

COMPONENTS OF IMPLICIT CULTURE: A PRIMER

Culture: "Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a person] as a member of society" (E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1871).

The following are the various components of nonmaterial (implicit) culture, which components are related to each other in complex though systematic ways.

NORMATIVE COMPONENT

Values: Shared, abstract ideas about what is good, desirable, or important for a group. In America, some of our national values are freedom, democracy, individualism, morality, a work ethic, romantic love, nationalism.

Norms: Socially defined rules and expectations about behavior, about how people should act in particular. Typically, norms are expressions of values at the everyday level. For example, in America fairness and equality are abstract values which are expressed in the norm that one should not cut to the front of a line.

Folkways: These rules for everyday behavior (norms) tend to be informal and do not involve major moral principles. A rough synonym for folkways is "customs" (also "manners"). A good example of a folkway is fashion. Overtime, we come to understand what kinds of clothing are appropriate for different social situations. Dressing appropriately allows us to fit in. The signals to others that we know the rules of became and agree to play by them. The signals help to make interaction more predictable and more comfortable. Because of these positive consequences of following folkways, failure to follow them can bring a variety of sanctions including exclusion, neglect, scorn, ridicule, being made fun of type (though typically there are no legal sanctions for not following them).

Mores (pronounced: "more-ayz"): These norms are more serious than folkways, usually involving major moral principles and behaviors deemed vital for the welfare of the social group. Because they are seen as so serious, they are often formalized in laws. Examples include prohibitions against assault, theft, rape, murder, and incest. An example of violating a more which is not a legal offense is teasing a bride for being ugly on her wedding day. Because following mores is seen as vital for the well-being of the social group, failure to follow them usually brings some sort of removal from the social group or more serious personal regulation went in the social group (incarceration, probation, parole).

COGNITIVE COMPONENT

Knowledge: A collection of ideas and facts about our physical and social worlds that are relatively objective, reliable, or verifiable. For example, the Earth is a sphere, not a plane. Knowledge can be captured in writing and turned into technology.

Beliefs: Ideas that are more subjective or unverifiable. E.g., the existence of God, the idea that all people are created equal.