

A common definition of culture is shared learned behavior, although there are theoretical problems with this. Can there be a culture if only one person is still alive who practices it? Is this the same as a language existing if only one person speaks it?

Learned is contrasted with innate – a problem theoretically. Most comparative behavioral scientists stress the innate component and are “ethologists” like Konrad Lorenz. Others stress the learned approach (Skinner). Still others like Piaget are developmentalist. T.C. Schneirla on the other hand feels that the opposite of “learned” is not “innate” and so setting up these categories is problematical. Rather he sees things developing but in a different way than Piaget.

There are over 70 definitions of “culture” in the dictionary of the social sciences so you pay your money and take your pick!

Languages have a set of rules (often called grammar) which people have in their heads, but are frequently not conscious of.

All speakers of any language know how to make up sentences in that language.

One can think of culture as a set of rules like a grammar for the way to look at the world – how it is perceived and how one should behave.

In language, we know that sounds, words, phrases and sentences have rules. You can say “The man walks the dog” and other English speakers will understand you. You cannot say “The the man dog walks” and expect to be understood.

So what then are the parts that are involved in the nature of culture?

## WHAT IS THE NATURE OF CULTURE

Symbolism may be one of the main components. The nature of the symbol is x stands for y arbitrarily so different cultures may symbolize different things with the same symbol. It differs from “signs” in that signs have an actual relationship with the thing they represent. The word “dog” is a SYMBOL for the furry animal. It changes from language to language. If a dog steps in mud and leaves a foot print that is a SIGN of the furry animal. It does not vary from place to place.

Symbols however, can be abstract categories as well. Such concepts as “sacred” and “profane”; “private” and “public” are categories which cannot

be located by physical tests in the real world, so they can be thought of as "symbolic" categories.

Symbols in one culture often do not match up well with symbols in another culture. As a result there can be conflict when 2 societies with different symbol systems come together.

So at a societal level, various social organizations can be found, but there is also a symbolic level. Some social scientists think of an organizational part of society (social organization) is comprised of such things as family and other social, political and economic organizations and a symbolic area in "human societies" Even family units (including members can be thought of and classified in different societies). In some societies, for example, one's father and one's father's brother are called by the same term. This may strike English speakers as odd, but no odder than others see English when it classifies one's mother's brother as "uncle", the same term it uses for one's father's sister's husband! Other languages like Chinese have 5 different words for the English word "uncle" having separate terms for father's older brother; father's younger brother; mother's brother; father's sister's husband and mother's sister's husband!!

CULTURE Cultures are often divided into 2 parts – the areas dealing with social structure – everything from the family up to complex governments; and symbolic aspects – religion, ethics, belief systems folklore and so on.

In the early days of anthropology the anthropologists were very involved with evolution – it was the "spirit of the times". Lyell had postulated geological evolution, Darwin biological evolution and early social scientists were talking about the evolution of societies. Some of that is apparent in the developmental sequences from hunting and gathering through horticulture to agriculture.

Agriculture (with plow)



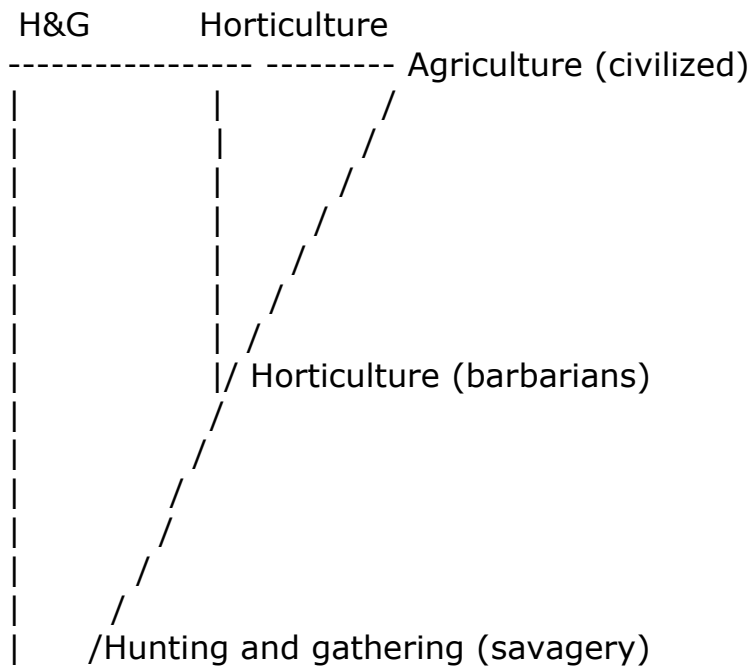
Horticulture (digging stick)



Hunting and gathering (bow and arrow, spears)



It was also felt that among some peoples, this development or evolution had not happened and so there were "survivals" – things that were held onto from the past so one could make a diagram showing this:



In general, Europe was seen as the apex of development (even to the point of requiring an alphabetic writing system so as to rule out Asia cultures which use either characters or syllabaries.)

While the ocean is a major primary producer and sequester of carbon dioxide and many other things of great importance, the two most important aspects of the ocean to people in their everyday life are transportation and a source of food.

No society in the world eats all the edible material around them (i.e. can be eaten for nutritional value and is not toxic). In the USA people normally don't eat dog or horsemeat and generally stay away from insects and worms and grubs

No society in the world seems to recognize human flesh as ordinary food, so cannibalism on a regular basis seem unknown although it does occur under conditions of extreme deprivation and ritually. Even in Western society, the eating of the body and blood of Christ during communion is an example of what has been called "symbolic cannibalism"

We do get many foods from the ocean although the vast amount of food people eat comes from the land. As populations increase, they often seek to build on relatively flat land which is also sought after for agriculture. So as populations increase and space to farm decreases there develop many problems. In effect a smaller amount of land available for planting is being asked to produce more and more food. This often requires fertilizers to be used which then become involved in run offs to the ocean where the result is algal blooms leading at times to dead zones.



Mollusks



crabs





Lobster



seal



Tuna



Sperm whale

There was a time when people thought there were unlimited quantities of fish in the ocean. Not just fish, but all kinds of food items:



The Grand Banks were known for their “infinite” numbers of cod fish. People used to say they were so plentiful you could walk on their backs across the water. By 2000 they were nearly extinct.



Fishing has been practiced by humans for more than 100,000 years. It has generally been considered a "side production method" compared to the use of the land. After all people are land living animals and as a result tend to be more involved with plants and animals which are also terrestrial. The earliest humans got their food from a process called "hunting and gathering". In these cultures people act more as passive producers of food. They caught what animals appeared and gathered whatever vegetable matter was available.

After many millennia people began to become more active in food production and began to domesticate animals and plant crops. Initially this appears to have been a kind of small scale gardening done with a "digging stick". This level of food production is called "horticulture"

Following that people became more intensive in their production and began to raise animals for food and plant more extensively, using the plow. This more complex level is known as "agriculture".

Fishing and the use of marine life as food is generally ignored since many peoples do not live by the ocean, and those who do, may not venture to far out on it. So the food from the ocean contributes only a small amount to people's diet.