

List and define the 5 components of all human cultures essay sample

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There are five components of human culture; symbols, language, values and beliefs, norms, and material culture and technology. Symbols are anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture. Language is a system of symbols that allows people to communicate with each other. Values are culturally defined standards by which people assess desirability, goodness, and beauty, and that serve as broad guidelines for social living. Beliefs are specific statements that people hold to be true. Norms are rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members. Technology is knowledge that people use to make a way of life in their surroundings, which is reflected by material culture.

I think that all of these components are found in all cultures because humans are all from one single species. This reverts to Sociobiology, or ways in which human biology affects how we create culture. We are all made the same, with the same foundation for thought; meaning that when it comes down to it we all think the same about very general things. This allows all cultures to also have several commonalities among their foundations. Symbols are probably the most common things taken for granted. The simplest most everyday things are symbols. A wave of the hand can be a friendly gesture of hello. However, if not done properly with all the fingers in the upright position it can be a rude gesture and a great sign of disrespect. The honking of a car horn is a symbol to grab someone's attention to their surroundings, i. e. the panic button on a key chain. Even something as common as a kiss is a symbol of love and caring. Language can be words or sounds that are spoken or words that are written.

For instance some people believe that dogs communicate with each other through barking, this may be their own language. In the ancient days of the Pharaohs of Egypt there were hieroglyphics that were written on the walls of tombs. Several Indians of the Americas also had languages that were symbols written on cave walls but they also had an actual spoken language. Even whales speak to each other by sending different sound waves through the ocean waters. Values are ways that people set guidelines for social living. Beliefs are statements that people firmly stand by to be true. Several examples of both can be found by looking at the Christian religion. The Ten Commandments are a great source. "You shall have no other gods before me", for Christians this statement is both a belief and a value. "Honor your father and mother" is a statement that Christians hold true and also one that they set their standards of living by. The third example of values and beliefs is "You shall not murder" a statement they stand by and live their lives by.

Norms are also a lot like values because they guide society's members. One example of a norm is not cheating on a test; we all know this is wrong and should not be done. Committing murder and running a red light are also examples of norms; we have all been taught that these are both wrong.

Material culture and technology are things that I believe Americans greatly take for granted. Not many of us think much about our kids learning about the trip that Neil Armstrong took to the moon. That single trip is an example of advanced technology. iPods are another example; you can fit hundreds of music songs into your pocket on a razor thin device. Plasma TV's are yet another example of material and technological advances. You can simply hang these picture perfect TV's anywhere on the wall.

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All of these components of human culture are very much so interrelated. Symbols and language have a large impact of human culture. For instance if the symbol of a heart was all of the sudden changed to mean hate instead of love then the word love in the English language would also have to be changed to mean hate. When you told someone ' I love you,' you would really be saying ' I hate you'. The values and beliefs of the word love would also have to be changed to accommodate the word hate. Being that norms go hand in hand with values and beliefs they would also have to be changed. Material things most definitely would change because giving someone a heart shaped balloon would no longer symbolize love it would symbolize hate. Something new would have to be made to symbolize love, this would also incorporate technology. Technology would have to be brought in to come up with a new and unique way to show love. This example shows how all the five components are changed by one another.