

CULTURE

WHAT IS CULTURE?

The concept of culture is fundamental in anthropology. Well over a century ago, in his book *Primitive Culture*, the British anthropologist Sir Edward Tylor proposed that cultures—systems of human behavior and thought—obey natural laws and therefore can be studied scientifically. Tylor’s definition of culture still offers an overview of the subject matter of anthropology, and it is widely quoted: “Culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor 1871/1958, p. 1). The crucial phrase here is “acquired . . . as a member of society.” Tylor’s definition focuses on attributes that people acquire not through biological inheritance but by growing up in a particular society where they are exposed to a specific cultural tradition. Enculturation is the process by which a child learns his or her culture.

The web of ways of living, behaviors, beliefs, values, customs, aesthetic standards, social institutions and styles of communication which a group of people have developed to maintain its survival in a particular physical and human environment. Its pervasive binding force belongs to a group of people who identify themselves as “Us”. Culture is a non–evaluative term, neither good nor bad