

What Is Culture and Why Does It Matter To Us?

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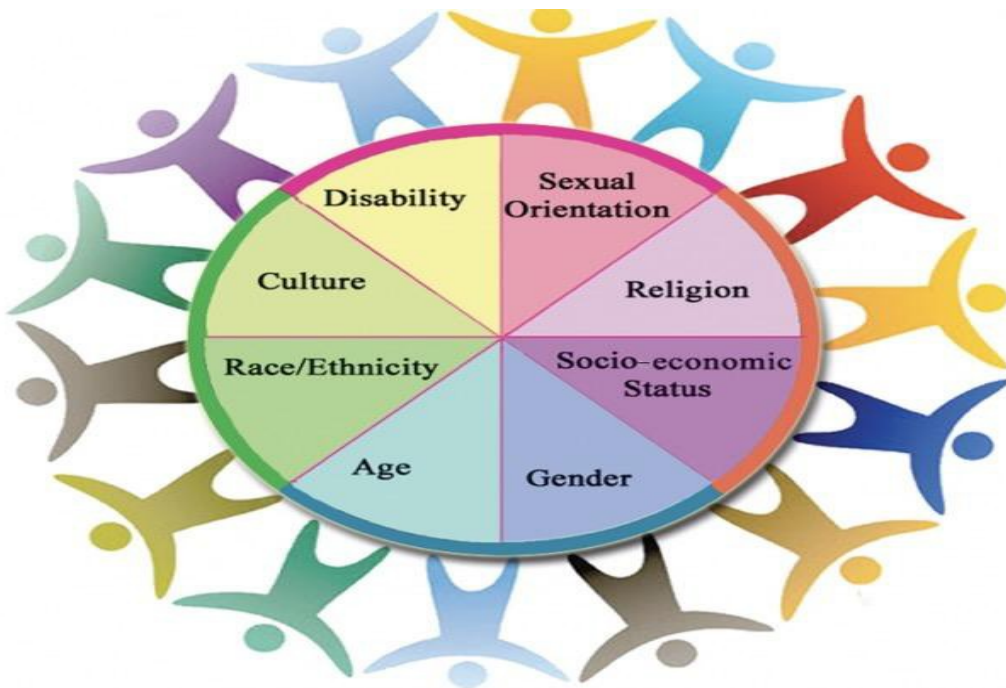
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Content	Page
Abstract.....	p.#3
Introduction.....	p#4
Background of research.....	p.# 4-5
Norms and Values.....	p.#5-7
Norms.....	p.#5
Values.....	p.#6-7
The importance of culture.....	p.#7-9
Respect.....	p.#7-8
Understanding.....	p.#18-9
Education.....	p.#9-10
My Cross Culture Experience.....	p.#9-10
Conclusion.....	p.#11
Annotated Bibliography.....	p.#11-12
References.....	p.#12
Appendix.....	p.#13-14

Abstract

This paper presents an overview of the social and cultural values. Culture is how one behaves, acts, and norms one follows which may be passed down generation by generation. Culture is how we select to measure in our society. All of our cultural values may differ yet all of them include celebrations, foods, religion, laws, and habits. Every culture has its unique values and beliefs, this can possibly cause cultural issues because many individuals say stereotypical comments and cultural shock can cause conflict. A culture's values are to determine whether or not they are doing things correctly, fairly, or wrong. Culture is shared among various groups of individuals. There is a possible chance that in some cultures they'll value something far more than other groups may value. Values vary as time changes and as people develop. Culture is what makes each country unique and interesting from others. Everyone faces different activities within their cultural beliefs. Rituals are also dissimilar in every culture. A ritual is an activity that is continuously done because it is so important to the culture. Several examples of what cultural values may include are morals, languages, arts, music, customs, traditions, beliefs and there are numerous more. Cultural values help build a society where people follow certain expectations and beliefs there may be in common. Cultural values shape and influence our society and the people in our nation. Within cultures, there could also be slight differences in cultural values between a society that may cause many disagreements and culture clashes. Cultural conflicts are a type of conflict that arises when different cultural values and beliefs clash. For example, the debate over abortion.

Introduction

A counterculture is a culture where one's norms and values of behavior differ considerably from most people in a society that view things as normal. Cultural norms are the standards an individual lives by. They are expectations and rules that allow us to guide our behavior with other people within the same or different social groups. Cultural norms are learned from our family, parents, friends, teachers and also by the people we surround ourselves with while growing up in a society.

Culture can be defined in many different ways. Our nation has become extremely diverse and multicultural since there are various people with different cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Constructs our society with people that follow similar values, and gives a unique experience of a culture and it influences people's character. Many cultures have various differences because there are a lot of different ways people celebrate holidays and people listen to different music genres. Our cultures can be similar because we have things in common such as spending time with our families but our activities might vary. Amongst our culture we all wear specific clothing to specific events, we listen to music and have our own typical dishes that allows us to identify who we are in society.

Background of Research

Experiencing different cultures and interacting with people from different cultures helps individuals view life in different perspectives. When we learn about other cultures, we establish new ways of thinking and solving problems. Embracing different cultures through travels allows people to experience what it's like to be a part of a certain community. Also gives cultural awareness and acceptance, which can help break down cultural barriers when individuals interact

with other cultures. When someone is exposed to diverse cultures it can assist us with appreciating more in life. You begin to value and respect people from other cultures when you interact with them. Attending various social groups is an excellent way of learning more about how diverse cultures are.

My experience with other cultures have made me realize that all cultures are different but we do have slight differences. All cultures have characteristics such as traditions, history, values and principles, symbols, and most importantly boundaries. We all have different norms set. It is such an amazing experience to learn about other cultures because it allows me to become a better individual, a better person. My job has definitely introduced me to various cultures. I learn something new everyday when I speak to customers and this has allowed me to appreciate all cultures.

Stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations about groups of people. They are based on one race, ethnicity, age, gender and sexual orientation. Prejudice is related to the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that someone has about the group. Prejudice is not empirical. Instead, it's a prejudice that arises outside of real-life experience. The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex. While racism is hatred directed at someone because of their color, ethnicity or national origin. I have never encountered a situation where I had to face racism but I did come across a situation in public that was absolutely disgusting, that my mother and I both had to defend the Hispanic man because of the lady that was being very disrespectful and behavior like that shouldn't be acceptable.

Norms and Values

What is the difference between norms and values? Well if we take a look at it, both can be somewhat similar. The difference between a value and a norm is that the value is related to a

general and overall ideal, whereas the norm is concrete and specifies the specific things that need to be done.

People from different cultural backgrounds eat different foods. These food preferences result in patterns of food options within a cultural or regional group. In religion, food is one of the most important parts of religious ceremonies. Everyone usually gathers and treasures those moments. Food helps us discover each other's attitudes, practices, and rituals surrounding food. Immigrants bring various varieties of food from their countries with them wherever they go. Cooking traditional food is a way of maintaining their culture even though they may move to a different location they are not accustomed to. Many cultures have norms they must follow while they are at the dining table. A norm is a social behavior that everyone must know of, and should be expected by the group. Norms can be defined as specific rules or expectations that are socially implied. Everyone should be respectful when it comes to sitting at the dining table. In some cultures everyone in the household must be seated so everyone can begin eating. While eating, in some cultures it is disrespectful to slurp your food but in other cultures slurping your food identifies as one enjoying their dish.

Clothing is such an important aspect of our daily lives. We are allowed to establish our sense of self in society. Clothing reflects the values and beliefs of individuals. Clothes are a significance of our identity and culture. It can reflect beliefs of individuals and groups. Religious groups are adapted to a certain style of clothing. In some cultures women are not allowed to wear pants instead they must wear skirts. In many cultures women are not allowed to show their hair after their wedding so they must wrap their head around with either a headscarf or a wig. This shows how clothing and accessories help demonstrate your status in society.

Everyone has their own preference of music but one similarity we may all have is that we can all agree that each culture's tunes are an important part of life while expressing ourselves as human beings. Music teaches us about language, it entertains us and we grow our cultural identity this way. Music gives us an opportunity to listen and understand a story, share ideas about it and certainly we can express ourselves with music. We learn about language while listening to music because every song has repetition, so the listeners tend to mainly focus on that part. For years, musicians have been known for expressing how they're feeling through the melody of songs while listeners are allowed to relate to the musician to find comfort in some source in the music.

The Importance of Culture

Respect

Every culture has its different beliefs which is a good thing and not anything that people should be confused about. It benefits lots of people and everything should be respected. Culture is good for bringing people together. Learning about different cultures is fun and interesting, and you can often find surprising similarities. It is fascinating to know what someone else may think about different things you may believe in. In my culture, we are big on family. We always value our time spent together, we usually always gather up at one specific home and we eat dinner together. Salvadorans enjoy socializing and are extremely friendly. Normally in my culture it is okay to speak while you're eating. Always expect lively conversation during the meal. While everyone is at the dining table everyone must say "buen provecho" meaning, "enjoy your meal". If music is being played at an event it must be turned off once everyone sits at the dining table. It is disrespectful to be using any device while you are at the dining table because this is your chance to catch up with your family and you must treasure every moment you spend with each

other. It is rude to leave immediately after eating, you are expected to stay for at least an hour after dinner to converse more with your hosts as well as the other guests that have been invited. Even though it might seem strange, in my culture it's okay to be late to family events only. Not extremely late but at least 30 minutes later it's fine.

Understanding

Understanding diverse cultures encourages us to be more accepting, tolerant, and open to others. One of the most effective methods for us to learn from each other and learn more about ourselves is to understand diverse people and their cultures. Nonverbal communication is when someone shows they are engaged in what may be going on through a nonverbal way such as eye contact, facial expressions, as well as the body language you are giving. Nonverbal communication plays an important role in our lives. It allows us the ability to improve how we engage with others and gives us the opportunity to establish meaningful interactions in our daily lives. This communication may lead people to develop stronger relationships with other individuals. Some potential obstacles can possibly be misunderstanding and / or miscommunication. Misinterpretation of non verbal messages can occur when the sender and receiver do not fully understand each other's language nor culture. "Most nonverbal communication is learned on the subconscious level", meaning that non verbal messages are the indications that occur without the use of words, only by expressions using gestures, posture, and facial expressions are all used while making a communication.

Education

The application of cultural values in education has a positive impact on several factors. It promotes a sense of belonging, identity and enhances community participation. It also promotes

understanding and understanding of history and cultural heritage. It is extremely important that every children receive an education in the United States. In other countries, this may not be mandatory. We must learn how to be respectful to one another's as well and respect each other's opinions.

My Cross Culture Experience

El Salvador is a Central American country. Of the seven Central American countries, El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated. Despite its lack of level ground, it is traditionally an agricultural country that relies mainly on coffee exports.

El Salvador achieved independence from Spain as of the 1st Mexican Empire then furthered to secede as part of the Federal Republic of Central America two years later. In 1841. Upon the republic's isolation, El Salvador became sovereign until forming a short-lived union with Honduras and Nicaragua called the Greater Republic of Central America which lasted from 1895 to 1898. El Salvador is known for being the smallest country in Central America.

The topography of El Salvador consists of various mountains, but the country does have a narrow, relatively flat coastal belt and a central plateau. One of the highest points in El Salvador is Cerro el Pital which is at about 8,956 feet, located in the northern part of the country on the border with Honduras. Tropical on the coast with rainy season from May to October and dry season from November to April, but temperate in higher regions.

The flag of El Salvador consists of three horizontal blue-white-blue stripes. The blue stripes of the flag represent the two oceans that border Central America, the Atlantic and the Pacific. The center of the flag consists of the words that say "República de El Salvador en la

América Central which means Republic of El Salvador in Central America. The 5 volcanoes represent the five states of the United Provinces of Central America.

El Salvador has many unique and exotic traditional foods. Some of their more famous dishes are pupusas which is a stuffed flatbread, tamales de elote (corn cakes), casamiento (black beans and rice), platanos fritos (fried plantains, quesadilla Salvadorean (sweet cheese poundcake) and horchata which is a sweet rice beverage. El Salvador food is particularly distinctive among the diverse cuisines of Central America.

Independence Day parades in El Salvador are traditionally led by many cars that are decorated with the Salvadoran flag, this takes place on September 15 and Salvadoran student bands prepare for these grand parades by practicing for months in advance, and on the day of families are preparing the materials to use to make the national dish in El Salvador, pupusas.

El Salvador holidays and traditions combine religious events with unique indigenous and colonial customs. The most popular religious celebrations are Easter week, August festivities, and Christmas as well.

My culture shock experiences I noticed while visiting El Salvador was the difference in language. Usually in New York City, where I grew up, everyone usually speaks more than one more language, one being English. While in El Salvador everyone only spoke one language which is Spanish. Another event I noticed while being in El Salvador was that attending elementary, middle and high school was not mandatory unlike in the USA, American laws mandate that every child be given the opportunity for an education.

Conclusion

Our differences are making the world full of diversity. We learn about culture through experiences. Culture is learned by the involvement from our surroundings and we gain knowledge about other culture values within the people in the same community or even by social media. Our values decide how each person of one's particular culture will behave and how it will lead their life.

Annotated Bibliography

My main topic was the importance of culture overall. All the resources I came across that aided me with this paper gave me the best information ever. I gained enough knowledge to recognize different culture similarities as well as differences. I had the opportunity to read about many different cultural values and norms. Everyone was super interesting and I would love it if it was possible for me to travel to different countries in order to physically experience how they live.

Michael Urick, Experiencing Different Cultures. Jul 3, 2018

The author of this blog presents his experiences as he travels to different countries due to his job. He explains his travels and what he experienced. Michael explains how every culture's food has many varieties of options.

Marie Korea, Blog about Culture. Jan 12, 2018

The author was born in Belgium, she spent most of her life in England before she moved to East Asia. As a student in an exchange program with a Chinese university, it led to her traveling to Japan and South Korea. Marie speaks about her everyday life in South Korea for the past three

years and about her local cultures and traditions that many tourists may not know of. She is now a designer and freelance travel writer in Seoul.

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Appendix



Map of El Salvador

