Symbols, Language & Culture

- A symbol is simply a thing that stands for something else
- Meanings of symbols are based on mutually understood interpretations
- Meanings can change over time
- Confusion can result from misunderstanding of meaning (lack of mutual understanding)
Similar or different?
The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

• Language is a key to understanding culture
• The structure of a language reflects the perception of experience of its native speakers
• The number and complexity of words available to describe certain things reflects cultural importance
• Example: Northern Cultures, The Inuit
Values & Beliefs: The Basis for Norms

- **Values** are ideas about what is good or bad in a society
- Values provide the basis for norms
- Eg. A society that values hard work will have norms against laziness
- **Beliefs** are ideas about the nature of reality
- Whether true or false, still have huge impact on culture
Norms...

• Rules defining appropriate and inappropriate behavior
• Can be actions that either are desired or discouraged
• are based up values and beliefs
Reciprocity between values and beliefs

1. Knowledge is power
2. A government’s primary duty is to protect its citizens
3. Conflicts should be resolved diplomatically rather than militaristically
4. The human body requires good, nutritious food to function properly.
5. The primary source of human happiness is money and material possessions
6. Ecosystems on the planet are being harmed by human activity
7. All humans are created equal and deserve to be treated with dignity
8. The Quran was revealed by God to the Prophet Mohammed by the angel Gabriel.
9. Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary
10. Upon one’s death their soul will be reincarnated into another being
Values & Beliefs Assignment

1. Choose any 3 of the previous statements of belief.
2. Write them down and list what values you think are associated with them.
3. Finally, write any norms that you think would be proposed by people who share those values/beliefs.

Remember: Beliefs are ideas about what is true. Values are what is important. Norms are actions and behaviours people should follow.
Norms: The rules we live by

February 19th, 2020
Types of Norms

- Folkways – norms without moral significance
- Mores – norms with a moral component
- Taboos – Behaviours strongly discouraged, significant punishments
- Laws – norms enforced officially by people/institutions with authority
Folkway, More, Taboo or Law?

- Eating three meals a day
- Farting in public
- Swearing in church
- Parking in front of a fire hydrant
- Cohabitation before marriage
- Eat dessert before supper
- Asking someone how much money they make?
- Leaving your dog in the car with the windows up in the summer
- Eating soup with a fork
- Slapping your mother
- Drinking and driving
- Sleeping in a bed
- Lying under oath
- Cheating on your wife
- Eating pork in Islamic and Jewish cultures
- Wearing your hat in school
How do Norms Change?

Case in Point: Smoking

• Over time norms in Western culture have changed significantly regarding smoking
• 1950 – 55% of American Men were smokers
• Down to 16% in 2019

• How have norms changed alongside smoking rates?
• Did rates of smoking drop because of norms or did norms change as rates dropped?
• How and why did values and beliefs change?
Enforcing Norms

February 20th, 2020
Enforcing Norms: Deviance & Social Control

• **Deviance** is behaviour that violates norms
• **Social Control**: What keeps deviance in check
• **Internal Social Control** – your conscience, guilt and shame
• **External Social Control → Sanctions** – rewards and punishments used to encourage people to follow norms
• **Formal sanctions** – imposed by persons given special authority
• **Informal sanctions** – rewards or punishments that can be applied by most members of a group
NO LIFEGUARD ON DUTY

NO DOGS ON BEACH
Really?? 7900 Block of Fairchild in Winnetka. #droughtshaming @ericgarcetti
#CecilTheLion - Gentle protector of 6 cubs. Loved by many. Killed by Dentist Walter Palmer Office in Bloomington, MN pic.twitter.com/2n2Xznbs8Mx
Donna B.
Sarasota, FL

7/28/2015

Please beware of Dr. Walter Palmer. He's a serial killer of innocent animals. Do you want him working on your teeth. Who knows when he'll get the urge to kill!!!!!!!
PALMER
There's a DEEP CAVITY waiting for YOU!
Journal #3

• Is it effective and/or appropriate to use shame as a social control to sanction deviant behavior?