Global PAD Core Concepts

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What is Culture?

A Compilation of Quotations

Compiled by

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Definitions of Culture

Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define. In 1952, the American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions. Apte (1994: 2001), writing in the ten-volume *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, summarized the problem as follows: 'Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature.'

The following extract from Avruch provides an historical perspective to some of the ways in which the term has been interpreted:

> Much of the difficulty [of understanding the concept of culture] stems from the different usages of the term as it was increasingly employed in the nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, it was used in three ways (all of which can be found today as well). First, as exemplified in Matthew Arnolds' *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), culture referred to special intellectual or artistic endeavors or products, what today we might call "high culture" as opposed to "popular culture" (or "folkways" in an earlier usage). By this definition, only a portion – typically a small one – of any social group "has" culture. (The rest are potential sources of anarchy!) This sense of culture is more closely related to aesthetics than to social science.
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> Partly in reaction to this usage, the second, as pioneered by Edward Tylor in *Primitive Culture* (1870), referred to a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on a development (evolutionary) continuum (in Lewis Henry Morgan's scheme) from "savagery" through "barbarism" to "civilization". It is worth quoting Tylor's definition in its entirety; first because it became the foundational one for anthropology; and second because it partly explains why Kroeber and Kluckhohn found definitional fecundity by the early 1950s. Tylor's definition of culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". In contrast to Arnold's view, all folks "have" culture, which they acquire by virtue of membership in some social group – society. And a whole grab bag of things, from knowledge to habits to capabilities, makes up culture.
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> The extreme inclusivity of Tylor's definition stayed with anthropology a long time; it is one reason political scientists who became interested in cultural questions in the late 1950s felt it necessary to delimit their relevant cultural domain to "political culture". But the greatest legacy of Tylor's definition lay in his "complex whole" formulation. This was accepted even by those later anthropologists who forcefully rejected his evolutionism. They took it to mean that cultures were wholes – integrated systems. Although this assertion has great heuristic value, it also, as we shall argue below, simplifies the world considerably.
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> The third and last usage of culture developed in anthropology in the twentieth-century work of Franz Boas and his students, though with roots in the eighteenth-century writings of Johann von Herder. As Tylor reacted to Arnold to establish a scientific (rather than aesthetic) basis for culture, so Boas reacted against Tylor and other social evolutionists. Whereas the evolutionists stressed the universal character of a single culture, with different societies arrayed from savage to civilized, Boas emphasized the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. Moreover he dismissed the value judgments he found inherent in both the Arnoldian and Tylorean views of culture; for Boas, one should never differentiate high from low culture, and one ought not differentially valorize cultures as savage or civilized.
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> Here, then, are three very different understandings of culture. Part of the difficulty in the term lies in its multiple meanings. But to compound matters, the difficulties are not merely conceptual or semantic. All of the usages and understandings come attached to, or

can be attached to, different political or ideological agendas that, in one form or another, still resonate today.

Avruch 1998: 6–7

Reflection

Look at the following definitions of culture, and consider the characteristics of culture that they each draw attention to:

'Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.'

Tyler (British anthropologist) 1870: 1; cited by Avruch 1998: 6

'Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.'

Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952: 181; cited by Adler 1997: 14

'Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.'

T.Schwartz 1992; cited by Avruch 1998: 17

'[Culture] is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.'

Hofstede 1994: 5

'... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.'

Matsumoto 1996: 16

'Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.'

Spencer-Oatey 2008: 3

Some Key Characteristics of Culture

1. *Culture is manifested at different layers of depth*

In analyzing the culture of a particular group or organization it is desirable to distinguish three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions.

When one enters an organization one observes and feels its *artifacts.* This category includes everything from the physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity, and other phenomena, to the more permanent archival manifestations such as company records, products, statements of philosophy, and annual reports.

Schein 1990: 111

This level [visible artifacts] of analysis is tricky because the data are easy to obtain but hard to interpret. We can describe "how" a group constructs its environment and "what" behaviour patterns are discernible among the members, but we often cannot understand the underlying logic – "why" a group behaves the way it does.

To analyze why members behave the way they do, we often look for the *values* that govern behaviour, which is the second level in Figure 1. But as values are hard to observe directly, it is often necessary to infer them by interviewing key members of the organization or to content analyze artifacts such as documents and charters. However, in identifying such values, we usually note that they represent accurately only the manifest or *espoused* values of a culture. That is they focus on what people *say* is the reason for their behaviour, what they ideally would like those reasons to be, and what are often their rationalizations for their behaviour. Yet, the underlying reasons for their behaviour remain concealed or unconscious.
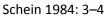
To really understand a culture and to ascertain more completely the group's values and over behaviour, it is imperative to delve into the *underlying assumptions*, which are typically unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel. Such assumptions are themselves learned responses that originated as espoused values. But, as a value leads to a behavior, and as that behaviour begins to solve the problem which prompted it in the first place, the value gradually is transformed into an underlying assumption about how things really are. As the assumption is increasingly taken for granted, it drops out of awareness.

Taken-for-granted assumptions are so powerful because they are less debatable and confrontable than espoused values. We know we are dealing with an assumption when we encounter in our informants a refusal to discuss something, or when they consider us "insane" or "ignorant" for bringing something up. For example, the notion that businesses should be profitable, that schools should educate, or that medicine should prolong life are assumptions, even though they are often considered "merely" values.

To put it another way, the domain of values can be divided into (1) ultimate, non-debatable, taken-for-granted values, for which the term "assumptions" is more appropriate; and (2) debatable, overt, espoused values, for which the term "values" is more applicable. In stating that basic assumptions are unconscious, I am not arguing that this is a result of repression. On the contrary, I am arguing that as certain motivational and cognitive processes are repeated and continue to work, they become unconscious. They can be brought back to awareness only through a kind of focused inquiry, similar to that used by anthropologists. What is needed are the efforts of both an insider who makes

the unconscious assumptions and an outsider who helps to uncover the assumptions by asking the right kinds of questions.
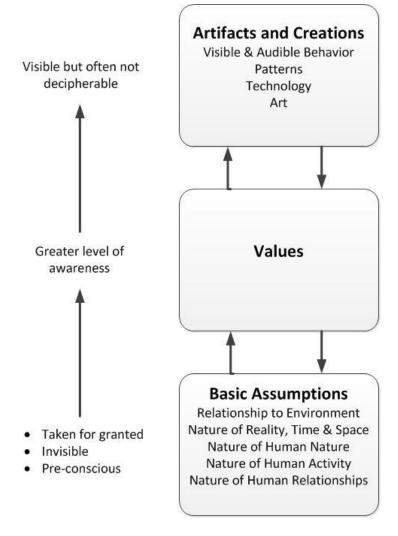
Schein 1984: 3–4

Figure 1: The Levels of Culture & their Interaction
(Minor adaptation of Schein 1984: 4)

2. *Culture affects behaviour and interpretations of behaviour*

Hofstede (1991:8) makes the important point that although certain aspects of culture are physically visible, their <u>meaning</u> is invisible: 'their cultural meaning ... lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders.' For example, a gesture such as the 'ring gesture' (thumb and forefinger touching) may be interpreted as conveying agreement, approval or acceptance in the USA, the UK and Canada, but as an insult or obscene gesture in several Mediterranean countries. Similarly, choice of clothing can be interpreted differently by different groups of people, in terms of indications of wealth, ostentation, appropriateness, and so on.

The following examples illustrate this:

Example One
I observed the following event at a kindergarten classroom on the Navajo reservation:

A Navajo man opened the door to the classroom and stood silently, looking at the floor. The Anglo-American teacher said 'Good morning' and waited expectantly, but the man did not respond. The teacher then said 'My name is Mrs Jones,' and again waited for a response. There was none.

In the meantime, a child in the room put away his crayons and got his coat from the rack. The teacher, noting this, said to the man, 'Oh, are you taking Billy now?' He said, 'Yes.'

The teacher continued to talk to the man while Billy got ready to leave, saying, 'Billy is such a good boy,' 'I'm so happy to have him in class,' etc.

Billy walked towards the man (his father), stopping to turn around and wave at the teacher on his way out and saying, 'Bye-bye.' The teacher responded, 'Bye-bye.'

The man remained silent as he left.

From a Navajo perspective, the man's silence was appropriate and respectful. The teacher, on the other hand, expected not only to have the man return her greeting, but to have him identify himself and state his reason for being there. Although such an expectation is quite reasonable and appropriate from an Anglo-American perspective, it would have required the man to break not only Navajo rules of politeness but also a traditional religious taboo that prohibits individuals from saying their own name. The teacher interpreted the contextual cues correctly in answer to her own question ('Are you taking Billy?' and then engaged in small talk. The man continued to maintain appropriate silence. Billy, who was more acculturated than his father to Anglo-American ways, broke the Navajo rule to follow the Anglo-American one in leave-taking. This encounter undoubtedly reinforced the teacher's stereotype that Navajos are 'impolite' and 'unresponsive', and the man's stereotype that Anglo-Americans are 'impolite' and 'talk too much.'

Saville-Troike 1997: 138–9

Example Two

The first time I saw coconut-skating I was so sure it was a joke that I laughed out loud. The scowl that came back was enough to tell me that I had completely misunderstood the situation. In the Philippines a maid tends to be all business, especially when working for Americans.

But there she was, barefooted as usual, with half of a coconut shell under each broad foot, systematically skating around the room. So help me, *skating*.

If this performance wasn't for my amusement or hers (and her face said it wasn't), then she had gone out of her head. It wasn't the first time, nor the last, that my working hypothesis was that a certain local person was at least a part-time lunatic.

I backed out and strolled down the hall, trying to look cool and calm.

"Ismelda … Ismelda is skating in the living room," I said to Mary, who didn't even look up from the desk where she was typing.

"Yes, this is Thursday, isn't it." …

"She skates only on Thursdays? That's nice," I said as I beat an awkward retreat from Mary's little study room.

"Oh, you mean *why* is she skating – right?" Mary called after me.

"Yes, I guess that's the major question," I replied.

Mary, who had done part of her prefield orientation training in one of my workshops, decided to give me a dose of my own medicine: "Go out there and watch her skate; then come back and tell me what you see." And so I did.

Her typewriter clicked on, scarcely missing a beat, until I exclaimed from the living room hallway, "I've got it!"

"Well, good for you; you're never too old to learn." Mary's voice had just enough sarcasm in it to call me up short on how I must sound to others. And while the typing went

on I stood there admiring nature's own polish for hardwood floors, coconut oil, being applied by a very efficient Southeast Asian method.

Ward 1984; cited by Lustig and Koester 1999: 41

3. *Culture can be differentiated from both universal human nature and unique individual personality*

Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual's personality on the other (see Fig. 2), although exactly where the borders lie between human nature and culture, and between culture and personality, is a matter of discussion among social scientists.

   Human nature is what all human beings, from the Russian professor to the Australian aborigine, have in common: it represents the universal level in one's mental software. It is inherited with one's genes; within the computer analogy it is the 'operating system' which determines one's physical and basic psychological functioning. The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, the need to associate with others, to play and exercise oneself, the facility to observe the environment and talk about it with other humans all belong to this level of mental programming. However, what one does with these feelings, how one expresses fear, joy, observations, and so on, is modified by culture. Human nature is not as 'human' as the term suggests, because certain aspects of it are shared with parts of the animal world.
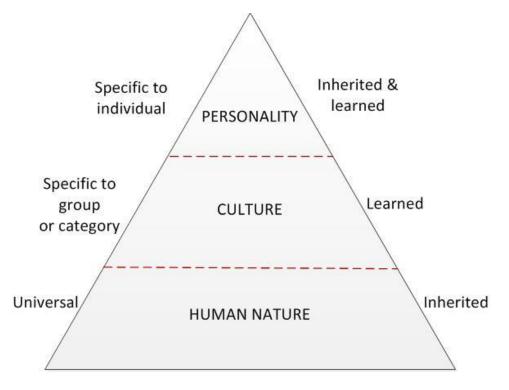

Fig. 2 Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming (Hofstede 1994: 6)

   The *personality* of an individual, on the other hand, is her/his unique personal set of mental programs which (s)he does not share with any other human being. It is based upon traits which are partly inherited with the individual's unique set of genes and partly learned. 'Learned' means: modified by the influence of collective programming (culture) *as well as* unique personal experiences.

Cultural traits have often been attributed to heredity, because philosophers and other scholars in the past did not know how to explain otherwise the remarkable stability of differences in culture patterns among human groups. They underestimated the impact of learning from previous generations and of teaching to a future generation what one has learned oneself. The role of heredity is exaggerated in the pseudo-theories of *race*, which have been responsible, among other things, for the Holocaust organized by the Nazis during the Second World War. Racial and ethnic strife is often justified by unfounded arguments of cultural superiority and inferiority.

Hofstede 1994: 5–6

4. *Culture influences biological processes*

If we stop to consider it, the great majority of our conscious behavior is acquired through learning and interacting with other members of our culture. Even those responses to our purely biological needs (that is, eating, coughing, defecating) are frequently influenced by our cultures. For example, all people share a biological need for food. Unless a minimum number of calories is consumed, starvation will occur. Therefore, all people eat. But *what* we eat, *how often*, we eat, *how much* we eat, *with whom* we eat, and *according to what set of rules* are regulated, at least in part, by our culture.

Clyde Kluckhohn, an anthropologist who spent many years in Arizona and New Mexico studying the Navajo, provides us with a telling example of how culture affects biological processes: "I once knew a trader's wife in Arizona who took a somewhat devilish interest in producing a cultural reaction. Guests who came her way were often served delicious sandwiches filled with a meat that seemed to be neither chicken nor tuna fish yet was reminiscent of both. To queries she gave no reply until each had eaten his fill. She then explained that what they had eaten was not chicken, not tuna fish, but the rich, white flesh of freshly killed rattlesnakes. The response was instantaneous – vomiting, often violent vomiting. A biological process is caught into a cultural web. (1968: 25–26)

This is a dramatic illustration of how culture can influence biological processes. In fact, in this instance, the natural biological process of digestion was not only influenced, it was also reversed. A learned part of our culture (that is, the idea that rattlesnake meat is a repulsive thing to eat) actually triggered the sudden interruption of the normal digestive process. Clearly there is nothing in rattlesnake meat that causes people to vomit, for those who have internalised the opposite idea, that rattlesnake meat should be eaten, have no such digestive tract reversals.

The effects of culturally produced ideas on our bodies and their natural process take many different forms. For example, instances of voluntary control of pain reflexes are found in a number of cultures throughout the world. … The ethnographic examples are too numerous to cite, but whether we are looking at Cheyenne men engaged in the Sun Dance ceremony, Fiji firewalkers, or U.S. women practicing the Lamaze (psychoprophylactic) method of childbirth, the principle is the same: People learn ideas from their cultures that when internalised can actually later the experience of pain. In other words, a component of culture (that is, ideas) can channel or influence biologically based pain reflexes.

Ferraro 1998: 19–20

5. *Culture is associated with social groups*

Culture is *shared* by at least two or more people, and of course real, live societies are always larger than that. There is, in other words, no such thing as the culture of a hermit. If a

solitary individual thinks and behaves in a certain way, that thought or action is idiosyncratic, not cultural. For an idea, a thing, or a behavior to be considered cultural, it must be shared by some type of social group or society.

<div align="right">Ferraro 1998: 16</div>

As almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time, people unavoidably carry several layers of mental programming within themselves, corresponding to different levels of culture. For example:

- a national level according to one's country (or count*ries* for people who migrated during their lifetime);
- a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation, as most nations are composed of culturally different regions and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or language groups;
- a gender level, according to whether a person was born as a girl or as a boy;
- a generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children;
- a role category, e.g. parent, son/daughter, teacher, student;
- a social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession;
- for those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization.

<div align="right">Hofstede 1991: 10</div>

So in this sense, everyone is simultaneously a member of several different cultural groups and thus could be said to have multicultural membership.

Individuals are organized in many potentially different ways in a population, by many different (and cross-cutting) criteria: for example, by kinship into families or clans; by language, race, or creed into ethnic groups; by socio-economic characteristics into social classes; by geographical region into political interest groups; and by occupation or institutional memberships into unions, bureaucracies, industries, political parties, and militaries. The more complex and differentiated the social system, the more potential groups and institutions there are. And because each group of institution places individuals in different experiential worlds, and because culture derives in part from this experience, *each of these groups and institutions can be a potential container for culture*. Thus no population can be adequately characterized as a single culture or by a single cultural descriptor. As a corollary, the more complexly organized a population is on sociological grounds (class, region, ethnicity, and so on), the more complex will its cultural mappings appear. This is why the notion of "subculture(s)" is needed.

<div align="right">Avruch 1998: 17–18</div>

6. *Culture is both an individual construct and a social construct*

… culture is as much an individual, psychological construct as it is a social construct. To some extent, culture exists in each and every one of us individually as much as it exists as a global, social construct. Individual differences in culture can be observed among people in the degree to which they adopt and engage in the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that, by consensus, constitute their culture. If you act in accordance with those values or behaviors, then that culture resides in you; if you do not share those values or behaviors, then you do not share that culture.

While the norms of any culture should be relevant to all the people within that culture, it is also true that those norms will be relevant in different degrees for different people. It is this interesting blend of culture in anthropology and sociology as a macroconcept and in psychology as an individual construct that makes understanding culture difficult but fascinating.

Our failure in the past to recognize the existence of individual differences in constructs and concepts of culture has undoubtedly aided in the formation and maintenance of stereotypes.

Matsumoto 1996: 18

… culture is a derivative of individual experience, something learned or created by individuals themselves or passed on to them socially by contemporaries or ancestors. … such a conception of culture differs from ones that have dominated thinking in much of the social sciences, especially in international relations and conflict resolution. For one thing, in this concept, culture is seen as something much less stable or homogenous than in the concepts proposed by others. Our idea of culture focuses less on patterning and more on social and cognitive processing than older ideas of culture do. For another, by linking culture to individuals and emphasizing the number and diversity of social and experiential settings that individuals encounter, we expand the scope of reference of culture to encompass not just quasi- or pseudo-kinship groups (tribe, ethnic group, and nation are the usual ones) but also groupings that derive from profession, occupation, class, religion, or region. This reorientation supports the idea that individuals reflect or embody multiple cultures and that "culture" is always psychologically and socially distributed in a group. Compared with the older approach, which connected a singular, coherent, and integrated culture to unproblematically defined social groups, this approach makes the idea of culture more complicated. Such complication is necessary, because the world of social action, including conflict and its resolution, is a complex one, and we need a different concept to capture it.

Avruch 1998: 5–6

7. *Culture is always both socially and psychologically distributed in a group, and so the delineation of a culture's features will always be fuzzy*

Culture is a 'fuzzy' concept, in that group members are unlikely to share identical sets of attitudes, beliefs and so on, but rather show 'family resemblances', with the result that there is no absolute set of features that can distinguish definitively one cultural group from another.

This assumption [that culture is uniformly distributed] is unwarranted for two reasons, one sociogenic (having to do with social groups and institutions) and the other psychogenic (having to do with cognitive and affective processes characteristic of individuals). The first reason is a corollary of the social complexity issue noted above: Insofar as two individuals do not share the same sociological location in a given population (the same class, religious, regional, or ethnic backgrounds, for example), and insofar as these locations entail (sub)cultural differences, then the two individuals cannot share all cultural content perfectly. This is the sociogenic reason for the nonuniform distribution of culture. *Culture is socially distributed within a population.*

The second, psychogenic, reason culture is never perfectly shared by individuals in a population (no matter how, sociologically, the population is defined) has to do with the ways in which culture is to be found "in there", inside the individual. Here we are, broadly speaking, in the realm of psychodynamics, at least with respect to the ways and circumstances under which an individual receives or learns cultural images or encodements. Because of disciplinary boundaries and the epistemological blinders they often enforce,

these sorts of generally psychological concerns are considered off-limits for many social scientists. For this reason, even many culture theorists have preferred to think of culture only as "out there", in publish and social constructions, including symbols, that are wholly independent of mind – of cognition and affect. Other scholars, especially from economics or international relations, as we shall see in the next section, prefer to ignore mind completely, treating it as essentially a "black box" phenomenon. But by ignoring mind they do not in fact escape broadly psychological issues; they merely end up relying on an unacknowledged, and fairly primitive, psychology.

It is by approaching mind – cognition and affect – that we can sort out the ways in which culture is causal, noting well our discussion, above, of the danger of reifying culture so that is simplemindedly causes conflict. It doesn't – it cannot. But cultural representations – images and encodements, schemas and models – are internalised by individuals. They are not internalised equally or all at the same level, however, Some are internalised very superficially and are the equivalent of cultural clichés. Others are deeply internalised and invested with emotion of affect. These can instigate behavior by being connected to desirable goals or end states. The more deeply internalised and affectively loaded, the more certain images or schemas are able to motivate action. This is the proper sense in which "culture is causal". It also accounts for the nonuniform distribution of culture, because for two individuals even the same cultural representation (resulting, for instance, from a completely shared sociological placement) can be differentially internalised. this is the psychogenic reason for the nonuniform distribution of culture. *Culture is psychologically distributed with a population*. Of two revolutionaries, each sharing the same socio-economic background and program, the same political ideology, and the same intellectual opposition to the regime in power, only one is motivated (by rage? by hatred? by childhood trauma? by what?) to throw the bomb. No one interested in social conflict or in conflict resolution can remain aloof from psychogenic – cognitive and affective – processes and their connections to social practice.

<div align="right">Avruch 1998: 18–20</div>

Just as there is no epidemic without individual organisms being infected by particular viruses or bacteria, there is no culture without representations being distributed in the brains/minds of individuals. … There is no epidemic without diseased individuals, but the study of epidemics cannot be reduced to the study of individual pathology. From this perspective, the boundaries of a given culture are not any sharper than those of a given epidemic. An epidemic involves a population with many individuals being afflicted to varying degrees by a particular strain of micro-organisms over a continuous time span on a territory with fuzzy and unstable boundaries. And a culture involves a social group (such as a nation, ethnic group, profession, generation, etc.) defined in terms of similar cultural representations held by a significant proportion of the group's members. In other words, people are said to belong in the same culture to the extent that the set of their shared cultural representations is large.

<div align="right">Žegarac 2007: 39–40</div>

8. *Culture has both universal (etic) and distinctive (emic) elements*

Humans have largely overlapping biologies and live in fairly similar social structures and physical environments, which create major similarities in the way they form cultures. But within the framework of similarities there are differences.

The same happens with language. Phon*etics* deal with sounds that occur in all languages. Phon*emics* are sounds that occur in only one language. The linguist Pike (1967)

took the last two syllables of these terms and coined the words "etics" for universal cultural elements and "emics" for the culture-specific, unique elements.

Although some students of culture assume that every culture is unique and in some sense every person in the world is unique, science deals with generalizations. The glory of science is seen in such achievements as showing that the laws that govern the movements of planets and falling apples are the same. Thus the issue is whether or not the emic elements of culture are of interest. When the emic elements are local adaptations of etic elements, they are of great interest. For example, all humans experience social distance from out-groups (an etic factor). That is, they feel closer to their family and kin and to those whom they see as similar to them than to those whom they see as different. But the basis of social distance is often an emic attribute: In some cultures, it is based only on tribe or race; in others it is based on combinations of religion, social class, and nationality; in India, caste and ideas about ritual pollution are important. In sum, social distance is etic; ritual pollution as a basis of social distance is emic. …

To summarize about emics and etics, when we study cultures for their own sake, we may well focus on emic elements, and when we compare cultures, we have to work with the etic cultural elements.

Triandis 1994: 20

There is another way of thinking, however, that may be more productive for understanding cultural influences on human behavior. Instead of considering whether any behavior is etic or emic, we can ask how that behavior can be both etic and emic at the same time. Perhaps parts or aspects of that behavior are etic and other parts are emic. For example, suppose you are having a conversation with a person from a culture different from yours. While you talk to this person, you notice that she does not make eye contact with you when she speaks, and she does not look at you when you speak. On the few occasions when her eyes look your way, her gaze is quickly averted somewhere else when your eyes meet. From your cultural background, you may interpret that she does not feel very positive about your or your interaction. You may even begin to feel put off and reject any attempts at future interaction. You may not feel trusting or close to her. But she may come from a culture where direct gazing is discouraged or even a sign of arrogance or slight. She may actually be avoiding eye contact not because of any negative feelings but because of deference and politeness to you. Of course, these behavioural differences have real and practical implications in everyday life; think about this scenario occurring in a job interview, in a teaching-learning situation at an elementary school, at a business negotiation, or even in a visit with your therapist.

If we examine this behavior from an etic–emic polarity, we will undoubtedly come to the conclusion that gaze behavior must be a cultural emic; that is, cultures have different rules regarding the appropriateness of gazing at others when interacting with them. But, let's ask ourselves another question: Is there any aspect about this behavior that can be described as etic? The answer to this question may lie in the causes or roots of the cultural differences in the gaze. In the example described here, your partner wanted to show deference or politeness to you. Thus, she enacted gaze behaviors that were dictated by her cultural background in accordance with the underlying wish to be polite. If you are an American, your culture would have dictated a different gaze pattern, even with the same wish for politeness. Your culture dictates that you look your partner straight in the eye when talking and show interest and deference by looking directly at them when they speak. It is only the outward behavior manifestation that is different between the representatives of the two cultures however; the underlying reason is exactly the same. Thus, while the outward behaviors we can observe may rightly be called emic, the inner attributes that underlie those behaviors may in fact be etic.

It is in this way that etics and emics can coexist in relation to our behaviors. Our understanding of cultures and cultural influences on behavior will be vastly improved if we avoid tendencies to compartmentalize behaviors into one or the other category and, instead, search for ways in which any given behavior actually represents both tensions.

Matsumoto 1996: 21–2

9. *Culture is learned*

Culture is learned from the people you interact with as you are socialized. Watching how adults react and talk to new babies is an excellent way to see the actual symbolic transmission of culture among people. Two babies born at exactly the same time in two parts of the globe may be taught to respond to physical and social stimuli in very different ways. For example, some babies are taught to smile at strangers, whereas others are taught to smile only in very specific circumstances. In the United States, most children are asked from a very early age to make decisions about what they want to do and what they prefer; in many other cultures, a parent would never ask a child what she or he wants to do but would simply tell the child what to do.

Culture is also taught by the explanations people receive for the natural and human events around them. Parents tell children that a certain person is a good boy because _____. People from different cultures would complete the blank in contrasting ways. The people with whom the children interact will praise and encourage particular kinds of behaviors (such as crying or not crying, being quiet or being talkative). Certainly there are variations in what a child is taught from family to family in any given culture. However, our interest is not in these variations but in the similarities across most or all families that form the basis of a culture. Because our specific interest is in the relationship between culture and interpersonal communication, we focus on how cultures provide their members with a set of interpretations that they then use as filters to make sense of messages and experiences.

Lustig and Koester 1999: 31–2

This notion that culture is acquired through the process of learning has several important implications for the conduct of international business. First, such an understanding can lead to greater tolerance for cultural differences, a prerequisite for effective intercultural communication within a business setting. Second, the learned nature of culture serves as a reminder that since we have mastered our own culture through the process of learning, it is possible (albeit more difficult) to *learn* to function in other cultures as well. Thus, cross-cultural expertise for Western businesspersons can be accomplished through effective training programs. And finally, the learned nature of culture leads us to the inescapable conclusion that foreign work forces, although perhaps lacking certain job-related skills at the present time, are perfectly capable of learning those skills in the future, provided they are exposed to culturally relevant training programs.

Ferraro 1998: 19

10. *Culture is subject to gradual change*

Any anthropological account of the culture of any society is a type of snapshot view of one particular time. Should the ethnographer return several years after completing a cultural study, he or she would not find exactly the same situation, for there are no cultures that remain completely static year after year. Early twentieth-century anthropologists – particularly those of the structural/functional orientation – tended to deemphasize cultural dynamics by suggesting that some societies were in a state o equilibrium in which the forces

of change were negated by those of cultural conservatism. Although small-scale, technologically simple, preliterate societies tend to be more conservative (and, thus, change less rapidly) than modern, industrialized, highly complex societies, it is now generally accepted that, to some degree, change is a constant feature of all cultures.

Students of culture change recognize that cultural innovation (that is, the introduction of new thoughts, norms, or material items) occurs as a result of both *internal* and *external forces*. Mechanisms of change that operate within a given culture are called *discovery* and *invention*. Despite the importance of discovery and invention, most innovations introduced into a culture are the result of borrowing from other cultures. This process is known as cultural *diffusion*, the spreading of cultural items from one culture to another. The importance of cultural borrowing can be better understood if viewed in terms of economy of effort. That is, it is much easier to borrow someone else's invention or discovery than it is to discover or invent it all over again. In fact, anthropologists generally agree that as much as 90 percent of all things, ideas, and behavioural patterns found in any culture had their origins elsewhere. Individuals in every culture, limited by background and time, get new ideas with far less effort if they borrow them. This statement holds true for our own culture as well as other cultures, a fact that North Americans frequently tend to overlook.

Since so much cultural change is the result of diffusion, it deserves a closer examination. Keeping in mind that cultural diffusion varies considerably from situation to situation, we can identify certain regularities that will enable us to make some general statements that hold true for all cultures.

First, cultural diffusion is a *selective* process. Whenever two cultures come into contact, each does not accept everything indiscriminately from the other. If they did, the vast cultural differences that exist today would have long since disappeared. Rather, items will be borrowed from another culture only if they prove to be useful and/or compatible. … Put another way, an innovation is most likely to be diffused into a recipient culture if: (1) it is seen to be superior to what already exists; (2) it is consistent with existing cultural patterns; (3) it is easily understood; (4) it is able to be tested on an experimental basis; and (5) its benefits are clearly visible to a relatively large number of people. These five variables should be considered by international business strategists when considering the introduction of new marketing or managerial concepts into a foreign culture.

Second, cultural borrowing is a two-way process. Early students of change believe that contact between "primitive" societies and "civilized" societies caused the former to accept traits from the latter. This position was based on the assumption that the "inferior" primitive societies had nothing to offer the "superior" civilized societies. Today, however, anthropologists would reject such a position, for it has been found time and again that cultural traits are diffused in both directions.

European contact with the American Indians is a case in point. Native Americans, to be certain, have accepted a great deal from Europeans, but diffusion in the other direction has been significant. For example, it has been estimated (Driver 1961: 584) that those crops that make up nearly half of the world's food supply were originally domesticated by American Indians. These include corn, beans, squash, sweet potatoes, and the so-called "Irish potato". …

Third, very infrequently are borrowed items ever transferred into the recipient culture in exactly their original form. Rather, new ideas, objects, or techniques are usually reinterpreted and reworked so that they can be integrated more effectively into the total configuration of the recipient culture. Lowell Holmes has offered an illuminating example of how the form of a particular innovation from Italy (pizza) has been modified after its incorporation into U.S. culture. "Originally, this Italian pie was made with mozzarella or scamorza cheese, tomatoes, highly spiced sausage, oregano spice, and a crust made of flour, water, olive oil and yeast. Although this type of pizza is still found in most eastern cities, and

in midwestern ones as well, in many cases the dish has been reinterpreted to meet Midwestern taste preferences for bland food. Authentic Italian pizza in such states as Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, or the Dakotas is often considered too spicy; therefore, it is possible to purchase in restaurants or in supermarkets pizzas that are topped with American process cheese, have no oregano at all, and in place of spiced sausage, hamburger or even tuna fish rounds out the Americanized version. In many home recipes, the crust is made of biscuit mix. Although the Italians would hardly recognize it, it still carries the name pizza and has become extremely popular." (1971: 361–2) …

Fourth, some cultural traits are more easily diffused than others. By and large, technological innovations are more likely to be borrowed than are social patterns or belief systems, largely because the usefulness of a particular technological trait can be recognized quickly. For example, a man who walks five miles each day to work does not need much convincing to realize that an automobile can get him to work much more quickly and with far less effort. It has proven to be much more difficult, however, to convince a Muslim to become a Hindu or an American middle-class businessperson to become a socialist.

It is important for the international businessperson to understand that to some degree all cultures are constantly experiencing change. The three basic components of culture (things, ideas, and behavior patterns) can undergo additions, deletions, or modifications. Some components die out, new ones are accepted, and existing ones can be change in some observable way. Although the pace of culture change varies from society to society, when viewing cultures over time, there is nothing as constant as change. This straightforward anthropological insight should remind the international businessperson that (1) any cultural environment today is not exactly the same as it was last year or will be one year hence. The cultural environment, therefore, needs constant monitoring. (2) Despite considerable lack of fit between the culture of a U.S. corporation operating abroad and its overseas workforce, the very fact that culture can and do change provides some measure of optimism that the cultural gap can eventually be closed.

Moreover, the notion of cultural diffusion has important implications for the conduct of international business. Whether one is attempting to create new markets abroad or instill new attitudes and behaviors in a local workforce, it is imperative to understand that cultural diffusion is selective. To know with some degree of predictability which things, ideas, and behaviors are likely to be accepted by a particular culture, those critical variables affecting diffusion such as relative advantage, compatibility, and observability should be understood.

An understanding that cultural diffusion frequently involves some modification of the item is an important idea for those interested in creating new product markets in other cultures. To illustrate, before a laundry detergent – normally packaged in a green box in the United States – would be accepted in certain parts of West Africa, the color of the packaging would need to be changed because the color green is associated with death in certain West African cultures.

Also, the idea that some components of culture are more readily accepted than others into different cultural environments should at least provide some general guidelines for assessing what types of changes in the local culture are more likely to occur. By assessing what types of things, ideas, and behavior have been incorporated into a culture in recent years, strategic planners should better understand the relative ease or difficulty involved in initiating changes in consumer habits or workplace behavior.

Ferraro 1998: 25–9

11. *The various parts of a culture are all, to some degree, interrelated*

Cultures should be thought of as integrated wholes – that is, cultures are coherent and logical systems, the parts of which to a degree are interrelated. …When we say that a

culture is integrated we are saying that its components are more than a random assortment of customs. It is, rather, an organized system in which particular components may be related to other components. If we can view cultures as integrated systems, we can begin to see how particular culture traits fit into the integrated whole, and consequently how they tend to make sense within that context. And of course, equipped with such an understanding, international businesspersons should be in a better position to cope with the "strange" customs encountered in the international business arena. …

If, in fact, cultures are coherent systems, with their constituent parts interrelated with one another, it follows logically that a change in one part of the system is likely to produce concomitant changes in other parts of the system. The introduction of a single technological innovation may set off a whole series of related changes. In other words, culture changes beget other culture changes.

To illustrate, one has only to look at the far-reaching effects on U.S. culture of a single technological innovation, which became widespread in the early 1950s – the TV set. This one single technological addition to our material culture has had profound consequences on the nonmaterial aspects of our culture, including our political, education, and religious systems, to mention only three. For example, political campaigning for the presidency in 1948 and earlier had been conducted largely from the back end of a railroad car on so-called "whistle-stop" tours. By 1960, the year of the first televised presidential debates, television had brought the ideas, positions, speaking styles, and physical appearances of the candidates directly into the living rooms of the majority of voters. Today political candidates, because of the power of television, need to be as attentive to makeup, clothing, and nonverbal gestures as they are to the substantive issues of the campaign. In formal education, one of the many consequences of the widespread use of television has been to lower the age at which children develop "reading readiness" as a direct result of such programs as "Sesame Street". … Television has been described by various social commentators as both a blessing and a curse. Yet however we might feel about its pluses and minuses, we can hardly deny that it has contributed to profound changes in many other parts of the U.S. cultural system. And the reason for these changes is that cultures tend to be integrated systems with a number of interconnected parts, so that a change in one part of the culture is likely to bring about changes in other parts.

<div align="right">Ferraro 1998: 32–5</div>

12. *Culture is a descriptive not an evaluative concept*

Sometimes people talk of 'high' and 'low' culture. Definitions associated with 'high culture' are as follows:

> '[Culture is] i) a state of high development in art & thought existing in a society and represented at various levels in its members; ii) development and improvement of the mind or body by education or training.'

<div align="right">Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English</div>

This interpretation of culture is often linked with terms and concepts such as *civilised, well educated, refined, cultured*, and is associated with the results of such refinement – a society's art, literature, music, and so on.

However, our notion of culture is not something exclusive to certain members; rather it relates to the whole of a society. Moreover, it is not value-laden. It is not that some cultures are

advanced and some backward, some more civilised and polite while others are coarse and rude. Rather, they are similar or different to each other.

Inadequate Conceptions of Culture

[There are] at least six mutually related ideas about culture that we call inadequate. These ideas are often found in the writings and practice of individuals, including those in conflict resolution who, borrowing an outmoded anthropological view of culture, seek to use a cultural approach in their work.

1. *Culture is homogenous*. This presumes that a (local) culture is free of internal paradoxes and contradictions such that (a) it provides clear and unambiguous behavioural "instructions" to individuals – a program for how to act – or (b) once grasped or learned by an outsider, it can be characterized in relatively straightforward ways ("the Dobuans are paranoid"). A homogenous view of culture makes the second inadequate idea easier to sustain, namely that:

2. *Culture is a thing*. The reification of culture – regarding culture as a thing – leads to a notion that "it" is a thing that can act, almost independently of human actors. There is no hint of individual agency here. A good contemporary example of this sort of thinking is Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" argument. It is easy to fall into the semantic trap of reification. Read the earlier remark in this essay about the constitutive power of culture to construct a definition of itself! The term is used as a shorthand way of referring, as we shall see, to bundles of complicated cognitive and perceptual *processes*, and it is a series of short (cognitive) steps from shorthand to metonymy to reification. But we should be on guard, particularly since by reifying culture it is easy to overlook intracultural diversity, underwriting the third inadequate idea:

3. *Culture is uniformly distributed among members of a group*. This idea imputes cognitive, affective, and behavioural uniformity to all members of the group. Intracultural variation, whether at the individual or group level, is ignored or dismissed as "deviance". Connected to this is the further misconception that:

4. *An individual possesses but a single culture*. He or she is simply a Somali, a Mexican, or an American. Culture is thus synonymous with group identity. The root of this misconception stems from the privileging of what we can call tribal culture, ethnic culture, or national culture, over cultures that are connected, as we shall see, to very different sorts of groups, structures, or institutions. In part this came from the social settings in which anthropologists first developed the culture idea: small-scale and relatively socially undifferentiated tribal or ethnic groups. It was then compounded by political scientists who took up the notion of culture (as "political culture") and privileged the nation-state as their unit of analysis – hence the "national character" idea. In fact, as we will argue, for any individual, culture always comes in the plural. A person possess and controls several cultures in the same way, as sociolinguists tell us, that even a so-called monolingual speaker controls different "registers" of the same language or dialect.

5. *Culture is custom*. This idea holds that culture is structurally undifferentiated, that what you see is what you get. And mostly what you see (especially in a culture different from your own), naively of course, is custom. Culture here is virtually synonymous with "tradition", or customary ways of behaving. The important things to know, if you come from outside, are the customary rules for correct behavior. Culture here reduces to a sort of surface-level etiquette. Cultural variation is, as Peter Black once put it, merely a matter of "differential etiquette". Once again, individual agency is downplayed. In this view there is no sense of struggle, except perhaps for the struggle of deviants (see number 3, above) who

cannot or will not abide by tradition and custom: after all, the smoothing out of difference and the mitigation of struggle are precisely what rules and etiquette are for.

6. *Culture is timeless*. Closely related to the culture-is-custom view (indeed, to all of the above views), the idea that culture is timeless imputes a changeless quality to culture, especially to so-called traditional ones. We speak here, for example, of "the Arab mind" as though a unitary cognising element has come down to us from Muhammed's Mecca.

These six inadequate ideas about culture are related and mutually reinforcing. Using them, we argue, greatly diminishes the utility of the culture concept as an analytical tool for understanding social action, in this case, conflict and conflict resolution.

<div align="right">Avruch 1998: 14–16</div>

Levels of Analysis and Fallacies to Avoid

Many of the studies to be discussed in this book will compare characterizations of particular national cultures with the average behaviour of a small sample of subjects drawn from within those cultures. In other words, we may find ourselves asserting that the collectivism of, say, Indonesian national culture *causes* a particular group of Indonesian students to make certain attributions on a questionnaire about reasons for the success or failure of their work. When expressed in this way, it is easy to see that the implication of causality is too strong to be plausible. We may in a general sense expect Indonesian national culture to be expressed in the educational system of that country, the type of students recruited, the type of teaching, and the type of assessment. But if we want to make a firmer test of causal links to individual behaviour, we should be better off knowing how collectivistic this specific group of Indonesian students in the study actually was. In other words we should use characterizations of whole cultures (e.g. collectivist values) to explain specific attributes of that culture as a whole (e.g. the type of political system that is found there, rates of disease, military expenditure and so forth). But we should use characterizations of the values of particular individuals or groups of individuals if we want to predict how those particular individuals will behave.

Culture-level measures can best be used to explain culture-level variation; individual-level measures can best be used to explain individual-level variations. Since most social psychological research is conducted with individuals, there is a pressing need for more researchers to use such individual-level measures, rather than relying on cultural-level characterisations such as those provided by Hofstede (Bond, 1996b). …

Confusion about levels of analysis is probably the greatest single problem in the current development of cross-cultural psychology. The difficulty is that many researchers fall victim to what Hofstede (1980) and others refer to as the *ecological fallacy*. Suppose it is shown that the nations that spend most money on medicine have the most healthy populations. Does it follow that the individuals who spend most money on medicine are also the most healthy? Most probably not; indeed it is quite likely at the individual level that the relationship would be reversed: those who were most ill would be spending most. Consider now an instance that derives more directly from the concepts we have been discussing. Nations whose values favour low power distance include most of the richest nations in the world. Does it follow that individuals who are opposed to hierarchy are likely to be rich? Certainly not: many of the most successful entrepreneurs have achieved success through taking a strongly hierarchical view of management. Exceptions to this pattern such as Steve Jobs at Apple Computer in the United States, Richard Branson at Virgin in the United Kingdom and Ricardo Semler in Brazil may achieve folk-hero status as exceptions to the rule, but their fame should not blind us to the much greater frequency of success among less-talked about figures who espouse less egalitarian values.

… If we are interested in explaining the differences across national cultures, then we must treat each culture as a single unit, and rely only on indices that characterize each nation as a whole, such as measures reflecting average values, wealth, health, climate or demographic profile. It follows that we can only successfully do studies of this type if we have available data from several dozen nations, as did the studies that we have discussed earlier in this chapter.

If we are interested in explaining similarities and differences in the behaviour of individuals, whether those individuals are all in one cultural group or spread over many groups, then an individual-level analysis is called for. However, it will be impossible to do individual-level analyses *across* national cultures, unless one takes into account culture-level differences. So, for instance, if we wish to study the relationship between employee values and absence from work across national cultures, we could first take account of the fact that absence from work is more frequent in some nations than others. Each individual's absence from work is more frequent in some nations than others. Each individual's absence score must therefore be expressed in relation to the average score *for their nation* before the hypothesis could be tested. Alternatively, we could test the values–absence link across the entire sample, and then examine whether the strength of this linkage varies by nation. If the relationship does vary, it will then be necessary to determine whether or not this is due to measurement artefact (Bond, 1996).

Triandis *et al.* (1985) proposed that in order to avoid confusion between analyses conducted at the level of cultures and analyses based at the level of individuals, we should use different but related pairs of concepts. Their suggestion was that we use the term 'allocentric' to describe a culture member who endorses collectivist values, but the point of making the distinction is that there will also be a minority of such persons individualist cultures. Similarly Triandis *et al* suggest the use of 'idiocentric' to describe a culture member who endorses individualist values. The proposal is a good one, but level-appropriate terms have not yet been adopted by other researchers.

<div align="right">Smith and Bond 1998: 60–2</div>

Culture and Related Terms

Culture and Nation In our everyday language, people commonly treat *culture* and *nation* as equivalent terms. Although some nations are in fact predominantly inhabited by one cultural group, most nations contain multiple cultures within their boundaries. *Nation* is a political term referring to a government and a set of formal and legal mechanisms that have been established to regulate the political behavior of its people. These regulations often encompass such aspects of a people as how leaders are chosen, by what rules the leaders must govern, the laws of banking and currency, the means to establish military groups, and the rules by which a legal system is conducted. Foreign policies, for instance, are determined by a nation and not by a culture. The culture, or cultures, that exist within the boundaries of a nation-state certainly influence the regulations that a nation develops, but the term *culture* is not synonymous with *nation*.

The nation of Japan is often regarded as so homogeneous that the word *Japanese* is commonly used to refer both to the nation and to the culture. Though the Yamato Japanese culture overwhelmingly predominates within the nation of Japan, there are other cultures living there. These groups include the Ainu, an indigenous group with their own culture, religion, and language; mainly from Okinawa, Korea, and China; and more recent immigrants also living there. The United States is an excellent example of a nation that has several major cultural groups living within its geographical boundaries; European Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and various Asian American cultures are all

represented in the United States. All the members of these different cultural groups are citizens of the nation of the United States.

Culture and Race   *Race* commonly refers to genetic or biologically based similarities among people, which are distinguishable and unique and function to mark or separate groups of people from one another. However, race is less a biological term than a political or social one. Though racial categories are inexact as a classification system, it is generally agreed that race is a more all-encompassing term than either *culture* or *nation*. Not all Caucasian people, for example, are part of the same culture or nation. many western European countries principally include people from the Caucasian race. Similarly, among Caucasian people there are definite differences in culture. Consider the cultural differences among the primarily Caucasian countries of Great Britain, Norway, and Germany to understand the distinction between culture and race.

Sometimes race and culture do seem to work hand in hand to create visible and important distinctions among groups within a larger society; and sometimes race plays a part in establishing separate cultural groups. An excellent example of the interplay of culture and race is in the history of African American people in the United States. Although race may have been used initially to set African Americans apart from Caucasian U.S. Americans, African American culture provides a strong and unique source of identity to members of the black race in the United States. Scholars now acknowledge that African American culture, with its roots in traditional African cultures, is separate and unique and has developed its own set of cultural patterns. Although a person from Nigerian and an African American are both from the same race, they are from distinct cultures. Similarly, not all black U.S. Americans are part of the African American culture, since many have a primary cultural identification with cultures in the Caribbean, South America, or Africa.

Race can, however, form the basis for prejudicial communication that can be a major obstacle to intercultural communication. Categorization of people by race in the United States, for example, has been the basis of systematic discrimination and oppression of people of color.

Culture and Ethnicity   *Ethnic group* is another term often used interchangeable with culture. *Ethnicity* is actually a term that is used to refer to a wide variety of groups who might share a language, historical origins, religion, identification with a common nation-state, or cultural system. The nature of the relationship of a group's ethnicity to its culture will vary greatly depending on a number of other important characteristics. For example, many people in the United States still maintain an allegiance to the ethnic group of their ancestors who emigrated from other nations and cultures. It is quite common for people to say they are German or Greek or Armenian when the ethnicity indicated by the label refers to ancestry and perhaps some customs and practices that originated with the named ethnic group. Realistically, many of these individuals are not typical members of the European American culture. In other cases, the identification of ethnicity may coincide more completely with culture. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, there are at least three major ethnic groups – Slovenians, Croatians, and Serbians – each with its own language and distinct culture, who were forced into one nation-state following World War II. It is also possible for members of an ethnic group to be part of many different cultures and/or nations. For instance, Jewish people share a common ethnic identification, even though they belong to widely varying cultures and are citizens of many different nations.

Culture, Subculture, and Coculture   *Subculture* is also a term sometimes used to refer to racial and ethnic minority groups that share both a common nation-state with other cultures and some aspects of the larger culture. Often, for example, African Americans, Arab

Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, another groups are referred to as subcultures within the United States. The term, however, has connotations that we find problematic, because it suggests subordination to the larger European American culture. Similarly, the term *coculture* is occasionally employed in an effort to avoid the implication of a hierarchical relationship between the European American culture and these other important cultural groups that form the mosaic of the United States. This term, too, is problematic for us. *Coculture* suggests, for instance, that there is a single overarching culture in the United States, implicitly giving undue prominence to the European American cultural group. In our shrinking and interdependent world, most cultures must coexist alongside other cultures. We prefer to regard African Americans, Arab Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and similar groups of people as cultures in their own right. The term *coculture* therefore strikes us as redundant.

<div align="right">Lustig and Koester 1999: 33–36</div>

Culture and Identity

Culture is not the same as *identity*. Identities consist of people's answers to the question: Where do I belong? They are based on mutual images and stereotypes and on emotions linked to the outer layers of the onion, but not to values. Populations that fight each other on the basis of their different "felt" identities may very well share the same values. Examples are the linguistic regions in Belgium, the religions in Northern Ireland, and tribal groups in Africa. A shared identity needs a shared Other: At home, I feel Dutch and very different from other Europeans, such as Belgians and Germans; in Asia or the united States, we all feel like Europeans.

<div align="right">Hofstede 2001: 10</div>

There is no box on any known government form for a racial or ethnic group called "Cablinasian". And, yet, there is at least one American who could check that box. His name is Tiger Woods. Woods, the golf phenomenon, says in an interview that he invented the word as a child to describe his racial makeup: Caucasian, black, Indian and Asian.

In addressing his ancestry, Woods has broadened the discussion of race in American, putting into high relief the infinite shades of gray that bridge the largely artificial divide between "black" and "white".

It is a bold move. Many governmental functions – the census, affirmative action and poverty programs, and the drawing of congressional districts – are based on counts of the four officially recognized racial groups: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black, and white. Those who are "Spanish/Hispanic" may check a box for their country of origin. … Perhaps more important, deeper issues of cultural identity – and the nation's history of racial injustice – have been based on long-established racial distinctions.

But it's the way in which Woods fails to conform to those long-established ideas about race that makes him so interesting.

<div align="right">Barton 1997; cited by Lustig and Koester 1999: 139</div>

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