

Taken from: **The Blank Slate** by Stephen Pinker. Viking Penguin, 2002 - Appendix

APPENDIX

Donald E. Brown's List of Human Universals

THIS LIST, COMPILED in 1989 and published in 1991, consists primarily of "surface" universals

of behavior and overt language noted by ethnographers. It does not list deeper universals of mental structure that are revealed by theory and experiments.

It also omits near-universals (traits that most, but not all, cultures show) and conditional universals ("If a culture has trait A, it always has trait B").

A list of items added since 1989 is provided at the end. For discussion and references, see Brown's Human Universals (1991) and his entry for "Human Universals" in The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences (Wilson & Keil, 1999).

abstraction in speech and thought

actions under self- control distinguished from those not under control

aesthetics

affection expressed and felt

age grades

age statuses

age terms

ambivalence

anthropomorphilation antonyms

baby talk

belief in supernatural/ religion

beliefs, false

beliefs about death

beliefs about disease

beliefs about fortune and misfortune

binary cognitive distinctions

biological mother and social mother normally the same person

black (color term)

body adornment

childbirth customs

childcare

childhood fears

childhood fear of loud noises

childhood fear of strangers

choice making (choosing alternatives)

classification of age
classification of behavioral propensities
classification of body parts
classification of colors
classification of fauna
classification of flora
classification of inner states
classification of kin
classification of sex
classification of space
classification of tools
classification of weather conditions
coalitions
collective identities
conflict
conflict, consultation
conflict, means of dealing with
conflict, mediation of
conjectural reasoning
containers
continua (ordering as cognitive pattern)
contrasting marked and nonmarked sememes (meaningful elements in language)
cooking
cooperation
cooperative labor
copulation normally conducted in privacy
corporate (perpetual) statuses
coyness display
crying
cultural variability
culture
culture/nature distinction
customary greetings
daily routines
dance
death rituals
decision making
decision making, collective
directions, giving of
discrepancies between speech, thought, action

dispersed groups
distinguishing between right and wrong
diurnality
divination
division of labour
division of labour, by age
division of labour, by sex
dreams
dream interpretation
economic inequalities
economic inequalities, conscious of
emotions
empathy
entification (treating patterns and relations as things)
environment, adjustments to
envy
envy, means of coping with
ethnocentrism
etiquette
explanation
face, word for
facial communication
facial expression for anger, contempt, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise
facial expressions masking/modifying
family or household
father and mother, separate kin terms for
fears
fears, ability to overcome
feasting
females do more direct childcare
figurative speech
fire
folklore
food preferences
food sharing
future, attempts to predict
generosity admired
gestures
gift giving
good and bad distinguished

gossip
government
group living
grammar
groups that are not based on family
hairstyles
hand, word for
healing the sick (or attempting to)
hospitality
hygiene
identity, collective
incest between mother/son unthinkable
ingroup distinguished from outgroup
in-group, biases in favor of, nepotism
inheritance rules
insulting
intention
interest in bioforms (living things or things that resemble them)
interpreting behaviour
intertwining (eg. Weaving)
jokes
kin, close distinguished from distant
kin groups
kin terms translatable by basic relations of procreation
kinship statuses
language
language employed to manipulate others
language employed to misinform or mislead
language is translatable
language not a simple reflection of reality
language, prestige from proficient use of
law (rights and obligations)
law (rules of member- ship)
leaders
lever
linguistic redundancy
logical notions
logical notion of "and", of "equivalent", " general/particular", of "not", of "opposite", of
"part/whole", of "same"
magic, magic to increase life, sustain life, win love

male and female and adult and child seen as having different natures
males dominate public/ political realm
males more aggressive
males more prone to lethal violence
males more prone to theft
manipulate social relations
marking at phonemic, syntactic, and lexical level
marriage
materialism
meal times
meaning, most units of are non-universal measuring
medicine
melody
memory
metaphor
metonym
mood- or consciousness- altering techniques and/or substances
morphemes
mother normally has consort during child- rearing years
mourning
murder
music
music, children's
music related in part to dance
music related in part to religious activity
music seen as art (a creation) music, vocal music, vocal, includes speech forms
musical redundancy
musical repetition
musical variation
myths
narrative
nomenclature (perhaps the same as classification)
nonbodily decorative art normal distinguished from abnormal states nouns
numerals (counting)
Oedipus complex
oligarchy (de facto)
one (numeral)
onomatopoeia
overestimating
objectivity of thought

pain
past/present/future person,
concept of personal names phonemes
phonemes defined by sets of minimally contrasting features
phonemes, merging of phonemes, range from 10 to 70 in number phonemic change,
inevitability of phonemic change, rules of phonemic system planning
planning for future
play
play to perfect skills poetry /rhetoric
poetic line, uniform length range
poetic lines characterized by repetition and variation
poetic lines demarcated by pauses
polysemy (one word has several related meanings)
possessive, intimate possessive,
loose practice to improve skills
preference for own children and close kin (nepotism)
prestige inequalities
private inner life
promise
pronouns
pronouns, minimum two numbers
pronouns, minimum three persons
proper names
property
psychological defense mechanisms
rape
reciprocity, negative (revenge, retaliation)
reciprocity, positive
recognition of individuals by face
redress of wrongs
rhythm
right-handedness as population norm
rites of passage
rituals
role and personality seen in dynamic interrelationship (i.e., departures from role can be explained in terms of individual personality)
sanctions
sanctions for crimes against the collectivity
sanctions include removal from the social unit
self distinguished from other

self as neither wholly passive nor wholly autonomous
self as subject and object
self is responsible
semantics
semantic category of affecting things and people
semantic category of dimension
semantic category of giving
semantic category of location
semantic category of motion
semantic category of speed
semantic category of other physical properties
semantic components
semantic components, sex
sememes, commonly used ones are short, infrequently used ones are longer
senses unified
sex (gender) terminology is fundamentally binary
sex status
sexual attraction
sexual attractiveness
sexual jealousy
sexual modesty
sexual regulation sexual regulation includes incest prevention
sexuality as focus of interest
shelter
sickness and death seen as related
snakes, wariness around
social structure
socialization
socialization expected from senior kin
socialization includes toilet training
spear
special speech for special occasions
statuses and roles
statuses, ascribed and achieved
statuses distinguished from individuals
statuses on other than sex, age, or kinship bases
stop/nonstop contrasts (in speech sounds)
succession
sweets preferred
symbolism

symbolic speech
synonyms
taboos
tabooed foods
tabooed utterances
taxonomy
territoriality
time
time, cyclicity of
tools
tool dependency
tool making
tools for cutting
tools to make tools
tools patterned culturally
tools, permanent
tools for pounding trade
triangular awareness (assessing relationships among the self and two other people)
true and false distinguished
turn-taking
two (numeral)
tying material (i.e., something like string) units of time
verbs
violence, some forms of proscribed
visiting
vocalic/nonvocalic contrasts in phonemes
vowel contrasts

Additions Since 1989

anticipation
attachment
critical learning periods
differential valuations
dominance/submission
fairness (equity), concept of
fear of death habituation
hope
husband older than wife on average
Imagery
institutions (organized co-activities)

intention
interpolation
judging others
likes and dislikes
making comparisons
males engage in more coalitional violence
males, on average, travel longer distances over lifetime
mental maps
mentalese
moral sentiments
moral sentiments, limited effective range of precedence, concept of (that's how the leopard got its spots)
pretend play
pride
proverbs, sayings
proverbs, sayings--in mutually contradictory forms
resistance to abuse of power
self-control
self-image, awareness of (concern for what others think)
self-image, manipulation of
self-image, wanted to be positive
sex differences in spatial cognition and behavior
shame
stinginess, disapproval of
sucking wounds
synesthetic metaphors
thumb sucking
tickling
toys, playthings
wearing weapons
weather control (attempts to)
white (color term)
world view