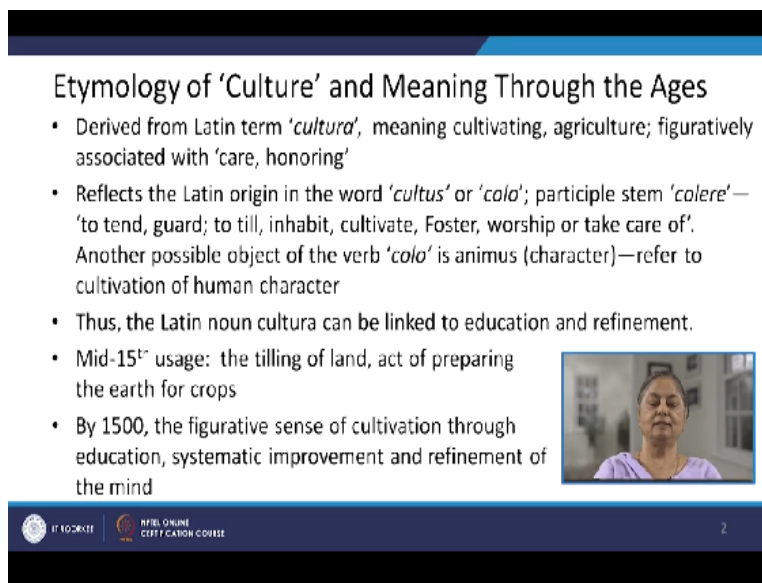


Literature, Culture and Media
Prof. Rashmi Gaur
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Lecture – 03
Defining Culture

Dear participants. Welcome to the third module of our introductory week. In the previous module, we have looked at various definitions of literature and had tried to look at the parameters within which we would carry forward our discussion in the subsequent weeks. Today, we will attempt to look at the parameters within which we would be looking at the term culture. We will try to define it and understand various connotations of the word culture. Etymologically the word has been derived from the Latin term cultura which means cultivating.

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Etymology of 'Culture' and Meaning Through the Ages

- Derived from Latin term '*cultura*', meaning cultivating, agriculture; figuratively associated with 'care, honoring'
- Reflects the Latin origin in the word '*cultus*' or '*colo*'; participle stem '*colere*'— 'to tend, guard; to till, inhabit, cultivate, Foster, worship or take care of'. Another possible object of the verb '*colo*' is *animus* (character)—refer to cultivation of human character
- Thus, the Latin noun *cultura* can be linked to education and refinement.
- Mid-15th usage: the tilling of land, act of preparing the earth for crops
- By 1500, the figurative sense of cultivation through education, systematic improvement and refinement of the mind

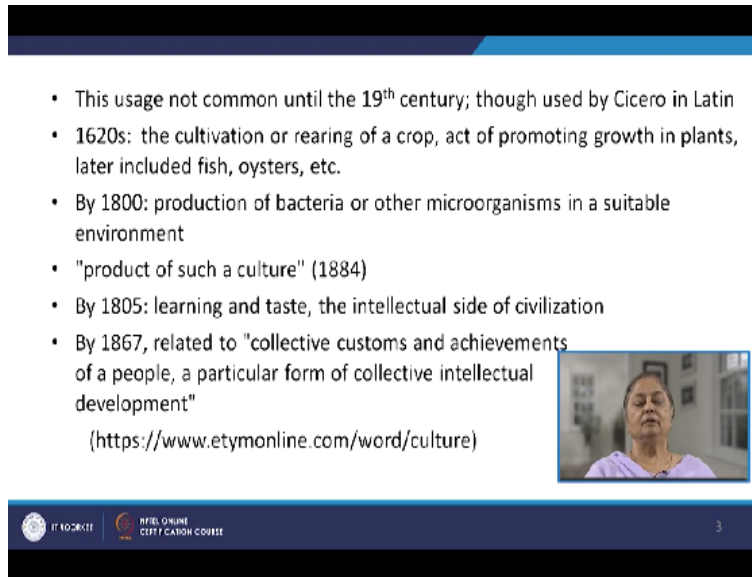
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And it was primarily used in the context of agriculture. Figuratively it came to be associated with caring for somebody or honoring something. The word culture also reflects the Latin origin. The origin can be traced to *cultus* or *colo* and its participle stem *colere* which means to tend, guard, to till, inhabit, cultivate, foster, etc. Another possible object of the word *colo* is *animus* which refers to cultivation of human character.

Thus we can say that the Latin noun *cultura* in this sense can be linked to education and refinement. During the mid 15th century, the usage was related with the tilling of the land, act of

preparing the earth for crops, etc. Before the introduction of the 16th century, the figurative sense of cultivation through education, a systematic improvement and refinement of the mind had started to be used.

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- This usage not common until the 19th century; though used by Cicero in Latin
- 1620s: the cultivation or rearing of a crop, act of promoting growth in plants, later included fish, oysters, etc.
- By 1800: production of bacteria or other microorganisms in a suitable environment
- "product of such a culture" (1884)
- By 1805: learning and taste, the intellectual side of civilization
- By 1867, related to "collective customs and achievements of a people, a particular form of collective intellectual development"

(<https://www.etymonline.com/word/culture>)

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The usage was not very common, however, until the 19th century; though it had been used by Cicero in his works. During the 1620s, it was related with the cultivation of or rearing of a crop. During the 1800, it also came to be used for the production of bacteria or other microorganisms. By 1805, it had started to be used in the context of learning and taste. And in 1867, we find that it came to be related collective customs and achievements of a people, a particular form of collective intellectual development.

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Various Definitions of Culture

- '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 1870: 1)
- '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)
- '[Culture] is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.' (Hofstede 1994: 5)



If you look at various definitions of culture over certain centuries, we find that certain characteristics become clear to us. We would start by looking at Tyler's definition. He had said that 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. So we find that in this definition, it is the capabilities and habits of man which he has acquired as a member of a group are important.

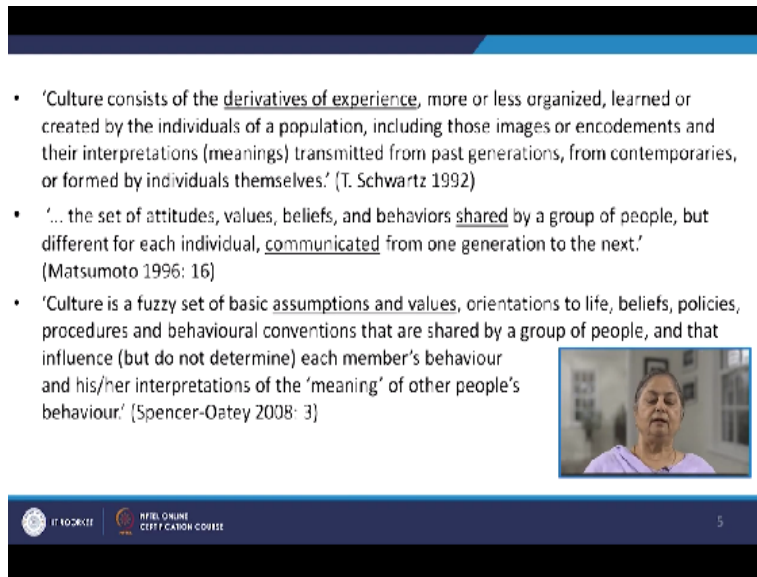
The same idea is retained by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, who suggest that culture consists of patterns, explicit as well as implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values, etc.

So we find that in this definition also the idea that it is related with the human group and not with a single individual is highlighted. And at the same time in this definition, the idea that the behaviour can be acquired as well as transmitted forward has been put across. It is also pertinent to look at a definition by Hofstede who says that culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

So with this definition, we find that the idea of culture as a conditioning of man, a collective

programming of man has been put forward.

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The slide features a white background with a blue header and footer. It contains three bullet points defining culture, each with a citation. A small video thumbnail of a woman is positioned to the right of the third bullet point. The footer includes the IIT Kharagpur logo, the text 'IIT KHARAGPUR', 'NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE', and the number '5'.

- '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)
- '... 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)

In certain other definitions also, we find that the variations of same ideas have been given. In those definition by Schwartz, we find that culture has been defined as consisting of the derivatives of experience which are more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population including those images or encodements and their interpretations transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.

So the idea of a continued legacy is also incorporated in this definition. Similarly, we find that Matsumoto has defined culture as a set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next. In this definition we find that though the emphasis is on the shared behaviour of a group of people, still individual variation has been incorporated.

The same idea has been continued by Spencer and Oatey who suggest that 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 or her interpretations of the meaning of other people's behaviour.

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What is Culture?

- Multiple meanings; culture cannot be separated from human life and experiences
- Culture: how we dress; what we believe; what we eat; what we speak; what we think. As a way of life; produces commonality of thought, experiences, beliefs and behavior
- Contributes to conformity with established norms, rule and standards
- Culture: (1) Allows us to live together in harmony; build communities
(2) Community established through shared signs and symbols whose meaning is known and recognized by the members of a society



So what exactly is culture? When we look at all these definitions, we find that despite the multiplicity of meanings, culture is something which cannot be separated from our life and its experiences. It is based on and is reflected through our dress, our belief systems, our culinary habits, our speech patterns, our thought patterns. So as a way of life, it produces a certain commonality of thought, experiences, beliefs and behaviour.

And therefore, it also generates a certain conformity with established norms, rule and standards in a given society. If we look at various characteristics of culture, they can be listed as given. First of all, it allows us to live together in harmony. It allows us to build communities. And community is established through shared signs and symbols whose meaning is known and recognized by every member of that group.

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- (3) Refers to all embedded norms and rules within an organization
 - (4) Norms and rules are imbibed and obeyed by members often unconsciously and subconsciously
 - (5) Socialization is the process of learning, and imbibing the norms as we grow up
 - (6) Presence of zones and regions within the broader culture; institutional norms within cultures and subcultures
- Culture is not a coherent entity or even a system : Set of dynamic processes, transactions, heterogeneous practises, technologies, transmutations, institutions
- Out of these set of practises and processes; things, events and occurrences are produced, experienced, and lived out
 - These heterogeneous practises give meaning and produce value in different ways to the chaotic elements and network of mutations from which they emerged to begin with



Similarly, we find that every member of the group can refer to the embedded norms and rules which are acceptable within the organization. These norms and rules are imbibed and obeyed by members often unconsciously or subconsciously. So we find that the idea of conditioning by our culture is also somehow intrinsically related with these definitions. It leads us to an understanding of socialization which is the process of learning things, imbibing certain values as we grow up.

Presence of zones in regions within the broader culture, institutional norms within cultures and subcultures is also present. At the same time, it becomes clear to us on the basis of these definitions that culture is not a coherent entity or even a coherent system. It is a set of dynamic processes, transactions, heterogeneous practices, technologies, transmutations, institutions, etc. Out of these set of practices and processes, certain occurrences, event and things are produced, experienced and lived out by human beings.

And these heterogeneous practices also give meaning and produce value in different ways to the chaotic elements and networks of mutations from which they emerged to begin with.

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Arnold on Culture

- Thus the question of culture – its existence or its ontology – cannot be reduced to either human bodily matter; economic matter; or lived experiential matter. The question of culture is also a spiritual matter—the history of culture from late 18th century informs us
- In his significant book, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Matthew Arnold says:
 - 'The kingdom of God is with in you; and culture, like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality'
 - According to Arnold, culture is that which is best – pursuit of what is best; the ability to know what is best; and the conceptual and spiritual application of that which is best
- Established the high Victorian cultural agenda which remained dominant till 1950s



Our discussions on culture normally begins by looking at the Arnoldian definitions. The acquisition of culture, its existence or its ontology, thus cannot be reduced to either human bodily matter, economic matter, or lived experiential matter. The question of culture is also a spiritual matter. And this idea was presented by Matthew Arnold in his significant book, *Culture and Anarchy* published in 1869 when he has suggested that.


And I quote "The kingdom of God is within you, and culture, like manner, places human perfection in an internal condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality." So according to Arnold, culture is that which is best, pursuit of what is the best, in our known understandings.



And at the same time, it is the conceptual understanding as well as our spiritual application of these understandings. Arnold's definitions of culture established the high Victorian cultural agenda which remained dominant till 1950s. And it is only after the second world war that the dominance of this cultural agenda started to be questioned.

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Williams on Culture

- *In Culture and Society* (1958), Raymond Williams, a major figure within the New Left, remarks:
 - He argues that the meaning of culture changes with time
 - The modern use of the term 'culture' and the 'idea of culture' became a part of the English world sometime during the 1960s and 70s
 - Ideas about culture emerge and evolve in relation to ideas about art, democracy, industry and class
- In his later works he suggests that culture is the whole way of life and makes up human society.
- Also that the political processes are specialized frameworks. It reverses conventional Marxist idea that culture is only a superstructure



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When we suggest that the definitions of Matthew Arnold dominated the critical scene till 1950s and they started to be questioned only after that we automatically want to refer to the views of Raymond Williams. Raymond Williams who was a major figure within the British New Left, has written some powerful books to explain his understandings of culture. He argues that the meaning of culture changes with time. And the modern use of the term culture and the idea of culture became a part of the English world sometime during the 1960s and 1970s.

He has also talked about how cultures emerge and evolve in relation to ideas about art, democracy, industry and class. He has also suggested in his later works that culture is the whole way of life and makes up the human society. He has also suggested that political processes are specialized frameworks and in this claim, he has deviated from the conventional Marxist idea which views that culture is only a superstructure.

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- History of the development of the meaning of culture
- Original meaning linked to tending of plants and animals— agriculture
- By Enlightenment, associated with 'civilization'—path of progress leading to European civilization
- 19th century (influence of Herder, German Romanticism, rise of nationalism)— culture referred to different and particular ways of life; life in different nations and regions
- Latter half of 19th century (influence of Arnold): from 'a general state or habit of mind' to 'the general state of intellectual development in a society as a whole'
- 'the general body of the arts'
- 'a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual'




(1958: xvi)

Raymond Williams has talked about the history of the development of the meaning of culture. Original meaning of the culture as we have seen was linked to tending of plants and animals, agriculture predominantly. During the enlightenment, it came to be associated with civilization linked with the path of progress leading to European civilization.

During the 19th century, under the influence of Herder, German Romanticism and rise of western nationalism, culture referred to different and particular ways of life, life in different nations and regions. In the later half of the 19th century owing to the influence of Matthew Arnold, if there was a shift from a general state or habit of mind to the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole.

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- Origins of the distinction between high and low culture; meaning of culture in 'cultural studies' (William's *Keywords* 1983). Uses the term 'popular culture' to refer to that which is not the 'culture of the learned'
- Williams calls it the 'social definition of culture': Culture is a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in particular ways of life, a particular 'culture'
- Expression of an important theme of cultural Studies: that culture is ubiquitous
- Elsewhere Williams (1958) remarks that 'culture is ordinary' —everydayness is emphasized



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Origins of the distinction between high and low culture are responsible for generating new debates in the field of cultural studies. The term popular culture was used to refer to what is not the culture of the learned. Williams has called it the social definition of culture and for him culture is a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour.



The analysis of culture, from this perspective is the clarification of the meaning and values which are implicit as well as explicit in our particular ways of life. A particular contribution of Raymond Williams is to popularize the notion that culture is ubiquitous. At the same time, he has suggested that culture is ordinary and he has emphasized that everydayness of culture.

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Culture in 19th and 20th Century

- In the 19th century, 'culture' began to be used in the plural form, 'cultures'
 - Arnold's popularization of the term 'philistine'
 - Distinction between better and worse forms of culture
 - Hierarchies within culture—the category of high and low culture
 - Culture was increasingly understood to mean the high arts—philosophy, liberal arts, classical music and literature, painting, sculpture, etc.
- At the beginning of 20th century, with the emergence of social and human sciences—particularly anthropology and sociology—culture was being closely associated with different meanings



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So we find that over the past centuries, the idea of what exactly culture is, how it has to be interpreted, has gone through certain changes. In the 19th century, culture had started to be used in the plural form and Arnold had also popularized his distinctions between philistine and a cultural person. There was also a distinction between better and worse forms of culture which later on was challenged by the cultural study programs which were initiated at the behest of the Birmingham center for studies in the contemporary culture during the 1960s.

The hierarchies within culture, the categories of high and low culture and these binaries were also started during these times. Culture came to be increasingly understood to mean the high art, philosophy, liberal arts, classical music and literature, painting, sculpture, etc. as it was practiced by the educated elite. At the beginning of the 20th century, with the emergence of social and human sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, culture came to be closely associated with certain different meanings.

We have already referred to the different meanings which were brought about in the academic world by Raymond Williams.

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- According to Williams, for anthropological and sociological studies of culture; there is no real difference between studying 'culture' and studying 'society'
- In this, Williams is following Durkheim's notion of 'conscience collective'. Durkheim had attempted to study how systems of belief and thoughts hold our societies together.
- How collective representations—shared values, beliefs and norms— unite society. Also the shared beliefs, values and norms that structure common, everyday life, routines and habits
- These collective beliefs are social in origin; even though they work at the level of the individual
- Allow individuals a sense of what is good, right, moral, immoral, etc



So Raymond Williams has suggested that for anthropological and sociological studies of culture, there is no practical difference between studying culture and studying the society. Williams is following the notion of conscience collective as presented by Durkheim. Durkheim had attempted to study how systems of beliefs and thoughts hold our societies together. He has talked about the collective representations of shared values, beliefs and norms which unite society.

He has also talked about the shared beliefs, values and norms that structure the common everyday life, the routines, and habits of our daily lives. These collective beliefs are social in origin, even though they might be working at the level of an individual. But these collective beliefs allow individuals a sense of what is good, right, moral, immoral, etc.

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Anthropological Approaches to Culture

- 19th Century British anthropologist E.B. Tylor defined culture in evolutionary terms (Tylor 1871)
- American anthropologist Margaret Mead defined culture as a learned phenomenon (Mead 1964, 1976)
- Clifford Geertz argued that culture is relative, the result of local storytelling, and nothing special (Geertz 1991, 2000)
- Anthropological definitions of culture are useful in understanding cultural studies
- Theories of relativism and behaviorism (all cultures are equal, strange, learned and unnatural) continue to hold sway



It is against this backdrop that we have to look at the anthropological approaches to culture. The 19th century British anthropologist Tylor had defined culture in evolutionary terms. American anthropologist Margaret Mead had defined culture as a learned phenomenon. Clifford Geertz had argued that culture is relative and it is the result of local storytelling and nothing very special. Anthropological definitions of culture help us to understand the cultural studies and we also look at the theories of relativism and behaviorism which continue to hold sway.

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Tylor's evolutionary form of culture

- Tylor's ethnocentric theory is no longer popular
- Emphasized slow and steady advance of society based on human creativity. Followed Darwinian approach to evolution by suggesting that cultural changes are virtually invisible because they happen over extended periods of time. 'Culture' broadly referred to society's beliefs, customs, habits.
- Believed that evolution of culture was oriented towards civilizational progress—inevitability of progress. Three stages of cultural evolution: savagery-barbarism-civilization
- Suggested some cultures were more advanced than others. Ethnocentric attitude: regarded western civilized societies as the zenith of achievement

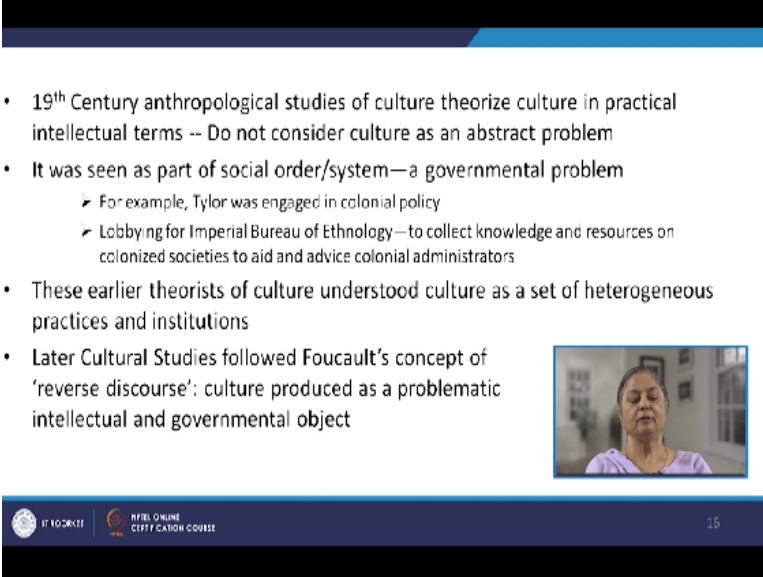


The 19th century ethnocentric theory of Tylor has practically been replaced by the subsequent academic developments. Tylor had emphasized a slow and steady advance of society based on human creativity. He had followed what can be termed as the Darwinian approach to evolution

by suggesting that cultural changes are virtually invisible because they happen over an extended period of time.

Culture, according to him, broadly referred to society's customs, habits and beliefs. He also believed that the evolution of culture was necessarily oriented towards the progress of the civilizations and that progress was inevitable. He has looked at 3 stages of cultural evolution and listed them as savagery, barbarism, and civilization. He had also suggested that some cultures are more advanced than others. And he had regarded the western civilized societies as the zenith of achievement.

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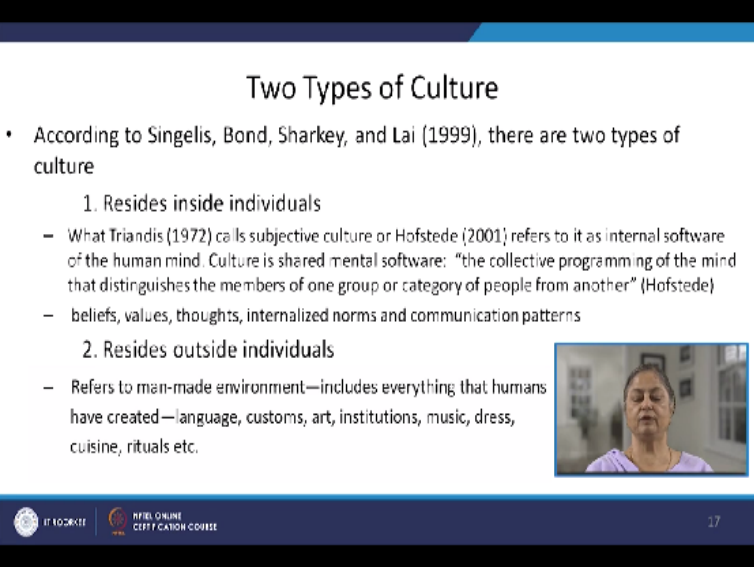
- 19th Century anthropological studies of culture theorize culture in practical intellectual terms -- Do not consider culture as an abstract problem
- It was seen as part of social order/system—a governmental problem
 - For example, Tylor was engaged in colonial policy
 - Lobbying for Imperial Bureau of Ethnology—to collect knowledge and resources on colonized societies to aid and advice colonial administrators
- These earlier theorists of culture understood culture as a set of heterogeneous practices and institutions
- Later Cultural Studies followed Foucault's concept of 'reverse discourse': culture produced as a problematic intellectual and governmental object

19th century anthropological studies of culture theorize culture in practical intellectual terms. And they did not consider culture as an abstract problem. It was seen as a part of the social order, a part of the social system a problem which was linked with the government and had to be solved at that level. For example, Tylor was engaged in colonial policy and he lobbied for imperial Bureau of Ethnology and he wanted to collect knowledge and resources on colonized societies to aid and advice colonial administrations.

So these theorists understood culture as a set of heterogeneous practices and institutions even though they believed in a certain hierarchy of cultures. Later cultural studies in contrast followed Foucault's concept of reverse discourse and culture was produced as a problematic intellectual

and government object.

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The slide is titled "Two Types of Culture". It contains a bulleted list with two main categories. The first category is "1. Resides inside individuals", which includes a sub-bullet: "What Triandis (1972) calls subjective culture or Hofstede (2001) refers to it as internal software of the human mind. Culture is shared mental software: 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another' (Hofstede)". The second category is "2. Resides outside individuals", which includes a sub-bullet: "Refers to man-made environment—includes everything that humans have created—language, customs, art, institutions, music, dress, cuisine, rituals etc.". To the right of the text is a small video inset showing a woman speaking. At the bottom of the slide, there are logos for "IP 1020811" and "IPFEL ONLINE CERTIFICATE COURSE" along with the number "17".

Two Types of Culture


- According to Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, and Lai (1999), there are two types of culture
 1. Resides inside individuals
 - What Triandis (1972) calls subjective culture or Hofstede (2001) refers to it as internal software of the human mind. Culture is shared mental software: “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede)
 - beliefs, values, thoughts, internalized norms and communication patterns
 2. Resides outside individuals
 - Refers to man-made environment—includes everything that humans have created—language, customs, art, institutions, music, dress, cuisine, rituals etc.

It is also pertinent at this point to refer to the ideas propounded by Singelis, Bond, Sharkey, and Lai who has suggested that there are 2 types of culture. Culture which resides inside individuals and culture which resides outside individuals. In the first type of culture which resides inside individuals, it refers to the beliefs, values, thoughts, norms, and communication patterns which have been internalized by a society. This is basically what Triandis has called subjective culture or Hofstede has referred to as internal software of the human mind.

In the same way when they talk about culture which resides inside individuals, they suggest that culture is a shared mental software. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes member of one group or category of people from another. When they talk about the culture which resides outside individuals, they refer to an environment which is made by man. It includes everything which has been created by human beings including languages, customs, art, music, dress, other institutions, cuisines, rituals, etc.

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- Rohner's (1984) concept of culture:
 1. Culture as a system of behaviors versus culture as a set of meanings
 2. Realists versus Nominalists
 - Realists argue for the independent existence of culture
 - Nominalists argue that culture is a subjective human construct




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Rohner has also suggested a particular concept of nature. In his view, culture is a system of behaviours which has to be contrasted with culture as a set of meanings. And he has referred to the debate which goes on between the Realists and the Nominalists. Realists argues for the independent existence of culture whereas Nominalists argue that culture is a subjective human construct. So we would look at the culture's definition as being a subjective human construct in detail.

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Subjective Culture: Mental Software

- Subjective culture: invisible, resides inside people's minds
- Geert Hofstede (1980), introduced the metaphor of culture—mental programming and software of the mind
- In 2001, he remarked that not all aspects of shared mental programming can be designated as culture
 - collective and individual identities cannot necessarily be classified as cultural elements
 - Answer questions like "Where do I belong"; "Who/what are we?"; and "Who/what am I?"
- People who share the same cultural values can indulge in struggles with each other based on their differences in identities. Religious identity ought to be distinguished from cultures



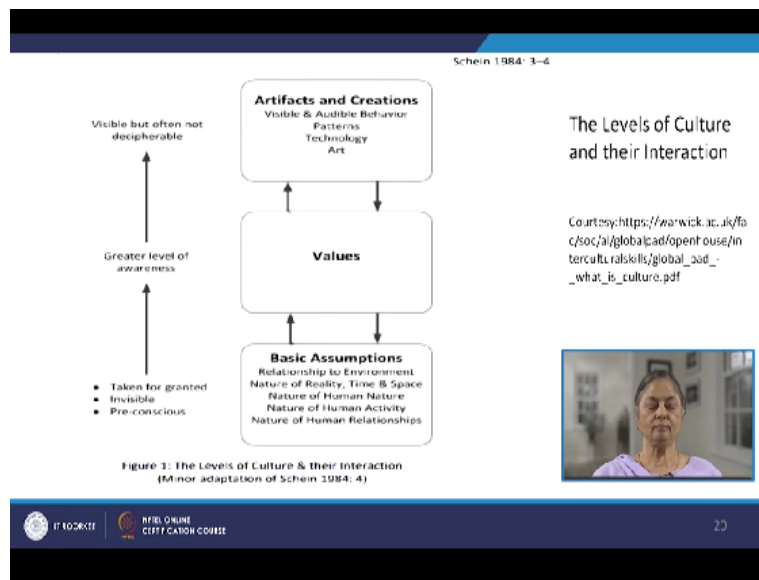
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Subjective culture is invisible. It resides inside people's mind and therefore, it has come to be referred to as a mental software. It was Hofstede who had introduced this particular metaphor of culture being the mental programming as well as the software of the mind. He has remarked

though that not all aspects of shared mental programming can be designated as culture. He has suggested that collective and individual identities cannot necessarily be classified as cultural elements.

And he has tried to analyze this idea by looking at certain questions which are esoteric in nature. For example, where do I belong? Who or what are we? And who and what am I for that matter? So people who share the same cultural values can indulge in struggles with each other based on their differences in identities. He has also suggested that religious identities ought to be distinguished from cultural identities.

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We can try to look at different levels of culture and their interaction with this particular model. At the base, there are certain basic assumptions. For example, relationship to environment, nature of reality, time and space, nature of human nature, etc., which are taken for granted which are invisible as well as preconscious. This fundamental structure leads to a greater level of awareness in terms of the value system.

And it is our understanding of the value system which results into the visible manifestation of culture in the production of artifacts as well as creations. So these are the visible and audible behaviour patterns which can be looked at as a technology of art. So we find that these 3 levels of culture continuously interact with each other and our responsible for influencing a particular

type of understanding to human beings being member of a particular society.

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Specific to individual
PERSONALITY
Inherited & learned

Specific to group or category
CULTURE
Learned

Universal
HUMAN NATURE
Inherited

Three Levels of Uniqueness in Human Mental Programming: Hofstede 1994

Courtesy:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ei/globalpa.../openhouse/interculturalskills/globalpa.../what_is_culture.pdf

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

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In our previous slides, we have referred to Hofstede's idea of human mental programming. We find that he has also looked at the closed relationship between culture and human nature. And he has tried to explain this idea with this particular model. At the base, he has put human nature which according to him is inherited and also universal to a large extent. This in turn is related with the learned aspects of a specific group or category which can be classified as culture.

And at the third level of mental programming, he has put personality which is specific to an individual which is inherited as well as learned. So we find that there are 3 levels of uniqueness in human mental programming as far as Hofstede is concerned.

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Objective Culture: Institution and Artifacts

- Culture is created/produced by individuals; it exists outside them
- Visible/tangible artifacts:
 - Objective/tangible existence
 - Painting, sculpture, literature, clothing, food, musical instruments, work instruments, architecture--buildings, museums
 - Studied by ethnographers
- Institutions:
 - Intangible/invisible elements of objective culture
 - Marriage, legal laws, taboos, prohibitions, inheritance laws, political and religious bodies
 - Studied by anthropologists, historians, sociologists, political scientists



We can also try to look at the culture as it is created and produced by individuals but it exists outside them. There may be some visible as well as tangible artifacts when we try to understand culture. And in the similar manner, there can be certain institutions through which culture is reflected. So when we look at the visible and tangible artifacts, we look at things like painting, sculpture, literature, food and these aspects of culture are studied by ethnographers.

When we look at institutions, we look at the laws, systems of marriage, work place, inheritance laws, political and religious bodies in a given culture. And these aspects are studied by anthropologists, historians, sociologists, as well as by political scientists.

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Culture: System of Behaviors

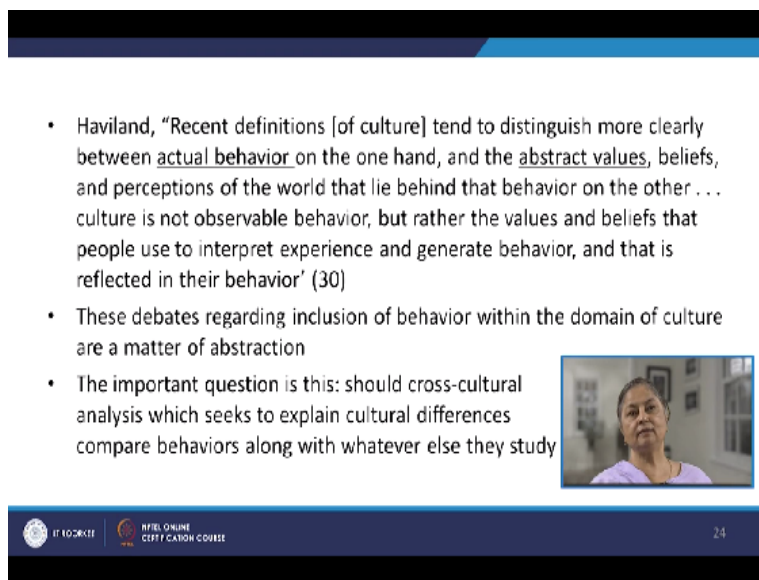
- According to Brown (1991), "culture consists of the conventional patterns of thought, activity, and artifact that are passed on from generation to generation"
- Any identifiable pattern of activity is deemed part of its culture
 - For instance, if a society is primarily agriculture based, then it is a part of its culture
- Not all anthropologists agree— for eg., Murdock (1940) argued that behavior is separate from the scope of culture
 - Behaviour does not automatically follow from culture: "which is only one of its determinants" (366)
 - Haviland (1990) condenses the opinions of many anthropologists:



Culture can also be understood as a system of behaviours. Brown has defined that culture consists of the conventional patterns of thought, activity, and artifact that are passed on from generation to generation. So in this definition also we find that the continuity of certain behavioural patterns has been highlighted. So any identifiable pattern of activity is a part of the culture.

For example, if a society is primarily based on the probation of agriculture, we can say that it becomes a part of their culture. However, there are other anthropologists who do not agree to this perspective and particularly Murdock among them argues that behaviour is separate from the scope of culture. And suggests that the behaviour does not automatically follow from culture which is only one of its determinants. Haviland has condensed the opinions of many anthropologists very concisely in this context.


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• Haviland, "Recent definitions [of culture] tend to distinguish more clearly between actual behavior on the one hand, and the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind that behavior . . . culture is not observable behavior, but rather the values and beliefs that people use to interpret experience and generate behavior, and that is reflected in their behavior' (30)

• These debates regarding inclusion of behavior within the domain of culture are a matter of abstraction

• The important question is this: should cross-cultural analysis which seeks to explain cultural differences compare behaviors along with whatever else they study

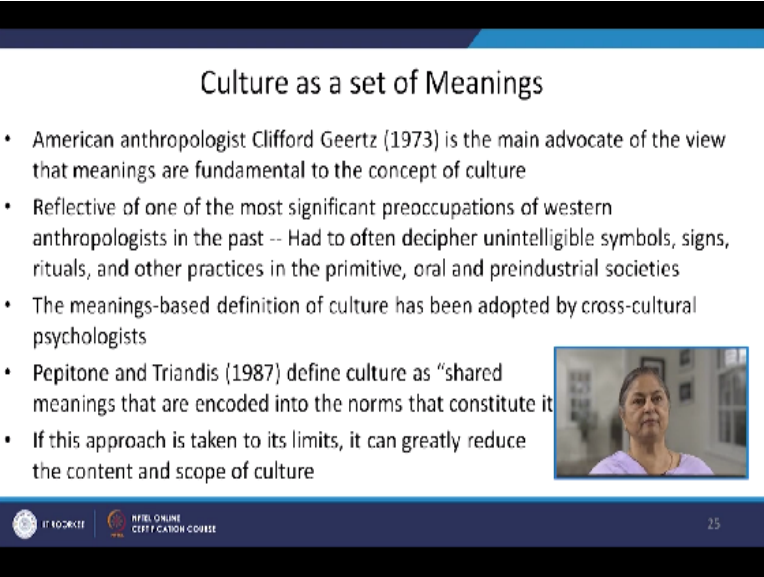


And I quote, "Recent definitions of culture tend to distinguish more clearly between actual behaviour on the one hand, and the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind that behaviour on the other. Culture is not observable behaviour, but rather the values and beliefs that people use to interpret experience and generate behaviour, and that is reflected in their behaviour."

These debates regarding the inclusion of behaviour within the domain of culture are a matter of

abstraction. However, a particularly significant question which these debates lead us to consider in today's context is related with the cross-cultural analysis. Should cross-cultural analysis seek to explain cultural differences and compare behaviours along with other objects of their study.

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The slide is titled "Culture as a set of Meanings" and contains a bulleted list of points. A small video inset shows a woman speaking. The slide footer includes logos for IIT Kharagpur and IITM Online Certification Course, along with the number 25.

Culture as a set of Meanings

- American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) is the main advocate of the view that meanings are fundamental to the concept of culture
- Reflective of one of the most significant preoccupations of western anthropologists in the past -- Had to often decipher unintelligible symbols, signs, rituals, and other practices in the primitive, oral and preindustrial societies
- The meanings-based definition of culture has been adopted by cross-cultural psychologists
- Pepitone and Triandis (1987) define culture as "shared meanings that are encoded into the norms that constitute it"
- If this approach is taken to its limits, it can greatly reduce the content and scope of culture


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Culture is also seen as a set of meanings. And the meaning based definition of culture has been adopted particularly by those psychologists who look at the cross-cultural experiences among people. American anthropologist Clifford Geertz is the main advocate of this view and suggests that meanings are fundamental to the concept of culture. He had to often decipher unintelligible symbols, signs, rituals, and other practices in the primitive, oral and preindustrial societies.

This idea is also dittoed by Pepitone and Triandis who defined culture as shared meanings that are encoded into the norms that constitute it. However, if we stretch this particular perspective further, it can greatly reduce the content as well as the scope of culture.

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- Can also rattle with cross-cultural analysis: “Culture is treated as a symbolic universe of gestures and their micro-interpretation within specific contexts, whereas the broader brushstrokes of cross-cultural comparisons are suspect” (Liu et al., 2010: 452)
 - Because culture in all its various aspects is certainly not just a system of signs and meanings
 - Culture, as treated in the vast literature on it, is certainly not just a system of meanings




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It can also rattle with cross-cultural analysis because culture is treated as a symbolic universe of gestures and their micro-interpretation within a specific context, whereas the broader brushstrokes of cross-cultural comparisons are suspect. So now we find that these debates continue because culture in all its various aspects is certainly not just a system of signs and meanings. Culture, as treated in the vast literature on it, is something beyond this.

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Culture as an Independent Existing Phenomena

- When anthropologists remark that culture has an independent existence; it means that one can study culture independently of its carriers— i.e., the humans
- White (1959/2007) argues for this through an analogy:
 - Linguists study languages; do not need to study speakers
- This notion of culture serves the purpose of many anthropologists who study—
 - Inheritance systems, different social institutions, kinship networks, prohibitions, taboos, and religions
 - The individual matters little in these kinds of studies
 - They are interested in unravelling the supra-individual level



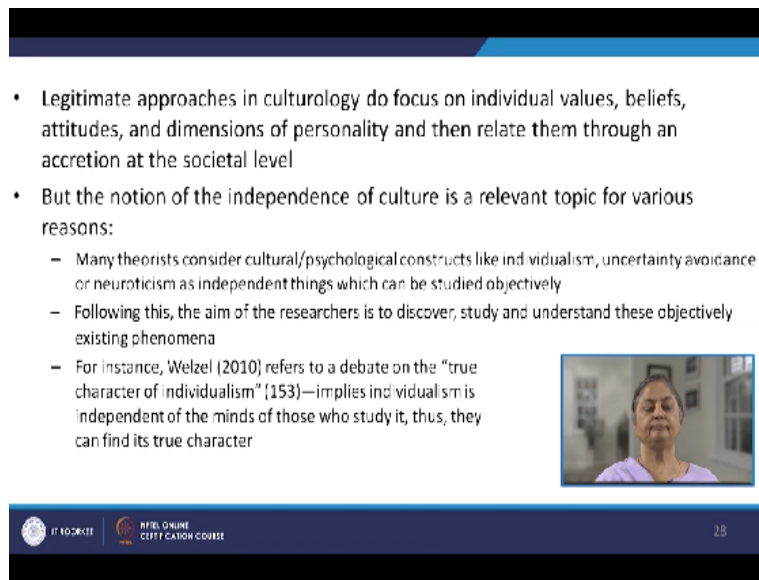
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Culture therefore can also be defined as an independent existing phenomena. When anthropologists suggest that culture has an independent existence, it means that one has to study culture independently of its carriers and that means that one has to dissociate the study of culture from the study of human beings. They often use the analogy of the linguistics study in language

and they say that where is linguistics study language, they do not study speakers.

This notion of culture serves the purpose of many anthropologists who study inheritance systems, different social institutions, kinship networks, as well as the individual matters. So we find that culture can also be taken up as an independent existing phenomenon.

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- Legitimate approaches in culturology do focus on individual values, beliefs, attitudes, and dimensions of personality and then relate them through an accretion at the societal level
- But the notion of the independence of culture is a relevant topic for various reasons:
 - Many theorists consider cultural/psychological constructs like individualism, uncertainty avoidance or neuroticism as independent things which can be studied objectively
 - Following this, the aim of the researchers is to discover, study and understand these objectively existing phenomena
 - For instance, Welzel (2010) refers to a debate on the “true character of individualism” (153)—implies individualism is independent of the minds of those who study it, thus, they can find its true character

Legitimate approaches in culturology focus on individual values, beliefs, attitudes, and dimensions of personality and then relate them through an accretion at the societal level. But the notion of the independence of culture is a relevant topic for various reasons. For example, many theorists consider that cultural and psychological constructs like individualism, uncertainty avoidance, or neuroticism as independent things which can be studied objectively.

Following this, the aim of the researchers is to discover, study and understand these objectively existing phenomena. For instance, Welzel in a 2010 study has referred to a debate on the true character of individualism and has implied that individualism is independent of the minds who study it and thus they can find its true character.

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Culture as a Subjective Human Construct

- House & Hanges (2004): 'There are researchers and methodologists that hold a measurement philosophy in which constructs are believed to be completely bounded by the methods by which they are measured'
 - Philosophy is called operationalism; was influential during 1940s and 50s
 - First propounded by Bridgman (a Nobel prize winning physicist): A construct is "nothing more than a set of operations"
 - Concepts like motivation, intelligence and even culture are identical with the way they are measured
 - Boring's definition of intelligence ("intelligence is what tests test") is a typical example of the belief that constructs are circumscribed by the way they are measured (100)
 - Operationalism was adapted to the social sciences and made prominent by B.F. Skinner and others



Culture is also studied as a subjective human construct and this approach has been advocated by House and Hanges who suggest that there are researchers and methodologists that hold a measurement philosophy in which constructs are believed to be completely bounded by the methods by which they are measured. This idea is based on philosophy which was called operationalism and it was very popular and influential during the 1940s and 1950s.

This idea was first propounded by a Nobel prize winning physicist, Bridgman, who had suggested that a construct is nothing more than a set of operations. And he had looked at concepts like motivation, intelligence and even culture as being identical with the way in which they are measured. And he gives an example of this method by looking at the definition of intelligence which suggests that intelligence is what tests test.

And he looks at this as a typical example of the belief that constructs are some circumscribed by the way they are measured. Operationalism was adapted to the social sciences and it was made into a prominent tool by B. F. Skinner and his other followers.

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- Different Approaches to the term
- A relatively concrete shape of arguments emerges with the beginnings of Culture Studies in 1970s



So we find that there are different approaches to the term culture. It has several connotations which may be simultaneously present. A relatively concrete shape of arguments had started to emerge with a beginnings of culture studies in 1970s which we shall take up in one of the later modules. Thank you.