

What is Culture: A Critical Review of the Literature

Joseph Nyemah

Economic Strategies and Initiatives Division, Department of Economic Development,
Government of Nova Scotia

This is a literature review critically examining theoretical discussions that aim to define culture. After thoroughly dissecting the contributions of some notable earlier and contemporary social theorists to the conceptualization and definition of culture, the paper argues that the task of defining culture is not only inclusive, but also flawed with exclusivity and political biases. This is partly, but significantly so, because the concept is fluid and ubiquitous. Defining culture is infused with the social, economic, political and environmental biases of the individual for whom a definition is attributed. Culture is complex, it evolves and manifested in situations, beliefs, artifacts and language. It is indeed, everything to everyone.