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Introduction

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Culture and cognition[1]

Naomi Quinn & Dorothy Holland

Undeniably, a great deal of order exists in the natural world we experience. However, much of the order we perceive in the world is there only because we put it there. That we impose such order is even more apparent when we consider the social world, in which institutions such as marriage, deeds such as lying, and customs such as dating happen at all because the members of a society presume them to be. D'Andrade (1984a:91) contrasts such culturally constructed things with cultural categories for objects such as stone, tree, and hand, which exist whether or not we invent labels for them. An entity such as marriage, on the other hand, is created by "the social agreement that something counts as that condition" (ibid.) and exists only by virtue of adherence to the rules that constitute it.

Such culturally constituted understandings of the social world point up not only the degree to which people impose order on their world but also the degree to which such orderings are shared by the joint participants in this world, all of whom behave as though marriage, lying, and dating exist. A very large proportion of what we know and believe we derive from these shared models that specify what is in the world and how it works.

The cognitive view of cultural meaning

The enigma of cultural meaning, seemingly both social and psychological in nature, has challenged generations of anthropologists and stimulated the development of several distinctive perspectives (see Keesing 1974 for an early review). Each of these ideational traditions in anthropology has had to address the same question: How are these meaning systems organized? Any convincing answer to this question should be able to account for at least the following properties of culture. It must be able to explain the apparent systematicity of cultural knowledge – the observation, old to anthropology, that each culture is characterized, and distinguished from others, by thoroughgoing, seemingly fundamental themes. Such a theory of culture also ought to explain how we come to master the enormous amount of cultural knowledge that the people of any culture have about the world and demonstrate in their daily negotiations with it (D'Andrade

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1981). Moreover, the large base of cultural knowledge we control is not static; somehow, we extend it to our comprehension of particular experiences as we encounter them. Given the uniqueness, sometimes radical and sometimes small, of these myriad daily experiences, cultural meaning systems must be adapted to the contingencies and complexities of everyday life. A theory of the organization of cultural knowledge must explain the generative capacity of culture. The approach in this volume makes progress and offers promise in accounting for all these properties of culture.

The papers in the volume represent a cognitive approach to the question of how cultural knowledge is organized. For nearly three decades, cognitive anthropologists have been pursuing the question of what one needs to know in order to behave as a functioning member of one's society (Goodenough 1957:167). This school of anthropology came to stand for a new view of culture as shared knowledge – not a people's customs and artifacts and oral traditions, but what they must know in order to act as they do, make the things they make, and interpret their experience in the distinctive way they do.

It is this sense of culture that is intended in the title of the present volume: *Cultural models* are presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it. Certainly, anthropologists of other persuasions have arrived at the idea of "folk models" as a way of characterizing the radically different belief systems of nonwestern peoples (e.g., Bohannan 1957; Holy & Stuchlik 1981a). What is new in the present effort is an attempt to specify the cognitive organization of such ideational complexes and to link this organization to what is known about the way human beings think.

Cultural models, talk, and other behavior

In practice, Goodenough's original mandate to investigate the knowledge people need in order to behave in culturally appropriate ways has been translated into a narrower concern for what one needs to know in order to *say* culturally acceptable things about the world. The relation between what people say and what they do has not gone entirely unconsidered by cognitive anthropologists. For example, this concern surfaces in an ongoing tradition of natural decision-making studies of which Geoghegan (1969), Gladwin and Gladwin (1971), Johnson (1974), and Fjellman (1976) are early representatives. In this line of research, behavioral decision models constructed with the help of informants' accounts of how they make decisions are then used to predict their actual choices. (See Nardi 1983 and Mathews in press for recent critiques of this approach from a perspective that would insist on the role of cultural knowledge in framing, not just

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making, decisions.) For the most part, however, cognitive anthropologists have specialized in talk.

This definition of the research task – explaining what people need to know in order to say the things they do – is simply taken for granted by the linguists with whom cognitive anthropologists exchange ideas, and it is a conventional research strategy in other branches of cognitive science as well. In artificial intelligence, for example, apart from an occasional robotic *tour de force,* the major methodological and theoretical challenge has been to build computer programs capable of story comprehension and other kinds of linguistic processing. This definition of the task is a legacy of earlier attempts to solve the machine translation problem. Artificial intelligence workers attempting machine translation discovered that language cannot be understood, much less translated, without reference to a great deal of knowledge about the world. The preoccupation of subsequent artificial intelligence research with this problem has captured the interest of cognitive anthropologists similarly concerned with what people have to know in order to use language.

It has been colleagues from the more materialist traditions in anthropology, and indeed from some of the ideationalist traditions within the discipline as well, who have been at pains to point out the limitation of a research program for validating cultural models solely on the basis of linguistic behavior. These anthropologists observe that people do not always do what would seem to be entailed by the cultural beliefs they enunciate (for cognitive anthropologists' own critique of this issue, see Lave et al. 1977; Frake 1977; Clement 1982). Do cultural models, they want to know, influence more than talk, and if so how? Harris (1968) has proposed that cultural beliefs are epiphenomena altogether, reflecting the political economic circumstances that they arise, *post hoc,* to rationalize. From a wholly different perspective, Levi-Strauss (1953) had earlier characterized native models as "home-made" ones, to be treated as repositories of false knowledge. The influence of his view can be gauged by the stance adopted in the work of anthropologist Barbara Ward (1965; 1966). Citing Levi-Strauss, she felt obliged to apologize for her interest in Hong Kong fishermen's native models of society, about which she wrote.

A third, related strain in anthropological thought reflects this same tendency to discount the role, in people's behavior, of the cultural beliefs reflected in their talk. In this formulation, models for talking are separated, analytically, from models for doing. Paralleling Ryle's (1949) distinction between "knowledge how" and "knowledge that," and Geertz's (1966) distinction between "models for" and "models of," Caws (1974) presents an oft-cited argument for a tripartite typology of models (see also Holy & Stuchlik 1981b:19–21). In addition to the scientist's "explanatory model," Caws proposes two types of native models: "representational" and "operational." The former are indigenous models of their world that people can more or less articulate; the latter are indigenous models that guide behavior

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in given situations and that tend to be out of awareness. Representational models, from this view, are not necessarily operational nor are the latter necessarily representational; thus, inconsistencies between what people say and what they do need not be cause for puzzlement. Holy (1979) applies this distinction in his attempt to resolve a long-standing debate in social anthropology over the reported disparities between Nuer descriptions of their kinship system and Nuer kinship behavior "on the ground."

Our vision of the role and importance of cultural models is at odds with the views of Harris and Levi-Strauss and that articulated in social anthropology by Caws. We do not assume that cultural models always translate simply and directly into behavior. Indeed, the papers in this collection by Hutchins, Linde, and Price move toward a more precise understanding of the situations in which cultural models are invoked to rationalize and sometimes disguise behavior for other people and for ourselves. Nor do we expect cultural conceptualizations of the world to be the sole determinants of behavior. The work in this volume does suggest, however, that cultural models – which we infer from what people say – do relate to their behavior in complex, powerful ways. We are only beginning to specify the nature of these relations. Keesing is right, in his paper in this volume, to urge that cognitive anthropologists like ourselves take an active role in the emerging interdisciplinary study of "humans-in-societies." By linking meaning to action, cognitive anthropologists could substantiate Keesing's argument that "how humans cognize their worlds constrains and shapes how humans-in-societies reproduce them." We think it is a crucial first step to show, as these studies do, how cultural models frame experience, supplying interpretations of that experience and inferences about it, and goals for action. When interpretation and inference call for action, as discussed by Lutz with regard to the goals embodied in Ifaluk emotion words, and by White with regard to the dual conceptual and pragmatic functions of proverbs, then cultural understandings also define the actor's goals. (See also Jenkins 1981; Nardi 1983; Quinn 1981; Salzman 1981; and White 1985 for complementary views.)

THE RELATION OF TALK TO ACTION AND AWARENESS

Seen as simultaneously interpretative and goal-embodying, cultural knowledge is not productively analyzed into "models of" and "models for," into "representational" and "operational" knowledge. Rather, in our view, underlying cultural models of the same order – and in some cases the same underlying cultural model – are used to perform a variety of different cognitive tasks. Sometimes these cultural models serve to set goals for action, sometimes to plan the attainment of said goals, sometimes to direct the actualization of these goals, sometimes to make sense of the actions and fathom the goals of others, and sometimes to produce verbalizations that may play various parts in all these projects as well as in the subse-

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quent interpretation of what has happened. Complexity in the relationship between what people verbalize about what they do and the execution of other, nonverbal activities is inherent in part because speakers so frequently undertake complex tasks with many goals that may or may not include producing a veridical verbal description of what they are about. Just to pose some possibilities in which verbal accounts are decidedly not veridical to the behavior they purport to describe, people may sometimes be concerned, simultaneously, to manage their affairs in a way advantageous to themselves and to present their goals in a favorable light; or to carry out their plans while hiding their true objectives from onlookers. In producing verbalizations, it is not so much that speakers invoke a different order of conceptualization of the activity about which they speak; it is rather that they invoke those cultural understandings pertinent to performing the linguistic part of the overall task at hand – say, in the task of presenting one's actions in a favorable light, a shared model of the good person for whom one wishes to be taken; or, in the task of concealing one's plans, a shared model of plausible intentions with which to detract attention from one's real motives. Even when people are not wholly concealing or misrepresenting their behavior in what they say about it, they are characteristically called on to construct *post hoc* accounts of that behavior that are comprehensible, plausible, justifiable, and socially acceptable to themselves and other audiences, and that require a certain amount of smoothing, patching, and creative amendment to these ends.

Moreover, the multiple cognitive tasks and subtasks required to meet one's varied goals must often be executed simultaneously; the task demands of nonverbal behavior and those of concurrent verbal behavior may diverge, creating a further complexity in the relationship between the two. A waiter bent on getting a good tip, for instance, might be attempting to provide customers with swift, faultless service, silently anticipating their requests before these can be voiced, while at the same time keeping up a line of niceties and flattery. Even such ordinary daily activities as are involved in doing one's job are multifaceted in nature, often requiring verbal expression and other action at once – sometimes in coordination, other times for independent purposes. Again, this is not to agree to the assumption that there exist, in the mind of the individual performing those different cognitive tasks simultaneously, two orders of cultural model. It is simply to acknowledge that these differing tasks draw on a variety of cultural knowledge available for different purposes at different times. Indeed, talk itself involves such complex skills and understandings. As Sweetser (this volume) points out, even a single utterance may have multiple purposes. Her paper on lies and Kay's on hedges in this volume point up this complexity especially well; talk, as they demonstrate, may use much specialized cultural knowledge about linguistic utterances as well as other cultural knowledge about the nonlinguistic world being talked about.

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It is also a misleading simplification to imply, as Caws has, that one set of models (those guiding behavior, in his formulation) are out of awareness, whereas another set (those said to guide description) are not. It is no doubt true that some knowledge is more habitually, hence more readily, put into words than other knowledge; that some knowledge but not other knowledge is tidily "packaged" in memory, hence easily retrieved for the telling; and that some knowledge is under conscious and voluntary control whereas other pieces are less available for introspection and articulation. Hutchins, in this volume, provides an instance of the latter case: a case in which inferences attributed by the analyst to the speaker in order to account for her interpretation of a Trobriand myth, appear to be out of the awareness of the speaker herself, Hutchins presumes, because they are so painful as to be repressed.

At another extreme, some linguistic outputs, but by no means most, have the "canned" quality of well-worked and well-rehearsed rationalizations or idealizations. Perhaps ethnographers are especially likely to be proffered such accounts. Much of people's cultural knowledge, however, is likely to be somewhere in between these two extremes of accessibility and inaccessibility – as D'Andrade (this volume) found for the American college students he interviewed about the way the mind works. These interviewees could not provide a comprehensive, well-organized view of the entire cultural model of the mind but could certainly describe how it operates when they were asked questions about specific examples. Models such as this one of the mind, which people use in a variety of tasks such as making inferences and solving problems (for a different example, see Jorion 1978), will be brought into awareness and made available to introspection and articulation to varying degrees depending on the precise demands of those tasks for such introspection or articulation.

Equally, knowledge embodied in cultural formulations that Caws might want to call "representational," cannot easily be distinguished from "operational" models with regard to the function he assigns the latter, of guiding behavior. Well-articulated cultural models of the world may also carry "directive force" (a term borrowed from D'Andrade 1984a). An obvious example, provided by White in this book, is that of proverbs. Proverbs promote enactment of the dictums they contain, White argues, precisely because their formulaic and linguistically economical construction signals cultural wisdom. This claim on wisdom is enhanced by present tense verb forms, which give them a timeless, enduring quality, and by their disallowance of exceptions or hedges, which grants them a seeming universal validity.

Cultural models, then, are not to be understood in either–or terms. That various anthropologists have proposed to sort cultural understanding into a kind for thinking and a kind for doing and to associate talking with the former may reflect more about the mind–body duality in our own

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western cultural model of the person than it does about how cultural knowledge is actually organized.

TALK AS ACTION

Were its only claim to be able to account for what people say, the present enterprise would still be an important one. The dismissive materialist stance that cultural models influence little more than talk neglects the pivotal social function of talk itself. As modern sociolinguistics teaches us, talk is one of the most important ways in which people negotiate understanding and accomplish social ends. Of course, discourse can be crucial to the efforts of individuals to create inner meaning for themselves, as illustrated vividly by Hutchins's analysis, in this book, of a Trobriand woman's attempt to comprehend her own experience in the terms of a familiar myth. However, these shared cultural understandings also figure large in the creation of social meaning. In Trobriand litigation, which is the subject of Hutchins's (1980) recent book, spoken claims and counterclaims are consequential acts.

For the college-age women whom Holland and Skinner describe in this volume, labeling another woman's fiancé a *nerd* is not just inconsequential chatter. The illness stories Price collected from poor Ecuadorian city-dwellers (this volume) reveal the efforts to which people will go in order to establish public, legitimated accounts of their behavior (see also Early 1982). Lutz (this volume) details a case in which the future course of kin relations depends on the accepted interpretation of an incident, an interpretation that emerges as the kinspeople involved talk to one another, proposing and negotiating different possible emotional definitions of the event (see also Frake 1977; Young 1981). Other papers in the collection suggest how cultural models undergird such varied kinds of talk as negotiations about the justification for anger, marital disagreements, proverbial and other advice about the solution to everyday problems, and inquiries into suspected lies. Such talk, in turn, influences social relations among people and the subsequent actions they take toward one another. Talk is itself a kind of act, and speech acts can have powerful social consequences.

THE DIRECTIVE FORCE OF CULTURAL MODELS

How do cultural models, whether invoked to persuade another or to order one's own inner experience, motivate behavior? The papers in this collection reveal differential sources of motivational force: One basis is in the authority and expertise with which cultural models may be invested, another in the intrinsic persuasiveness these models themselves have for us.

White's analysis of proverbs, as mentioned, suggests that linguistic forms can grant a certain amount of persuasiveness to knowledge by packaging it as "cultural wisdom." Relatedly, Linde shows how explanatory systems for human behavior that are devised by one group of culturally

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designated experts – academic psychologists – have come to provide us with models for making our own life choices. This is so even though neither ordinary people nor the "expert" psychologists themselves agree on a single explanatory system. Cultural understandings would seem to gain force from their identification with expert knowledge and cultural wisdom, in spite of the availability of alternative, equally expert explanatory systems and contradictory, equally wise-sounding admonitions.

Even though expert validation and cultural authority play a role in the persuasiveness of cultural models, explanatory adequacy in the face of our experience can also be compelling. This effect is perhaps best illustrated in the present collection by Kempton's example of an informant who switches from a "valve" theory to a "feedback" theory of home heating in mid-interview, after realizing that the first of these analogies was contradicted by her memory of how an observable heating device actually worked. Kempton shows elsewhere in his paper how acceptance of one or another of these alternative theories has consequences for thermostat settings. Collins and Gentner's paper, on the other hand, cautions against any conclusion that evidence drawn from real-world analogies is automatically compelling, showing as it does that a thinker such as their Subject *PC*, who relies heavily on analogies to phenomena he has observed or heard about, may shift among these local analogies without checking their consistency – failing to develop a coherent view of evaporation and often giving inaccurate answers.

This tendency of individuals to check their understandings against expert opinion and test them against experience highlights the co-existence of alternative, often conflicting cultural renditions of that world. In the pages of this book, it appears that individuals find it relatively easy to entertain different theories of how the thermostat works and even abandon one theory for another; to combine components of different analogies in their attempted explanations of evaporation; to invoke conflicting proverbial advice for the solution of different problems; and to adopt one or another contradictory folk theory of language depending on which one best fits the linguistic case at hand.

The latter example, of two contradictory folk theories of language, prompts Kay (this volume) to observe that cultural models are not to be thought of as presenting a coherent ontology, a globally consistent whole, in the way that the expert's theory is designed to be. Cultural models are better thought of, in Kay's view, as resources or tools, to be used when suitable and set aside when not. That there is no coherent cultural system of knowledge, only an array of different culturally shared schematizations formulated for the performance of particular cognitive tasks, accounts for the co-existence of the conflicting cultural models encountered in many domains of experience. What is not accounted for, in this view, is the degree of apparent systematicity, best characterized as a thematicity, that does seem to pervade cultural knowledge as a body. In the final section

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of this introduction, we argue that this thematic effect arises from the availability of a small number of very general-purpose cultural models that are repeatedly incorporated into other cultural models developed for special purposes. This account of cultural thematicity does not rule out the kind of contradiction arising among variant cultural models that Kay and other volume authors describe.

Some cultural understandings people have, such as the models of mental processes, emotional states, marital commitment, career choice, gender relations, and kinship obligations described in this book, have a different feel from our models of heating devices. The metaphor of conceptual models as tools to be taken up and put down at will does not fit these other cultural models very well. They are compelling in a way that does not depend on what the experts say and often seems highly resistant to revision in the face of apparent contradiction. Largely tacit and unexamined, the models embed a view of "what is" and "what it means" that seems wholly natural – a matter of course. Alternative views are not even recognized, let alone considered. But more than naturalness, these cultural models grant a seeming necessity to how we ourselves live our lives.

How do ideas gain such force? Partially, the answer lies in what we accept as the typical and normal way of life, judging from the lives of our fellows. When we look around us, we find confirmation for our own lives in the beliefs and actions of other people; cultural models that have force for us as individuals are often the historically dominant models of the time. This is so even though such cultural understandings have certainly undergone historical change, often radical, and certainly have contemporary competitors in any given historical moment.

But the force cultural understandings can have is not simply a matter of people's conformity to the dictums popular in their time. In considering the directive force of cultural meaning systems, D'Andrade (1984a:97) returns to the ideas of Melford Spiro (1961), who argued persuasively that much socially required behavior comes to be inherently motivating for individuals, most often because it directly satisfies some culturally defined need (what Spiro called "intrinsic cultural motivation") or sometimes also because it realizes some strongly held cultural norm or value ("internalized cultural motivation," in Spiro's term). As D'Andrade (ibid.:98) summarizes, "through the process of socialization individuals come to find achieving culturally prescribed goals and following cultural directives to be motivationally satisfying, and to find not achieving culturally prescribed goals and not following cultural directives to be anxiety producing." D'Andrade adapts this argument to a cognitivist view of cultural meaning. He suggests that culturally acquired knowledge need not be purely representational, as the term *cultural knowledge* connotes, but may draw on socialized-in motivation as well. This directive force is "experienced by the person as needs or obligations to do something" (ibid.).

Thus, in D'Andrade's (ibid.:98) example, the cultural meaning of suc-

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