

CHAPTER 34

An Anthropological Perspective

The Revival of Cultural Psychology— Some Premonitions and Reflections

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The publication of this handbook is of historical importance for the field of cultural psychology, and it is a fitting and useful form of acknowledgment of an intellectual revival or take-off of interdisciplinary research interests that began about 25 years ago. It is also a welcome opportunity to take stock and imagine future possibilities for creative investigations of diversity in human mentalities (the different things people know, think, want, feel, and value) across distinguishable culture-dependent groups. Although the volume is surely going to become a canonical text for anyone who has been engaged in or wishes to become part of the lively ongoing conversation that began to emerge in the early 1980s at the interface of social psychology and anthropology, it will certainly also interest developmental psychologists, cognitive psychologists, philosophers, and even linguists. Robert LeVine's chapter (Chapter 2, this volume) tells a story of academic ancestry that must read like ancient history to contemporary social psychologists doing work in cultural psychology (and an even deeper history going back many centuries, one

that all of us should know, can be found in Gustav Jahoda's [1993] *Crossroads between Culture and Mind*). So it is a very old conversation, but a new one as well, and one that has grown in depth and intensity over the past couple of decades.

Increasingly, this renewed conversation has been gaining widespread recognition. One is actually heartened to read the five-paragraph entry under "Cultural Psychology" that appears in Wikipedia, not only because that consensus-seeking online encyclopedia acknowledges the discipline but also because they more or less get it right. Here is all or part of the lead sentence from each of the five paragraphs: "Cultural psychology is a field of psychology which contains the idea that culture and mind are inseparable"; "Cultural psychology has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s but became more prominent in the 1980s and 1990s"; "Cultural psychology is distinct from cross-cultural psychology in that cross-cultural psychologists generally use culture as a means of testing the universality of psychological processes rather than determining how local cultural practices

shape psychological processes"; "Cultural psychology research informs several fields within psychology, including social psychology, developmental psychology, and cognitive psychology"; "One of the most significant themes in recent years has been cultural differences between East Asian and North Americans in attention (Masuda & Nisbett, 2001), perception (Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura, & Larsen, 2003), cognition (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001) and social-psychological phenomena such as the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)." They also write: "So whereas a cross-cultural psychologist might ask whether Piaget's stages of development are universal across a variety of cultures, a cultural psychologist would be interested in how the social practices of a particular set of cultures shape the development of cognitive processes in different ways." Perhaps the authors of the entry do go a bit overboard in associating cultural psychology with the view that "there are no universal laws for how the mind works," but for the most part they get the point.

Indeed, my own earliest anticipation of a cultural psychology revival—at the time it was little more than a premonition—does go back to the 1960s. In 1964 the anthropologists A. Kimball Romney and Roy D'Andrade published an influential special issue of the *American Anthropologist* titled "Transcultural Studies in Cognition." That collection of essays, originally prepared for an interdisciplinary Social Science Research Council conference on culture and intellectual processes held in Mexico in the spring of 1963, was an intimation that something new and interdisciplinary—on the frontiers of anthropology, psychology and linguistics—might soon be in the air. Best of all, the publication included a "Summary of Participants' Discussion," which contained some rather eye-opening (and even entertaining) transcripts of verbal exchanges (and sallies) between several social psychologists and several cultural anthropologists. Comments and quips included:

In using the semantic differential, people are forced to evaluate objects, and apparently there is consistency in the way in which they respond. I don't understand what the meaning of this consistency is in terms of the culture in which it occurred. And until I understand it, I don't see any point in comparing across cultures. You say that these factors are related to "visceral reactions"—then perhaps what this consistency means is that

cultural differences have been wiped out and only a common animal reaction remains. —anthropologist William Sturtevant, critiquing psychologist Charles Osgood (p. 238)

No, just the reverse. We are trying to find a framework of similarities within which we can observe more meaningfully and more rigorously real differences. Then we can be sure that these are real differences and not just artifacts of the language being used. —psychologist Charles Osgood (p. 238)

If you did investigate which adjectives went together in a language and culture which you know, do you doubt seriously that you would find three dimensions similar to evaluation, potency, and activity? —psychologist Fred Strodtbeck, addressing anthropologist Sturtevant (p. 238)

I don't know. And the reason it bothers me is that it seems so artificial to force people to tell you whether "Wednesday" is "good" or "bad." And I don't understand what significance any consistency you may get in forced tasks such as this has for understanding a culture. —anthropologist William Sturtevant (p. 238)

Why is it more arbitrary to employ the probes used in the semantic differential than it is to employ the "kind of" or "part of" questions [Charles] Frake uses? What is there unique about one kind of questioning which makes it arbitrary? —psychologist Charles Osgood (p. 238)

I think we are doing the same things for different reasons. We are both asking people questions and getting answers. But one difference is that if people laugh at one of my questions, I throw away the question. If people laugh at what you ask, you force an answer and say, "Come on, boys, now this is serious." What I would like to know is, "How much force is legitimate, and is the amount of force a variable to be taken into consideration?" —anthropologist Charles Frake (p. 238)

This is the narrow line we have tried hard to walk. That is, in order to get comparability, we have had to use enough control over the general context in which the data is elicited to obtain some reasonable security of equivalence. The problem, then, is to make sure that the kind of control that is exercised for that purpose can in no way influence the substantive relationships within the material. . . . —psychologist Charles Osgood (p. 238)

In their summary of the conversations among the conference participants, the editors Roy D'Andrade and Kim Romney (two very multidisciplinary graduates of the Harvard University Department of Social Relations)

tried to comprehend the disciplinary tensions between the anthropologists and the psychologists by drawing a distinction between the study of "codes" (associated with anthropological research) and the study of "intellectual processes" (associated with psychological research). They imagined a hypothetical research project in which anthropologists and psychologists go off together hand in hand to study ordinary game-playing behavior in games such as chess, checkers, or baseball, but end up parting ways by asking very different questions (e.g., "What are the rules of this game?" vs. "Which intellectual abilities differentiate winning players from losing players?") and end up developing two very different theories of psychological functioning and methods of research. D'Andrade and Romney elaborated on this imagined contrast. Anthropologists, they suggested, tend to study socially learned codes, rules, and meanings for the interpretation of a behavior (remember Clifford Geertz's [1973] famous example of the "blink [or was it a 'wink']? of an eye"); and for the anthropologist "behavior" is treated as a symbol or message that requires interpretation of its meaning, often in relation to codes, rules or norms of some sort. Psychologists, on the other hand, tend to study intellectual processes such as categorization, inference, or memory and view socially learned codes, rules, and meanings as mere content (or even as "noise") that should be ignored or filtered out in any study of the basic elements of mental functioning.

Yet D'Andrade and Romney also made the following crucial observation, which I take to be a central tenet of cultural psychology, namely, that what you think about and with (the meaning or content of ones thinking) can be decisive for how you think and that culture and psyche make each other up. This is their key remark:

The relationship between the codes an individual learns and the intellectual processes of the individual is apparently very complex. Such processes as categorization and inference, for example, appear to be built into codes, providing the individual with a ready-made set of categories and inferences for use. However, to allow the individual to use these cognitive maps which are built into codes also demands the exercise of other complex intellectual processes. (p. 231)

They also pointed out that in any interdisciplinary research project on game-playing

behavior around the world an anthropologist "would probably come to distrust generalizations made about human behavior across all classes of games, since for him most behavior is 'determined' by the code in use, which varies by the game" (p. 232). I'll return to this point later in a brief discussion of cross-cultural research in experimental economics, where behavior in the "ultimatum game" varies widely and in some counterintuitive ways (given our own culturally shaped intuitions) across cultural groups, which seems to be related to the way the game (which is itself a cultural product whose rules and meanings have been defined by the researchers) gets assimilated to local codes, rules, and meanings when transported abroad and presented to subjects in another culture. Here I simply want to note one of the lessons I took away from my 1960s reading of "Transcultural Studies in Cognition," namely, that research designed to discover the empirically uniform features of human mentalities is likely to bracket the existence of (and hence underestimate the behavioral significance of) the local, socially learned "codes" that define social life in human groups and dismiss them as mere content, thereby ignoring one of the great sources of mental differences between the members of different code-dependent groups (cultures).

That gathering of anthropologists, psychologists and linguists in the Yucatán in Mexico in 1963 was one of many such meetings that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, premised on the article of faith that interdisciplinary conversation can be a good thing. Historical precursors and personal premonitions aside, however, I suppose I really associate the current and rather dramatic revival of cultural psychology as a vibrant and visible academic discipline with a few key academic events in the 1980s and 1990s and several nonacademic contemporary trends on the domestic and international scene.

One of those academic events was of huge import for the rebirth of an interest in higher-order units of analysis (such as culture, ethnicity, and race) among mainstream social psychologists, namely, the ongoing seminar on cultural psychology organized and run for several years in the early 1990s by Hazel Markus and Richard Nisbett at the University of Michigan. (It was a time when the reductive tendencies within psychology were apparent and social psychology was at risk of becoming a branch of

cognitive psychology, which, it has now become apparent, was itself at risk of becoming a branch of neuroscience.) During that period, interdisciplinary visitors came from all over the world to Ann Arbor, old but profound formulations in anthropology and psychology were reexamined and revived (e.g., the work of John Whiting and Irvin Child on the "custom complex" and of Harry Triandis on "individualism" and "collectivism"), and the University of Michigan and later Stanford University put themselves on the map as leading centers of research on cultural psychology, ultimately resulting in the creation of the Center for Culture and Cognition at the University of Michigan (whose vibrant voices and critical intelligences have included psychologists Phoebe Ellsworth and Shinobu Kitayama and anthropologists Lawrence Hirschfeld and Scott Atran). One should not be surprised that so many of the most active and creative social psychologists who now call themselves cultural psychologists or sociocultural psychologists (including the two editors of this volume) have ancestral connections to either the University of Michigan or Stanford University, although there are now several other leading psychology department-based centers of excellence in cultural psychology (University of California, Berkeley; University of British Columbia; University of California, Los Angeles; University of Illinois; and others). And of course there are several other centers for training and research in cultural psychology that are based in either anthropology departments (UCLA; Emory University; Duke University; University of California, San Diego) or interdisciplinary departments such as the Department for Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago (where for nearly 70 years anthropologists and psychologists have been colleagues in the same program).

The second academic event I would mention is the Culture Theory Conference held in the spring of 1981 and subsequently published in the book *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion* (Shweder & LeVine, 1984). Perhaps this is an all too personal and autobiographical recollection of the history of the growing interest in cultural psychology. Robert LeVine's chapter in this volume brings us up to date and puts contemporary practitioners of cultural psychology in touch with some of their relatively recent anthropological ancestors, but it stops just short of 1984, when (at least from

my biased point of view) at least some of the current action began. It began with the publication of LeVine's own coedited volume *Culture Theory* (which, with characteristic modesty, he never mentions). The "Culture Theory" project was an attempt to draw out the implications of a symbols- and meaning-centered or interpretive conception of culture for the study of mental functioning across groups, with special attention to certain key formulations, for example, the work of Geertz on local forms of mental functioning and culturally parochial ideas about the self. Had LeVine added just one more page to his narrative he might well have turned his attention to the conception and birth of the Social Science Research Council's Culture Theory project, in which he played a major role and for which I was his coconspirator. It was at that conference that several anthropologists began to articulate once again (and with new ethnographic and linguistic evidence) some of the definitive and provocative ancient propositions of cultural psychology—for example, that when it comes to the study of human consciousness (including human self-consciousness) there are multiple diverse psychologies out there rather than a single psychology; and that many of those distinctive mental qualities of individuals are acquired, activated, maintained, or lost by virtue of participation in the way of life (including the linguistic life) of particular ancestral groups.

At the 1963 Romney and D'Andrade culture and cognition conference, the psychologists in attendance included Roger Brown, Jerome Kagan, William Kessen, Charles Osgood, and Fred Strodtbeck, and the anthropologists included Brent Berlin, Roy D'Andrade, Charles Frake, Dell Hymes, A. Kimball Romney, and William Sturtevant. It was the era of the cognitive revolution and "ethnoscience" was a hot topic in cultural anthropology. At the 1981 Culture Theory conference the psychologists in attendance included Jerome Bruner, Cal Izard, Martin Hoffman, Howard Gardner, Catherine Snow, and Elliot Turiel, and the anthropologists included Robbins Burling, Roy D'Andrade, Michael Fischer, Clifford Geertz, Paul Kay, Robert LeVine, Robert Levy, John Lucy, Michele Rosaldo, Bambi Scheffelin, David Schneider, Richard Shweder, Michael Silverstein, and Melford Spiro. Jürgen Habermas attended and served as the general discussant. It was an era when the cognitive revolution was no longer hegemonic and stud-

ies of self and emotion were back at center stage; one of the major aims of the conference was to critically examine the "symbolic" or "interpretative" approach to culture (as the socially inherited goals, values, and pictures of the world that are distinctive of members of different groups and made manifest in their behavioral norms), as well as the implications of that approach for research on psychological development (including research on self, emotion, moral reasoning, and language acquisition). As I recall, it was LeVine who had the prescience to recognize the potential value of Geertz's conception of culture for the study of psychological development. At the conference we brought together anthropologists (who at the time were actively debating and trying to make sense of a Geertzian conception of culture) and psychologists (who at the time were struggling with, and resisting, the reductive and restrictive implications of the "cognitive revolution" for the study of the mental life). Many psychologists at that time were interested in going beyond the structural analysis of human perceptual and reasoning processes to the study of human wants, feelings, and values; the anthropologists believed they had something to contribute by virtue of their ethnographic research on the more revelatory and meaning-laden aspects of daily experience and the socially inherited goals, values, and pictures of reality that lead individuals to commit to a particular way of life. While there was disagreement among the conference participants about whether the "cognitive revolution" had been a blessing or a curse for the study of language, culture, and mental functioning, there was a notable level of expressed concern about the negative influence of the cognitive revolution on anthropology and psychology: concern about the apparent prestige associated with cognitive research; concern about the lack of attention to social practices and higher order units of analysis among cognitive researchers; concern about the tendency to put everything inside the head. The following fascinating exchange took place between Roy D'Andrade and Clifford Geertz (see Shweder & LeVine, 1984). This particular give-and-take raises far more issues than I can address here (for example, the direct or indirect influence of the philosophies of the early versus late Ludwig Wittgenstein on the formulations offered below; the metaphysical status of a "conceptual structure" that is not "in the head"; the way an

"interpretive approach" to culture might successfully join the study of behavior with the study of ideas), but this exchange does give a sense of how, by the early 1980s, the cognitive revolution was already "breaking up":

ROY D'ANDRADE: When I was a graduate student, one imagined people *in* a culture; ten years later culture was all in their heads. The thing went from something out there and very large to something that got placed inside. Culture became a branch of cognitive psychology. We went from "let's try to look at behavior and describe it" to "let's try to look at ideas." Now, how you were to look at ideas was a bit of a problem and some people said, "Well, look at language." That notion, that you look at idea systems, was extremely general in the social sciences. On, I think, the same afternoon in 1957 you have papers by Chomsky and Miller and in anthropology, Ward Goodenough. All signal an end to the era of "Let's look at behavior and see what they do." Before 1957 the definition of culture was primarily a behavioral one—culture was patterns of behavior, actions, and customs. The same behavioral emphasis was there in linguistics and psychology. The idea that cognition is where it is at struck all three fields at the same time—it has a slightly different trajectory in each discipline—whether you do experiments or whether you look for intuitions or whether you talk to informants. I think it was a nice replacement. But the thing is now breaking—that force set in motion in the late fifties . . . and we each have different ideas about how it is breaking up.

CLIFFORD GEERTZ: At the same time the revolution was going on where people were putting things inside people's heads a counterrevolution was going the other way—criticizing the whole myth of inner reality, the whole myth of private language. The one thing that anthropologists hadn't said about culture is that it is a conceptual structure. What does it mean to say that? Take, for example, the theory of infant damnation. To know what it is you have to, first of all, conceptualize it historically and with other beliefs of this type. Then you can discuss the incidence of it, and how people got it, and how they got rid of it, and what determined all these things. But what the cultural element is, is the structure of meanings, ideas or significances that that particular religious ideology contained. The reason I am against putting things in people's heads is that it reduces the tension between cultural analysis and psychological analysis. By psychologizing things you don't have the kind of problematic where you can ask what is the impact of a conceptual structure or system of ideas such as the theory of infant damnation during the Ref-

ormation. What psychological effect did it have on different people in different contexts? That tends to get lost because the theory is identified as a psychological phenomenon in the first place. It's a conceptual structure—and that is what the whole depsychologizing of the concept of sense, of meaning, was all about and still is about. (pp. 7–8)

I believe it was about that time, in the early 1980s, as I prepared for the Culture Theory conference, that I began to recognize the connection between the interpretive or symbolic approach to culture and some of the tenets of the historical Romantic rebellion against the Enlightenment; and I even tried to comprehend some of the tensions that emerged at the conference in those terms (see Shweder, 1984). Even now, as I think about the intellectual foundations of cultural psychology as a discipline, I resonate to the observation by the political and moral philosopher Isaiah Berlin, in which he contrasted enlightenment figures such as Voltaire and Condorcet with Johann Herder, one of the great Romantic rebels (and a founder of cultural psychology). Berlin (1976, quoted in Gray, 1996) wrote:

For Voltaire, Diderot, Helvetius, Holbach, Condorcet, there is only one universal civilization, of which now one nation, now another, represents the richest flowering. For Herder there is a plurality of incommensurable cultures. To belong to a given community, to be connected with its members by indissoluble and impalpable ties of a common language, historical memory, habit, tradition and feeling, is a basic human need no less natural than that for food or drink or security or procreation. One nation can understand and sympathize with the institutions of another only because it knows how much its own mean to itself. Cosmopolitanism is the shedding of all that makes one most human, most oneself. (p. 122)

Perhaps that last sentence will seem shocking to some readers, especially those who live or idealize a cosmopolitan way of life. Nevertheless, the Romantic rebellion was in large part an act of intellectual resistance to the Enlightenment. It was a rejection of the Enlightenment ideal for a “modern self,” with its highly individualistic image of a fully realized human person as one who has become liberated or emancipated from all traditions, from all revelations or faith-based attachments to groups, from all commitments to received values or pictures of the world other than those that can be univer-

sally justified or grounded in logic or science. It is that “enlightened” cosmopolitan vision of the liberated individual (who is at home nowhere in particular or feels at home only when detached from all groups and loyal to none of them) that Johann Herder opposed and viewed as the shedding all that makes us most human. One trusts it is a message that many social psychologists will readily understand.

When reflecting on the contemporary psychological sciences, it is tempting to draw an analogous contrast. On the one hand, psychology aims to describe a universal psychology, and, in pursuit of that universal psychology, ends up investigating the cosmopolitan college student subject as its richest flowering and adduces an account of that psychology that is largely devoid of all mention of historical memory, local language, distinctive communal attachments, group traditions, or the parochial mental states that make us what we are. On the other hand, cultural psychology, as Herder might have envisioned it, is the investigation of those distinctive and several (or multiple) psychologies that make it possible for each of us to be and feel at home in some particular group.

Now I do not mean to suggest that any one, two, or three academic events should be fully credited with the revival of interest in cultural psychology. The organized efforts, including this monumental handbook project, to move the field forward have been many. One welcomes all of these efforts and looks forward to the day when the recent history of cultural psychology as a reemerging discipline is systematically documented. Any such history, one imagines, will surely also point to events and processes outside the academy that have created a favorable environment for the growth of a field that is so deeply concerned with questions of cultural difference. I have in mind, of course, changes in the U.S. immigration laws in the 1960s that prepared the way for increased levels of Asian, African, and South and Middle American migration; the international pendulum swing in the direction of economic globalization, which eroded national barriers to the flow of goods, information, capital, and labor (including students and scholars) all over the world; the emergence of identity politics, social justice consciousness, and affirmative action policies and their beneficial consequences for funding research or researcher training with regard to ethnic and racial minority groups; and

the various and numerous conflicts and competitions between nations and groups over the past decades (from the Japanese success in the world economy to the current war in Iraq and the tensions between Islam and Christianity in Europe) which have made it increasingly apparent that cultural differences not only are here to stay but also need to be understood for the sake of domestic and international tranquility, and for everyone's general well-being.

By now it should be apparent that I use the expression “cultural psychology” (as does Wikipedia) in a sense that is much narrower than the usage implied by the very broad reach of the preceding 33 chapters in this volume. Breadth of coverage is a good thing for a handbook, and it is a fact of life and sign of healthy intellectual activity that scholars who do comparative research on mental states and processes across code-dependent (i.e., cultural) groups do so with many different types of aims and agendas, most of which are important and legitimate. Nevertheless, not all of them are doing cultural psychology in the sense I have been describing. What is that sense?

Here I draw upon several earlier formulations in which I have tried to imagine a field of study called cultural psychology (Shweder 1990, 1991, 1993, 1999, 2003a, 2003b, and the other entries in the reference section under my name; Shweder & Sullivan, 1990). That field has a distinctive subject matter (psychological diversity, rather than psychological uniformity); it aims to reassess the uniformitarian principle of psychic unity and develop a credible theory of psychological pluralism. One does hope that it goes without saying by now that any theory of psychological pluralism would lack credibility if it staunchly denied the existence of any and all universals. That is why a credible theory of psychological pluralism, one that honors our true, deep, and significant differences, cannot and does not entail the denial of all universals. Cultural psychology presupposes many universals, including a theory of mind according to which to be a “person” is to have the capacity to initiate action; to construct a picture of the world; and to display the features of creative intelligence in the generic sense, which include the abilities to imagine the future, know things, want things, feel things, and value things (see Shweder et al., 2006). Nevertheless, as I use the expression, cultural psychology refers to the study of ethnic and cultural sources of diversity in emotional and

somatic functioning, self-organization, moral evaluation, social cognition, and human development.

The field also has a particular conception of the proper units of analysis for comparative research on psychological facts. It calls for the study of human “mentalities” (in the plural) as conceptualized by Johann Herder (that 18th-century Romantic German philosopher), whose central premise was that “to be a member of a group is to think and act in a certain way, in the light of particular goals, values, and pictures of the world; and to think and act so is to belong to a group” (Berlin, 1976). According to this approach to cultural psychology, the idea of “goals” includes wants, preferences, and motives of various kinds. The idea of “values” includes emotional reactions as well as “goods” and “ends” that are thought to be “preference-worthy” or morally desirable. The idea of “pictures of the world” includes local definitions and categorizations, beliefs about means–ends connections and causal connections and metaphysical and existential premises of various kinds. To describe a “mentality” (e.g., the “mentality” of Oriya Hindu Brahmins or Mandarin Chinese or liberal American middle-class anticlerical cosmopolites) is to get specific about the particular conceptual contents (the “ideas”) that have actually been cognized and activated by such persons or peoples, where to “cognize” refers to any process that enables human beings to represent “ideas” (conceptual content) and to attain knowledge by deriving or computing their implications. In other words, cultural psychology is the study of the specific conceptual content that renders meaning-full behavior (or “actions”) intelligible.

I have not counted how many of the chapters in this volume are prototypes or even instances of cultural psychology in that sense of the field. However, what does strike me as noteworthy is the breadth of the collection and how the expression “cultural psychology” has come to encompass so many very different types of intellectual traditions. Reading through reference sections when I first received the chapters for this volume, I had the impression that the authors were inspired by very different canonical texts and did not really share common intellectual ancestors, although for the most part, all the chapter authors have some kind of interest in research that in some sense or other is “cross-cultural.” In order to be a bit more objective about the sharing

or nonsharing of canonical texts and intellectual ancestors every cited author and every cited written work in each of the chapters was entered into a database (the data analyzed were nearly complete at the time of the analysis, although a few citations that were either added or dropped during the final editorial process may have been overlooked). This made it possible to derive pairwise similarity measures for all of the chapters based on the degree of overlap either in the specific authors or in the specific works cited in their chapters and to conduct cluster and multidimensional scaling analyses on the co-citation or similarity structures of the chapters themselves (similarity or proximity measures were used that did not treat the joint noncitation of an author or text as a measure of sharing or similarity). It also made it possible to determine which authors and texts were the most cited and to what degree.¹

One basic fact about the citations in this volume is this: The vast majority of both cited au-

thors (approximately 77%) and cited written works (approximately 88%) are cited in some single chapter only, and not mentioned in any other chapter in the book (see Figures 34.1 and 34.2). In other words, most citations are unique; hence, the "J" shape of the curve of the distributions in the graphs is dramatic, and it reveals that, for both researchers and texts, if you are cited at all you probably are cited in only one of the chapters. Of the 3,560 written works cited herein, there is only one—Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama's (1991) *Psychological Review* article "Culture and the Self"—that is cited in even half of the chapters, and it is an outlier. Of 4,057 authors, only seven are widely cited, in the sense of being cited in at least half of the chapters. Gustav Jahoda's useful primer on the history of theory and research on culture and mind (which I pointed to earlier) does inform the historically oriented chapter by Harry Triandis but is not mentioned in any of the other chapters.

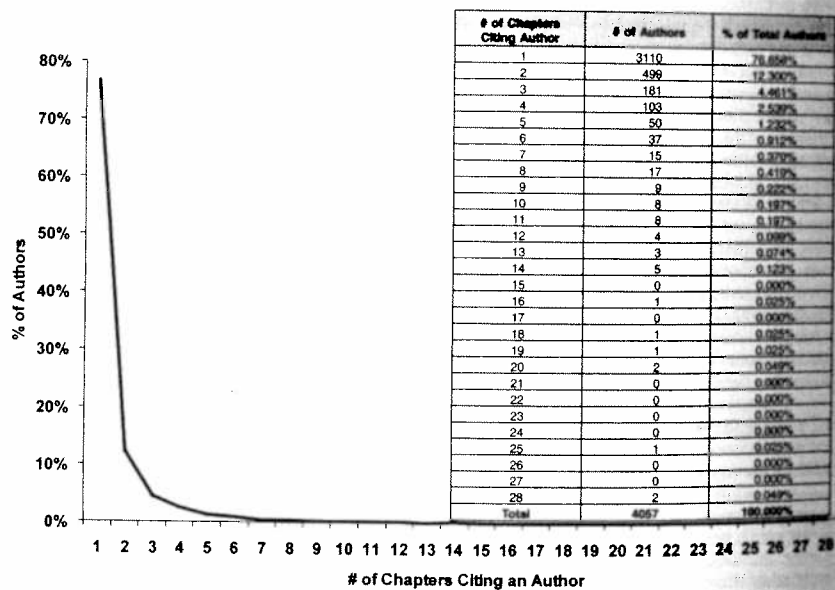


FIGURE 34.1. Citing trend of authors.

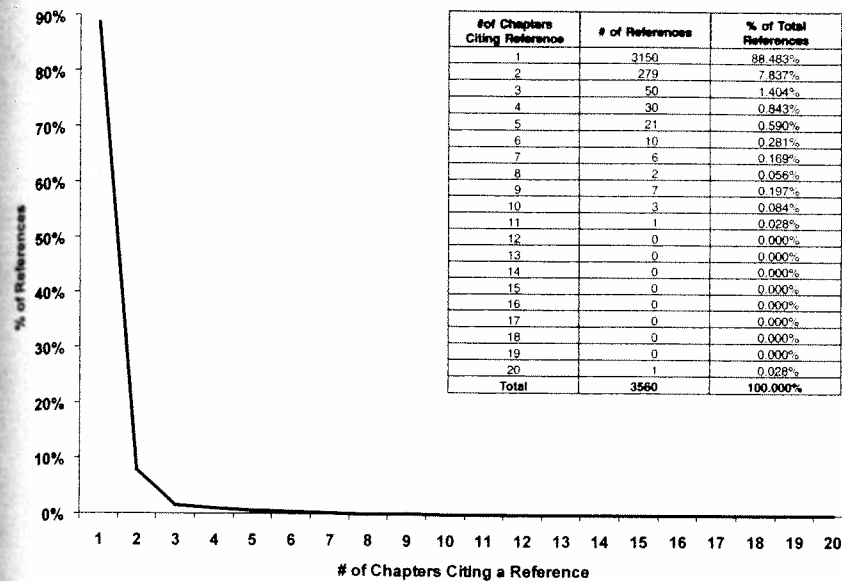


FIGURE 34.2. Citing trend of particular works.

I realize, of course, that it is hazardous to interpret the significance of this basic fact. Perhaps the relative lack of common intellectual reference points (including historical reference points) is a feature of every subfield in the social sciences. But it does give the impression that "cultural psychology," at least in this particular usage of the expression in a *handbook of cultural psychology*, is a cover phrase for a wide range of intellectual programs and research agendas. Figure 34.3 lists the 62 most-cited authors across the chapters, where the inclusion criterion is citation in at least 8 of the preceding 33 chapters. Figure 34.4 lists the 51 most-cited written works, where the inclusion criterion is citation in at least 5 of the preceding 33 chapters. When inspecting these figures, two things seem apparent. First, the field of cultural psychology, at least among academic social psychologists, has been riding a wave associated with East/West comparisons and especially a small set of almost personality-trait-like theoretical contrasts between individualistic versus collectivist societies, independent versus interdependent selves, and analytic versus ho-

listic thinking. Secondly, the most widely cited articles are those published in a very small set of mainstream psychological journals, for example, the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Psychological Review*, *Psychological Bulletin*, and the *American Psychologist*. Relevant articles on cultural psychology published in the journals of other disciplines (anthropology, philosophy, linguistics) are not widely cited, although three books about culture written by anthropologists (Geertz, Sperber, and Kroeber & Kluckhohn) and one written by a sociologist (by Weber) are acknowledged in at least 5 or more of the 33 preceding chapters.

Reading through this volume, the overall or general impression one gets is of the following: (1) one big idea organizing a coherent research agenda for a subset of social psychology authors interested in psychological diversity but framed very much as a debate about the scope or generality of fundamental intellectual processes and researched in a way that parallels the logic of personality-trait psychology at the level of groups and fits the format of main-

1. Give priority to the study of culturally unique psychological and behavioral phenomena or characteristics of the Chinese people.
2. Investigate both the specific content and the involved process of the phenomenon.
3. Make it a rule to begin any research with a thorough immersion into the natural, concrete details of the phenomenon to be studied.

Speaking as an anthropologist, this emphasis on starting one's research in cultural psychology with an immersion experience makes great sense and places some emphasis on field research, the observation of real-world practices and behavior (including language use), and the investigation of the native's point of view (content, meaning, and context). It also might have the effect of getting researchers in cultural psychology to rethink the dubious and hence vulnerable assumption that cultural variability can be indexed by census categories such as nationality, race, or ethnicity. Indeed it might help to free the discipline from its heavy reliance on cosmopolitan college student subjects who happen to come from different national, racial, or ethnic groups.

The advantage of taking this step can be seen in the field of experimental economics, which has for many years relied on college student subjects but has recently transported its "comparable stimuli" (its experimental games) to rural and "third-world" field settings and to the type of small-scale societies that are familiar to anthropologists. Lo and behold, they have discovered substantially greater variability in bargaining behavior in experimental game situations than previously discovered with student populations. The variability across groups that has been discovered lends itself to explanation by reference to local socially learned codes, norms, and meanings associated with social interaction in everyday life in this or that particular cultural group (Henrich et al., 2005). This research is carried forward very much in the interdisciplinary spirit of cultural psychology, with a good deal of reliance on ethnographic knowledge to build a model of a cultural mentality that helps in the interpretation of behavior in an experimental game situation (the meaning of which it is not possible for the experimenters to fully control precisely because there are cultural differences in the significance of the stimulus situation).

Consider, for example, the "ultimatum game" as defined in the experimental econom-

ics literature and described by Henrich et al. (2005):

In this game, subjects are paired, and the first player, often called the "proposer," is provisionally allotted a divisible "pie" (usually money). The proposer then offers a portion of the total pie to a second person, called the "responder." The responder, knowing both the offer and the amount of the pie, can then either accept or reject the proposer's offer. If the responder accepts, he receives the offer and the proposer gets the remainder (the pie minus the offer). If the responder rejects the offer, then neither receives anything. In either case the game ends; the two players receive their winnings and depart. Players are typically paid in cash and are anonymous to other players. . . . (p. 798)

In the comparative field-based research reported by Henrich et al. substantial amounts of money (in local currencies) were involved, and the "players" were kept anonymous to each other.

From the point of view of cultural psychology almost everything interesting about this type of experimental approach turns on understanding how the "stimulus situation," or experimental game, is understood and given meaning from the "native point of view" of members of different groups. The challenge for a cultural psychologist is to engage in the type of "thick description" of the mentality of local "game players" so as to understand precisely how and why the stimulus situation is, in fact, not the same or equivalent as it is transported from one code-dependent world to another. That is what "thick description" amounts to: specifying the local goals, values, and pictures of the world that render apparently identical stimuli (e.g., the experimenter-defined rules of the "ultimatum game") nonequivalent. Consider this possible picture of the world: Imagine a society of strangers in which all persons are motivated mainly by material rewards and hold to the premise that more is always better than less, and hence interpret the stimulus situation (the "ultimatum game") in such a way that they conclude that any proposed offer, however small, should be accepted, given the constraints of the game (because if you refuse the offer no one gets anything), leading to the shared expectation that proposers should and will offer very little and responders should and will accept it. Apparently, not even "first-world" cosmopolitan college student subjects

picture the world that way or construe the stimulus situation in those terms; the typical offer among college student subjects over many studies is around 45–50% of the original pie and college student responders typically reject low offers, even though they end up with nothing. These results have been shown to be reliable and robust across variations in the details of the experimental procedure.

More important, as one moves into rural field settings away from the "first world," all sorts of astonishing and variable patterns of behavior emerge. This variation in "bargaining behavior" is independent of such individual characteristics of the subjects as their age, education, or wealth, and seems to be related specifically to group membership and to the particular picture of persons and social relationships shared by members of one's group. As Henrich et al. (2005) note, "In some groups, rejection rates are extremely rare, even in the presence of low offers, while in others rejection rates are substantial, including frequent rejections of offers above 50%" (pp. 801–802). Consider, for example, the experimental game behavior of the Au and Gnau peoples of Papua New Guinea, where many "proposers" offered more than 50% of the available currency and many of these offers were turned down by the "responder," leaving both "players" with nothing.

What thick description of goals, values, and pictures of the world can help us comprehend what the stimulus situation actually meant to these subjects? Henrich et al. offer the following explanation:

The rejection of seemingly generous offers, of more than half, may have a parallel in the culture of status-seeking through gift-giving found in Au and Gnau villages, and throughout Melanesia. In these societies, accepting gifts, even unsolicited ones, implies a strong obligation to reciprocate at some future time. Unrepaid debts accumulate, and place the receiver in a subordinate status. Further, the giver may demand repayment at times, or in forms (political alliances), not to the receiver's liking—but the receiver is still strongly obliged to respond. As a consequence, excessively large gifts, especially unsolicited ones, will be refused. (p. 811)

The main (and perhaps obvious) point to be made here is that there are many different pictures of the world or cultural mentalities that might be brought to the table when "playing an

experimental game" (of course, that very way of describing the interaction or event is itself a discretionary and not mandatory way of understanding the stimulus situation), and "thick description" is a way of rendering behavior intelligible in terms of local and socially shared meanings.

I think something like that form of explanation—thick description of local meanings—is pretty much what D'Andrade and Romney (1964) had in mind when they wrote:

The relationship between the codes an individual learns and the intellectual processes of the individual is apparently very complex. Such processes as categorization and inference, for example, appear to be built into codes, providing the individual with a ready-made set of categories and inferences for use. (p. 231)

Indeed, that may be one of the primary reasons for cultural group based variations in bargaining behavior in the "ultimatum game."

Although I have raised some questions about heterogeneity of coverage, the publication of this volume is a monumental achievement and marks a new stage in the revival of the field. Back in 1964 it was not obvious that in the coming decades so many mainstream social psychologists would embrace the notion of cross-cultural research and run with it in so many fascinating directions, or that so many would become suspicious of strong claims about psychic unity and seriously entertain the possibility that mentalities are not uniform around the world. Nor, might I add in conclusion, was it obvious back then that work in experimental economics would simultaneously force us to recognize the importance of ethnographic fieldwork with diverse groups, deepen our appreciation of the psychological significance of social learned cultural codes, and lend support to the central notion of cultural psychology that culture and psyche make each other up.

NOTE

1. I am most grateful to Michele Wittels and Jacob Hickman for assisting me in these analyses. Any detailed presentations and discussion of the taxonomic structure of the Handbook chapters based on their cocitation patterns will have to wait for another occasion. Here in this commentary I just want to make a few brief observations about the breadth of this volume and raise a question or two about the future of the field.

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CHAPTER 35

A Psychological Perspective Cultural Psychology—Past, Present, and Future

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People who are unaware of the history of cultural psychology are surprised to learn that the founder of experimental psychology, Wilhelm Wundt, was also a cultural psychologist. He believed that one could not understand behavior by just looking at what people were doing in laboratories. One also had to know history and culture. Kurt Lewin, the founder of the field of experimental social psychology, was also a student of collectives of all sorts. He actually wrote one important ethnography comparing Germany and the United States. And there was always a fundamental concern with history and culture and collective issues on the part of the Soviet psychologists, notably Vygotsky and Luria. Through at least the 1950s, plenty of psychologists—especially social psychologists—were concerned with societal and collective and cultural issues.

But a very dramatic shift away from concern with culture occurred roughly in the mid-60s. I have two theories about why this happened. I think it was partly because culture in the 1940s and 1950s was studied in the context of what was called the "culture and personality movement." Unfortunately,

this movement operated with the two predominant theories in the behavioral sciences, and these were not well suited for studying culture. One of these, Freudian theory, is perfectly good for some things, including, for example, the theory of "preperception" in attention. But Freudian theory just is not very good for studying culture. Cultures do not differ from one another because of when they do their toilet training or how they resolve their Oedipus complexes. The other orientation that guided research was learning theory. When applied to human behavior, the theory was rarely used in an explanatory or predictive, as opposed to a purely circular, fashion. Why do people do what they do? Well, because they are being reinforced for it. And how do we know that they are being reinforced for it? Well, because they are doing it. As Robert Abelson pointed out, social psychology, which is the fountainhead of contemporary cultural psychology, is the only field of psychology that was never behaviorized. It was always clear to social psychologists that cognitive structures in people's heads were doing the work, although it was