
“Politicization of Culture”

By Susan Wrights’

1) What does Susan Wright mean by what she calls “old meanings of culture”? According to Wright, what are the specific problems with these “old meanings of culture”? What does she mean when she says – “Although anthropologists have developed new ways of thinking about ‘culture,’ these ‘old ideas of culture’ have percolated out from academic discourse and...are still in widespread use in public parlance”? What examples does Susan Wright provide of this “widespread use in public parlance”?

- Old and new with respect to common anthropological understandings of meaning, and understandings of culture others have gotten from anthropology
- Not an evolutionary endpoint
- Old meanings of culture anthropologists used to use (Malinowski)
- New meanings of culture (tale of 2 pregnancies)
- Wright means by “old meanings” of culture- culture is bounded, inside or outside of culture, no border crossers, defined characteristics:
 - **The unchanging:** old functionalist idea, doesn’t change over time, it’s a coherent system, self-reproducing system
 - **underlined system of shared meanings:** born into it
- there are a lot of people who endorse some view of culture

2) What does Susan Wright mean by what she calls “new meanings of culture”? How, specifically, are these “new meanings” different from the “old meanings”? Is Susan Wright arguing here that the “old meanings of culture” are of no use to Anthropology? So is Susan Wright saying that Anthropologists today support the “new meanings of culture” while politicians, policy-makers, managers, activists and the public still support the “old meanings of culture”? Is she saying that Anthropologists are “right” and the politicians, policy-makers, managers, activists and the public are all “wrong” about “culture”?

- More dynamic, its changing, not just a set area
- **Why is culture always changing?:** organization of society itself, reality of any society
- No society that isn’t uniformed
- Contests

3) According to Susan Wright, what is the difference between “authentic culture” and “ideology”? What does she mean by “hegemonic ideology” and how, does she argue, do “hegemonic ideologies” become established?

- Idealology: a world view, a set of ideas and beliefs that characterize people’s opinions of the world, can be changed and transformed

- Hegemonic idealogy: can't change it all because we can't imagine an alternative, old meaning of culture can be an hegemonic idealogy

4) What specific examples does Wright discuss to show the “new idea of culture” as a “contested process of meaning-making”? How is this different from “old meanings of culture”?

5) What does “cultural racism” mean and how is this different from “racism”? How does this specific case-study in Wright’s article help us understand the difference between “old meanings of culture” and “new meanings of culture”?

- **Racism:** an idealogy, belief the world is divided into groups that are different because they are genetically different as a group, ex: Asians are better at science and math: based on the assumption that it's in their genes
- Why not just racism?

6) What does “corporate culture” mean? How does “corporate culture” get defined and understood as an example of “old meanings of culture”? How does “corporate culture” get defined and understood as an example of “new meanings of culture”? Why does Wright believe this distinction between “corporate-culture-as-old-meaning-of-culture” and “corporate-culture-as-new-meaning-of-culture” is important?

7) How does the story of the Kayapo Indians of Brazil demonstrate the critical differences between “old meanings of culture” and “new meanings of culture”? How does this story help us understand processes of cultural change for the Kayapo Indians? How does this story help us understand Susan Wright’s explanations of the differences between “culture” and “ideology” and the establishment of “hegemonic ideologies”?

- Doesn't mean Malinowski was wrong

Culture and development