

CHICKEN SOUP & *Crawdad Gumbo*

Brought to you by

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December 2006

Brought to you by

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the key

RESPECT

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First

What is America?

When did America become America?

Where do Americans live?

Who is an American?

How do you become an American?

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**What ethnic groups are these guys in?
What information are you getting? Are
they Americans? How do you know?**



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What is culture?

Culture is a system of shared

- values
- norms
- artifacts and symbols
- and behaviors
- transmitted through forms of communication (such as language)
- that are learned through experience
- and change over time

**Culture is reflected in our social interaction with our
relatives, peers, patients and members of other social
groups**

Iraqi woman with child



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Culture is

transmitted through many modes of communication

- verbal and visual
- attitudes and values
- body language
- sounds
- smells and tastes
- physical affection
- greetings and a person's name
- proximity and touching
- food (so what is your favorite food?????)

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Culture is

Consider this

- During a physical exam a physician asks her Korean first generation immigrant patient "are you feeling blue"? The patient says no and yet the physician senses that her patient is emotionally depressed.
- In the English language the word blue can mean that a person is feeling depressed or the color blue. In the Korean language the word blue is the color blue. The meaning of the word blue was **transmitted** to the Korean patient by her parents.
- This is a cultural miscommunication. If you think there might be a cultural miscommunication, try changing your words or ask your patron what the word you used means to her. When you tell her that blue means a color and also can mean emotional depression you will be **transmitting cultural information** to her.
- **I'm transmitting right now, think of all the ways I'm doing that**

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Search for

- **depression and Asians (broad)**
- **depression and Koreans (narrow)**

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Lakota Sioux man



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Why does it make a difference?

If you said Native American or North American Indian do you need to know about different tribes? (think birth and death rituals)

If you saw a “white guy” in the photograph would you know if he was Irish, Polish, or German, or Swedish? Do you need to know or are all "white guys" alike? (think genetics)

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Culture is

Learned

Culture is **social** not genetic. Culture is **learned** through experience. A Japanese infant raised in the United States will not acquire Japanese cultural traits unless exposed to them while growing up rather they will acquire American cultural traits.

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Culture is

You **learn** cultural information formally and informally from

- your family
- age mates
- gender/sexuality group
- at schools
- in religious institutions

You **learn** the culture of the social groups you belong to, including

- the military
- your profession
- your social class

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Search for how do they learn about

- Japanese adolescents and birth control
- Latina young adults and condoms
- Irish male child and alcohol

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Culture has

Symbols

- **Symbols** are most simply something that stands for something else, **language is a symbol set** with letters, sounds, and words that have meaning
- Some things in health care that carry a **symbolic** load
 - physician's white coat
 - stethoscopes
- Other things in our society that carry a **symbolic** load
 - American flag called the "Stars and Stripes"
 - cell phones

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Consider this

- A physician's patient has been told that people who wear white coats in health care clinics are physicians. The white coat is a **symbol** of power.
- Imagine their surprise to find that nurses and other health care providers also wear white coats (are they a **symbol** of power for nurses?)

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Search for

- How elders perceive nursing homes
- What attitudes do African Americans have about physicians
- Are patients worried that someone will find out they have HIV

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Maori man



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Artifacts

Artifacts are the objects of human cultural creativity and labor and these artifacts can have symbolic meaning and value.

The following **artifacts** all carry a symbolic meaning beyond their use

- stethoscopes
- pills and injections
- white physician coats
- clinics and hospitals
- X-ray or MRI technologies

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Consider this

- Among the Hmong, Western hospitals may be viewed as a place one goes to die, and X-ray machines and injections (**artifacts with symbolic load**) may be perceived to cause illness rather than to help diagnose or cure illness.

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Iraqi boy and girl



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Language

Language, a symbol set, is used to communicate the meaning of our thoughts and feelings, and enabling the members of a social group that **uses the same language** to interact and cooperate.

Humans use **language** to

- define the meaning of something, such as perception of illness or wellness
- describe life experiences, such as feelings of pain and family histories

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Consider this

- If a physician only speaks Spanish and his patient only speaks English they will have a problem.
- The physician may want to consider using a medical language interpreter, either telephone or in-person.
- As a librarian you too may encounter a person who doesn't speak fluent English then what?

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Search for

- **How do you find patient education in languages other than English?**
- **Is all Spanish the same?**
- **What about easy reader materials and who are they for?**

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What are yours?

Tradition, normal, natural, custom

What are yours ethnic?

- **Celebrations**
- **How you do birth and death**
- **How you name a child (what is the ritual process)**
- **Traditional foods you eat**
- **Traditional clothing (you might not wear)**
- **Traditional roles for females and males**
- **Traditional wedding rituals**

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Old Japanese man



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What difference does it make?

- **Asians are from many geographic areas, the most populous “group” in the world and made up of MANY different ethnic groups who have their own distinct cultures.**
- **Do all Italians look alike? Do all blacks look alike (what is black anyway?)**

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Culture has

Values

Values are defined as standards that members of a society or ethnic group require each other to abide by, such as what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, beautiful or ugly, admirable or shameful.

Some **basic values** in society in the United States are

- individualism
- freedom
- accountability
- timeliness
- equality

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Norms

- **Norms are rules in a society** or ethnic group that define how we ought to act in a certain circumstance.

At present in the United States, for example

- waiting in line in an orderly fashion is a norm
- not cheating on a medical school exam is a **norm**
- assisted suicide for terminally ill patients is against the law in most states

- Continued

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Some norms are so embedded in our culture that we do not notice them or know where they came from.

When asked why we do a certain thing we answer

- that it is our way
- our law
- it is our custom
- or tradition
- or we just don't know why

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What happened to these guys? What ethnic groups are they from? What "culture" were they in and what "culture" are they in now?



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Culture

Changes over time

All cultures are **never static** and change over time because of the **social interactions** that people have with each other. People are always reproducing and transforming their culture.

Youth may embrace traditions from their elders but they may vary those traditions to reflect their current needs and cultural situations.

Continued

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Culture

Culture **changes over time** in ethnic groups and societies from internal and external pressures, some of which are

- social
- environmental
- technological
- historical
- political
- religious

Some cultures **change slower than others** depending on the types and intensity of the pressures on them. **Think of one that is in the United States.**

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**What ethnic group is this fellow from?
What else do we know about him?**



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Ethnicity

People in an ethnic group may share

- ancestry (eg., African-Americans ancestors are from Africa)
- ethnic group name (eg. Italian)
- particular beliefs (eg. health beliefs) (**learned and transmitted**)
- **values and norms** (eg. the norm is to birth a baby in a hospital)
- **language** (eg. Vietnamese)
- historical experience (eg. Holocaust) (**change over time**)
- food preferences (eg. pasta or greens)
- traditions and celebrations (eg. Dingus Day) (**symbols and artifacts**)
- a home land (eg. China)
- a sense of solidarity (**culture**)

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Consider this

- Everyone is part of an **ethnic** group(s). You might be Iroquois, Jewish, Italian, Irish, Hmong, Sudanese, or Russian. You may be a citizen of the United States and call yourself an American but that is your **nationality** not your **ethnicity**.

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“Traditional” Family in the United States

Family is the most basic unit in the United States and is based on contractual (marriage), biological (birth), or ritual Relations (symbolic ties). Families vary in how they are made up and how they function.

A “traditional family”, in the United States, consists of

- a male and female (is this true now?)
- who are legally married (what does that mean?)
- and includes any of their biological or adopted children (can foster kids or your sister’s kids count?)

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Culture has

Families usually

- live together (domestic unit)
- share economic resources
- and care for their children

Families have role obligations to

- provide food and shelter
- Procreate (do all families procreate?)
- educate their children
- and care for elder parents

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What are yours?

- Your personal “traditional” family
 - Who speaks for the family?
 - Who has the most power inside the home?
 - Is there extended family?
 - Are their god parents?
 - Are adopted children allowed?
 - How do you excommunicate a family member?
 - How are family members who have a disability treated?
 - How are elders treated?

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Proximity rules

- I'm your new client and I'm from England. You on the other hand are Puerto Rican.
- Your **proximity or personal space requirements** are far closer than mine. When you get about six inches from me I begin backing up on the exam table. My proximity requirements are usually 18-24 inches.

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Touching rules

Think about touching. Who is allowed to touch whom in your family? Who is allowed to touch you at work? Who is allowed to touch you sexually? Who is allowed to touch people in your family?

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Culture is a complicated and complex concept. We learn it and transmit it in many ways. It has the artifacts we have made and carries huge symbolic loads around for us.

Culture informs us how to live, speak, dress, eat, raise our children, be sexual, how to conduct relationships, what to think and more.

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thank you!!

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