insurance, hospital visitation privileges, and inheritance rights. Despite increasing acceptance, domestic partnerships have not been accorded the broad social and legal approval that marriage generally receives.

Some cultures recognize polygamy—that is, marriage to more than one wife or husband at a time. The marriage of one man to two or more women at the same time is called polygyny. Polyandry refers to the marriage of one woman to two or more men.

The use of space from cultural aspect

Man's use of space, the study of which is called 'proxemics' is another silent language about which we all need to know more if we are to achieve clear communicative and harmonious relations with people of varying cultural backgrounds. We need to be sensitive to auxiliary communication techniques that are highly culture bound such as distance, space and time.

Proxemics

When we speak to another individual or group, the distance our bodies are physically apart also communicates a message. Proxemics is the study of such interaction distances and other culturally defined uses of space. Most of us are unaware of the importance of space in communication until we are confronted with someone who uses it differently. For instance, we all have a sense of what is a comfortable interaction distance to a person with whom we are speaking. If that person gets closer than the distance at which we are comfortable, we usually automatically back up to reestablish our comfort zone. Similarly, if we feel that we are too far away from the person we are talking to, we are likely to close the distance between us. If two speakers have different comfortable interaction distances, a ballet of shifting positions usually occurs until one of the individuals is backed into a corner and feels threatened by what may be perceived as hostile or sexual overtures. As a result, the verbal message may not be listened to or understood as it was intended.

Comfort in interaction distance mostly has to do with the distance between faces that are looking directly at each other. Most people do not have the same feeling about physical closeness if they do not have eye contact. In a crowd or an elevator, people usually choose not to look at anyone in order to avoid feeling uncomfortably close.

Whispering and shouting generally get your attention more than speaking with a normal voice. Children learn this important fact at a very early age.

In addition to specifying comfortable interaction distances, culture tells us when and how it is acceptable to touch other individuals. In North America, culture generally discourages touching by adults except in moments of intimacy or formal greeting (hand shaking or hugging). This informal rule is most rigidly applied to men. If they hold hands or kiss in public, they run the risk of being labeled homosexual and subsequently marginalized socially. Similar culturally defined patterns of physical contact avoidance are found in most of the cultures of Asia and Northern Europe. In Southern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America, much more physical contact usually is expected and desired.

Cultural Use of Space

Culture also tells us how to organize space in such a way as to control the nature of interaction. In North American corporate offices, for instance, the boss is usually physically isolated in a very separate private room. This tends to minimize his or her personal contact with ordinary workers. In contrast, Japanese offices commonly are set up with the boss's desk at the end of a row of pushed together desks used by subordinate employees. This maximizes his interaction with them.

A court room similarly alters behavior. In the United States, the judge usually wears a black robe and sits behind an elevated desk. The other desks and chairs in court are positioned so that all attention is focused on the judge. This intentional setting makes those present feel respectful and subservience to the judge, thereby making it easier for him or her to control the proceedings.

Culture also guides our perception of space by defining units of it. In the industrial world, space is divided into standardized segments with sides and position. Acres and city lots with uniform dimensions are examples of this in the United States. There, property boundaries are referenced to such segments of space. As the density of population increases, the importance of defined spatial boundaries grows. Land owners in densely occupied neighborhoods have been known to get angry enough to kill each other over disputed fence lines between their properties. In less dense rural areas of the American West, for example,

where people own ranches of hundreds and even thousands of acres, the movement of a fence three feet one way or another is rarely of consequence.

Cultural Use of Time

Culture tells us how to manipulate time in order to communicate different messages. When people appear for an appointment varies with the custom, social situation, and their relative status. In North America or England, if you have a business meeting scheduled, the time you should arrive largely depends on the power relationship between you and the person who you are meeting. People who are lower in status are expected to arrive on time, if not early. Higher status individuals can expect that others will wait for them if they are late. For instance, most people who have medical appointments are expected to arrive early and to wait patiently for their doctor to see them rather than the other way around. An invitation to a party is an entirely different matter. It is often expected that most guests will arrive "fashionably late."

When people come together with very different cultural expectations about time, there is a potential for misunderstanding, frustration, and hurt feelings. This could occur, for instance, if an Arab businessman does not arrive "on time" for a meeting with a potential North American customer in New York and fails to give an apology when he arrives. For the Arab person, time may be relatively "elastic" and the pace-of-life a bit slower. He/she believes that he/she was sufficiently prompt for the scheduled business meeting, having arrived within a half hour of the appointment. It is not surprising that he/she is astonished and offended when he/she is treated coldly by the North American who also feels slighted by what he/she perceives as rudeness. Compounding the situation is likely to be differences in their comfortable physical interaction distances. This dismal scenario can be avoided, of course, by foreknowledge about the other culture and a willingness to adopt a cultural relativity approach. The old saying "when in Rome do as the Romans do" is still good advice.