

Culture

Culture – learned ideas and behaviors that are acquired by people as members of a society

One definition but still difficult to define

Culture Against Racism

In the early 20th century culture was developed and enveloped by the idea of race

A race was seen as distinct biological subpopulations or even subspecies of humanity

The idea of race was seen through the lens of various traits such as: skin color, hair texture, other visible traits, language, dress, and even intelligence

We're number 1! Oh, yeah and you're not! Why did people first gravitate to this idea of race?

Franz Boas (1858-1942) wanted to show differences existed in a social (socialization) not biological way

It's not necessarily where you come from (biology) but how you got here (enculturation)

Maybe we actually are quite like on the macro scale (human universals)

Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) believe all human experience the same basic human needs

What you look like does not dictate who you. When you are born you are able to learn any language in the world!

Sherman Washburn (from Berkeley) helped lessen the idea of race even more after WW II. He focused on the impact of adaptation on human variation.

The difficult today is deny race as biology while still dealing with race as a cultural construct

The Evolution of Culture

Next step: natural selection on genes helps produce adaptation and survival by learning cultural practices

Thanks for the help grandpa! I am sure glad I don't have to learn to make fire on my own!
Cultural Inheritance theory (similar to memes)

Cultural activities reshape the environment which changes the pressures we are under.
Technology will make my life so much easier....what...why am I so damn busy now! That darn niche construction!

Culture and Symbolism

;) You get this, a chimp won't. Why? We use symbols. A symbol is something that stands for something else. There is no necessary link between the symbol and what it stands for.

Animals can learn but only humans have symbolic encoding

Slippage can occur so symbolic systems need to be kept systemic or coherent so "face"!

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Ethnocentrism – viewing one's own way of life as natural and as naturally better than other, different ways of life

We are better than you because...well because we just are better! We have "culture" and you don't so nyah!

Ethnographic fieldwork helped to develop the position of cultural relativism. It is the interpretation of specific beliefs and practices in the context of the culture to which they belong

Good idea but even good ideas can be misused. "Savages" became people "stuck in the past"

The Boundaries of Culture

How sharp are the boundaries of a culture? Will I get cut up if I try to step out of the boundary?

Does any culture live in a vacuum? Is any culture truly fixed?

The Concept of Culture in a Global World

So if culture is porous what does the ethnographer do? Make sure to tell the reader who and what is being studied

Bedouin youth, tourist and travelers

If culture has uniformity: one group within a culture can use it to suppress others

Ruling groups who took over after the colonial powers left Africa

If culture has uniformity: it can create commonalities like language and a sense of relationship if from a great distance

Anyone ever meet the president?

Apartheid in South Africa used the idea to control people by moving them to “homelands” in rural areas since they could not understand “modern” culture

Culture: Discussion and Debate

One society/one culture may not be correct however the idea of culture is still relevant and important

There are macro cultural similarities with micro culture differences

Now cultures are able to pick and choose what they want to bring in or leave out of their culture

Don't worry, no culture will become “Americanized” just because McDonald's comes to town!