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Journal Assignment #7

**First Entry:** I believe that every individual has their own specific idea of what culture is. It is hard to determine the exact definition or meaning for the word culture. When I think of ‘culture’ I think of the traditions, attitudes, people, ideas and commonly held beliefs in a certain society. I believe that the word culture is a sub-part of society. Society is the fact; it is the buildings, location, amount of people, and technology. Culture is like ‘opinion’ the heart of the society, societies have cultures within them, culture is the people, feelings, emotions, traditions, attitudes and the way people live life.

Geertz stated in his article, “Common Sense as a Cultural System” that common sense is not a universal thing and that it differs between cultures. This statement tells me that culture is specific and very different throughout the world. What may be common sense to an American child in the city may not even be considered by a child living in rural China. Culture is a universal word but the culture itself differs so much within communities and society. Harris’ statement about what culture is is very similar to what I thought of off the top of my head. He says, “Culture refers to the learned, socially acquired traditions of thought and behavior … in human societies … socially acquired lifestyle of a group of people… repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.” This quotation just reinforces my personal ‘definition’ of culture. I do not think that the word culture should have a specific definition, but rather guidelines or ideas that are presented to help everyone better understand. From Harris’ definition I recognize that culture is heavily based on emotions and social tradition. It is human nature to be emotional, and humans want to belong to a group, in a society. Culture gives humans something to belong to, traditions are what allow us to reflect on our cultures past and pass it on to future generations. The emotions and attitudes are the center of a culture, the way people live. Culture is the heart of society; it is diverse and specific emotions, traditions, attitudes, people, ideas and feeling within society.

**Second Entry:** Both nature and nurture work together to create culture. Culture is not specifically because of nature or nurture, it is a combination of both that is somewhat hard to determine. I personally think that nurture plays a much more dominant role, but nature also holds an important part in culture. In Ridley’s book, “Nature via Nurture” he talks about a time during the evangelical movement; when Darwinism was becoming prevalent in society, “culture came to mean the opposite of human nature – the elixir that elevated man above the ape.” Nature is innate and wild, but culture is the conformity and ‘domesticated’ version of our natural animal self. I do believe that nurture does hugely impact culture, but my view of nature’s role is that humans naturally want to belong and be together. Just like apes, humans have families and hierarchies within society and both feel a natural and biological sense of family and community. Nature is a part of culture and the phenomenon of self-awareness in humans is simply what sparked ‘culture’, the natural intelligence of human is what started it all.

Nature and nurture both contribute to the development of a cultural. While nature provides the genetic abilities to speak and think, nurture is what made culture what it is, and passed it on for generations and that is why culture and society is what it is today. A quote from Ridley’s article pretty much sums up why nurture plays such a major role, “A child who comes into the world today inherits a set of genes and learns many lessons from experience. But she acquires something else too: the words, the thoughts, and the tools that were invented by other people.” To me this quote means that, sure, thousands and thousands of years ago nature allowed humans to create culture, but in modern times culture is acquired mainly through nurture. When a child is born today it is nurtured and taught exactly how to do things and taught the ways of the world. Each culture has already been established and a child born into the word simply inherits that culture. While traditions may change slightly over time, the base of culture has already been formed and nurture is what upholds it.