How can we define culture?

* The world culture itself is not easily definable. **Matsumoto (2004)** mentions a book from 1998 that analysed 128 different definitions of culture.
* Culture is widely used in daily language but is difficult to define precisely.

Different aspects of culture

* Certain aspects of culture are visible and explicit.
* For example: food, clothes, music, religion, rituals etc.
* These visible aspects of culture are sometimes called "surface culture”.
* Other aspects of culture are not visible and implicit.
* For example: beliefs, attitudes and values.
* These manifestations of culture are sometimes called “deep culture”.

How should culture be used?

* According to **Kuschel (2004),** culture should not be used as an explanation of behaviour since the concept of culture is so vague and includes so many variables.

**Learning outcome: Define the terms culture and cultural norms**

**Culture can be defined as:**

‘common rules that regulate interactions and behaviour in a group, as well as a number of shared values and attitudes in the group’.

**Lonner (1995)**

‘a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and behaviours’. **Matsumoto (2004)**

Hofstede (2002) described culture as “mental software.”

Culture is dynamic

Culture is not fixed, it changes over time in response to environmental and social changes.

**Cultural norms**

Cultural norms can be defined as the rules that a specific group uses for stating what is seen as appropriate and inappropriate behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes.

What do cultural norms do?

Cultural norms give people a sense of order and control in their lives as well as a sense of safety and belonging. Cultural norms may encompass communication style, whom to marry and how, child-rearing practices, or interaction between generations.

What are examples of cultural norms?

Cultural norms can also be explicit, for example, wear uniform to school. Or implicit, for example, don’t tell someone they look fat. *Rememeber that these norms do not apply to all cultures.*

Cultural norms are often passed down from generation to generation by observational learning by the group’s gatekeepers (parents, teachers, media, peers etc.).