Culture

Culture is defined in many different ways. Every person has a different way of cultivating their definition of culture because they come from different backgrounds and have different experiences. Shelley Zion and Elizabeth Kozleski define culture as, “The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to interact with their world and with one another” (3). This is an excellent definition because it includes the different ways that people are influenced. Zion and Kozleski go on to list a few of the components of culture: language, gender roles, taboos, etc (5-7). The list describes how the different attributes could relate to culture and how society can morph a person’s view on culture. Li and Karakowsky, researchers at Texas A & M defines culture in their article, *Do We See Eye-to Eye? Implications of Cultural Differences for Cross-Cultural Management Research and Practice*. The definition provided by Li and Karakowsky is elaborate, but states that culture is “the cumulative deposit of knowledge,” that this knowledge can be shared by groups of people and some of the symbols are, “knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives” (1). This definition gives the impression that a person’s culture can be changed over time depending on a person’s experiences. This is an excellent point because a person is able to make decisions, but they are always influenced by past situations and beliefs. This can be seen in Noguera’s book, *The Trouble with Black Boys: And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education*. Noguera writes, “Unlike their parents, immigrant Latino youth often find themselves caught between two worlds, neither fully American nor fully part of their parents’ country” (75). This example gives proof that culture can be changed depending on one’s current situation. Immigrant students must balance the culture that they know and the new one they experience. This will mold each student’s culture differently. Each of these definitions acknowledge the idea that culture shifts as a person gains new experiences, but is still influenced by family, past experiences, and beliefs.

I believe that the definition of culture is the combination of beliefs, heritage, and experiences that affect a person’s view of the world and how they interact with other people. I think it is important to keep in mind the flowing nature of a person’s culture. It can change depending on the situations occurring and the people around them. I have personally experienced this since arriving at college 3 years ago. The people that attend Butler University are different than the types of people that went to my high school. I realize that the people around me change the way I interact with people and how I think about different situations. My past has always shaped how I viewed things, mostly because my family was very influential in my life decisions. Li and Karakowsky wrote, “Heroes are persons, past or present, real or fictitious, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture. They also serve as models for behavior” (1). As I have aged I have been able to pick out my own role models and that has made a difference on my culture. My role models are different from those of my parents. When defining culture it is important to keep in mind the whole person. That includes the past, inherited beliefs, and the current situation.
References

