The American Folk Model of the Mind

A cultural model is...
A cognitive schema that is intersubjectively shared by a social group.

A cognitive schema typically consists of a small number of conceptual objects and their relations to each other.

The “Buying” Schema (and cultural model)

- **Parts:**
  - Purchaser, seller, merchandise, price, sale, money.
- **Relations:**
  - Assumed sequences of events.
    - Seller communicates intention to sell
    - Buyer makes offer
    - Buyer gives money to seller
    - Seller gives merchandise to buyer

Hierarchical Organization of schemas

- Reciprocity
  - Economic exchange
    - Buying Goods for money
    - Bartering Goods for goods
  - Social Exchange
    - Will work for Food
    - Buy lunch with cash
    - Buy a car with financing
    - Buy a house with Financing and escrow

Intersubjective Sharing

- Everybody in the group knows the schema
- And everybody knows that everyone knows the schema
- And everybody knows that everyone knows that everyone knows the schema.

Using schemas to understand the world

- **Instantiation** of the schema means to connect specific things and events to the conceptual elements (slots or roles) in the schema.
- The general “buying” schema has these roles
  - Purchaser, seller, merchandise, price, sale, money and events linking these.
- An instantiation of the “buying” schema assigns particular people and events to the parts of the schema.
- E.G., John bought a hat at the bookstore.
Your sense of reality is grounded in cultural schemas

• When events are interpreted using cultural models (intersubjectively shared cognitive schemas) the interpretations are treated as if they are obvious facts about the world.

No need to be explicit about everything

• When a schema is intersubjectively shared, a partial instantiation will trigger “filling in” by listeners.

• In a typical discourse, you will find that a single cultural model may be partially instantiated with one set of elements, then partially instantiated with a different set of elements. Each time, the listener is expected to fill in the missing parts.

Outline of D’Andrade’s exposition of the folk model of the mind

• Identify the core parts and relations
  – Use the details of our language and the writing of philosophers.
• Check the model by doing focused interviews.
• Compare the current folk model to historical models (via novels and other writing).
• Compare the folk model to scientific models: academic psychology and psychoanalysis.
• Compare the American folk model to Ifaluk folk model.

The core model

Is this model true?

• Compared to what?
  • It’s different from academic psychology, which
    – puts more emphasis on physical states
    – different notion of motivation
  • Different from psychoanalysis, which
    – puts emphasis on unconscious mental states and processes
  • Different from Ifaluk, which
    – puts more emphasis on emotion and less distinction of emotion/thought
    – mind in the gut, not the head
    – instruction drives behavior

The model of internal states mirrors speech act categories

• Speech Act Category
  • Representatives
    – I state
  • Directives
    – I order
  • Commissives
    – I promise
  • Expressives
    – I apologize

• Mental Process
  • Thoughts
    – I think, believe
  • Wishes
    – I want, need...
  • Intentions
    – I aim to, plan to
  • Feelings
    – I feel sorry, proud
• The folk model of the mind is a key resource in virtually all meaningful accounts of human behavior.
• Look for it. It might appear in an interview about almost ANYTHING.