ELEMENTS OF SURFACE AND DEEP CULTURE

Surface Culture

Elements of surface culture include the tangible things related to a group of people. When we speak of a group of people as a whole, the possibility exists of stereotyping everyone within the group. This often leads to overgeneralizations about a particular ethnic group and ultimately provides erroneous information rather than clarifying the situation.

Every cultural group has undergone, and is undergoing, processes of acculturation and assimilation. However, every cultural group maintains certain customs that are unique to that group. These customs and practices become associated with the group until it is difficult to think of one without the other.

Surface culture includes:

1. Food (food and culinary contributions)
2. Holidays (patriotic holidays, religious observations, and personal rites and celebrations)
3. Arts (traditional and contemporary music, visual and performing arts, and drama)
4. Folklore (folk tales, legends, and oral history)
5. History (historical and humanitarian contributions, and social and political movements)
6. Personalities (historical, contemporary, and local figures)

Deep Culture

Elements of deep culture deal with the feelings and attitudes that we learn by being members of particular groups. Each culture stipulates certain behaviors that are to be followed in particular situations and promotes particular attitudes. The following are examples:
Ceremony  (what a person is to say and do on particular occasions)
Courtship & Marriage (attitudes toward dating, marriage, and raising a family)
Esthetics (the beautiful things of culture: literature, music, dance, art architecture, and how they are enjoyed)
Ethics (how a person learns and practices honesty, fair play principles, moral thought, etc.)
Family ties (how a person feels toward his or her family, friends, classmates, roommates, and others)
Health & Medicine (how a person reacts to sickness, death, soundness of mind and body, medicine, etc.)
Folk Myths (attitudes toward heroes, traditional stories, legendary characters, superstitions, etc.)
Gestures & Kinesics (forms of nonverbal communication or reinforced speech, such as the use of the eyes, the hands, and the body)
Grooming & Presence (the cultural differences in personal behavior and appearance, such as laughter, smile, voice quality, gait, poise, hair style, cosmetics, dress, etc.)
Ownership (attitudes toward ownership of property, individual rights, loyalties, beliefs, etc.)
Precedence (accepted manners toward older persons, peers, and younger persons)
Rewards & Privileges (attitudes toward motivation, merit, achievement, service, social position, etc.)
Rights & Duties (attitudes toward personal obligations, voting taxes, military service, legal rights, personal demands, etc.)
Religion (attitude toward the divine and the supernatural and how they affect a person’s thoughts and actions)
Sex roles (how a person views, understands, and relates to a member of the opposite sex and what deviations are allowed and expected)
Space & Proxemics (attitudes toward self and land; the accepted distances between individuals within a culture)
Subsistence (attitudes about providing for oneself, the young, the old, and who protects whom)
Taboos (attitudes and beliefs about doing things against culturally accepted patterns)
Concepts of Time (attitudes toward being early, on time, or late)
Values (attitudes toward freedom, education, cleanliness, cruelty, crime, etc.)
Source: