

What is Culture and How Can People Be Discriminated Based on Their Culture?

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Abstract

Culture is a very important aspect of our lives. Our culture is what makes us unique. There are many ways in which our culture makes us unique. This essay will be answering the question “what is culture?” and giving more information about the different aspects of culture including the elements of culture. The norms, values, and beliefs of our culture and how that is important to us. The many different types of verbal and nonverbal communication are explored in this essay. In addition, people are stereotyped and discriminated because of their culture and that has a negative effect on the lives of many. I mention the outcomes of those negative effects and ways it could possibly be resolved. Lastly, my feeling towards this topic is stated while recommending ways in which stereotypes and discrimination can be handled.

Introduction

Culture is the ways of life that are based down from generations to generations. People are who they are because of their culture. There are many different aspects of culture. These aspects include the elements of culture which are norms, values, beliefs, religion, symbols, and languages. My topic is about answering what culture is and the different aspects within a culture. Also, the differences within different cultures. I chose this topic because I wanted to explore more in depth about my culture and other cultures. In addition, the meaning behind the word culture. In the future, I would like to travel a lot so that I will be able to encounter many cultures. In addition, I plan on being a doctor. Doctors encounter many different patients of all different cultures or backgrounds. Your culture is part of your identity and who you are. In this paper, I

will be exploring the meaning of culture. Additionally, the different aspects of a culture and what makes that culture unique and different from other cultures. This research paper is going to consist of eight sections. The first section will be the cover page which will include name, class, topic, and professor's name. The second section will include the table of contents which will be a guide to easily navigate the contents in my paper. The third section will be the background where I will be talking about the background of my topic. The fourth section will include the introduction where I will be explaining my topic, why I chose it and how it connects to my future. Also, the different parts of the paper will be explained. Section five will be the body paragraphs where I will be going in depth on my topic and inserting evidence. There will be multiple body paragraphs with different subheadings. The sixth section will be my conclusion and I will be tying everything together to conclude my paper. Section seven will be the annotated bibliography where my sources are listed with a short summary of why it will be useful to my research paper. Lastly, section eight will be my reference page. All the reference I use in this paper will be on that page.

Background

It is very important to respect people's cultures. That is what makes them unique. Your culture is what you have practiced or grow up knowing your whole entire life. Whether it is passed down from generations to generations, or just religions and beliefs, or norms and values. Many people do not respect other's culture because they are not used to it. That is not right because everyone's culture is different in its own way. There are many different cultures within the world and many conflicts surround them. A conflict that people face is discrimination against

their culture. For example, certain cultures wear certain clothing and society would laugh at them which is disrespectful. Another conflict would be norms and values. Some people argue with others just because they do not have the same norms or values. This is wrong because every culture has different norms or values. So, people are not wrong for obeying their culture, they just view things differently. Lastly, another conflict could be religion. One religion would think they are better than another because they believe in different things.

Norms, Values and Beliefs

Norms, values, and beliefs are all elements of culture. Norms are the way people behave in accordance with what society sees as good, bad, right, and wrong. Values are what is good and just in society. Beliefs are patterns, thoughts and actions shared within a society that is passed down to generations. Norms, values, and beliefs help shape our culture. There are two types of norms called formal and informal norms. Formal norms are rules that are written. For example, “Laws are formal norms, but so are employee manuals, college entrance exam requirements, and “no running” signs at swimming pools” (Griffiths et al., 2017). This quote explains the written version of norms. This is where people obey norms that are written, and they do not have a choice. They must abide by these laws or will be punished. Informal norms are casual behaviors that should be obeyed. Informal norms are learned by observation, limitation, and general socialization. For example, “In the United States, there are informal norms regarding behavior at fast food restaurants. Customers line up to order their food and leave when they are done” (Griffiths et al., 2017). There are some norms in society that are not laws and are not written.

This quote explains how these norms are learned. It is as simple as lining up in a restaurant for food and leaving when done. It may not seem as much, but it is an informal norm learned by people. In addition, values and beliefs are important to our culture because there are things that we grow up to value and believe in. It can often be difficult to measure up to these values and beliefs. For example, “It’s easy to value good health, but it’s hard to quit smoking [...] Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all people are valued in the United States, yet the country’s highest political offices have been dominated by white men” (Griffiths et al., 2017). In a culture, people value and believe indifferent things. However, it is hard to value somethings when we still do the opposite.

Symbols and Language

Symbols and Language are also important elements of culture. “Symbols such as gestures, signs, objects, signals, and words help people understand the world” (Griffiths et al., 2017). Symbols can be used to help people communicate within their culture and even outside their culture. I am not familiar with many symbols used in my culture. However, I know some cultures use symbols to represent certain things. For example, there are many symbols in Arabic that are used as their own alphabet or numerals etc. It is different that was we are used to in America or even in my country, St. Lucia. These symbols are beautiful symbols that are specifically used in Arabic writing. I have a tattoo that say “love yourself first” in Arabic. I do not speak Arabic nor know how to write in Arabic, but the symbols were unique and their way of writing it caught my attention. “Language is a set of shared symbols or signs that a group of people has mutually agreed to use to create meaning” (Samovar et al., 2010). There are many

languages around the world within different cultures. The two languages spoken in my culture are English and Creole. Many people would use them to talk to someone else of that same language in certain situations. For example, my family and I would use our creole language when we want to talk in public but do not want the people next to us to understand. However, you never know who can speak that language. Symbols and language are both equally important in our cultures. Despite us knowing a symbol or language from another culture, we should respect people when they use their symbols or language and do not automatically think they are saying something bad about us.

Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Every culture has verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication is when people are using words to convey a message orally. Nonverbal communication is when we do not speak but use our body to communicate using gestures or facial expressions. Some examples of verbal communication in my culture are “oye” which is used to get someone attention or call them, “saka fet” which is creole for what’s up, and “awa” which means no. In addition, when I first came to America, the “American slang” was something I was not used to. Some examples of verbal communication in America are “whatchamacallit” which is literally one word for when you forgot something you are speaking about. Another word is “word” which could mean true as a statement or even a question. It all depends on how you use the words. Some examples of nonverbal communication are using our mouth to point at someone we are speaking about without wanting them to know, pointing in a direction with a mad face to a child will indicate that you are mad and that they should go where you are pointing at. Also, in my country, to stop

a bus we would put our hands out and shake it for the bus to stop. It is similar to yelling for a cab in New York City. These may not be unique to only my culture. This is where similarities within cultures come in. Some cultures do have similar verbal and nonverbal communication.

Stereotypes and Discrimination

Many are stereotyped and discriminated by people of other cultures and because of the way they look, the way they talk, their accent, their language, what they wear, and skin color. When one incident happens with a certain culture or race, everyone in that category is seen as a threat or bad. For example, when someone sees Muslim men wearing turbans, fezes, kaffiyeh or any clothing, they are seen as “terrorist” because of the incident that happened on 9/11 in the United States. It is true that some people can be traumatized from that event but labeling everyone you see dressed like that is not a terrorist. Sometimes, the person under that clothing could be the sweetest person ever. It is their religion, their culture, their way of life and they abide by their rules. Another stereotype white people being racist and African Americans are seen as criminals. Again, all white people are not racist, and all African Americans are not criminals. There are many events that may have occurred that might cause people to see all white and all African Americans like that, but everyone is different. In addition, certain places highlight certain things about minorities that do not need to be highlighted. The text states, “For example, when a newspaper identifies by race individuals accused of a crime, it may enhance stereotypes of a certain minority” (Griffiths et al., 2017). People would judge minorities based off what they do and label them. For example, if it was an African American man who was committed of the crime, now every African American male would be seen as a threat. Similarly, “in which real

estate agents' direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race. Racist attitudes and beliefs are often more insidious and harder to pin down than specific racist practices" (Griffiths et al., 2017). This quote shows how being able to afford a home as a certain race will not allow all discrimination to be stopped. There are people that do not want to see people of certain races in their neighborhoods because they do not think they "belong" there. This is unfair because people should not have to be limited to where they live because of who they are.

Response

Looking at people differently and judging them for things they cannot control, their values, beliefs, the way they look, how they talk, or what they wear is absolutely wrong. That is part of their culture, and it is something that should be respected. For example, a Muslim woman wearing a hijab should not be seen as a threat or should not be laughed at because of her religion. That is her culture and is what they should do. People will bully others into thinking they should not do as they please. Discrimination someone because of their culture while following your culture is wrong. People should not have to endure pain because they are living their life the way they choose too.

Recommendations/solutions

Some recommendations or solutions to the issue of stereotypes and discrimination is to respect people culture and do not judge anyone for abiding by their culture. Another thing that

could be done is raising awareness to the issue. When a person sees someone being harassed, bullied, or discriminated because of how they are dressed, how they look, how they talk or by just respecting their culture; they should speak up and say something. It is not always easy to say something because people out there in the real world are dangerous so may be if it is one of those situations, the authorities should be called. A little goes a long way. In addition, jobs or schools should not reject someone because of who they are. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to get a job or go to school or even live where they want to. "Because culture and stereotypes are both learned early in life, we recommend that the first stages of avoiding stereotypes begin in childhood" (Samovar et al., 2010). This quote is a very good solution. Since both culture and stereotypes are taught during out childhood, kids should be taught to love their culture and other people's culture also. They should also be taught not to discriminate people because they look, talk or dress different from them. If parents teach their kids from young, the world will be a less hateful place. Lastly, everyone should be seen for themselves and who they are. An event that occurred should not make everyone of a certain culture look the same because everyone is different.

Conclusion

In conclusion, culture is passed down from generations to generations. Norms and values, beliefs, symbols, and language are all elements of culture. Every culture is unique in their own way. Everyone's culture should be respected because that is what shapes them. Stereotypes and discrimination against cultures are unjust and should not be allowed. People should be able to freely express their culture or tradition without being hated for it. Our cultures may be different,

but it is what makes us who we are and united. This is how we make friends and families.

Uniting with other cultures is always a good thing and should always be that way.

Annotated Bibliography

Frese, M. (2015). Cultural practices, norms, and values. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46*(10), 1327–1330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115600267>

This is a scholarly source. It will be a great source for my research paper because it talks about cultural practices and the elements of culture which are norms and values.

Griffiths, H., Keirns, N. J., Strayer, E., Cody-Rydzewski, S., Scaramuzzo, G., Sadler, T., Vyain, S., Bry, J., & Jones, F. (2017). *Introduction to sociology 2E*. OpenStax College, Rice University.

This source is one of the textbooks used in my CLDV 100 class. It will be a great source for my research paper because it includes a lot about culture and other topics surrounding culture.

Hinton, P. (2017). Implicit stereotypes and the predictive brain: Cognition and culture in “biased” person perception. *Palgrave Communications, 3*(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.86>

This is a scholarly source. It will be a great source for my research paper because it focuses on stereotypes and the biases surrounding that topic.

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Roy, C. S. (2010). *Communication between cultures*. Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

This source is one of the textbooks used in my CLDV 100 class. It will be a great source for my research paper because it includes topic such as language, stereotypes, and discrimination. These are topics that are mentioned in my paper.

References

- Frese, M. (2015). Cultural practices, norms, and values. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 46(10), 1327–1330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022115600267>
- Griffiths, H., Keirns, N. J., Strayer, E., Cody-Rydzewski, S., Scaramuzzo, G., Sadler, T., Vyain, S., Bry, J., & Jones, F. (2017). *Introduction to sociology 2E*. OpenStax College, Rice University.
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- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Roy, C. S. (2010). *Communication between cultures*. Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.