

The Need for Culture (Even if it Doesn't Exist): A Lithuanian Example

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An argument is presented for why culture does not exist as a thing in itself, and why, nonetheless, it is necessary to create and presume that "it" does, in fact, exist. This paper advances a pragmatic theory of culture that does not reject either empirical or postmodern approaches to the study of culture. It is argued that conceptions of culture are cognitive mediating device that individuals use to find and claim either commonalities or differences between groups of people. The critical features that are posited as "cultural" are then generalized to the group and taken to be attributions of the group, leading to "flat" representations of culture. The pragmatic theory offered here suggests that all cultural attributes vary across members of a culture. It is not the attributes but rather the organized and shared knowledge of how to interpret behavior that is "culture". The theory is applied to interview data gathered in Vilnius.

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The Proliferation of the Cultural Concept

"Culture" has become, perhaps, the most used common buzzword in university departments other than the physical or natural sciences. For instance, almost all (if not all) the recent hires in the social sciences, liberal arts, and in the business school at my college, the State University of New York-New Paltz, used "culture" as a key word to define their research agenda. The term "culture" has grown as rapidly outside academe and seems as sturdy as kudzu (a weed that proliferates in the southern U.S.). Popular and professional media outlets casually refer to "the culture of _____" where the blank can be filled in by: business, sports, gangs, women, men, cities, slums, the poor, the rich, tourists, gangs, nations, ethnic groups, religions, etc. The very use of such statements as "Lithuanian culture" presumes that this culture (and other cultures) exists as a social entity with observable and definable characteristics, artifacts, or mannerisms.

Anthropologists have felled a few forests and spilled much ink writing about culture, but they are further from arriving at a consensus about what culture exactly is than ever before (see Fox 1999; Brumann 1999). The four classical social science theorists – Marx, Weber, Freud, and Durkheim – considered the shift from a communalist (i. e. sociocentric-organic) to an individualist (i. e., egocentric-contractual) *eidos* to have been a consequence of the „rupture“ (Gledhill 1994: 11) between the “traditional” (i. e., kin-based, small scale, homogeneous groupings) and “modern” (i. e., industrial, global scale, heterogeneous groupings) worlds. Giddens (1991), Sennett (1977), Lindholm (2001), Shweder (1998) and many more contemporary social theorists echo this concern. Perhaps the language changes, and “*eidos*” is replaced by “identity” or “interdependent” versus “independent” selves (Markus & Kityama 1991), but the underlying assumption remains secure in its bunker: modern social order(s) and consequently the modern individual(s) is fundamentally different from traditional social order(s) and individual(s). A plethora of contrast sets framing this distinction have become part of introductory social science texts. Consider, for example, the distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, mechanical and organic solidarity, the shift from exchange to use value, the rise of bureaucracy and rationalism, public versus intimate social arenas, organic versus contractual relations, the discourses on multiple versus single concepts of the self, multiculturalism and nationalism, and so on. I will argue that underlying the dichotomization (or whatever other sorts of criteria are used to divide culture up into two or more different types) of culture into “traditional” and “modern” (by, for example, Giddens 1991) for analytical purposes lies the unquestioned and near axiomatic belief that cultures are more or less bounded and integrated wholes or what Chriss Hann has referred to as “the basic illusion [of a]... *totalitarian* concept of culture” (Hann 1997: 21).

Brumann Attempts to Reclaim the Concept of Culture for Anthropology

The post modern emphasis on difference and subjectivities and on transnational, protean cultural forms all point to a need to revise or at the very least, re-evaluate, the conception of culture. Of course, there have been many debates on this issue, most have like the tide come and gone, leaving only some neologisms stranded on the discipline’s shoreline. Remarking on culture, Richard Fox wrote that “the concept of culture has gained wide (and vapid) usage in popular expression... At the very same time [it has come under sharp attack in] the discipline which claims “culture” as its central concept” (Fox 1999: i). In part to restake “our” disciplinary control over this concept, Brumann (1999) sought to both capture the main points in the debate in anthropology and to offer a new definition of culture. He asked whether anthropologists should “write against” or “write for” culture. The argument against culture is well represented by Jonathan Friedman who wrote that “the most-dangerously mis-

leading quality of the notion of culture is that it literally flattens out the extremely varied ways in which the production of meaning occurs in the contested field of social existence" (Friedman 1994: 207; cited in Brumann 1999: S2).

Brumann argued in favor of writing for culture, but his argument was largely pragmatic, arguing that now when the whole world is using this term, we anthropologists should not abandon the one term that distinguishes us from other academic disciplines. In fact, he offered a rather nebulous "culture is everything" definition of culture writing that "culture should be retained as a convenient term for designating the clusters of common concepts, emotions, and practices that arise when people interact regularly" (Brumann 1999: S1). Communities that interact frequently over time should eventually generate "clusters of common concepts, emotions, and practices". That is, culture is the precipitate of historically iterated interactions between some set of people. Brumann's definition is interesting for two reasons—one for what it says and the other for what it does not say.

Brumann's definition is very positivist because it unequivocally states that culture is derived out of interaction. It therefore follows that culture must be studied in terms of observable phenomena (human interaction) translated as empirical data. Second, for Brumann, neither a contiguous territory nor common mother tongue are necessary or sufficient conditions for the formation of culture. Thus, cultures can be created which are not correlated with either a common location or language. This allows for professional cultures to form as communities of like-minded citizens (say anthropologists) who regularly get together and interact. Despite these useful points Brumann's definition is ultimately unsatisfying because it is too vague and relies too heavily on human interaction. First, we do not know what and how many common clusters constitute a culture, nor how we identify such clusters, now what is meant by regular interaction. Further would two communities (or nation-states) that are regularly at war, as India and Pakistan over Kashmir, be considered a single culture? Probably not. Third, there are many concepts, emotions and practices that are universal (probably all emotions are), but no one would say that the societies that share these commonalities constitute a common culture; for example, Muslim society in Indonesia and Bedouins.

Brumann's definition of culture has been very influential both because it was published in a prestigious international journal (*Current Anthropology*) as the lead article in a special issue on culture, and because on first scan it makes sense. We do indeed find clusters of traits among communities using the same language or a mutually intelligible dialect. As a result, we often use linguistic qualifiers such as "Russian", "English", "Chinese", or "Lithuanian" to refer to both a language and a culture. Such usage makes sense for everyday speech and may adequately serve as a commonsensical theory of

culture and identity, but it perpetuates the misconception of culture as a unified, coherent whole.

Brumann's definition merely shifts the axis for a holistic and homogeneous model of culture from territory to behavior by using language as his conceptual but implicit pivot. Language is the implicit pivot because the traditional cultural area approach presumed that people living in the same area speak the same language (or dialects of the same mother tongue) and Brumann's emphasis on regular interaction also presumes that people who interact regularly speak the same language. Still anthropologists should, if they are not to disappear from the academic battlefield, try to reclaim some control over this "central concept". Particularly as our methodologies (based on long term participant observation and analysis of unobtrusive, mostly unconstrained, variables) and our comparative approach provides us a solid knowledge and experiential base from which to think about culture.

The problem that we are faced with is that while I believe that culture does *not* exist, we must nonetheless talk about it, investigate it, as if it did exist. Further, the concept may, as many suggest, be as "vapid" and "misleading" as it is useful. Mostly it is used as a trope or as part of a "language game" that keeps us from ever dealing with what Roger Keesing once referred to as the "morass of contextuality" that is human life. But then again, we cannot describe each individual in a population, we must talk about them as a more or less unified mass. James Clifford summed up this dilemma when he wrote "there are times when we still need to be able to speak holistically of Japanese or Trobriand or Moroccan culture in the confidence that we are designating something real and differentially coherent" (Clifford 1988: 4). But when are those times? And why do we feel a "need" to describe culturally "holistically?" In what follows I seek to answer these questions and, in so doing, I propose another theory of culture and conclude by employing this new definition to interview material collected in Lithuania.

The Mediating Function of Culture

Culture is a mediating device whose minimal function is to give some group of people a feeling that they belong to a collectivity. Society is never comprised of an unmediated cluster of individuals, but there are always some expressed conceptions about who are members of the group and who are not and what the members hold in common (though what is held in common or why it is important may be disputed). Thus there are always narratives and conceptions that represent the population as a collective, a body politic. These narratives provide contexts, and authorial voices for framing and interpreting one's being in the world and the actions of others. Some groups are seen as first

order groups where the relations are direct and based on rhetoric of common primary experiences and their derivative ideas (e. g., freedom, democracy, and individualism). Other groups may have second order conceptions of unity, where commonalities are drawn from a common history or heritage, which converges on salient equivalencies in ideology and practices.

All individuals, in any society, belong to a wide variety of different first and second order groupings. And probably, even in small scale forging societies, no two individuals belong to the same set of groups. Thus, each individual, in any society, is, to some degree, unique, in their collection of social groups. Each of these groups has its own mediating tropes and narratives. Some of these tropes are isolating of others, some are assertive, while others are not. In this sense each individual is indeed, tangled up in a web of social significances and this web constitutes his or her culture. This version of culture is akin to A. F. C. Wallace's (Wallace 1961) now well-seasoned and perhaps forgotten concept of "mazeways". Wallace defined "mazeways" as "the sum of all the cognitive maps which at any moment a person maintains, of self, of behavioral environment, and of those valued experiences or states of being which attract or repel him" (Wallace 1961: 323).

Mazeways are unique but they blend together in recognizing a common "behavioral environment" (a term first proposed by A. I. Hallowell 1955). Individuals refer to and often self identify with those individuals who are significant in constituting and shaping that environment. As a result they begin to control their own behaviors and those of others as well and this process of control, understanding and purpose shape dynamics within a behavioral environment. Rather than a "culture-centered" approach that views culture as disembodied systems, à la "social", "kinship", "economic", "political", or "religious" systems Hallowell and Wallace favored a "behavior-centered" approach (Garro 2000: 315). A behavior-centered approach rejects a 'part-equals-the-whole' by taking the individuals and contexts as indissoluble.

Individuals are not atomistic units but belong to many overlapping and independent social groups. Each group has its own behavioral environment, its own part of the "mazeway". Consequently people move from micro-context to micro-contexts, each of these mediated by different social statuses, registers of speech, arrays of symbols that give order and meaning to the micro context and, in other words, each micro-context has its own culturally mediated behavioral environment. Some of these groups and some of the behavioral environments are consciously and intentionally mediated, for example weddings, class rooms, business, while others are not. This mazeway of cross-cutting ties contributes to a feeling of the individual as embedded in a wider collectivity which is mediated by an overarching device called "culture". This feeling is likely to be consciously rationalized when micro-contexts are hierarchically nested or explicitly

interlinked. For example, if one works in a family business, then family ties and work place are connected; or if one is an anthropologist at a university, then both anthropology conferences and various committee and academic conferences are linked and promulgates the perception and feeling of being a member of one large organization. Culture then becomes the warp and woof that unifies the various segments of this over-arching, experienced and felt, but unrealizable, organization.

The personal sense of being grounded in and oriented to the world at large in terms of both language and culture explains, I believe, why we often think of language and culture as similar systems and why we use language terms to stand for culture, as mentioned above. The partial substitutability of language for culture probably feels stronger in homogeneous local communities rather than in urban areas or in nation-states. Though of course language may still have great emotional and political valence in (mostly small) nation-states. Political identities may be derived from our communicative groundedness in language and tendency to equate language to culture. The greater this tendency and the more it is encourage, the more likely that we see culture as a homogeneous and hegemonic concept and interpret cultural differences as a potential "clash of civilizations". The problematizing of the culture equals language equation subverts the growth of such hegemonies.

The mediating conceptions of each group or grouping are what define the group. These mediating conceptions provide a shared frame within which actions are linked to intentions and the members of the group are able to read actions and their implications in similar ways. Behaviors are "read" within the mediative frame. At the same time, mediating conceptions are derived from the primary experiences, actions and desires of the people that make up the relevant groupings. At the most immediate and local sense the mediating conceptions define and are defined by the groupings.

Inconsistencies between behavioral environments are collapsed by an over-arching sense of communicative order that instills in a person a sense of knowing what she is doing and what is going on. Differences collapse and the pragmatic sensibility of an actual, operating, social order and one's own introspective sense of self consistency fogs the varying differences, giving individuals a sense of commonality and sharedness with those others in his or her behavioral environments even where there is no evidence for it. Individuals do recognized differences but most often view them as analogous to dialectical differences. Often we are able to code switch across many of these "dialects" and through this process we produce yet wider conceptualizations of consistency across sub groups within a larger population and we call the sum of these conceptualizations "culture".

A second generative mechanism is the tendency for some conceptualizations to become hegemonic and therefore authoritative across groupings in society. Such conceptualizations, such as discourses on “democracy” in the United States, are accepted as cultural values by the whole. These authoritative rules or concepts can multiply and produce a sense of a common culture, even when those rules may also exist in other cultures or even, when there are other rules that contradict or are not shared across these groupings. Such authoritativeness can either be a matter of explicit rules and norms (as learned in school and church) or a matter of exposure to authoritative or attractive models (as in TV dramas or sitcoms, or in lives of culture heroes).

Since individuals each belong to a range and variety of groups, the conceptualizations that define or are defined by each group are dealt with by the individuals from the outside. That is, each individual forms an internal representation of the conceptualizations of each group to which she or he relates – with perhaps varying degrees of completeness and specificity depending on how close and of what sort the relationship is. The conceptualizations that define or are defined by a group can be thought of as the group’s “collective representations”. It is these collective representations which anthropologists aim to describe when they describe “cultural models” or “culture”. But, since each and every group consists of nothing but such “outsiders”, none of them has a (and thus there exists no) direct representation of the conceptualizations – no place that the anthropologist can go to directly observe “it.”

As Saussure realized in the case of *langue*, each member of any group or community only knows the conceptualizations (or *langue*/language) of that group from a particular point of view and from a particular set of experiences; such knowledge is necessarily always partial, limited, and partaking of some idiosyncrasies. In this sense true/actual collective representations or cultural models can be said not to actually or truly exist; they have to be only a convenient fiction. What make these collective representations seem real or feel real to us are the facts that:

(1) as individuals we conceptualize each group with which we interact as, in some sense and to some degree, an animate “it” capable of a unitary characterization – and hence social scientists feel comfortable looking for a description of such an “it”;

(2) our informants talk about these “its” as if they actually exist – both the cultures and subcultures and the beliefs and knowledge that characterize each;

(3) we all act as if we feel these collective representations or cultural models actually, independently exist, and, through the communicative constraints (the separate “its” that each member constructs a representation of) act as if we are describing the same apparently external and objective “it.”

In sum I wonder why I keep talking of collective representations and cultural models even though I firmly don't believe in their objective actual existence. I am trying to describe how my view differs from such people as Fredrik Barth who want to eliminate "the middle man" (of culture or collective representations) and speak directly of patterns of interaction, shared experience, and shared knowledge. It is, I believe, it is necessary to see a mediative device between the behaviors and the patterns of interaction and this mediative device is a non-existent agent: culture. Without cultural intervention there is no way to make sense of our sense of sharedness and of pattern because otherwise we go directly from independent data to pattern eliminating the middle man – that is human beings who are, after all, the source of pattern. Finally, I would like to show how this "theory of culture" works with interview data obtained on the streets of Vilnius.

Interview Data

The above theory of data is behavior-centered rather than culture-centered and the individual is taken as the "unit of analysis" rather than as a warehouse for variables (e.g., intelligence; power; social status; age; modes of production, etc.). My analytical strategy is as follows: to develop individual profiles (of whatever topics are of interest to the researcher; to discover and make explicit patterns of overlap and difference among the individuals questioned; and to infer mediating mechanisms or discourses from these patterns. By "mediating mechanisms or discourses" I mean describing some kind of interpretive or processual operation that is (more or less) shared and used by most of the informants. The analysis below is relatively simple and I have not attempted to nest or embed it within larger frames of analysis. This would be possible and indeed necessary if, the purpose of this paper was to analyze a data set. However, for purposes of this paper, the data are secondary to my argument for a theory of culture as a mediating device that produces a sense of socio-cultural consistency among diverse people and groups. I want to point at, not analyze, the mediating devices as they are present in these interviews and then I want to suggest how these mediating devices are used to develop a discourse and belief in culture.

Methodology

The interview data were elicited from pedestrians in Vilnius who the author stopped on the streets or at the train or bus station and asked if he could interview them. The author was accompanied by Ms. Janina Jodelienė who had

translated the questions into Russian and Lithuanian and who conducted the interviews. Five interviews were conducted by Ms. Jodelienė without my presence. The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees and later transcribed by the author and Ms. Jodelienė. There are fifteen interviews in all. The interviewees ranged from 22 to 65 years of age and seem to be a reasonable cross-section of the larger Vilnius population. None of the interviewees were members of the upper middle-upper classes. All interviewees were asked the same set of questions (presented in Appendix A). The interviewees were questioned at the place we met them and the questions were verbally presented by Ms. Jodelienė in either Lithuanian or Russian (two of the informants were Russian and were not comfortable speaking Lithuanian). Interviews lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes. Sometimes questions not in the questionnaire were asked to follow-up or take advantage of a particular response, but in the main the interviewees received the same set of questions and in similar situations.

I will present and discuss only that data concerning the following subjects: 1) languages spoken; 2) description of job and income; 3) main life concern; 4) children and hopes for them; 5) desire to go abroad and why; 6) ideas about Vilnius.

Analysis of the Data

All fifteen informants were, at minimum bilingual, eight were able to speak and write three or more languages. All the speakers were fluent in Russian. Interestingly, two informants who were Russian nationals, though they have never been out of Lithuania, did not speak Lithuanian. This ability to code switch between Lithuanian and Russian by the majority of Lithuanians is one communicative capacity that they share in common and reminds them of their common history and heritage as part of the Soviet Union. It is this common history, in fact, that many of the informants referred to when they responded to the question "how Vilnius has changed." Few had anything good to say about the period of Soviet occupation, but most remembered the lines they stood in for food, the lack of goods.

Most of the informants used a discourse of aesthetics and tourism to describe how Vilnius had changed. They mentioned the beauty of the city, its growth, the new buildings that had gone up and areas of the city that were under renovation and construction, the night clubs, the fact that there was now a plethora of commodities and foods available, and the *influx* of tourists. But the way these changes were discussed was often ambivalent, with most of the informants, especially the older ones, not being able to place themselves within the context of these changes. In their talk of these changes they presented

themselves as distant and disengaged observers rather than participants in these changes. I present some of their comments below, to illustrate this point:

1. 45 year old male: Vilnius is now beautiful city and draws many tourists.

There are many rich but I manage just barely to get by with less than 500 litas a month;

2. 50 year old female: Now Vilnius is beautiful and don't have to stand in line for goods and come home after two hours. So there is everything in Vilnius except job and money.

3. 61 year old male: Of course there is an 11% unemployment in Vilnius and that is good, worse elsewhere. But I do not complain, we have won our freedom and that is the biggest wealth.

4. 50 year old female: Well perhaps Vilnius became nicer, more beautiful but people are still angry, very angry.

5. 40 year old Plumber: Mansions are growing because there are rich people, factories are closing up, schools are also closing up. So nothing good... totally nothing good.

From these quotes it seems that these *Vilniečiai* (i.e., residents of Vilnius) share a common understanding of their relationship to the city. This understanding is expressed in what appears to be a new aesthetic discourse of the city. Thus there is a common understanding of describing the city not in its utilitarian functions but in its appearance. Second the informants' articulation of their own relation or position to the city is one of ambivalence and, if you will, separateness, expressed in sarcasm. The mediating devices (that is the "cultural models") present in their responses may include not only what they say but their register of speech, which is wry and which distances the self from the urbanity and emblematic (i.e., reference to night clubs, buildings, fashion stores, etc.) modernity of Vilnius. The self is portrayed as passive and pragmatic, simply trying to get by, and as stoically amused and bemused by the changes. There is a shared style of discourse and of the presentation of self, as simple yet clever. In part it is this style of speech, this representation of self as anchored in a more pragmatic reality and as non-participants in the re-fashioning of Vilnius, that these informants share and which gives them a means of talking with each other and constructing a shared cultural identity, however transient or imagined that identity may be.

These informants also share a concern with the economics of everyday life. Money is needed, there isn't enough, and it is always uppermost in their minds, both for themselves and for their children. The informants' concern with money is always anchored in a language of modesty rather than materialism. Informants are quick to note that they don't need money to buy cars or even houses, they simply want to be able to buy food and pay their rent. They represent themselves as pragmatic and resourceful as opposed to the rich and to tourists

who are, inevitably portrayed as “spoiled” and “lazy.” But many of the informants’ livelihoods were dependent on both tourists and on the wealthier Vilniečiai.

The wry humor and stoic presentation of self offered up by my informants is in sharp contrast with their descriptors of the two other referent groups: the upper class and foreigners. Both foreigners and the upper class were described in similar terms: they were soft, went to night clubs, the opera, and were part of the scene of a new “urbane” Vilnius. The modernity of Vilnius is immanent in the foreigners and upper class (and perhaps the Mafia), its past is represented by most of my older informants. This is illustrated by two interesting quotes, one from a twenty-two year old student, the other from a pensioner. The student responded to the question how Vilnius has changed as follows, “Vilnius has changed. Now there are clubs and more self expression (“išraiška”). Old people, however, are the same now [in their thoughts and behaviors] as they were in soviet times.” This student identifies a generational division in which the older generation views the world through the cultural lenses of soviet times. In these times, through his eyes, individuals lacked “self expression” and did not go out to nightclubs. He uses this mediating frame to view and make sense of the behaviors, utterances, and appearance of older generations. It is in remarking on this difference, however, that he also evinces to us that the interpretive frame through which he views the older generation (that is cultural models as a mediating device), allows him to make sense of the older generation. He reconnects with them because he understands and knows about their personal and social history. He also presents himself, and by extension his generation as a collectivity, that is as a cultural group, characterized by increased self-expression and going to nightclubs, and, by implication, having surplus cash to spend on entertainment. The new generation has cash and uses it for entertainment, their culture is one of performance and aesthetics, whereas the world of the older generation is that of work and home, of solemnity and work.

This theme of generational cultures, specifically those who were adults during the Soviet time and those who are now coming of age, is further highlighted by the comments of an older informant. The sixty-five year old man, had told us that he had not been working for about ten years and that he was pensioned (*pensininkas*). We inquired as to how he was earning an income over these years. The question, appeared innocent to us, but he retorted as if we had insulted him and said with evident irritation, “how come you say that I was all the time without a job? How can I not work! All those years I worked.”

Ms. Jodelienė placatingly said, “But nowadays (*šiais laikais*) many people don’t have [jobs]”. To which he quickly replied, using her word, “nowadays,” “You see nowadays. I’m not from nowadays, I am from olden times.” (*šiais laikais. Aš ne iš šių laikų. Aš iš senų laikų.*)”

This *pensininkas* and the student seem, to me to be sharing the same cultural model first for categorizing social groups on the basis of gender and second to assign specific differences in cultural traits to these groups. Unlike the student, the *pensininkas* valorizes his identification with "olden times" when men worked and work defined, in part, the individual. Such criterion for membership would probably seem slightly ridiculous and certainly old-fashioned to the student, and by extension members of his generation, but I can imagine them nodding their heads and smiling, remarking something like, "yes, just like my dad". The *pensininkas* views the younger generation as "lazy," desiring not to work, and, as the student, concerned about entertainment and self expression. In this way both the student and the *pensininkas* share the same model (or mediating device) of the differences between the two generations but they place a different value on these differences, though, at the same time realizing the other's value system. The generations can see each other as sub-groups or sub-cultures of a larger cultural complex, recognizing their differences, but knowing how each sees the other. Both, in other words, recognize the point of view of the other generation, knowing that the other generation uses a different, perhaps reciprocal, evaluative scale.

Conclusion

I have argued with Brumann, that anthropologists must reclaim the concept of culture, but I disagree with his approach to culture. I argue that culture cannot be primarily based on regular interaction between people, even if we include second-order interactions (that is on telephone or via various media outlets). I hope I have indicated that culture cannot exist as an entity or in any straightforward causal manner, but the presumption of its existence is a necessary fiction. I have stated that a viable contemporary theory of culture must be able to interpret variation and uniformity, difference and similarity. Consequently, the individual was taken as the unit of analysis and I have taken culture to be found in the varying cultural models, or what has here been termed "mediating devices" which people use to frame and interpret themselves and their behavioral environment. We cannot move straight from on the ground behaviors or utterances to social systems or shared ideologies for two reasons: first, without mediating devices it is the social scientist or whoever is doing the research who alchemizes human action into socio-cultural processes and states; second, individuals must select from the welter of sensory input what is significant from what is not and they must make sense, organize and act on those input therefore they must apply some kind of mediating cognitive devices. There is no other possibility. A theory of culture as mediating devices leads to the idea that we connect to each other by recognizing or sharing the same mediating devices rather than the same values or behaviors.

The goal of anthropological research, from this perspective, is to discover, describe and analyze those mediating devices and how they operate among the members of a population. Examples of this process are presented in my analysis of the interview data. I have uncovered a number of such devices among the residents of Vilnius. Among them are sense of humor, generational distinctions, bilingualism, and a common understanding of their Soviet past and contemporary changes. Finally, using this theory of culture we show that views of Vilnius may differ among generations but that both younger and elder generation Vilnites employ the same interpretive frames, but with different evaluative scales. The present study advances a pragmatic cognitive theory of culture and illustrates its usefulness. I expect that future researchers could use and further develop this theoretical approach to their advantage.

Appendix A: Interview Schedule with Vilnites

I. Vital statistics

- a. age
- b. religion
- c. married
- d. children
- e. where born
if not Vilnius then where
how came here
- f. district live in
- g. how many and who you live with
- h. education
- i. languages speak read, write

II. Job

- a. how got job
- b. jobs before
- c. who pays you
- d. what happens when sick
- e. season best for work and why
- f. what is best part of work
- g. what is worst part of work
- h. approximately how much earn

III. Life

- a. when married
- b. how did you meet
- c. how long before marry and who asked and decided

- d. children? Any die
- e. where do they live
- f. what do they do
- g. what are your hopes for them
- h. who are the people you are closest to and can go to for help
- i. what are the biggest difficulties in your life
- j. what gives you most satisfaction in life
- k. how has Vilnius changed for best for worse

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Kultūros (net jei ji neegzistuoja) poreikis: Lietuvos pavyzdys

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje teigiama, jog, nepaisant daugelio postmodernistinių teorinių kultūros sąvokos aiškinimų, ji iki šiol paprastai apibrėžiama taip, kad nors besąlygiškai ir sąmoningai pripažįstame, jog mūsų diskursams apie kultūrą būdingas subjektyvumas, bet kalbame apie kultūras kaip apie susijusias visumas, kurioms būdingos ypatingos „esminės“ savybės. Argumentuojama, kodėl kultūra neegzistuoja kaip daiktas savyje ir kodėl vis dėlto būtina sudaryti išpūdį ir manyti, jog „ji“ iš tikrųjų egzistuoja. Pateikiama pragmatinė kultūros teorija, kuri neatmeta nei empirinio, nei postmodernaus požiūrio į kultūros tyrinėjimą. Teigiama, jog kultūros samprata yra kognityvinė tarpininkaujanti priemonė, kurią individai naudoja tarp žmonių grupių egzistuojantiems bendrumams arba skirtumams surasti ir į juos pretenduoti. Individai šiais laikais veikia daugybėje atskirų pasaulių, kurie iš jų reikalauja skirtingų įvaizdžių, įgūdžių, verčių ir elgesio; kiekvienas iš tų pasaulių yra atskira modulinė elgesio aplinka, reikalaujanti iš individo skirtingai save pateikti, tačiau tai netrukdo jam galvoti apie save kaip apie atskirą holistinę būtybę su nepertraukiama gyvenimo istorija.

Individai naudojami kognityvine tarpininkaujančia priemone, kad skirtingus kontekstus ir įvaizdžius suvoktų kaip skirtingus „vaidmenis“, kuriuos atlieka tas pats individas; tokiu būdu individai veikia skirtingose kultūrinėse aplinkose, bet gali suvokti save kaip dalį holistinės ir susijusios kultūros, arba kaip įstatytus į šią kultūrą. Straipsnyje svarstoma apie tai, jog kognityvinės tarpininkaujančios priemonės padeda sujungti „modulines“ elgesio-kultūrinės aplinkas. Pateikiamas pavyzdys, kaip ši kognityvinė priemonė veikia kurdamą holistinę Lietuvos kultūros įvaizdį. Autorius teigia, jog iš tikrųjų nėra holistinės Lietuvos kultūros, išskyrus tai, kaip ją įsivaizduoja patys lietuviai (arba, tiesą sakant, kuri nors kita grupė). Autorius pateikia pavyzdžių, kaip ši kognityvinė tarpininkaujanti priemonė veikia Lietuvos identiteto diskursuose. Individai arba susieja save su holistinio ir susijusio identiteto lauku, arba save atskiria nuo šio identiteto; bet kuriuo atveju jie kuria holistinį identitetą, kuris yra daugiau nei diskursas, nes tai yra įsivaizduojama visuma, priklausanti nuo konteksto. Čia pateikta pragmatinė teorija teigia, jog visi kultūriniai požymiai kinta tarp kultūros narių. Tai ne požymiai, o veikia organizuotas žinojimas, kuriuo dalijamasi norint aiškinti elgesį, kuris yra „kultūra“.

