

Cultural Values: views and definitions

- “Cultural values are the most fundamental framework of the deep structure of a culture ...” “Cultural values dictate what one ought or ought not to do.”
- “A set of explicit or implicit conceptions that distinguish an individual or characteristic of a group from another ...”
- Cultural values are communicated through verbal and nonverbal symbols. They determine our communication patterns. (Chen, Starosta: 348)
- Concern how people should treat each other, the way people should work, the proper kinds of recreation, the correct relation to the supernatural, the best ways to relate to other societies, the best kinds of artifacts, how to socialize children, and so on. (D’Andrade: 4)
- Examples: individualism, family, religion, materialism, human nature, science and technology, progress and change, competition, work and leisure, equality, gender roles, nature and the environment, time, formality and informality, talk, silence, assertiveness and interpersonal harmony.

The meaning of “value”

- Simultaneously something one should do, something that is enjoyable, something wanted, something that is right.
- When “people say they value something highly, or that something is very important to them, they are rating this something highly not just on the basis of criteria concerning enjoyment or obligation or moral rectitude or desire, but as an integrated sum of all these.” (D’Andrade: 135)

Classification of values

- Organized patterns of values
 - value orientations: liberal, conservative, individualistic, collective, communal, interdependent, traditional, modern, postmodern, mystic, ascetic, evangelical,...
 - associated with institutions: capitalistic, socialistic, democratic, authoritarian,...(D’Andrade: 12)
- Institutionalized values
 - normative or social values
 - values that “people agree *should* be valued in enacting some *role* or performing in some *group*.” (ibid.: 121)
 - institutions, roles, and organizations possess values *apart from* the personal values of their members;
 - institutionalized values are “collectively agreed upon value criteria that apply to role performance” (ibid.: 123)

➤ Internalized values

- “a person believes some object or event is good, when the person experiences a strong sense of its goodness and responds with the feelings and motivations that are appropriate to such an appraisal.” (Sapiro; quoted in D’Andrade: 11)

Issues

- Conflict between institutionalized and personal values
 - “values are always a compromise in a tension between opposing tendencies.”
 - To do what is right versus doing what one wants; to do as one is obligated versus to do what one enjoys (ibid.: 136)
 - Example: the Vietnamese immigrants and their conflict between their disposition to achieve and the obligations to the family. The collectivistic values of the Vietnamese mark the line in the conflict between setting one’s own goals and accepting the goals of the group.

Literature:

Chen, Guo-Ming, Starosta, William, J. “Intercultural Awareness.” In Samovar, Larry A., Porter, Richard, E. (eds.) *Intercultural Communication*. Belmont, USA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003, pp. 344 -353

D’Andrade, Roy. *A Study of Personal and Cultural Values: American, Japanese, and Vietnamese*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008