Helping to track down the Weirdos (and their sub-cultures like the French and the English)

How do we know what European cultures looked like several hundred years ago? Or even what they look like today? It’s not easy, because aborigines never sent anthropologists to check up on us. Europeans hardly get a mention in HRAF or D-PLACE.

We can only look up our history books and read our (very recent) surveys and self-report data. And yet the evidence is there... For centuries travellers have been documenting what they see in other cultures. Cultures Observations Database is a pilot project demonstrating one way to tap into and analyze this body of information, currently almost unused as data.

EXAMPLE 1: If travellers from five cultures all agree about a behavioral phenomenon in another culture it can be supposed that the phenomenon in question exists. That is already a basic and overdue step forward in research on modern cultures. But what if travellers from one of the five cultures do not notice the phenomenon, or only notice it much later than the others? The obvious place to look for a clue would be in their own cultural back yard. This database makes that possible.

EXAMPLE 2: Groups most seen in England and France. Glaring differences already emerge from our tiny sample containing just 1070 « observations » from 116 « observers » or in other words travellers. The observers come mainly from three nations: England (37 travellers), France (32), and USA (26). This is far too small a sample to give reliable results, but the two tables at right give an idea of possible applications of the data.

GROUPS

ENGLAND

FRANCE

The future of COD

Cultures Observations Database (COD) is looking for a home. Ideally, a development of this database, or something like it, could, and should, become a major archive. Collecting observations is relatively easy, although control is obviously needed, and ideally the observations should be translated into English. The time-consuming part is the choosing... choosing which one of already listed totools to add as new traits.

Who are we? We are independent students. I'm the one who does the guessing when it comes to deciding which attributes to put in which pigeon-holes, and Josh Lepper does the programming in Microsoft Access. I was born closer to Weirdos than to French folk. That's why I chose France (Toulouse, France) and England. That's all! And the French and the English

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