



Crossing Cultures

*Cultural Conceptions
and Approaches for
Agents of Cultural
Change*





Session Outcomes

After considering a theoretical, conceptual, broad view of culture as well as some positive and negative features, you will discern your role as an agent of cultural change.





Definition of Culture

1. *the total way of life of a people*
2. *social legacy the individual acquires from the group*
3. *a way of thinking, feeling, and believing*
4. *a storehouse of pooled*
5. *set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems*
6. *learned behaviour*
7. *a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour*
8. *a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to others*
9. *a precipitate of history*
10. *a behavioural map or matrix*



Definition of Culture

Culture is an 'historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms, by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about, and attitudes toward life (reality).



Definition of Culture

“The way a group of people, over a long period of time, have used their imagination and their ingenuity to work on their environment to meet their basic human needs. The environment is partly physical, partly social and partly ideational.”

(Hally – Unpublished)



Reflection

Diamond suggests this is a significant reason for inequality. I.E. All cultures have the ingenuity, but different environments provide different opportunities.

(Guns, Germs and Swords)





But culture is not just influenced by the physical environment ...

- A **PHYSICAL** environment leads to the development of “appropriate” technology for using resources in production, distribution and consumption.
- A **SOCIAL** environment is a totally human creation of a complex set of patterned relationships, which are closely interrelated with the technology.
- More important than the physical or social is the **IDEATIONAL** environment. Everyone is born into an ideational environment made up of the assumptions, values and goals, which ancestors have worked out in trying to deal with the basic questions of existence.



A **SYMBOLIC SYSTEM**, gives meaning and holds a culture together.

Symbol ~ Any object, act, event, quality or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception; the conception is the symbol's meaning. It can be:

Cognitive - statement about reality

Affective - give rise to feelings

Directive - influences behaviour

Myth - a narrative symbol

Some Cultural Symbols

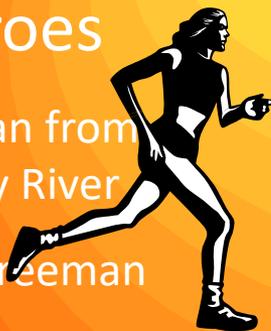


Clothes



Heroes

The Man from Snowy River



Kathy Freeman

William Deane



Icons

Holden ute



Emblems



Kangaroos



Special foods



Patriotism

National Anthems



Myths

Bronzed Ozzie

The Anzacs



Flags





SYMBOLIC SYSTEM

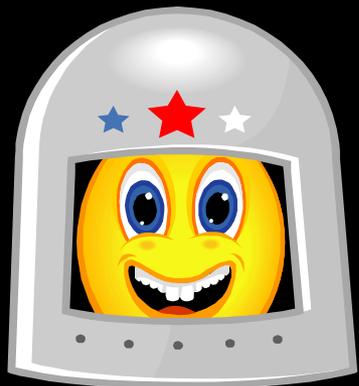
In day-to-day interactions every culture or sub-culture draws heavily upon its symbolic system, impregnated with meaning, to maintain its economic and social structures.

I define rules as the resilient components of the political and social world that structure actors' behaviour through distributing power – resources, access and authority ([Mahoney and Thelen 2010](#), pp. 7-8). Rules can be informal (generally accepted codes or norms of behaviour) or formal (the written rules).



Our peace of mind and efficiency depends upon all these cues being stored in our collective subconscious and any one or any number coming into play immediately it is required.

Culture tells us how to act appropriately in most situations and our knowledge is based upon a sense of rightness, which others share.





LANGUAGE AND MYTHS are critical.

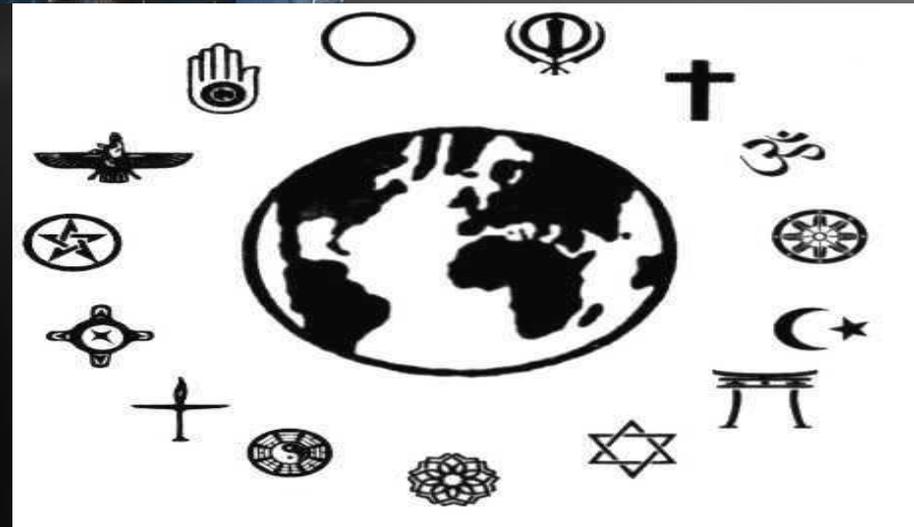
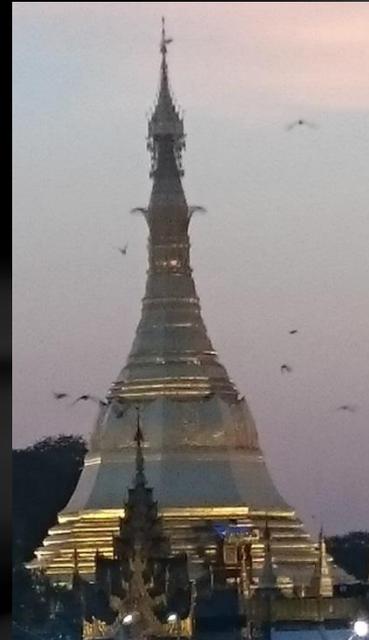
- They help us believe that our way of life is reasonably good and our contribution worthwhile and so help maintain the social and economic structures.
- They carry messages that impart this sense of rightness.
- As they are learned and internalized they establish acceptable and predictable patterns of thought and behaviour and give them meaning. (Hally)



Life is manageable because it is predictable and it is predicable because beliefs about its meaning are not only shared but have entered the subconscious and shaped the basic assumptions, values and goals out of which the society operates. These basic assumptions and values are so deeply internalised that any structural change in the culture can only happen through them.



Cultural symbols create loyalties that have driven human history.





Some Definitions:

Enculturation

The aspects of the learning experience that mark humans off from other creatures and by means of which initially, and in later life, each human being achieves competence in his/her culture.

Redfield,R.,Linton,R.&Herskovits,M. (1936) Memorandum for the study of acculturation. American Anthropologists ,XXXVIII, 149-150.



Some Definitions:

Acculturation

Those phenomena that result when groups of individuals, having different cultures, come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent change in the original culture patterns of either, or of both groups.

Redfield,R.,Linton,R.&Herskovits,M. (1936)



Some Definitions:

Transculturation

The transference of cultural traits, symbols, meanings, values or institutions of a specific culture to almost all other cultures.

(Azevedo)



Commitment Fostering Mechanisms are used to encourage En/Ac/Trans/ cultururation.



Rites of passage



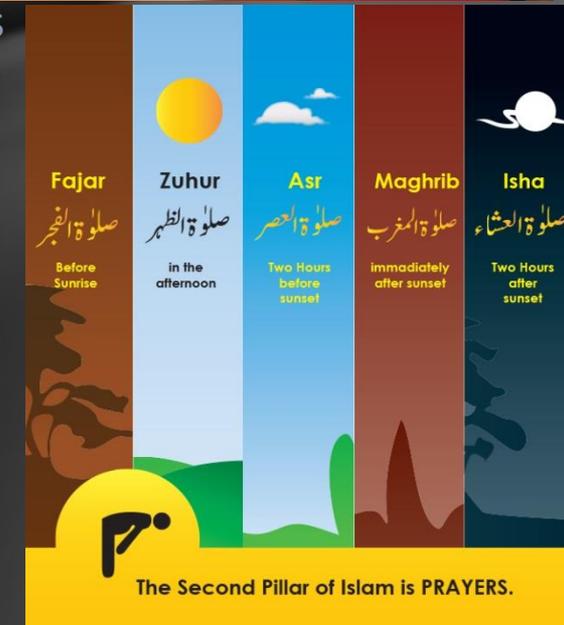
Songs



Religious symbols



Places



Sacred times

Commitment Fostering Mechanisms reinforce shared meaning among those for whom the symbols retain meaning

BUT

for some can become more important than actually being true.

What dangers become evident when this occurs?



The grave danger is that culture runs so deep that people have and will die for the club and often without question.

Mythologies and hero status arise around these life taking identities/causes.

Working overtime

Sport violence

Cult groups

Crusades

Suicide bombers

War

As a member of a culture there may be little choice but to comply or be marginalized.

At the end of 2016 Oxford dictionaries made “post-truth” their word of the year.

Post-truth means any conviction, firmly expressed, must be given due public consideration.

Post-truth is also about insularity: an inward turn manifest in excessive preoccupation with self, home and the homeland

No decent person would argue against care and respect for self, family, community or country. But taken too far, these positive characteristics become exclusionary, destructive and selfish.

This more cynical view is fashionable at present. Bluntly stated: others are fundamentally unlike us; concern for their welfare represents a drain on public finance, something better relegated to charity do-gooders or private capital ventures.

Borders are to be policed and rigidly enforced. What happens beyond them may be unfortunate, but not our responsibility.



Questions:

Is the cultural interaction fostered by globalization accelerating an undermining of enculturation?

Is this, for the first time in human history, producing a simultaneous crises of cultures and sub-cultures?

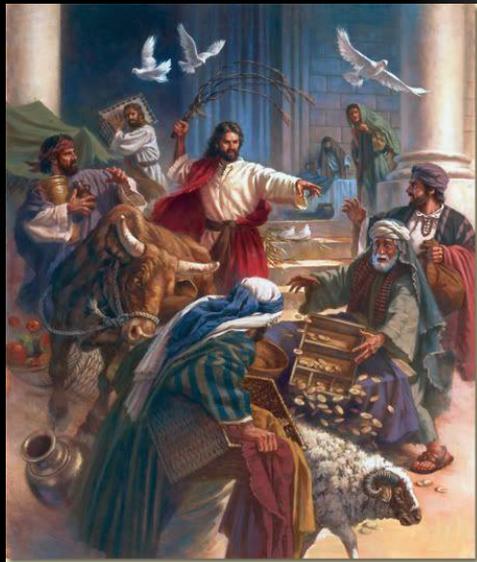
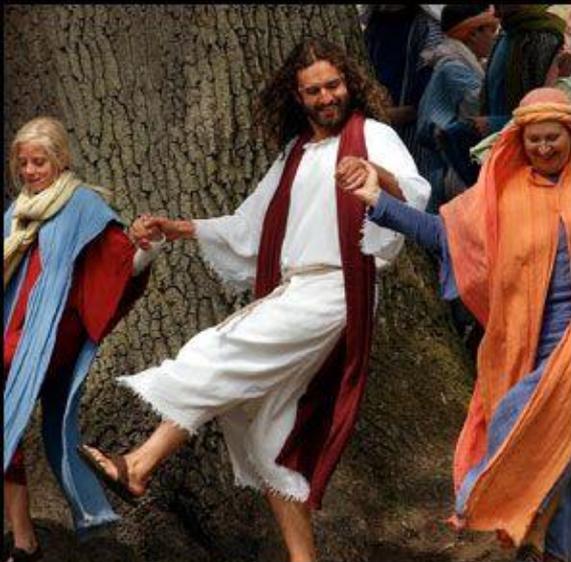
As agents of cultural change do we advance acculturation or transculturation?



Does reflection on one's faith or worldview encourage a particular response?

Antony Gittins suggests that cultural structures do force compliance and oppress and divide people. As a Christian he proposes:

The disturbing ministry of Jesus



PARTICIPANT
INSIDERS

PARTICIPANT
OUTSIDERS

NON PARTICIPANT
INSIDERS

NON PARTICIPANT
OUTSIDERS

STATUS

NON-STATUS

INSIDERS

OUTSIDERS

Adult Males/VIPs: Holders of authority and power who determine cultural rules

- 1. Ancestors
- 2. Those with power of sanction
 - Political, Legal and/or Military leaders, Civil Defence, Police
 - Economic /Business controllers
 - Religious leaders
- 3. Significant Others - Legitimators
 - Heads of Households
 - Members of professions – Clergy; Lawyers; Bankers; Physicians

Counter-cultural activists like Jesus, Gandhi, Mandela, Romero, Us.

Twofold mission
(a) To break the lie of culture
(b) To bring the Kindom of God

1st movement

2nd movement

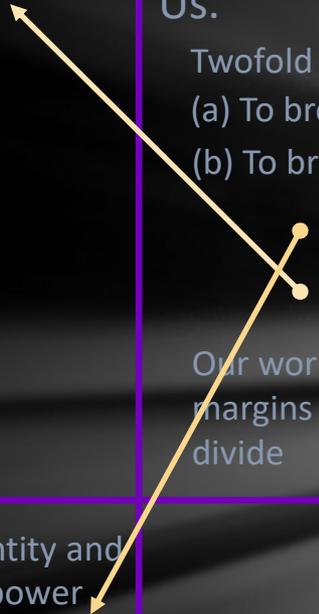
Our work is to bring people to the margins and remove the lines that divide

Non Adult males/Nobodies: No social identity and with limited power

- 1. The immature
 - The unborn: lacking viability
 - Infants: lacking language
 - Children: Lacking sexual maturity
- 2. The deviant
 - Physically: cripples, the sick
 - Mentally: the insane, crazy, possessed
 - Morally: criminals, prostitutes, tax collectors
- 3. Women
- 4. Non-participating males

Tourists

Irrelevant to meaning making. Give you my dollars but not me. Not seeking engagement. Maintain independence



Reflection

We are potential participant outsiders.

What prevents us from moving to the margins to do the work Gittins proposes?

‘My Story’ People

Well educated, therapeutic, psychological explaining people. These people tend to get trapped in a sphere of private meaning with their educated answers. They are prone to individualistic worldviews.

‘Our Story People’

Very attached to tribal loyalties. They desire some kind of worldview, but they stop. They fly the flag/banner for country, papacy, the Bible, religion, sport. At its extreme they are fanatical until death.

Does Gittins share essential truths with the responses of other traditions or worldviews?

Can such responses free humankind from cultural stories and symbols that divide Jew and Greek, Man and Woman, Slave and Free?

Can the various worldviews come together to provide 'The Story' under a:

Sacred Canopy



Is this is the realm of universal meaning?

Where the story is always true?

Where every culture and religion is able to identify universal patterns and point to similar responses?



Does failure to identify universal
patterns

leave us lost in choosing tiny
patterns



Does sharing the great stories have the potential to free us from tyranny and idolatry where we remain trapped in our small cultural and private worlds?

Is this our obligation as agents of change?



**Under the sphere of the
“The Story”**

**can we move to transcendence free
from**

“I am” and “We are”?

One who is able to empathise with and understand those who live in different spheres can provide a

My story

Our story

Prophetic Voice

The Story



Prophetic voices are:

People who have eyes for the small and big picture.

They both honour and listen to the little stories and live in the final yet present state of affairs.

They see all three spheres simultaneously.

They won't dismiss or demean people working on personal issues in the "My Story" sphere

They appreciate the needs and context of people in the "Our Story" sphere.

They know the sacred patterns of "The Story" and live ultimately inside it.



For later reflection:

What is the “The Story”?

What makes it always true?

Are there patterns in “The Story” that are found in every culture and religion?

Name some of today’s prophets? Identify some of the qualities that makes one a prophetic voice?

Do you see “The Story” as sacred and meaningful enough to take you to the margins?