

Cultural differences

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- *Obvious*: clothes, food.
- *Subtle*, less visible – *shared interpretations*.
- **Shared interpretations** – lead to actions that are regarded as appropriate and effective behaviors within a culture.
- They are very important and result from the culture's collective assumptions about what the world is, shared judgements about what it should be, expectations about how people should behave, and predictable behavior patterns that are commonly shared.

Cultural differences - cultural patterns

- *Cultural patterns* - basis for interpreting the symbols used in communication.
- **Cultural patterns** – shared **beliefs, values, norms and social practices** that are stable over time and lead to roughly similar behaviors across similar situations.
- Cultural patterns are shared mental programs that govern specific behavior choices.

Cultural patterns - beliefs

- **Belief** - an idea that people assume to be true about the world.
- A set of learned interpretations that form the basis for cultural members to decide what is and what is not correct.

Cultural patterns - values

- **Values** refer to what a culture regards as good or bad, right or wrong, fair or unfair, just or unjust, beautiful or ugly, clean or dirty, valuable or worthless, appropriate or inappropriate. They are *guiding principles* in people's lives.
- Values are ***desired characteristics*** of culture, and do not necessarily describe its actual behaviors and characteristics.

Cultural patterns - norms

- **Norms** – socially shared expectations of appropriate behaviors.
- Norms, like values, can vary within a culture in terms of their importance and intensity.
- Norms, unlike values and beliefs, may change over a period of time.
- Norms exist for a wide variety of behaviors, e.g. greeting behaviors are based on norms.

Cultural patterns – social practices

- The *predictable behavior patterns* that members of a culture typically follow.
- They are outward manifestation of beliefs, values and norms.

Types of social practices:

- *Informal*, including everyday tasks: eating, sleeping, dressing, working, playing, talking with others.
- *More formal and prescriptive*: rituals, ceremonies, structured routines, performed publicly and collectively (praying in church, getting married, honoring the dead at funerals, etc.)

Kluckhohn and Stodtbeck's value orientation

Activity	Being	Being-in-becoming	Doing
Relationships	Linearity	Collaterality	Individualism
Human nature	Evil	Mixture of good and evil	Good
People-nature	Subjugation to nature	Harmony with nature	Mastery over nature
Time	Past	Present	Future

Source: Intercultural Competence. Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures, 2010.

References

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