

BEYOND



Cultural Bridges

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The call for customs, rituals and traditions

Denisa Calin



Rituals, customs and traditions are essentially specific forms of behaviors that tend to be perpetuated and conserved throughout contextual change. This means that everything, from the way we eat or celebrate, to the way we transaction possessions is essentially a ritualized act, a custom we've practiced until it has become the norm – or “normality”. In evolutionary psychology terms, we only perpetuate the actions and rituals that fulfill a need.

So what's the need behind preserving customs and traditions?

First of all, we as humans are genetically built to incorporate our forefathers' experiences and knowledge, as part of our natural survival mechanism. But the need for preserving customs and traditions goes beyond the biology of being a human being.

If you look at it from an evolutionary perspective, with perpetuating our ancestors' behavioral patterns, we replicate and improve on ways to survive and thrive, as validated within our species.



Essentially, we're fulfilling personal and societal needs in patterns of behavior we've learned (or know inherently) are successful.

Customs, rituals and traditions fall within the broader category of contextually forged means of addressing reality and existence in a way in which we manage to fulfill a couple of important aspects:

1. Personally and socially, it allows us to define our identity, just as our unique DNA defines us as individuals;
2. They act as a means to satisfying our personal needs that span from basic functioning to complex relational and existential needs;
3. They ensure functioning, identity and coherence within our social groups;
4. They act as a means of inter-group communication, ensuring connection to other groups and our species as a whole.

Essentially, our whole way of life is impacted by the customs and traditions we've conserved, adapted and improved throughout time. And this spans from everything

from the way we eat, or cross the street, to the way in which we celebrate. The way in which we adhere to, replicate or introduce new customs, traditions or rituals is very much influenced by our history, and very much an inherent trait we carry on as human beings (whether we're aware of it or not).

And this existential dance that we do is part of our cyclic transition throughout existence, in which we become enriched and improved, retaining the essence of who we are on a personal, group and species level.

Balanced scales?

Yiannis Kalfopoulos



If you sit down and observe the people around you, you will probably realize that there are many unbalanced aspects within our society. Social inequality is one of the taboos of today's modern culture.

The simplest definition of social inequality is that something it is not equal in relation with something else – from a social perspective.

Social inequality occurs when resources in a society are not distributed in a fair way, but rather through norms based on the way we define people and put them in categories. It is the differentiated preferential access to social goods based on a social group's power, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual preferences.

The social rights that are generally restricted to some members of a population, that differ from said population's perceived norm, include: access to the labor market, income, access to healthcare, freedom of speech, the right to education, political representation, and participation within societal affairs.



For example, gender inequality as a form of social inequality, occurs when women and men are treated differently and separate them. Sex and gender based discrimination, called sexism , and it is major factor to social inequality.

Another, less apparent but very acute form of social inequality is based on a person's age group. In doing this, a person is discriminated against and treated differently because of their age. And within our society we can see this happening often in situations such as these: promotions, recruitment, access to resources or funding.

Racial or ethnic inequality is the result of social distinctions between racial and ethnic categories within a society and often established based on characteristics such as skin color and other physical characteristics, or an individual's place of origin or culture. Racism, as an extreme form of social inequality, happens when some races are privileged and preferred to do things within a given society. In some societies, ethnic privileges may apply, where one enjoys preferential treatment for belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Uneven and unfair as it may seem, our modern day culture comes with the risk of adhering to socially constructed categories, capable of restricting or enabling social status. And this is a challenge we all face, if we intend to not only survive, but thrive.

I was discriminated because of my...

Kristi Karampatzaki

For the past few decades the ideology of discrimination is more and more present, in any kind of social interaction. Societies are slowly desensitizing to incidents of discrimination. Although everyone is familiar with the idea of discrimination not anyone could answer the question: *what is discrimination?*

So, according to official declarations discrimination is:

- the treatment of an individual or group with prejudice and injustice
- the denial of basic human rights, especially the rights of race, sex, religion, class and education

The main types of discrimination that are actually against the law include forms of discrimination based on a person's:

- age
- disability
- being or becoming a transsexual person
- being pregnant or on maternity
- race, including color, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- education

All of the above are called protected characteristics and they are legally set within the Equality Act of 2010. They were set based on the findings derived from a short-term research conducted on an Erasmus plus program. The following passages from the interviews reflect different types of discrimination and specific examples of incidents.



"It was a teacher in high school and discriminated students to good and bad ones. And he actually left students out of the classroom just because he didn't want them. He thought we were but influence for the others and this actually is what creates the stereotype of excellence in school".



In this case discrimination is based on the notion of excellence in school and is directly linked to social and economic discrimination reproduced within the educational environment. Furthermore, education about

human rights and discrimination has to be a priority for any educational system.

“ [...] a teacher of mine saw me wearing the hijab [...] he a actually a teacher that i really loved. And he told me «don't be stupid, don't lose your mind”.

This second case is an example of discrimination based on religion. An interesting fact is that this teacher is from the same county and the same nation. And even though he was used to it, he was unable to manage the diversity and the personal will of his student.

The above examples are just a small sample of discrimination's many damaging forms. And this is to remind us of the extreme urgency to protect human beings' rights to individuality and non-discrimination, at all levels of the modern society we live in today.



Things to know when you travel abroad

Ümmü Gülsevım ÖZENTÜRK

Eugeniu Straistaru

Everyone has a dream about travelling in different countries. But are we really prepared to pack up and go? People keep being told that they should get out of their comfort zone at least once in their lifetime and explore the world. If you open your eyes and look around, there are plenty of places you need to visit. The only question is: how should you really be travelling?

To help you with this dilemma, we've pinpointed six things you need to know if you want to travel abroad.

- 1) Do not be scared, because your body can adapt really fast in any environment. If other people can do it, we can too. Do not be afraid to experience everything around you. The World is your home.
- 2) Not every place is suitable for visiting in any season. Unfortunately in-season prices are really high. To avoid that you need to be an early bird and reserve your hotel and your flights in advance. Also, we suggest you avoid travel agencies because they are really expensive.



- 3) If you are planning to travel soon enough you should download some apps for your smartphone. Technology helps a lot when it comes to travelling. It's highly

recommend that you to get apps like : Google maps,UBER, tripadvisor, booking etc.



- 4) Learn about the country's national policies about tourism, especially if they require visa or not. If so, you should get one as soon as possible.
- 5) Plan your trip and organize everything in advance, because you will be more relaxed and happy during your travels. Try to keep notes in your travel notebook and all your experiences, thoughts and future plans.
- 6) Last but not least, in order to avoid getting robbed you should definitely use your credit card and only if necessary cash money.

Culture Quiz

- 1) Which of the following is not a type of discrimination according to the equality Act?
 - a) sexual orientation
 - b) disability
 - c) different diet habits

- 2) What is the best way to carry your money while traveling?
 - a) in cash
 - b) in the bank account
 - c) on credit card and few cash

- 3) What are customs traditions and rituals?
 - a) superstitions
 - b) behavioral patterns we replicate for evolutionary purposes
 - c) reasons to celebrate

- 4) Social inequality it is about:
 - a) denying certain social groups privileges and rights, otherwise accessible to the majority of a population
 - b) alienating someone, based on their being different from a population's perceived norm
 - c) all of the above

Correct answers

- 1 – c
- 2 – c
- 3 – b
- 4 – c