



The Complexity of Culture in Persons

Claudia Strauss

One of my favorite works of culture theory, Ulf Hannerz's *Cultural Complexity* (1992), begins with the following observation about the two locations of culture, in persons and in the publicly observable world:

[C]ulture has two kinds of loci, and the cultural process takes place in their ongoing interrelations. On the one hand, culture resides in a set of public meaningful forms, which can most often be seen or heard, or are somewhat less frequently known through touch, smell, or taste, if not through some combination of senses. On the other hand, these overt forms are only rendered meaningful because human minds contain the instruments for their interpretation. The cultural flow thus consists of the externalizations of meaning which individuals produce through arrangements of overt forms, and the interpretations which individuals make of such displays... (Hannerz 1992: 3-4)

In other words, there is a constant interaction between culture in the world and in people. I will call these external and internal culture, or public culture and culture in persons.¹ Hannerz's main interest in the book is in external, publicly observable culture and the way transnational

C. Strauss (✉)
Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, USA

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media, power differences, urbanization, and other features of complex societies complicate its distribution. Yet, he also stresses that the variable distribution of culture “necessarily brings people back in” (p. 16), people whose personal perspectives shape the way they interpret and create external culture. The result is that there is not a simple, straightforward relationship between public culture and culture in persons.

My argument in this chapter begins from the same assumptions as Hannerz, but unlike him, I study the internal side of culture. I claim that complexity in external culture, and complexity in the way humans internalize culture, lead to six interesting features of culture in persons. Although other scholars and I have written about these aspects of culture in persons previously, there has been no summary of all of them.

Complicating culture in persons may help dispel the squeamishness many contemporary anthropologists display when discussing the internal side of culture. There are examples of such squeamishness in Handler’s (2004) otherwise stimulating afterword to a collection of *American Anthropologist* articles reworking Boasian anthropology for the twenty-first century. Handler argues that “culture as acquired knowledge is not best imagined ‘inside’ people” (p. 491). Drawing upon Whorf’s discussion of the effects of language on thought, he states, “SAE [*Standard Average European*] speakers imagine their skulls as containers that stop up thought” (Handler 2004: 491). In other words, the idea that culture is inside people is just a secondary rationalization of the ways speakers of European languages tend to think due to their language-induced container-plus-contents image of reality. Furthermore, “the image of group mind molding individual minds ... comes a bit too easily to us moderns” (p. 493). In other words, anthropological theories about the interaction of external and internal culture reflect (as Tocqueville observed in the second volume of *Democracy in America*) American assumptions about the “pressure of the mind of all [*public opinion*] upon the individual intelligence” (Tocqueville 1945 quoted in Handler 2004: 493).

The problem is that this formulation leaves us with a contradiction. If American anthropologists imagine culture as inside people because of their ingrained ways of thinking, have not those anthropologists internalized a certain mode of thought? Handler may realize this, because in summing up his approach, he claims that for “an adequate theory of cultural order,” we need to realize that

Creatures of culture, we create the world as “culture” ... But we do not create it each moment *de novo*. Humans carry about with them (“in mind” and, perhaps, in “embodied” forms as well) ordering schemes, which are sedimented out of history ... and which allow them to respond to (to interpret, to learn about, to understand) the ordering schemes of the other humans they encounter ... The stabilized results of human semi-otic productions (speech and texts but “material culture” and landscapes as well) have orderliness built into them, and at the same time seem to elicit or trigger alternative ordering schemes from other humans who encounter them. (Handler 2004: 493)

Thus, in the end, Handler arrives at the same place where Hannerz and I started. Meanings are in public semiotic productions such as speech, texts, material culture, and landscapes. They are also sedimented into “ordering schemes” carried about by people. However, his discomfort with saying ordering schemes are in people lingers, reflected in the scare quotes around “in mind” or the alternative of “‘embodied’ forms.”

Why the inconsistencies and scare quotes? Handler and other culture theorists’ objection to talk of culture in persons rests on a variety of arguments, most of which I have addressed and rebutted previously (Strauss and Quinn 1997, Chapter 2). As we discussed there, some anthropologists will argue that Geertz (1973) definitively established that “culture is public because meaning is” (p. 12); private meanings cannot be cultural. Our answer is that Geertz and his expositors conflate different meanings of *public* and *private*. *Public* can mean out in the world and perceptible or it can mean shared. Public and private have other meanings as well, but those are the most important ones for this discussion. There is no contradiction between a meaning being shared (public in that sense) and internal (private in a different sense), just as speakers of the same language have much the same shared, internalized knowledge of it.

One of Handler’s concerns, as noted already, is one others have voiced as well that the boundaries between “inner” and “outer” or between “individual” and “society” are ethnocentric Western constructs. It is true that Westerners often imagine a more firmly bounded self (e.g., Geertz 1983) or are more likely to see individuals as oppressed by society (Benedict 1934, quoted in Handler 2004: 492) than do members of many other societies. However, it appears that every language has a way of referring to a person considered as a stable entity (Wierzbicka 1993: 211;

Goddard and Wierzbicka 2007). Furthermore, as far as we know, there is no society that fails to recognize a distinction between an inner realm of thought/feeling and a world outside of persons, although that inner realm is not necessarily conceptualized in the same way as in Western ethnopsychologies (Spiro 1993; Strauss and Quinn 1997: 29–31).

There is another way to interpret Handler's (2004) concerns, as well as those raised by other culture theorists. The real issue is not whether theories of culture should recognize its location in persons as well as its external side. The greater concern is how to model the relationship between culture in persons and culture in the publicly observable world. Handler criticizes what he calls "mechanistic" theories of the relation of culture to personality: "a psychology in which culture, especially in the form of 'child-rearing practices,'² determined personality, and then personality reproduced culture" (Handler 2004: 492) creating distinctive national characters that are taken to be natural kinds. Those of other theoretical persuasions have raised yet different objections. For example, theorists with a performative approach to identity believe that interiority implies coherence and fixity (e.g., Butler 1990). Practice theorists are concerned that positing internalized culture ignores people's ability to interact with other people and objects or adapt to particular contexts (e.g., Lave 1988).

All of these are important concerns, but the response must be better models of culture in persons, not rejection of the whole idea of culture in persons (Strauss and Quinn 1997). No one would want to replicate the excesses of mid-twentieth century national character studies or ignore the criticisms that many psychological anthropologists raised at the time that some of these studies ignored intracultural variation. I share Handler's concern that culture should not be reified or bounded. I also share his admiration for a Boasian theorist who avoided such cultural reification: Edward Sapir. Handler approvingly quotes Edward Sapir's statement, "the true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals and, on the subjective side, in the world of meanings which each . . . may unconsciously abstract for himself from his participation in these interactions" (Sapir 1949: 515, quoted in Handler 2004: 492). Handler's singling out of this comment for his agreement is surprising because in that essay and many others, Sapir stressed that individuals and their subjective meanings are quite real and what is called culture is "something of a statistical fiction" (Sapir 1949: 516). Sapir particularly emphasized the intracultural variability that is the result of each person's process of

making sense of their social interactions: “For each individual, the commonly accepted fund of meanings and values tends to be powerfully specialized or emphasized or contradicted by types of experience and modes of interpretation that are far from being the property of all men” (Sapir 1949: 517). The way individuals abstract frameworks of meaning from experiences, some of which are shared and others not, is what we need to understand.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that a careful study of culture in persons leads away from cultural reification toward a more interesting way of thinking about culture in persons and its relation to publicly observable culture.

MOVING AWAY FROM SIMPLISTIC MODELS OF CULTURE IN PERSONS

The body of this paper presents my findings of the way Americans living in suburbs and exurbs of California, North Carolina, and Rhode Island discuss topics such as work, immigration policies, and their goals in life. In other words, I study the effects, not the processes, of internalization. (For studies of processes of culture learning, see the papers by Chapin, Quinn, Sirota, and Stromberg in this volume.) Nonetheless, I begin with background assumptions about public culture and the way it is learned, which it is useful to explain.

Two Background Assumptions

In setting out these principles and in the observations reported below, I focus on difference and disruption rather than consensus and continuity. In *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning*, which I co-authored with Naomi Quinn (1997), we labeled these the centrifugal and centripetal aspects of culture, respectively. Socialized as we were in different anthropological generations, I find the centrifugal side more compelling, while she is more struck by centripetal processes. By combining our perspectives, we reached a good balance. I continue to find centrifugal processes more interesting and hope tilting in that direction here will be of interest to readers as well. However, I also aim, if not to recreate the equal balance of Strauss and Quinn (1997), at least to keep in mind the larger truth of competing centripetal and centrifugal processes.³

Principle #1: Public culture is complex. If we know nothing else at this point, we know that public culture is complex. Dominant national discourses are countered by alternative global and local discourses; public representations of culture are contested; institutions, values, and beliefs change; people migrate or are exiled or flee persecution or intermarry, sometimes inventing hybrid cultural practices in the process. Some of these public cultural forms get labeled and seen as the group's culture; others do not; about others, there is disagreement. These are all examples of centrifugal cultural processes, and research about them is too vast to cite. Yet, on the centripetal side, there are also what Handler (2004) terms "historically sedimented systems" of meanings (p. 489). Public contests over meanings, movements of peoples, and shifts in identities are layered over commonalities in assumptions so ingrained that they are beyond contesting. Thus, public culture is doubly complex. There are the conflicts and changes that bedevil reductive attempts at cultural description, coupled with a deeper layer of at least partial continuity and tacit agreement. Furthermore, although this is less often discussed (but see Bourdieu 1977), public culture takes different forms. As I will discuss, of particular interest for an understanding of culture in persons are the differences among (1) public culture that is fully articulated in explicit statements of rules or values or narratives (see Stromberg's chapter in this volume), (2) concepts implied by what is said, and (3) regularities of experience that are not verbalized but are still a source of culture learning. Culture learning, then, is not simple, because what is being learned is so complicated.

Principle #2: The processes by which public culture is learned are not simple. The flow from public culture to culture in persons is complex as well, as several of the other papers in this volume attest. The term "internalize" can be misleading because it suggests swallowing whole. Even centripetal processes of cultural reproduction are not simple (see Quinn 2005 and Chapin, Quinn, Sirota, and Stromberg's chapters in this volume). Sometimes material and social reward structures produce compliance rather than wholehearted commitment. For example, in a capitalist society, even those with explicit anti-capitalist values may still subtly nudge their children to consider the earning potential of their passions. I will focus on complexities in how ways of thinking are constructed.

First, people's mental frameworks are drawn from patterns in their own experience, not from patterns that an outsider might observe generalizing over many people or drawing upon the parts of public culture

particularly striking to them. A person forms schemas based on the regularities they encounter; those schemas then can lead to reconstructing memories or even perceptions to fit the schemas (Koriat et al. 2000).⁴ In processing information, details that are irrelevant to the schema are ignored and forgotten; information that is missing or ambiguous is filled in or resolved based upon what is expected based on the person's current schemas.

Often, two people living in similar circumstances will acquire similar schemas. These shared cultural models, because of the way they direct attention and resolve blurry perceptions and memories, contribute to culture reproduction. However, members of a society, even members of the same family, do not have identical experiences. Differences in their experiences lead to some differences in their schemas; differences in their schemas later lead to differences in how they process new information, driving further differences in how they interpret public culture. Emotions and motivations are relevant as well. People have better memories for what is relevant to their goals or what evokes strong emotions than for what it is of little affective or motivational significance (Koriat et al. 2000: 512). What people extract from public culture also depends on its personal relevance for them. Thus, it is not only that the division of labor in society leads to a differential distribution of specialized cultural information, with farmers knowing more about plants and animals and beauticians more about techniques and styles of hair, skin, and nail care. Even two people exposed to the same public culture will attend to different aspects of it and recollect different things.

Not everything people experience is simplified or distorted to fit schemas. While schema-irrelevant information is quickly forgotten, schema-inconsistent information "is often remembered better than schema-consistent information" (Koriat et al. 2000: 494). There is no cultural filter in perception and memory that keeps people from awareness of strong counterexamples to their beliefs, creating the possibility of challenges to these beliefs and change in them.

Attitudes are complex as well. Psychologists have found that there can be discontinuities between implicit attitudes (reflected in speed of categorizing words that fit a stereotype versus ones that do not) and explicit attitudes (what people believe they think). Merely considering a negative social stereotype can strengthen implicit negative associations with the stereotyped group even if one disagrees with it (Devine 1989, cited by Bohner and Dickel 2011: 399). Those associations can lead to

re-enacting those disavowed attitudes when snap judgments are made, as we have seen too often in recent years when police officers in the United States, even African American police officers, kill African Americans by whom they felt threatened, even if they had no objective basis for feeling that way.

Six Features of Culture in Persons

These complexities in public culture and in culture learning are responsible for six interesting features of culture in persons that I explain and illustrate in the rest of this chapter. The aspect of culture in persons that is my focus is what Malinowski called “the native’s point of view... *his* vision of *his* world” (Malinowski 1961: 25). Studying the native’s point of view, he said, is the goal of ethnography. Points of view are not all of culture or even all of culture in persons. Another important aspect is “embodied” procedural knowledge, such as what gestures to make in different situations or how to drive a car. However, the cognitive aspect of culture in persons that Malinowski discussed—people’s understandings of what is and what ought to be—is what I know the most about. All of us are natives of some place. Malinowski’s admonition to study the native’s point of view keeps individuals in the picture. He does not advise that we study culture but rather people and their vision of their world. The only problem is the generalization implied by “the native.” Do all of the natives of any place, even the Trobriand Islands, have the same vision of their world? Does each person have an internally consistent vision of their world?

POINT 1: PEOPLE’S INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORKS ARE COLLECTIONS OF SPECIFIC, SOMETIMES CONFLICTING, SCHEMAS

To say that people’s ideas of what is and what ought to be consists of cognitive schemas implies something different than to say that people’s ideas consist of ideologies or themes. In writing cultural descriptions, we anthropologists notice repeating themes both in public symbols and institutions and in typical comments people might make or ways they act. We might sum up those themes with a shorthand like “individualism.” That does not mean, however, that people have internalized an individualism schema. What they have learned are many specific schemas that,

because they are learned from living in a certain sociopolitical order, share many features. People can form generalizations from similar kinds of experiences. Chapin's chapter in this volume gives the example of the variety of experiences that lead Sri Lankan Sinhala children to form the expectations that their parents will anticipate their needs and that young people should defer to elders. Children can also learn that disparate experiences that are treated as similar by caregivers (that is, labeled with the same terms, similar emotional and behavioral reactions) belong to the same category. However, what outsiders see as a theme may not be so treated by members of the society. Moreover, as discussed above, socio-cultural complexity often leads to children learning other schemas that do not fit the theme.

To illustrate the way people's interpretive frameworks are cobbled together from specific schemas, consider the way the native-born African American and white North Carolinians I interviewed in 2000 talked about immigration from Latin America. Between 1990 and 2002, North Carolina had the largest percentage increase in the U.S. in its Latinx population (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

When I raised the topic of immigration with Daniel Shane, a white small business owner in his early 30s, he admitted to some discomfort with the larger numbers of Hispanics in his area:

At times I feel I've become a minority, and I'm sure it's nothing compared to ways black men have felt or black people, or other people, but it's a strange feeling, you know. It's just uncomfortable. I think probably the main group it comes from is Hispanics coming over. What do you do to stop it? The government's not going to do it.

These comments express a Whites are Becoming a Minority schema about immigration, albeit one softened a bit by Shane's acknowledgment that whites are not a minority in the same sense that blacks have been. (Nor were whites even close to being a numerical minority in North Carolina, including in his county.⁵) Despite that concession, Shane takes the next, one could say white nationalist, step of saying that if whites are becoming a minority, that trend should be stopped. ("What do you do to stop it? The government's not going to do it.")

But in his very next sentence, without pause, Shane expresses a more welcoming attitude:

Daniel: What do you do to stop it? The government's not going to do it. Who pulls the rug under them? Should you deny people an opportunity? You know, should you say, 'Look this is ours, just stay out?' It's a touchy situation. It's hard to say. Everybody deserves a chance ... I guess []. Does that make sense?

Claudia: Yeah, I can see.

Daniel: You probably have to be a strong racist or something to have a dead-set answer to be on one side of the fence or the other. But I think, you know, everyone should have an opportunity...⁶

These comments express a completely different schema that all people, regardless of race or nationality, should have the same economic opportunities and it is wrong to say, "Look this is ours, just stay out." It is consistent with what we could call a Land of Opportunity schema, the basic point of which is that the U.S. should be open to anyone who wants to get ahead through hard work or to escape political repression.

The Whites are Becoming a Minority schema and the Land of Opportunity schema are just two of 23 specific schemas about immigration my participants expressed.⁷ As I explain in Strauss (2012), their comments did not reflect a single theme like humanistic values or white nationalism, but instead were strung together from a variety of schemas. Most of the time, their collection of schemas did not reflect a consistent positive or negative attitude.

That is not to say that ideologies have no influence on the way people think. For example, many of the participants in my studies have been devout Christians. Christianity fits what I mean by an ideology: a wide-ranging, explicitly articulated set of value-laden ideas. Learning from a source like that can increase coherence among many of a person's schemas. However, as is well known, the particular ways people internalize Christianity may leave many gaps and inconsistencies. For example, although about half of my North Carolina interviewees attended church regularly, only one spoke of Biblical teachings commanding that "you shall love the alien as yourself" (Leviticus 19:33–34). That is not to say the others lacked pro-immigration schemas, but their positive schemas were secular ones like Land of Opportunity, or Nation of Immigrants, or Immigrants' Work Ethic. Even in the Bible Belt, religiously based humanism was almost completely absent (Strauss 2012: 187–188). Although the Bible is clear, what matters more is how Christians hear it applied. Perhaps the public discourse in their congregations and among devout people they knew did not refer to that aspect of Biblical teaching.

POINT 2: SCHEMAS GO BEYOND THE INFORMATION
GIVEN, WHICH CAN LEAD TO DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS
OF SHARED EXPERIENCES

One of the most fundamental features of cognitive schemas is that they shape the way experiences are processed. As explained earlier, someone with a well-learned schema will attend to schema-relevant information more than information irrelevant to their schemas, will resolve ambiguous information to fit their schemas, and will reconstruct memories to better accord with their schemas. This automatic tendency of people to “go beyond the information given” (Bruner 1973) is what first led researchers to posit the existence of schemas.

For cultural anthropologists, the fact that learned frames of interpretation shape attention, perception, and memory is not surprising. What is interesting, however, is that this aspect of schemas can create differing interpretations of public culture.

Consider interpretations of the Occupy Wall Street movement. I began interviewing unemployed southern Californians in the fall of 2011, coincidentally, the same time as the Occupy Movement took to the streets to protest the systemic political and economic failures that had led to the Great Recession. Everyone I talked to who knew anything about Occupy understood the main message was about the state of the economy. Many of them associated “99%” with the movement (from Occupy’s slogan, “We are the 99%”). Beyond that agreement about the point of the movement, however, I found that their own political and economic schemas often shaped the way they understood Occupy’s message. Some blamed the recession on individuals’ failings; they were more likely to see Occupy’s message as being about bringing particular malefactors on Wall Street to justice. Others interpreted Occupy as expressing their own beliefs that more financial regulations or higher taxes on the rich were needed. Still others were distrustful of the whole political establishment, both Democrats and Republicans. They believed *that* was the point of Occupy Movement: a complete rejection of the political establishment, not just reform legislation. Moreover, some people added further meanings that were not part of Occupy’s message at all. For example, one working-class African American man in his early 50s, Carl Mathews, was very enthusiastic about the Occupy protests. As he kept talking, he referred to clashes between demonstrators and police and said, “You can only teargas and mace people so long, but let’s face it

we got more people out here with guns than police officers. Police got it good because people like me and you choose to not hurt no one. When the people change their heart, then they need to watch out.” I was surprised because the Occupy Movement espoused and practiced nonviolence. I asked, “So you think people might actually start demanding their rights with guns?” He replied,

Most things don’t dissolve easy. It takes struggle on both ends until something pops and breaks and then you have to restructure everything. Then after that it calms down. Just like with the Watts riots. [del.] Blacks didn’t hardly have jobs, when after the Watts riots they were hiring people that couldn’t even hardly speak or even had education because they was black.

Carl did not say that the Occupy movement preached armed resistance, but seeing televised images of police officers facing off against Occupy demonstrators brought to his mind his schema for effective political protest, which he thought of as militant protests or riots like those that took place in 1965 in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. His interpretation of the Occupy protests was also guided by his anger at police harassment of African Americans. Our interview took place before the Black Lives Matter movement began, but blacks who grew up in Los Angeles, as Carl did, did not need that movement to be aware of the long history of brutality by Los Angeles police officers against communities of color. As a result, the presence of conflict between police and demonstrators was more salient to him than to others of my participants, very few of whom commented on the role of the police when we talked about the Occupy Movement (Strauss 2018b).

The Occupy Movement attempted to channel public anger about gross economic inequality. Some scholars worry that the wrenching changes from mid-twentieth century forms of industrial capitalism that relied on relatively high wages and consumer spending, to the current insecurity of work and incomes under flexible capitalism (Harvey 1989), has left members of the public without interpretive schemas to comprehend their lives. For example, Anne Allison (2013), writing beautifully about contemporary Japan, notes the way insecurity in jobs spreads, becoming “a widely shared uneasiness over an instability and insecurity in life; not having a place that feels steady, not being in a temporality that makes sense” (2013: 17). (See also Berlant 2011; Jameson 1984; Sennett 1998.)

Another possibility, however, is that some people will have schemas capacious enough to make sense of social change. Their conceptual framework gives them a way to comprehend social disruption; for them, social instability does not mean a loss of meaning. That is what I found when I interviewed a white woman in her early 60s, Krystal Murphy, who lost her job as an administrative assistant at a financial institution in 2011 and was not able to find another position. I interviewed her a few months after she lost the job when she had no income because she was initially deemed ineligible for unemployment compensation. Both Krystal's father and her ex-husband had worked in a California steel mill with good wages and benefits. That steel mill closed in the early 1980s, she became the primary breadwinner with much lower wages, then she and her husband separated. She went from a secure family income to near-poverty level wages even when she was working; she has lived the changes in the U.S. economy. Yet, Krystal was not suffering from anomie or lack of a schema to interpret her much more precarious finances. Instead, she said she had never had high expectations for her life because her severe learning disabilities had kept her from pursuing her dream of being a veterinarian. This is the wisdom she imparted to her teenage daughter: "I'm telling you, you can make all the plans you want in life and unfortunately shit happens." Nor are her memories of the days when the mill was operating more positive. Yes, her father earned good wages and benefits, but his need to support his family trapped him in a miserable job: "He hated that job every day he had to go there. He hated it. But he knew that that's the best he could do for our family." Her schema that the world will probably not give you what you want led her to see continuity where others saw discontinuity (Strauss 2018a).

These examples show that people's schemas differ, with the result that they do not interpret public culture in the same ways.

POINT 3: SELF-IMAGE, EMOTION TRIGGERS, AND MOTIVATIONS ARE KEY IN CONSTRUCTING ACTORS' POINT OF VIEW

Schemas differ not only in their contents but also in their connections to a person's self-image, learned emotion triggers, and personal motivations. Krystal Murphy has a younger sister, Summer Carrington, whom I interviewed at the same time. Summer lost her job at the same financial institution on the same day as Krystal and was not able to find another

stable job thereafter. Unlike Krystal, Summer's response was anomic. She became deeply depressed. Part of the problem was that she believed the dominant American schema that her life situation was the result of her voluntary choices and that she could change her circumstances with talent and hard work. This was not a belief she held in a detached way; it was important to her self-image to take personal responsibility for her actions. Summer's voluntarist schema of economic individualism had corresponded with her experiences in the past, but in her late fifties, faced with the paucity of jobs in the poorest large urban area of the United States (Nisperos and Hagen 2013) and one of the worst hit by the Great Recession (Adams 2011), she lost a way to comprehend her circumstances and respond in a way that fit her values.

Why did Summer and Krystal, sisters who spent a great deal of time together as adults as well as when they were growing up, apply different emotionally and motivationally imbued schemas to understand their economic circumstances? Krystal Murphy traces her philosophy of limited personal agency ("you can make all the plans you want in life and unfortunately shit happens") to her struggles with schoolwork when she was young. There was little help for people with severe dyslexia then, and no matter how hard she tried, she still got bad grades. For Summer, on the other hand, schoolwork was easy, and she was also very popular. Bright and attractive, she grew up feeling that the only thing holding her back was her choices. When I asked what social groups they belonged to, Krystal said she was "lower middle class," but Summer replied, "I belong everywhere I chose to be." Summer married a musician who became a substance abuser, earned little, and implicated her in his legal and financial troubles, but she only blamed herself for choosing to marry him. Even the way they recounted some family stories differed, with Summer stressing her father's poor choices and Krystal stressing their limited income. Although Krystal also believed in personal responsibility for one's actions, and Summer also had more cynical interpretations of workplace politics, those perspectives were less emphasized when we talked (Strauss 2018a). Thus, even people with the same repertoire of schemas do not necessarily find those schemas equally relevant for their own lives.

Or consider the differences in the political views of Carl Mathews and Terrance West. Terrance, like Carl, is an African American man who also spent part of his childhood in Los Angeles before his family moved east to the city of Rialto. Terrance brought up the topic of the Occupy

movement before I raised it, and he, like Carl, discussed Occupy protesters' confrontations with the police. Unlike Carl, however, Terrance defended the police and had mixed feelings about Occupy:

Terrance West: I also felt really strongly about the Occupy movement that was taking place.

Claudia: Oh, yeah? What did you think about that?

Terrance: I felt like I was on both sides of that. The reason why I'm saying that is because I understand the anger and the hostility towards the bad economy and some of the folks that we believe may have had a part to play in that, but then again, there was a lot of property damage that cost millions of dollars. [*A few lines in which he elaborates were deleted here.*] I liked the way the police department handled it because they were being understanding but being firm at the same time. On a personal level, I was upset because they destroyed the lawn at City Hall and L.A. City Hall is one of the most spectacular landmarks in L.A. and I hate that they messed up a part of what makes L.A., L.A. I hated seeing people getting beat in the other cities like in New York and in Oakland and in Boston because we're all Americans. We're all suffering through the same bad economy and the cop that might've been out there beating that protester is probably only a paycheck or two away from being out there *with* that protester, so that's why.

For Terrance, cops were just working men like him, and he highly disapproved of the damage Occupy LA caused to the grounds of the Los Angeles City Hall.

Why the difference between Carl Mathews' and Terrance West's interpretations of Occupy? In part, they are due to their different repertoires of self-relevant schemas. Carl was born in the early 1960s. Although he was a child during the Watts Riots and the heyday of Black Power discourse in the U.S., it was a greater part of his lived experience and that of others with whom he interacted (relatives, slightly older peers) than for Terrance, who was born in the early 1970s. More relevant, however, were significant differences in their identities and life goals. Terrance's faith in the political establishment is closely tied to his ambition, when he was younger, to become a mayor "running some city and doing some good for a lot of people." One of his heroes was Tom Bradley, who served five terms as mayor of Los Angeles when Terrance was growing up and was the first African American mayor of a large city with a majority white population. Terrance was appointed to a city

commission in Rialto when he was eighteen. Terrance's earlier political ambitions were related to his belief that the political system generally works for the good of the community; therefore, he is not favorably disposed toward challenges to the political order. That belief may help explain why he was especially upset by Occupy LA's unsightly encampment around City Hall.

By contrast, a middle-class lifestyle is central to Carl's self-image. When I asked him what social groups he belonged to, he said, "I'm not poor, I'm not rich but I am middle class, and hopefully still try to retain that status." When we first met, he had been out of work for a year and without unemployment compensation because he had been fired. He was embarrassed about his old clothes and old car, close to losing his home, and angry that his bank had never let him modify his mortgage. Anger at his bank made Carl particularly receptive to the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the experience of meeting other homeowners of diverse ethnicities in the same predicament gave him a personally relevant, memorable example of shared interests among the 99%. Terrance, by contrast, had never owned a home, and considered himself a worker rather than a consumer. He could understand why others were angry at big banks, but it was not relevant for him (Strauss 2018b).

People can share emotion-laden, identity-relevant, and goal-directed schemas. Indeed, as Quinn (2005) stresses, culture learning is often engineered to connect shared schemas to motivations, emotions, and identities. However, as I have illustrated, affectively charged and goal-directing schemas also vary, even among people from the same demographic group or even, as in Krystal and Summer's case, the same family.

POINT 4: MEANINGS ARE SITUATIONAL; SCHEMAS SHIFT MORE SLOWLY

Schemas are mental frameworks of interpretation. They change slowly over time. Meanings are not the same as schemas; instead, they are the actual interpretations that arise for actors when they apply their schemas to people, objects, and events at a particular time (Strauss and Quinn 1997). Because people typically hold sets of disparate schemas (Point 1), different combinations can be activated at any given time. That explains why culture in persons is compatible with reactions that will vary depending on the situation.

For example, compare two stories Terrance West narrated about his reactions on election night 2008, when Barack Obama was elected president. He told the first story during my first interview with him, in 2012:

I was crying and happy, just a flood of emotion and when I got home—at the time me and my mom were roommates. I’d get home and my mom is in her room with the door open. CNN is blasting on her TV and she’s shaking her head and she’s like, “Oh, my God. I don’t believe it. I don’t believe it. I didn’t think that this was gonna happen in my lifetime.” I said, “Mom, I didn’t think it was gonna happen in my lifetime.” I just remember this overwhelming pride, but then I sat there and I thought about what it – it meant more than just a black dude in the White House. What it means to me is that anybody of any race could sit in that seat. It meant that we could have a President Gonzales. We could have a President Wong. We could have a President whoever now, you know?

In the fall of 2013, I re-interviewed Terrance. In July 2013, a jury acquitted George Zimmerman of second-degree murder charges for shooting and killing an unarmed African American teenager, Trayvon Martin, who had walked through Zimmerman’s neighborhood. That decision began the social media campaign that, with further police killings of African American men, developed into the Black Lives Matter protests the following year. Terrance had been moved by President Obama’s personal reaction to the acquittal. With these fairly recent events on his mind, Terrance’s narrative of his feelings the night Obama was elected changed a little:

I couldn’t believe it because I’ve always heard all my life, “We’re never going to have a black president. Never going to have a black president,” and I remember driving home from the polling place that night, it was like 9:30, ten o’clock and I’m like, “Wow, really? I can’t believe this.” I got home— at the time my mom and I were sharing an apartment. I got home and my mother was in her room with CNN on and she was in tears. She’s like, “I don’t believe it. I don’t believe it.” It was really emotional. I remember going to sleep that night and I’m thinking, “Wow, I cannot believe we actually are going to have somebody that is new and kind of young and kind of different in the White House. And it’s somebody that I can look in the mirror and say I actually kind of look like the president a little bit. I can’t believe it. It was relatable to me. It was an overwhelming pride. I had similar pride when he got re-elected.

The facts Terrance tells are almost identical. In both narratives, he comes home from working at the polls, his mother is watching the television, and he and his mother are thrilled that a black man was elected president given their expectation it would never happen in their lifetimes. But his narrative evaluations—the meanings he assigns to those facts—are a little different. In 2012, he adds that what the election “means to me is that anybody of any race could sit in that seat. It meant that we could have a President Gonzales. We could have a President Wong.” During our 2013 interview, by contrast, his black identity was heightened by talking about President Obama’s public comments after Zimmerman’s acquittal for killing Trayvon Martin, which led Terrance to recount examples of racial discrimination he had faced. With all of this in mind, he subsequently retold his election night story with the emphasis on his own racial pride.

This shift does not mean that Terrance has lost his concern for other socially disadvantaged groups. He is gay, and his boyfriend is Mexican-American. On Facebook, Terrance continues to repost memes reflecting his concerns for all ethnic minorities. Terrance has stable schemas, but these schemas interact with current events to produce situational meanings.

Carl also made comments that seemed to express widely differing attitudes on different occasions, but that were traceable to more stable schemas. Carl is a socially conservative evangelical Christian. In our follow-up interview in 2014, he criticized Obama’s eventual support for same-sex marriage and said lesbians and gays should be barred from running for president. Yet, when he was talking about the Occupy Movement in 2011, he said with approval, “it’s not a racially motivated thing, it ain’t black, it ain’t Mexican, it ain’t Jews, ain’t homosexuals, it’s *everybody*, holding hands, fighting for the same thing, the 99 percent.” Why this particular selection of social groups? Furthermore, Carl seems to be homophobic; why was he talking about holding hands with homosexuals?

A clue to the explanation lies in the fact that Carl also mentioned Jews and Mexicans. All are groups that, at some point during our three lengthy interviews, he spoke of as Others. For example, he asked me if I was Jewish. When I confirmed that was my ethnic heritage, he said he had to be nice to me because “you guys are the ‘chosen people.’” Although Jews are not as problematic for him as gays, they are still quite distinct. He also discussed Mexican Americans. On the one hand, he mentioned similarities in the way Mexican men and black men are

treated by police, but on the other, he blamed undocumented Mexican immigrants for his difficulty in finding another job and said they should be deported. I believe that precisely because he did see Mexicans, Jews, and homosexuals as Others that these were the groups that came to mind when he wanted to express how the Occupy Movement was creating solidarity that transcended other lines of difference. Earlier in that interview, he had said that with the middle-class disappearing, soon the main lines of division would be the rich against everyone else, “which is going to be the new racism. It ain’t going to *be* all this prejudice against, black against white, and Chinese against Japanese and Mexicans against everybody—ain’t going to be none of that.” With that schema salient in his thinking, he applauded political solidarity among all the groups that he saw as different from him (Strauss 2018b). As I noted earlier (Point 1), general labels for others’ views are not helpful for understanding the specific schemas a person holds and the ways those schemas shape their actions in a particular context.

POINT 5: BELIEFS ARE INTERNALIZED IN DIFFERENT WAYS

As the examples above are intended to illustrate, beliefs are complicated. Another complication is that the form of beliefs in persons varies.

Some of people’s beliefs seem to be internalized in a highly verbal way. That was the case for the 23 schemas about immigration I found when I discussed that topic with ordinary North Carolinians. The Land of Opportunity schema, for example, was typically expressed with the catchphrase, “a better life,” as the following examples (among many others) show:

I don’t have a problem with people wanting to come to the United States to have a better life. (Lea Taylor)

They’re just doing what our forefathers did. They’re coming and looking in search of a better life. (Paul Davis)

Everybody came here originally for a better life. (Maggie Hughes)

I have termed a shared, often repeated schema like Land of Opportunity a “conventional discourse” (Strauss 2012). The kinds of beliefs expressed in conventional discourses are evidently learned from others’ words.

Their canned quality suggests that people hear or read others' opinions, chunks of which are internalized nearly verbatim. Beliefs formed in that way are learned as nearly complete sentences. A person's outlook in those instances looks a lot like belief defined as "conviction of the truth of some statement" ([merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)).

Culture in persons, however, consists of much more than explicit statements. There are also implicit beliefs. Implicit beliefs, as philosophers define that term, are not ones that a person holds but that are "swiftly derivable from something one explicitly believes" (Schwitzgebel 2015). I am convinced of the truth of many statements that I had never considered or learned, but I would assent to if I were asked. For example, I do not think the moon is made of green cheese, cheddar cheese, strawberries, or any other food. I do not need to have previously learned the statement, "The moon is not made of strawberries" to instantly agree with such a statement if it ever came up. While that example is trivial, consider instead more consequential cultural assumptions so taken for granted that they do not need to be stated. My participants, whether themselves immigrants or native-born, took for granted that the world consists of nation-states with fixed borders separating those who belong from those who do not (cf. Billig 1995). For example, Jorge Paiz, an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala who later obtained a green card and U.S. citizenship, discussed which undocumented immigrants should be deported and which should be allowed to stay. He thought that immigrants who were hard workers and good people should be allowed to stay. Under President Obama "most of the people that are getting deported is because you know, they did something bad,"⁸ and he agreed with this policy although he recognized it had deleterious effects on the Central American countries where many of the young deportees were sent. Implicit in his comments is the assumption that the world is carved up into countries with a natural right to expel those who do not belong or are considered undesirable. Jorge Paiz probably has not internalized a statement like, "The world is divided into countries that have a right to expel foreigners." Instead, it was a reality of the difficult trip he made on his own as a teenager from Guatemala to Mexico to the United States. Currently it is the tacit assumption behind all the discussions he hears about deportation policies. Still, we could say that Jorge holds that belief in the sense that it is an implicit presupposition of other beliefs he holds explicitly.

An even more complicated example of beliefs not learned from explicit statements are ones that the speaker would deny if asked. As was discussed in the introduction, psychologists have found that someone could sincerely disavow sexist, racist, or other prejudiced views, but their implicit attitudes turn out to be at odds with their explicit ones. An interesting example is the implicit association of males with science (Nosek et al. 2009). Volunteers in 34 countries were given an implicit association task online in which they were to press one key if they saw the words for he, boy, physics, chemistry, etc. and another key if they saw the words for she, girl, arts, history, etc. Either before or after that task, the same participants pressed keys with the instructions reversed so that the feminine words were associated with the sciences and the masculine words with the humanities. More than 70% of participants more quickly followed instructions if the male terms were associated with the sciences and the female terms with humanities than the reverse, revealing implicit gender stereotyping of the disciplines. Participants who completed the implicit associations task were also asked for their explicit views with questions in which they rated both “Science” and “Liberal Arts” on scales ranging from “strongly male” to “strongly female” (Nosek et al. 2009). The correlation between their explicit attitudes and implicit associations was not very strong ($r = .22$). It seems that their assumptions about the gendering of science are not a belief in the Merriam-Webster sense of “conviction of the truth of some statement.” They do not hold that belief in the form of a statement, but rather as strong associative links. Probably they abstracted the pattern that science teachers and famous scientists are typically men. Verbal commentary about scientists may contribute, but such commentary does not need to include explicit statements about the typical scientist’s sex. For English speakers, using masculine pronouns when talking about scientists would be sufficient to create the association.⁹

Whether we call them “full-blown beliefs” or not, such implicit associations have important effects. Nosek et al. (2009) found that the average association of science with males varied considerably. It was smallest among participants from Jordan, Moldova, Macedonia, and the Philippines and largest in Tunisia. These differences in implicit gender stereotypes were significantly related to the difference between 8th grade boys’ and girls’ science scores on standardized tests in those countries. In fact, in Jordan, Moldova, Macedonia, and the Philippines, girls’ science test scores were better than the boys’ (Nosek et al. 2009, figure 1; see

also Mukhopadhyay 2004 on India). Explicit attitudes expressed in average ratings of the gendering of the sciences did not independently contribute to prediction of national achievement gaps in science, but average implicit attitudes did (Nosek et al. 2009). It seems that, at some level, participants had assumptions about the maleness of sciences that may have reduced adults' encouragement and girls' motivation to study hard, or that may have created a stereotype threat (Steele and Aronson 1995) that interfered with the girls' performance. These cultural associations are as significant, if not more so, as explicit beliefs.

These different forms of cultural learning are not equally accessible to the person's consciousness. Beliefs learned verbally and remembered in large verbal chunks like conventional discourses are easy to bring to mind and recognize as one's view. (Although people are not always aware of all the conflicting conventional discourses they hold. Frequently those are compartmentalized, with only some coming to awareness in a given context, Strauss 2012.) The implicit presuppositions behind what one believes are less often voiced and recognized, for lack of normal occasions to do so, although they could be recognized in the right context. Implicit associations, especially those at odds with a person's explicit attitudes, are hard to recognize and, if they conflict with shared explicit beliefs, are readily misrecognized (cf. Bourdieu 1977).

POINT 6: BELIEFS VARY IN BEING SEEN AS CULTURAL

A final way in which culture in persons is complicated is in meta-understandings linked to ideas. Not only do ideas vary in being typically recognized, unrecognized, or misrecognized, they also vary in being recognized *as* cultural. Those seen as cultural are not taken to be natural or universal. Instead, they are tagged as held by some kinds of people but not by other kinds. To put it another way, these ideas have social indexicalities. To continue with the example of the gendering of science, such a meta-understanding might be the view that the sort of person who believes that the sciences are a male field is an old-fashioned sexist. To explicitly reject such beliefs is a way of claiming a certain kind of identity (not sexist or old-fashioned).

Linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have terms for such meta-understandings. For example, Labov (1971) distinguished *indicators* (dialect features that occur with higher frequency in some speech communities than others but are not usually noticed by speakers

themselves) from *markers* (dialect features that speakers recognize as typical of their group or another group) and *stereotypes* (dialect features used to typify a group). Speakers can deliberately play with stylistic variation in their adoption of markers or stereotypes to highlight or downplay certain identities (Eckert 2008; see also Silverstein 2003 on indexical orders).¹⁰

Similarly, among people's sociocultural understandings, some are mentally associated with meta-understandings about what sort of person holds that view but others are not. The standard account of modern Westerners is that they embrace a notion of unfettered personal agency (e.g., Shweder and Bourne 1984: 192). But in what way do Westerners embrace voluntarism? Is it completely taken for granted or is it seen as one possible framework among others? There are some realms (e.g., responsibility for choosing one's spouse) in which most Westerners are unselfconsciously voluntaristic. When Summer rues her choice of a spouse, she takes for granted that whom she married was her choice. Love marriages, for Americans like her, are not held up as a cultural artifact, unlike in societies like India where arranged marriages are common and love matches are outside the norm. By contrast, in the United States, there are alternatives to voluntaristic ways of attributing responsibility for one's economic situation. Those non-voluntaristic frameworks could certainly have been invoked in Summer and Krystal's case. They were fired because Summer used Krystal's employee password to make an online request on Krystal's behalf that she be allowed to take a personal day to visit her son-in-law in the hospital. Employees were not supposed to share their password, but this was a particularly inhumane application of that rule. Their difficulties in finding another job could be attributed to the terrible economy in their area and, in addition, to age discrimination (Neumark et al. 2015). Summer was aware of these structural conditions, but when I asked Krystal and Summer whether "it's fair what you went through," Summer replied, "I don't want to sit here and look at it, 'It's not fair.'" Her point is that she did not want to be the kind of person who complains about life being unfair. Instead, she wanted to be the kind of person who takes personal responsibility for what she called "all the mistakes you've made in life," whether it was breaking the rule about not sharing passwords or marrying a man who turned out to be a feckless cheating drug abuser. Thus, she made a choice to be the sort of person who believes in the power of one's choices, in full awareness that there are other ways one could think about one's situation. (See Strauss 2007 on defensive voluntarism.)

Elsewhere I have delineated gradations in the *cultural standing* people attribute to their views, ranging from ones they see as controversial, to ones they see as under debate in their opinion community, to ones they see as the common opinion in their group (but not in other groups), to ones they just take for granted and do not recognize that they hold (Strauss 2004). U.S. Americans I have interviewed are careful to voice an opinion in a way that shows their awareness of its cultural standing. One of the valuable contributions of Handler's (2004) discussion of culture theory is his reminder of Tocqueville's observation that there is cultural variability in the extent to which people are concerned about public opinion. Perhaps in the France of Toqueville's day, all the variations in what I am calling cultural standing were not so clearly marked in speech. Nonetheless, ethnographies I have read suggest that people in every society are aware that social groups differ in their outlooks. Those meta-understandings are another important aspect of culture in persons.

TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF "THE NATIVE'S POINT OF VIEW"

In comments about "the native's point of view," Geertz (1983) distinguished between locals' own "experience-near" concepts (e.g., the concept of love) and observers' "experience-distant" concepts (e.g., the psychoanalytic concept of object cathexis).¹¹ He added that experience-near concepts are used unselfconsciously:

People use experience-near concepts spontaneously, unself-consciously, as it were colloquially; they do not, except fleetingly and on occasion, recognize that there are any "concepts" involved at all. That is what experience-near means—that ideas and the realities they inform are naturally and indissolubly bound up together. What else could you call a hippopotamus? Of course the gods are powerful, why else would we fear them? (Geertz 1983: 58)

In Quinn and Holland's (1987) groundbreaking discussion of the shared cognitive schemas they termed cultural models, they made a similar point about the "transparency" of such beliefs:

Our cultural understanding of the world is founded on many tacit assumptions. This underlying cultural knowledge is, to use Hutchins's (1980: 12) words, "often transparent to those who use it. Once learned, it becomes

what one *sees with*, but seldom what one *sees*.” This “referential transparency” (ibid.) ... causes cultural knowledge to go unquestioned by its bearer. (Quinn and Holland 1987: 14)

Quinn, Holland, and Geertz are not saying that tacit assumptions or naturalized conceptual systems are all there is to culture, but they do highlight this one kind of culture in persons, the kind that is mostly implicit and not seen as cultural.¹²

Unselfconsciousness and referential transparency do characterize the way actors hold some of their cultural views. Describing and questioning the naturalness of such assumptions are still some of the most important things we do as anthropologists. My point is not that we should stop conducting such cultural analyses, but rather that completely unselfconscious, commonsensical experience-near constructs are only part of the native’s point of view.

Eighty-five years ago, Sapir made the same point. He stressed that “the true psychological locus of a culture is *the individual* or a *specifically enumerated list of individuals*, not an economically or politically or socially defined group of individuals.” Then he explained that the individual includes a “total world of form, meaning, and implication of symbolic behavior which a given individual partly knows and directs, partly intuits and yields to, partly is ignorant of and is swayed by” (Sapir 1949: 517–518). That compact formulation nicely captures some of the different ways people relate to their beliefs as I explained above (Point 5, about how beliefs are differently internalized, and Point 6, about how they vary in being seen as cultural).

Complicating our understanding of culture in persons has implications for how we ought to study culture. It requires attention to all the levels of what is said, implied, and misrecognized; variations in cultural standing; differences not only between people but also within them (Strauss 2005); and the contextual variation that is the result of people’s ability to hold a variety of possibly conflicting schemas.

Recognition of complexity of culture in persons is also important for understanding others in our own society. I am writing this in 2017, shortly after the election in which Donald Trump became president. Those who voted against Trump may wonder how so many of their fellow citizens could condone his remarks about Mexicans, Muslims, women, and other groups he stigmatized. Yet, as my examples illustrate, people are complicated. Like Daniel Shane, they may

sound anti-immigrant at one moment and welcoming of immigrants a moment later. Or like Carl Mathews, they may disapprove of gays and lesbians, but be open to solidarity with them and other outgroups in order to fight economic injustice. On a more pessimistic note, they may consciously subscribe to unprejudiced views, but unconsciously take the dominance of whites, men, and the native-born as the norm (see also Hochschild 2016). A better theory of culture in persons is a practical, not just theoretical, necessity.

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NOTES

1. In Strauss and Quinn (1997), we used the terms “extrapersonal” and “intrapersonal.” External and internal are a little snappier.
2. Notice, again, Handler’s insertion of scare quotes around “child-rearing practices” in the quote above. Is he questioning the observable fact that there are differences, across space and time, in the way people bring up children, differences that have consequences over the life course? (See Chapin in this volume for a striking example.)
3. See Sökefeld (2007), who insightfully questions whether my emphasis on differing cultural models is consistent with the explanation of culture in Strauss and Quinn (1997).
4. That does not mean that schemas should be taken to be bounded mental representations. Instead, I conceive of them as the learned tendency of groups of neurons to be activated jointly (Strauss and Quinn 1997).
5. In 2000, Hispanics were only 4.7% of the total population of North Carolina. In Wake County, where Daniel Shane lived, whites were 72.4% of the population, Hispanics only 5.4% (<http://censusviewer.com/county/NC/Wake>, accessed January 13, 2017).
6. My transcription conventions are as follows: [del.] = deletion; ... = pause; [] = unintelligible; italics = speaker’s emphasis; [italics] = added by the author for clarification.
7. In Strauss (2012), I described a Racial Differences/Cultural Inferiority schema instead of Whites are Becoming a Minority.
8. This is his wife’s translation of his comments in Spanish.

9. According to Schwitzgebel's (2015) overview of epistemologists' analysis of *belief*, "it remains controversial to what extent [*implicit attitude*] tests of this sort reveal subjects' (implicit) *beliefs*, as opposed to merely culturally-given associations or attitudes other than full-blown belief," and that Gendler (2008) "suggests that we regard such implicit attitudes as arational and automatic *aliefs* rather than genuine evidence-responsive *beliefs*." Thus, Schwitzgebel distinguishes *implicit associations* in the field of psychology from *implicit beliefs* in philosophy.
10. See also Agha on enregisterment (Agha 2003, 2005). Enregisterment is the historical process by which some group comes to recognize a language variety as indexing a particular persona, i.e., a certain social type (Agha 2005: 38).
11. Interestingly, Geertz took these terms from the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut (1971).
12. This is despite Quinn and Holland's cognitive anthropology being at odds with Geertz's interpretivist anthropology in other respects (Strauss and Quinn 1997).

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