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# Introduction to Socio-cultural Variations in Health

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# Objectives

After completion the lecture the students enable to:

- Define culture and other related concept
- Describe the characteristics of culture
- Contrast the terms culture and sub culture



## Key point:

1. Cultural aspects of human behavior are not biologically based or conditioned but are acquired solely through learning.
2. Cultural conditioning of behavior is ultimately accomplished through habituation and thus acts through unconscious processes rather than rational deliberation, although secondary rationalizations are often offered to explain cultural values.



## Key point: ..... Cont

3. All cultures are equally developed according to their own priorities and values; none is better, more advanced, or less primitive than any other.
4. Cultural traits cannot be classified or interpreted according to universal categories appropriate to "human nature". They assume meaning only within the context of coherently interrelated elements internal to the particular culture under consideration.





## Definition of Culture:

The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts 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



This is a complex definition  
and points to four important  
characteristics stressed by  
cultural relativists





- Refers to the beliefs, values, and behavior that are shared by members of a society and provide a design or map for living.
- It is a culture that tells people what is acceptable or unacceptable also it is the integration of human behaviors(which include thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions) of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group.



- Culture represents the vast structure of ideas, attitude, and habits, languages, rituals, ceremonies, and practices peculiar to a particular group of people.



- Culture also provides people with a general design for living and patterns by which to interpret reality.





The fundamental element or building block of culture is the culture trait. Traits assume many forms varying from material artifacts -- tools, house structures, art works -- to behavioral regularities -- family interrelationships, economic exchanges, and legal sanctions -- to abstract concepts and beliefs. All of these diverse and complex manifestations share one feature in common; they are symbols and as such express meaning.



A symbol is simply understood as an expression that stands for or represents something else, usually a real world condition. The use of words in a language provides the most obvious example. Words stand for perceived objective entities and states. Words as symbols, however, differ from the objects they represent and have special qualities, which is why they are so useful to us. One important characteristic is that they bear no intrinsic relation to what they represent and are thereby arbitrary





Culture traits and broader cultural patterns inclusive of language, technology, institutions, beliefs, and values are transmitted across generations and maintain continuity through learning, technically termed **enculturation**.

Culture is observable only in the form of personal behavior but can be abstracted from individuals' actions and attributed to the social groups to which they belong





# Characteristics of culture:

- (1) Culture is an adaptive mechanism
- (2) Culture is learned
- (3) Culture is change (Dynamic)
- (4) culture is multifaceted
- (5) People Usually are not Aware of their culture
- (6) We do not Know All of Our Own culture
- (7) Culture Give Us a Range of Permissible Behavior Patterns
- (8) Cultures No Longer Exist in Isolation



## (1) Culture is an adaptive mechanism

We need our cultural skills to stay alive, to adapt with climate and geographic.

Example: efficient hunting skills, fire use, and ultimately, clothing, warm housing, agriculture





## (2) Culture is learned

Every human generation potentially can discover new things and invent better technologies. The new cultural skills and knowledge are added onto what was learned in previous generations. As a result, culture is cumulative

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Example:

Most high school students today are now familiar with mathematical insights and solutions that ancient Greeks such as Archimedes struggled their lives to discover



### (3) Culture is change (Dynamic)

Cultural knowledge does not perpetually accumulate. At the same time that new cultural traits are added, some old ones are lost because they are no longer useful







#### (4) Culture is multifaceted

People belong to many different cultural groups at any given time



## (5) People Usually are not Aware of their culture

The way that we interact and do things in our everyday lives seems 'natural' to us. We are unaware of our culture because we are so close to it and know it so well. For most people, it is as if their learned behavior was biologically inherited. It is usually only when they come into contact with people from another culture that they become aware that their patterns of behavior are not universal





## ( 6) We do not Know All of Our Own culture

No one knows everything about his or her own culture. In all societies , there are bodies of specialized cultural knowledge that are gender specific - they are known to men but not to women or vice versa. In many societies there are also bodies of knowledge that are limited largely to particular social classes, occupations, religious groups, or other special purpose associations



## (7) Culture Give Us a Range of Permissible Behavior Patterns

Cultures commonly allow a range of ways in which men can be men and women can be women. Culture also tells us how different activities should be conducted, such as how one should act as a husband, wife, parent, child etc. these rules of permissible behavior are usually flexible to degree  
- there are some alternatives rather than hard rules





## (8) Cultures No Longer Exist in Isolation

It is highly unlikely that are any societies still existing in total isolation from the outside world. Even small, out of the way tribal societies are now being integrated to some extent into the global economy

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## (1) Enculturation

The process of transmitting culture through learning

## (2) Ethnology:

The theoretical analysis of cultures and cultural elements through comparison, generalization and hypothesis formation





### (3) **Ethnography**

The process of recording and describing a culture of a specific people and its traits, patterns, and principles of coherent integration

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### (3) Ethnography for nurses

Is the study of culture. The methodological approach of ethnographic research central to the nurse's ability to develop a heightened awareness of culturally diverse needs of individuals, is to define a field for observation for study of the environment and its people, as well as the reciprocal relationship that exist between the two





## (4) Holism

A position that maintains that individual culture elements must be understood in terms of how they are articulated to other elements and cannot be understood in isolation.

## (5) symbol:

an expression that stands for or represents something else, usually a real world condition



## (6) World View:

Basic philosophical and ethical orientation that provides the basis for a people to organize their perceptions of their natural and social surroundings

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## (6) Ethnocentrism

- Is the belief that ones own cultural practices and values are inherently correct or superior to those of others.
- The practice of interpreting and judging other cultures by the values of one's own
- Ethnocentric attitude can lead to the following problems

1. **Prejudice**: Negative preconceived opinions about others people or groups based on hearsay, perception, or emotion.
2. **Stereotyping**: Believing that one member of a cultural group will display certain behaviors or hold certain attitudes (usually negative) simply because he or she is a member of that cultural group).



3. **Discrimination:** Differential treatment based on race , class, sex, or other variables rather than on individual merit.
4. **Stigmatization:** the attribution of negative characteristics or identify to one person or group, causing the person or group to feel rejected and , alienated, from society.



Values, norms, beliefs, tradition and taboos: All together these terms are constitute the essential elements of the non-material dimension of culture.





## Values:

These are intrinsic beliefs or ideals about desirable conduct, custom, and other entities. As such they provide the basis for each person's attitudes and behaviors and they assist in establishing hierarchic of needs and goals value orientations can be defined as principles that assist in the solution of common human problems.



## Values:

There are three different value orientations toward time

1. Past oriented.
2. Present oriented.
3. Future oriented.





## Values:

For example some people value punctuality and clock time, others value flexibility and lived time. A nurse who adheres to fixed schedules for appointments, baths, meals and sleep may find conflict with a client who has a flexible time orientation. It is important not to assume that client shared the nurses value orientation. It is important not to assume that client share the nurses values orientation or that the nurses are inherently better.



## Beliefs:

it is conviction based on information held by people from which no socially acceptable means of validity exist, it is a conviction that is mentally accepted as true whether or not it is based on fact.

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## Norms:

they are expected behavior. They provide rules about standards of appropriate behavior in particular situations. Norms flow from cultural values about what is important in various situations.





## Tradition:

Ancient ethno-cultural-religious, belief and practices handed down through generations

## Taboo:

They are proscribes act and thoughts to avoid actual or potential harm to self and others.



## Cultural knowledge :

Knowledge that appertains to one particular , several or many cultures.

## Cultural discovery:

A term used in reference to the discovery of cultural information that provides nurses for example , with insight into , and understanding of , a given culture or various cultures.





## Cultural imposition:

The tendency of an individual or cultural group to impose their beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior upon another culture for varied reasons e.g religious, economical, political, and social.



## Culture shock:

Relates to an abrupt transition from a familiar to an alien environment and involves many major and minor differences in life styles and events.( when we move to live among members of an ethnic group dissimilar to our own)





## Intercultural :

Is used to describe situations, relationships and practice in which the client and the nurse are of different cultural traditions; at times both may be from a different ethnic minority group .

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## Intracultural:

Is used when the client and the nurse are of the same cultural tradition.



## Transcultural :

(Implying the presence of, or in reference to, more than one culture, but also as denoting the existence of an affirmative desire to bridge and transcend cultural differences within the nurse - client relationship.

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## Sub culture :

A group that deviates in certain areas or features with respect to values, beliefs, and behavior from that of a dominant or parent culture with which they are perceived or known to be closely identified in daily life.



## Cultural Relativism:

the practice of interpreting and judging other cultures in terms of their own internal meaning and value systems .

