Culture

Sociology 101
Principles of Sociology
Spring 2008
Elements of Culture

- Symbols
- Language
- Gestures
- Norms
- Sanctions
- Values
Symbolic Meaning

**Symbol**: Something to which people attach meaning, and use as a basis for communication

**Language**: A system of symbols that can be combined in an infinite number of ways to communicate with others.

**Gesture**: Using one’s body to communicate with others, conveying meaning without words
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>An expectation or rule of behavior that derives from a group’s values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanction</td>
<td>Positive or negative reactions to the ways in which people observe or adhere to norms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Formal norms enforced by the state</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mores</td>
<td>The strongest norms that elicit the harshest sanctions, and that reflect society’s most cherished principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folkways</td>
<td>Informal norms that govern everyday behavior</td>
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**Values**

**Value:** A group’s collective ideas about what is worthwhile or desirable in life; standards by which a group defines what is good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, etc.

Values shape individual preferences and choices