Knowl. Org. 42(2015)No.5
W.-C. Lee. Culture and Classification

303

concerning representation and prioritization. The influence between culture and classification schemes is mutual. Classification schemes and subject description standards like *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (*LCSH*) can reinforce or marginalize culture(s) by including or excluding cultural perspectives. Olson (2000) examines *LCSH*, and points out that *LCSH* is based on U.S. centered mainstream perspectives, which may not represent the whole of lived experience. In addition, both Olson (2000) and Mai (2013) point out the underlying values of warrants, and the myth of pursuing neutral and universal classification scheme and subject description. In the multi-cultural world, the exclusion of non-mainstream perspectives is an ethical challenge. Olson (2000) suggests that we accommodate the dynamic changes of both content and relationships of subjects to standards like *LCSH*. Mai (2013) advocates for developing domain/practice based ethical classifications, which value culture and context. This complements Furner's (2007) critical race theory analysis of the *DDC*. By allowing subject description changes to reflect cultural differences, people who share different cultures can experience less of a sense-making gap, and librarians can provide more ethical and equitable access to information.

2.0 Culture in Knowledge Organization and Anthropology

Previous research has addressed cultural issues in KO, and emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive knowledge organization (Tennis 2013). It is critical to clarify how culture is defined in the literature. We review the KO literature and the literature of anthropology to gain a deeper understanding of how scholars view the concept of culture. The review is organized into different families of definitions. We consider culture as 1) nationality or geographic region, 2) context, 3) collective phenomenon, and 4) human-made part of human environment.

As mentioned, López-Huertas (2008; 2013) defines culture along national or geographical boundaries. Similarly, Hofstede (1994) and Steinwachs (1999) talk about national culture. National culture is considered one layer of culture which people often refer to when conducting intercultural comparisons, or promoting cooperation among nations. Both Steinwachs and Olson (2000) finds national culture disputable in that national borders do not always correspond to boundaries of societies. However, distinguishing culture by nationality is often considered the easier, and sometimes the only feasible way for data collection.

Taheri et al. (2014) treat culture as context. In their work, they refer to Islamic culture and Iranian culture, and claim that culture influences attitudes and concepts. Geertz (1973) defines culture as context as well. It is a system of symbols, in which symbols can be thickly described. As a point of criticism, Everett (2012) thinks Geertz's definition overlooks the dynamic and evolving nature of culture.

Some treat culture as collective phenomenon. This family of definition has two core tenets: 1) it is assumed that individuals learn culture from other members of the same group, and 2) culture distinguishes group members from non-members. Some authors explicitly emphasize the two tenets in their definitions. Beyond that, authors disagree. Kluckhohn (1944), Tylor (1958), and Hofstede (1994) think culture is civilization. They approach culture from a progressive perspective, and view culture as a scale with civilized and ignorant as extremes. Goodenough (1971) regards culture as rules, guides, and expectations of behaviors that reside in people's minds, while Steinwachs (1999) sees culture as predisposition and judgment of behavior.

Menou (1982) defines culture as the human-made part of human environment. He distinguishes two types of culture: objective/material culture and subjective/non-material culture. Subjective/non-material culture consists of "code of signs and meanings which shapes the individual and social perception of the universe" (Menou 1982, 122). It influences people's cognition. Menou lists some traits of subjective/non-material culture: values, stereotypes, etc. Objective/material culture is further divided into artifacts and observable patterns of human activity. Some examples of artifacts include settlements and housing, or language. Menou also provides examples of observable patterns of activity, which include family structure and norms. The list seems to imply that observable patterns of activity are the underlying infrastructures with different levels of influence and restriction on members of the society. Menou's definition covers some core components of culture which other scholars integrate to their definitions (Hofstede 1994). One of Kluckhohn's definitions claims that culture is "that part of the environment that is the creation of man," (Kluckhohn 1944, 17) which comports with Menou's definition.

3.0 Manifestations and Elements of Culture

We have looked at different families of definitions of culture. It is clear that culture is multifaceted. Like Geertz (1973) says, while we want to study culture, we can only study what is observed and described. In order to study culture, scholars tend to identify and examine manifestations of culture, which are not only easy to observe, but indeed the only thing we can observe (Goodenough 1971; Kluckhohn 1944). These observations, and our interpretations of them, allow us to study the proxies for culture, and thereby develop and compare definitions, models, and theories. Manifestations are key to this work. The following section will introduce and compare the manifestations as well as the elements (i.e., proposed sub-