

Culture as A Dynamic Product of Socially and Historically Situated Discourse Communities: Examples and Case Studies

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Abstract

The aims of this study are to explore the relationship between culture and discourse communities. Qualitative research is used for this study as it provides a deep understanding of the social and historical contexts in which culture is produced, reproduced, and reconstructed. Using historical analysis, globalization, and subcultures, the paper discusses the revolutionary character of culture and how historical conditions as well as social interactions collectively give rise to cultural identities. Through the use of diverse case studies, such as global youth culture, African American culture in America, and post-colonial cultural changes, this essay outlines the role of discourse communities in the creation of culture. The findings show that culture is not a fixed product but rather a dynamic entity constantly evolving through the interactions of people and communities in given historical and social contexts.

Keywords: culture, discourse, discourse communities, historical context, social context

1. Introduction

Culture is an ever-evolving product of socially and historically located discourse communities that take shape through interaction, language, and symbols used by the community members. It is not static, but continuously changes in response to social, historical, and global conditions. As Rutherford (2018) stated, culture is now more frequently understood as something dynamic and ever-changing, conditioned by the social and historical settings in which it is created. Discourse communities are at the heart of this process, as they are the groups through which cultural meanings are negotiated, shared, and transmitted. "Discourse communities, as defined by Hu and Liu (2018) are groups of individuals who share similar communicative intentions, practices, and linguistic norms. They are the sites where culture is constructed, reconstructed, and transformed. This framework explains culture as a byproduct of socially and historically located discourse communities, enabling an understanding of how culture is built and rebuilt over time. Previous research works have mostly focused on individual studies of culture and discourse communities, leaving a gap in understanding their broader relationship. This paper aims to fill that gap by discussing how culture is a product of socially and historically located discourse communities. It will explore how the processes of culture production and transmission must be understood, the role played by discourse communities in negotiating cultural meanings, and how language, social interactions, and historical processes construct culture using cases and examples.

2. Theoretical Framework

In an effort to examine comprehensively how socially and historically located discourse communities influence culture, one must initially be familiar with the primary notions of culture and discourse communities. These notions shall form the foundation for analysis in subsequent sections.

2.1 Culture

Culture is also defined as the common values, beliefs, traditions, practices, and social norms of a specific people (Frese, 2015). Culture is not only a social interaction product and a medium whereby social relations are constructed and reproduced but also one that is changing and dynamic rather than fixed and static. Culture is not frozen in time but is a constantly evolving product of its social and historical context. As Rodríguez-Lluesma (2018) aptly describes, culture is the result of the intricate interaction between historical, social, political, and economic

forces. This understanding defies the conventional view of culture as that which is passed down through generations in an unaltered static form.

Language is one of the most prominent aspects making culture dynamic. Language is not only a means of communication but also an instrument through which cultural meaning is created and transmitted (Trager et al., 1957). People use language to communicate values, norms, and beliefs and hence create and recreate cultural identity. This cultural transmission, therefore, is not passive but one that calls for negotiation, adaptation, and transformation as people and groups keep reinterpreting and remaking their cultural practice in response to changing social and historical conditions.

This cultural fluidity also manifests itself in the form of emergence of subcultures and transnational cultural movements. Globalization has done its part in developing globalization in the arena of cultural practice and thought beyond the boundaries, producing hybrid practices and culture forms (Conner, 2014). These international forces are normally transformed and adapted locally, giving rise to new cultural forms that accommodate the specific histories and social contexts of the location in which they appear (Tolgfors & Barker, 2021). Global diffusion of hip-hop culture, for instance, has given rise to locally distinct styles of hip-hop music and dance in as geographically diverse countries as Brazil, Japan, and South Africa (Brooks & Conroy, 2010). These transnational cultural forms are at once the internationalization of culture and the local contexts in which they are being produced.

In addition to globalization, social movements and historical events also have a profound impact on culture. Historical events such as wars, revolutions, and colonization cause radical shifts in culture. The cultural changes introduced in post-apartheid South Africa were predominantly shaped by the experience of racial segregation and rebuilding a less discriminatory society (Negru, 2010). In addition, the American Civil Rights Movement played a central role in the re-definition of African American culture, in creating new forms of expression, culturally, such as jazz, soul music, and hip-hop (Johnson & Carter, 2019).

2.2 Discourse Communities

Discourse communities play an important role in the understanding of how culture is constructed and transmitted within a society. Discourse communities, as understood by Devitt (2015), are social groups of people who are united in that they possess some common set of communicative practices, aims, and values, which allow the group to function. It is the mutual agreement of members within a discourse community to specific communicative practices and social norms governing their interaction which unites members of a discourse community. These conventions and norms not only influence how members talk, but also establish means by which culture is negotiated, understood, and reformed. The contribution of discourse communities to construct culture is great, as they are the locations where culture is conveyed, strengthened, and, in many instances, reformed.

Discourse communities function on the principle of shared language and symbols. Language is not just a system of communication but is a key mechanism by which members of a community negotiate, convey, and express cultural meanings, norms, and values (Aljarelah, 2024). Through interaction of members of a discourse community, language is employed to construct its members' identity, to communicate shared experience, and to transmit cultural tradition. These language interactions are at the core of building the group's cultural context. For instance, in academic discursive communities, there are some terminological conventions and writing norms that follow to facilitate communication and develop mutual knowledge. Similarly, social or political discourse communities possess languages that reflect goals and values defining what the group stands for and where it sees itself in the future.

By participating in discourse communities, individuals are socialized into the cultural practices and norms of their group. It is not simply a question of transmitting knowledge but also of negotiating and renegotiating cultural meaning (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). As members interact, they are constantly adjusting their sense of common values, building and rebuilding their collective identity. This interaction renders the culture of discourse communities dynamic, as opposed to static, because the members are constantly influencing and redefining the cultural practices of the community (Kim et al., 2022). For instance, in a music subculture, like punk or hip-hop, the members will debate the direction of the movement, disagreeing on what the essential values of the movement are and how the values need to be represented. Through these interactions and discussions, the culture changes as a response to internal changes and external pressures.

This dynamic nature of discourse communities also implies that the cultural routines of such discourse communities are always open to modification. With the influx of new members and with an evolving world and society, discourse communities evolve with new environments (Kim & Vorobel, 2015). For instance, evolution of computer-mediated communication has revolutionized many discourse communities, i.e., internet world, where practice and vocabulary keep changing day by day with technological advancements and the link offered by the

internet to the whole world. Online communities like Reddit, Twitter, or YouTube are illustrations of how discourse communities are formed upon the arrival of technological innovation (Rohde et al., 2023). Discourse communities here are built around shared ends and purposes, and how language functions on such websites is reflective of worldwide forces and localised cultural milieux.

Another important core of discourse communities is that they can sustain and preserve cultural practices and values in the long term (Loach et al., 2016). Although discourse communities continue to evolve, they also contribute to continuity by transmitting cultural traditions and knowledge. For instance, within customary craft societies, skills for craftsmanship passed across generations are done within a discourse community to pass on the culture while progressing along with innovations of materials or means. Discourse communities thus form custodians and initiators of innovation by treading carefully between culture continuation and development.

Discourse communities thus find themselves at the focal point of why and how culture is formed and reformed in the process of time. In their shared communicative routines and shared goals which constitute them, such communities represent a rich fertile ground where cultural meanings are negotiated, transmitted, and repeatedly redefined (Nguyen, 2024). Continuous interaction between such communities ensures that culture remains always a dynamic process that keeps on changing and adapting to internal as well as external conditions defining collective values and identity.

3. Methodology

The present paper adopts a qualitative research paradigm to explore the relationship between culture and discourse communities. Qualitative research is particularly suited for this study as it provides a deep understanding of the social and historical contexts in which culture is produced, reproduced, and re-staged. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the social and linguistic practices that shape cultural meaning. Unlike quantitative approaches, which primarily focus on numerical data, qualitative research captures the richness of cultural processes, social interaction, and the dynamic nature of culture in its complexity (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). In foregrounding the subjective experiences, social practices, and cultural meanings, qualitative research best captures how culture is negotiated, transmitted, and transformed in discourse communities.

However, to differentiate this study from existing literature and move beyond a simple synthesis of prior research, this work introduces a novel analytical framework and proposes the collection of primary data to fill the identified research gap

3.1 Novel Analytical Framework

This study proposes a framework that goes beyond synthesizing prior studies by focusing on the intricate interplay of social, historical, and linguistic contexts within specific discourse communities. This framework will analyze how historical events (e.g., the Civil Rights Movement) influence the language and communication practices of a community (e.g., African Americans), thereby shaping their cultural identity. Furthermore, the framework extends the traditional definition of discourse communities to include "multidiscourse communities," exploring how individuals simultaneously participate in multiple communities (e.g., an online hip-hop subculture and a traditional craft society), and how these interactions lead to the creation of hybrid cultural forms

3.2 Primary Data Collection

In-depth Interviews: We will conduct semi-structured interviews with members of selected discourse communities to gather firsthand accounts of their experiences. Questions will focus on how historical and social events have impacted their community, the role of language (e.g., slang, memes) in shaping identity, and their perceptions of cultural change over time.

Surveys: A survey will be designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from a larger sample of community members. This will help identify broader trends and supplement the in-depth interview findings.

Content Analysis: We will analyze the content created within digital discourse communities (e.g., Reddit threads, Twitter discussions) to observe how cultural narratives and practices evolve in real time. This approach allows for a dynamic view of culture in the modern, interconnected world.

Như vậy việc kết hợp khuôn khổ phân tích mới với dữ liệu chính mới để vượt ra ngoài việc chỉ tổng hợp tài liệu hiện có là một hướng đi rất tốt và hợp lý. Nó thể hiện rằng nghiên cứu này không chỉ là một bài tổng hợp lý thuyết mà còn đóng góp thực tiễn, cung cấp bằng chứng cụ thể về cách văn hóa được hình thành và thay đổi trong các cộng đồng diễn ngôn. Cách tiếp cận này giúp lấp đầy khoảng trống nghiên cứu đã được xác định trước đó

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Case Studies and Theoretical Application

The African American culture case study, for example, examines how discourse communities have shaped the evolution of such cultural forms as music, language, and social practices. In this community, the shared history of slavery, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement has significantly influenced the shared identity among African Americans. These identity shifts are not fixed but are constantly reconfigured through ongoing social interaction within the community (Santiago, 2020). The strategy also takes into account the influence of globalization and how much African American culture is engaged in and influences global cultural trends, illustrating the fluidity of discourse communities.

Illustrative Example: Hip-Hop Music:

Early hip-hop from the 1970s-80s served as a voice for marginalized urban communities, with lyrics like those in "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five depicting struggles and acting as a form of social commentary and resistance. The global spread of hip-hop illustrates how a culturally specific discourse community can influence global trends. For instance, Brazilian hip-hop artists adapt the genre to discuss local issues like life in favelas and police brutality, merging the global form with local historical and social contexts.

A second case study looks at the subcultures of young people, for example, punk or hip-hop, and how discourse communities offer a context for negotiating the meaning of culture in social, economic, and political situations. Youth subcultures are, by definition, anti-mainstream values and tend to act as a medium for expressing resistance to the mainstream cultural code. Youth subcultures are continually evolving, new forms of identity and expression emerging continuously through communicative practice and participants' goals.

Illustrative Example: Social Media Posts:

Within online communities, memes serve as a primary form of communication and cultural negotiation. A meme related to a political event can be shared and adapted by different groups, with each adding a layer of meaning that reflects its own values, demonstrating how a shared artifact can be repurposed to construct a unique, evolving cultural identity. Trends on Twitter and TikTok are prime examples of how communicative practices can quickly shape cultural norms and language. A specific phrase or dance can become a shared symbol of identity for a community, illustrating the dynamic and fluid nature of culture.

Additionally, methodology involves theoretical readings on discourse communities and culture based on the works of authors that established the field. Kim and Vorobel (2015) offers an initial perspective of discourse communities with emphasis on how discourse communities utilize language in order to facilitate shared communicative ends. Johnson and Carter (2019) offers insight into the perspective that culture is an active and changing phenomenon that is molded by history, sociality, and politics. Conner (2014) gives us the theory of hybridity and cultural negotiation, where the way culture is always re-fashioned by the conflict between local and global forces is brought out. These theories are applied to the case studies to form a concrete foundation for explaining how culture is constructed and communicated within discourse communities.

4.2 Culture as the Product of Socially and Historically Situated Discourse Communities

Culture, as a matter of course, is a dynamic idea in a state of continuous construction by social interaction within discourse communities. These are the places wherein humans gather and share the same values, practices, and beliefs and wherein the cultural identity of the group is constituted, negotiated, and revised. Through ongoing interaction, people work through the process of cultural negotiation, negotiating and reaffirming their common meanings to fit their experiences and new social and historical situations they face (Negru, 2010). Discourse communities afford the social space in which cultural identities are made and remade, so that members may appropriate the collective values of the group and grasp the social and historical context that has resulted in the beliefs and practice. Members continue to shape culture through such involvement in an ongoing process.

Cultural identities in discourse communities are not fixed but are constantly being negotiated through social interaction. Cultures formed in these communities are informed by the shared histories, experiences, and values that make up the community. For example, African American culture, being so strongly infused with the history of slavery, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement, is constantly being negotiated by the social forces of the community (Rodríguez-Lluesma, 2018). Common identity in African American communities manifests in cultural expression like music, language, rituals, and collective celebrations with historic significance. African American Vernacular English (AAVE), for instance, is not merely a way of speaking, it is a marker of identity and community coherence. African Americans express their specific challenges, strength, and empowerment in language and music but another confirmation of their shared cultural identity.

Cultural forms like gospel music, blues, jazz, and hip-hop represent the African American experience, historical suffering and triumph (Rankine, 2004). These musical forms, as much as they have their origins in Africa, also borrow elements of European music culture and thereby become hybridized forms that mark the meeting point of African American culture with other places. The ongoing evolution of these forms of music is evidence of the way in which discourse communities interpret and reassert culture, continually negotiating meaning and significance for cultural symbols and practice.

Cross-cultural interactions, particularly in times of globalization, also play their part in shaping the cultural identity of discourse communities (Safronova & Michshenko, 2023). In today's networked world, cultures are no longer localized in discrete geographic spaces. Instead, culture exchange is common practice, thus leading to blends of traditions, ideas, and practices from cultures. This cross-cultural process of cultural hybridity can be viewed in the global popularity of K-pop (Korean pop). K-pop, its roots planted firmly in South Korea, borrowed enormously from Western popular music, the American and the European, but has also amalgamated characteristically Korean content like traditional musical instruments, the Korean modes of dance, and Korean lyrics (Krishna, 2022). As K-pop gained popularity on a global front, it then became an international cultural phenomenon, an extension of the modern reality of hyphenated identity. This intersection of local and global forces is characteristic of the dynamics of culture in discourse communities. It shows how culture continuously gets reworked by global dynamics, forming new structures of culture that are based on local cultures but influenced by global forces (Jin, 2015).

In addition, the emergence of digital and online discourse communities has also enabled the swift evolution of culture. YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter have enabled the formation of new subcultures and the dissemination of alternative culture that would otherwise not be seen using traditional media. These virtual sites are international gathering places where people from different cultures can share information, express themselves, and subvert mainstream cultural discourses. These activities have given rise to new cultural phenomena such as meme culture, internet activism, and spreading new genres of music. The history of such electronic subcultures also serves to further reinforce the point that culture is not an absolute or static entity but instead a constant working product of social negotiation and interaction between discourse communities.

Globalization has significantly enhanced the mobility of culture through advancements in information technology, communication, and social media. As a result, discourse communities are no longer confined to geographical boundaries but have expanded on a global scale, facilitating cultural hybridization and the emergence of new identities. For instance, while hip-hop has retained its core characteristics, it has also undergone localization in various countries, such as Japan and South Africa, where it integrates indigenous cultural elements to create distinct styles.

However, globalization also presents challenges to the preservation of traditional cultural values. The widespread adoption of English as a global lingua franca within academic and professional discourse communities has led to the diminished role of many local languages. Additionally, the pervasive influence of Western culture through media consumption may contribute to cultural homogenization, potentially overshadowing indigenous traditions. Therefore, culture within discourse communities is not merely a product of historical developments but is also profoundly shaped by contemporary global dynamics.

4.3 Culture as a Historically Situated Product

Culture is closely determined by what has happened in the past and by the social environments of these occurrences. Those occurrences that determine the history of a society—e.g., revolutions, wars, social movements, and eras of social crisis—are potent agents for reshaping cultural transformation. More specifically, those events in the past which initiate wholesale alterations of power relationships among human populations, such as the decline of colonialism or the demise of apartheid, may be the cause of radical cultural change. The fall of apartheid in South Africa, for instance, spurred extensive-scale cultural change as the nation dealt with the aftermath of race separation and endeavored to remake its national identity within post-apartheid society (Loach et al., 2016). Here, the deconstruction of apartheid did not only result in a political or legal shift but also resulted in a redefinition of South Africa's cultural identity, such as the rediscovery and enhancement of traditional African customs, languages, and arts that were kept under suppression during apartheid.

In South Africa, the recapture of identity was inextricably bound up with overall political transformation away from apartheid toward democracy. Social movements and political leaders like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu helped South Africa interweave a more inclusive narrative of culture one that welcomed diversity among its peoples (Harding, 2021). Music, dance, painting, and literature were also at the forefront of rebuilding cultural identity since they offered spaces for social subjects to reclaim culture and interact with the nation's traumatized past. Furthermore, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was instituted to deal with the apartheid

atrocities, offered a space for communal recovery in which cultural practice and articulations of identity were used as social reconciliation tools.

Likewise in America, the Civil Rights Movement provided the driving force for changing the culture (Pruitt, 2020). African Americans drew on music, literature, artwork, and politics to claim rights and call for equal treatment. Soul music's breakout, as well as that of jazz and African American intellectuals like James Baldwin and Toni Morrison, was an enormous cultural response to institutionally based racial biases that for so long dominated the nation. These cultural works, products of the Civil Rights Movement, assisted in redefining African American identity, taking it from that of marginalization to one of empowerment. The African American fight for justice and equality has been tied inexorably to cultural production, since art became a resistance form and means through which to define the reality of inequality and racism (Hall, 2005).

Language is a necessary ingredient in society's cultural history, as not only does it mirror but also affects the significance of events within culture. African American Vernacular English (AAVE), for instance, developed over time inflected by United States slavery history, segregation, and African diaspora. As Aryani (2020) puts it, AAVE is a language system forged out of African Americans' experience with inputs from African languages, English, and experience with slavery as culture. The language and language use have served both as a means of social communication and as a vehicle of cultural resistance. Through time, AAVE evolved into a defining element of African American culture and identity and an influence on literature, music, and popular culture.

Preservation and transformation of culture are also at the center of its historical development. Because culture is always in the process of evolving in accordance with changing social conditions, most cultural beliefs and practices are preserved through rituals, ceremonies, and other modes of cultural transmission. These rituals are identity signifiers, giving continuity in the context of social change. However, such preserved practice is not static; it is continually re-fashioned and re-configured to meet new social, political, and economic circumstances. So, therefore, African American church worship, long a domain of religious and social convergence, has added incrementally the styles of modern music and social activism to mainstream religious practice (Giddens, 1991).

4.4 Examples and Case Studies

Case studies reveal the rich insights of how historically and socially situated discourse communities constitute culture. One case study is the contribution language makes to forming national identity in post-colonial India. When India gained independence from Britain in 1947, the state attempted to unify India's many various linguistic and cultural communities. One of the key ways in which this was done was with the promotion of Hindi as a national language. The policy sought to promote national integration as much as it hoped to forge an identified common cultural base. This promotion of Hindi, however, created debate over the significance of regional languages such as Tamil and Bengali for local cultural preservation. The language policy then became a site of cultural negotiation in which diverse discourse communities bargained over the significance of safeguarding regional cultures and languages, as well as accepting the integrative power of a national language (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014).

The second case study looks at the globalization of hip-hop culture around the world and how it has been remixed and reinterpreted everywhere. Hip-hop, for example, in Brazil has merged with indigenous music styles like samba and bossa nova to produce a distinctly Brazilian version of hip-hop combining international influences with local cultural roots. Brazilian hip-hop musicians use the genre as a means of commenting on poverty, inequality, and social injustice, taking cues from the struggles of the marginalized communities in Brazil. This fusion of international and local aspects of culture serves to identify the hybridity of culture and also brings to the fore the work of discourse communities to create cultural practices (Sajjani, 2015).

In South Africa, hip-hop is an effective medium of expression for youth who are struggling with the legacy of apartheid and post-apartheid life. South African hip-hop artists speak about racism, poverty, and inequality in music as a form of resistance and empowerment. In this case, hip-hop culture is used as a cultural negotiating tool, offering a space for young people to communicate their shared identity and call for social change (Peoples, 2007).

Last but not least, the United States Civil Rights Movement is another iconic instance of how culture is informed by social conditions and historical circumstances. The movement also saw new modes of African American cultural expression in the genres of jazz, soul music, and hip-hop, which became potent vehicles of conveying the reality of African Americans in a divided society. The cultural influence of the Civil Rights Movement extended beyond music and art to other areas like literature, drama, and culture at large. Jazz, for instance, became an art form of expression that not only depicted the life of African Americans but also as a reaction to the racial injustices of the era (Safronova & Michshenko, 2023).

5. Conclusion

Culture is the result of socially and historically located discourse communities. It is constructed, transmitted, and remade by social negotiation and interaction within these communities. Language, identity, and history are essential to how culture develops over time. From the case studies, it can be observed that culture is neither static nor static but is rewritten over and over again in response to the social and historical context in which it exists. Discourse communities provide the sites where these cultural negotiations occur, in which culture can continue to move and in which culture can reflect on the changing needs and experiences of its members. One limitation of this study is that it primarily focuses on case studies from Western and urban contexts. Future research could explore how rural or indigenous discourse communities negotiate cultural identities in different historical and social contexts. Besides, future research could examine how digital discourse communities, such as social media networks, influence the rapid evolution of cultural practices and identity formation in a globally interconnected world.

This study primarily focuses on discourse communities in Western and urban contexts. Therefore, future research could expand the scope by exploring how rural or indigenous discourse communities negotiate their cultural identities. It is important to examine how intangible cultural traditions, such as folk art or oral storytelling, evolve in response to the impacts of urbanization and migration. Additionally, an analysis of digital discourse communities, such as social media networks, would help us better understand the speed and nature of cultural evolution in a globally interconnected world.

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