

NATURE VS. NURTURE

Lecture 2

Culture and Human Behavior

- We act the way we do because of both **biology** & **culture** and biology.
- How much of each?

“Western” does not =
“normal”:

- Dominant cultures wrote history/text books

ethnocentricity v.s. cultural relativism

- Much of our behavior that we view as “natural” and due to biology is really due to culture
- This is an ethnocentric view

- ethnocentrism = the tendency to view one's own culture as best and to judge the behavior and beliefs of culturally different peoples by one's own standards
- it is a cultural universal

cultural relativity:

- The position that the values and standards of cultures differ and deserve respect.
- Cultures should be judged by their own standards
- human rights?

Anthropology uniquely suited for studying the nature/ nurture dilemma because:

- studies cross-cultural differences
- universals most likely nature
- differences most likely nurture

cultural anthropology's 2 ways to study cultural diversity:

- **Ethnography** (field work)
- **Ethnology** (Cross-cultural comparison; the comparative study of ethnographic data, society and culture)

How does ethnography differ from survey research (5 ways)?

- 1. whole functioning society **v.s.** small sample of a larger population
- 2. rapport **v.s.** no rapport
- 3. holistic **v.s.** narrowly focused
- 4. simpler/not read and write **v.s.** more complex/read and write
- 5. little statistics **v.s.** statistics

What are the characteristics/ benefits of an ethnography?

- 1. long (1 year)
- 2. **HARD** (culture shock/hard conditions)
- 3. live the life
- 4. wide variety of data
- 5. natural environment
- 6. ethically problems
- 7. **BUT** get detail, “truth,” & a better sense of what everyday life is like

- “The truly meaningful things about a people are not learned by conducting an interview, gathering statistics or watching the news, but by going out and living with them.” (Conover 1987, p. xii)

Why are ethics so important in anthropology?

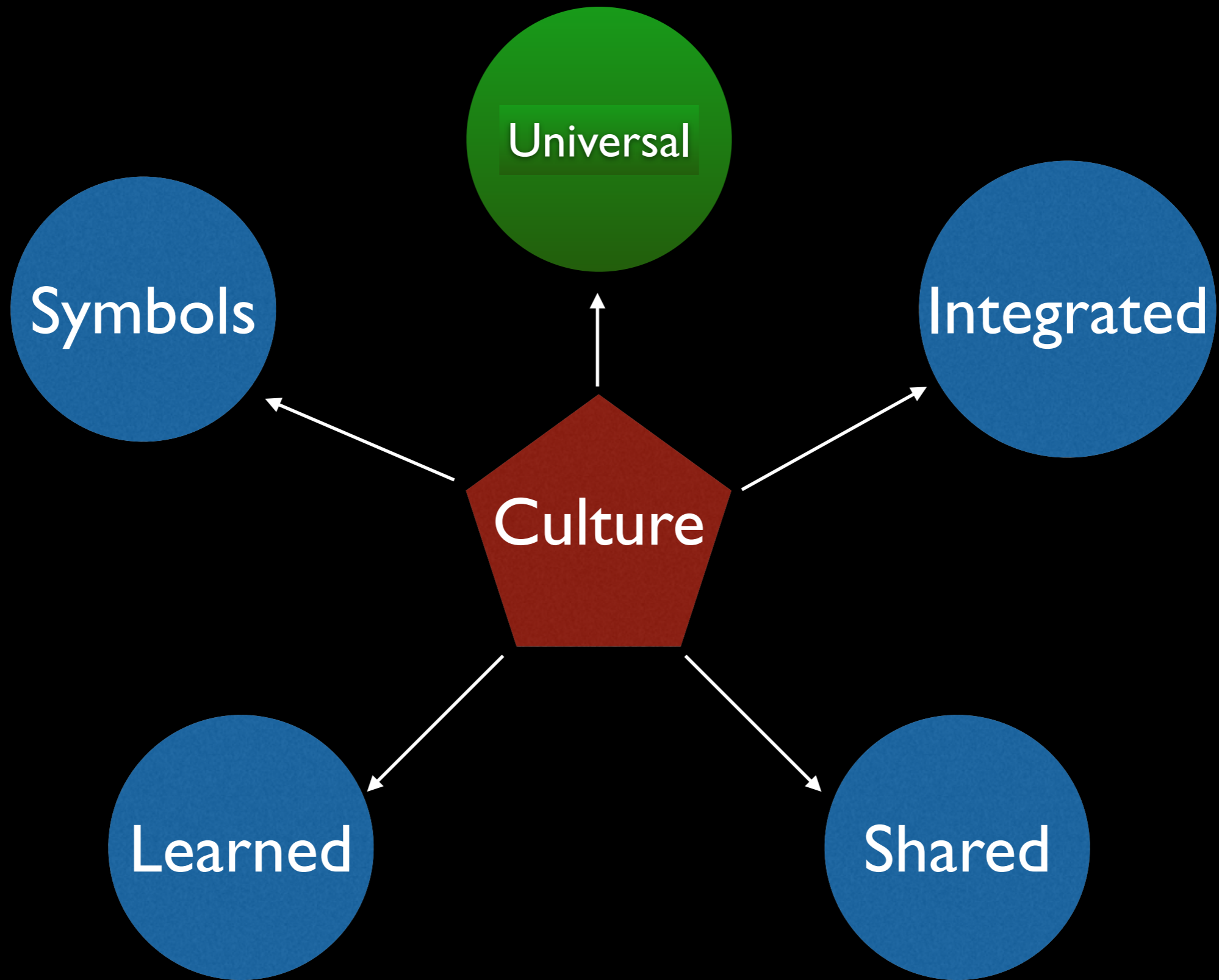
- the anthropologist is the “agent of measure”
- rapport with informants

Ethics

- What is the primary ethical obligation of anthropologists?
- the people/artifacts/primates they study

Definition of Culture:

- The shared symbolic knowledge which people draw on as they make their way through life



Properties of culture

The Benefits and Costs of Food

Production (Compared with Foraging)

Benefits

- Discoveries and inventions
- New social, political, scientific, and creative forms (e.g. spinning, weaving, pottery, bricks, metallurgy)
- Monumental architecture, arched masonry, sculpture
- Writing
- Mathematics, weights, and measures
- Trade and markets
- Urban life
- Increased economic production
- More reliable crop yields

Costs

- Harder work
- Less nutritious diets
- Child labor and child care demands
- Taxes and military drafts
- Public health declines (e.g. more exposure to pathogens, including communicable and epidemic diseases)
- Rise in protein deficiency and dental decay
- Greater stress
- Social inequality and poverty
- Slavery and other forms of human bondage
- Rise in crime, war and human sacrifice

Core Values

- Cultures train their members to share certain personality traits
- Ex. individuality

Through **socialization**
individuals are introduced to:

- concepts of self for that particular culture
- How one should behave in that particular culture
- everyone interprets in their own way – but share broad, general ideas about things

The result is a kind of cognitive
map of the world in terms of
which the individual will think
and act = *personality*

Definition of Personality:

- the complex psychological processes occurring in a human being as she functions in her daily life, motivated and directed by a variety of internal and external factors.

How psychological anthropologists look at “behavior”

- EXAMPLE - Ruth Benedict's Patterns of Culture

Ruth Benedict

1887-1948



Zuni (Apollonian) –Greek God Apollo (sun, order, harmony)

- inoffensiveness
- order and the collective
- attention to detail
- restraint
- dignity
- even-tempered
- cooperative
- play down differences in wealth

Kwakiutl (Dyonesian) – Greek God Dionysos (wine, revelry)

- excess
- great differences in social rankings
- humiliate and insult rivals
- show self as superior
- POTLACHES

Could look at economic differences, or political differences but **psychological anthropology** interested in:

- people's view of the world
- their views on interpersonal relations
- their notions of the IDEAL PERSON

Chart and observe these differences but also interested in:

- how differences came about
- what kinds of psychological demands behaviors pose on people
- what kind of psychological gain do people get if they conform to the ideal behavior
- what are the costs if they don't

tonights reading

- Gladwell, Chapter 1
- Watch TED Talk “Susan Savage-Rumbaugh on apes” http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_savage_rumbaugh_on_apes_that_wrote.html