CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: WHO NEEDS IT?

Richard A. Shweder

Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois 60637

Maria A. Sullivan

Department of Psychiatry, Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, New York, New York 10032

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INTRODUCTION

An interdisciplinary subfield called "cultural psychology" has begun to re-emerge at the interface of anthropology, psychology, and linguistics. The aim of cultural psychology is to examine ethnic and cultural sources of psychological diversity in emotional and somatic (health) functioning, self organization, moral evaluation, social cognition, and human development. Its goal is to understand why so many apparently straightforward questions about human psychological functioning (e.g. Are there basic emotions and which ones are they? Is human category learning a feature frequency process, an exemplar

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comparison process, or a prototype comparison process? Is moral reasoning equivalent to reasoning about harm, rights, and justice? Under what conditions does classroom learning take place? Is there a mid-life crisis? How fundamental is the fundamental attribution error?) have not resulted in a consensus among qualified scientists, and why so many generalizations about the psychological functioning of one particular population (e.g. the contemporary secularized Western urban white middle class) have not traveled well across sociocultural, historical, and institutional fault lines. Sapir once wrote (1929:209), "the worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different words attached." The aim of cultural psychology is to understand the varieties of normal human consciousness across those historically and culturally constructed worlds (see Averill 1980; Geertz 1973, 1984b; Harré 1986a; Marriott 1989; Shweder 1991b; Shweder & Much 1987; Stearns & Stearns 1988; Taylor 1989).

The deep historical antecedents of cultural psychology have recently been traced in eye-opening detail by Jahoda 1992 (see also M. Cole 1988, 1990; Shweder 1984, 1990, 1991b). This essay (a) locates cultural psychology in its immediate disciplinary, historical, and institutional contexts; (b) mentions a few core assumptions and problematics of the field; (c) identifies key contributors to an emerging conception of cultural psychology; and (d) outlines some research agendas of the discipline, with selective reference to studies of emotion, self, social cognition, and health. Other contemporary formulations of the aims and assumptions of the field are available (Bruner 1990; M. Cole 1990; D'Andrade 1990; Howard 1985; LeVine 1984, 1990; Lutz 1985a,b; Lutz & White 1986; Markus & Kitayama 1991, 1992; P. Miller et al 1990; Peacock 1984; Rosaldo 1984; Shweder 1984, 1985, 1990, 1991b, 1992a,b; Shweder & Sullivan 1990; Stigler et al 1986; Wertsch 1985, 1991, 1992; White 1992a,b; see also D'Andrade & Strauss 1992; Fiske 1991; Harris 1991; Kurtz 1992; Lucy 1992a,b; Holland & Quinn 1987; Rosenberger 1992; Schwartz et al 1992; Shweder & LeVine 1984; Stigler et al 1990; White & Kirkpatrick 1985; see also the journals *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* and the *Publications of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* published by Cambridge University Press).

CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: SOME CONTEXTS

Cultural psychology is, first of all, a designation for the comparative study of the way culture and psyche make each other up. Second, it is a label for a practical, empirical, and philosophical project designed to reassess the uniformitarian principle of psychic unity and aimed at the development of a credible theory of psychological pluralism. Third, it is a summons to reconsider the methods and procedures for studying mental states and psychological processes across languages and cultures. It is widely recognized that performance differences among human populations may arise from the partial translatabil-

ity or limited commensurability of stimulus situations and materials (see M. Cole & Scribner 1974; MacIntyre 1985; see also Hollis & Lukes 1982; Wilson 1970). Far less appreciated is the fact that through the methodical investigation of specific sources of incommensurability in particular stimulus situations (so-called thick description) a culture's distinctive psychology may be revealed (Geertz 1973; Shweder 1991b).

The current excitement about the development of a cultural psychology is related to events in three contexts: a disciplinary context, an historical context, and an institutional context.

The Disciplinary Context

There are many stories that can be told about the reemergence of an interdisciplinary concern for the development of a cultural psychology at the interface of anthropology, psychology, and linguistics. Here is one brief tale (for the full story see Shweder 1990 and Shweder & Sullivan 1990).

In the late 1950s experimental work on animal learning and psycho-physics was considered real psychology and ethnographic work on ritual, myth, and kinship real anthropology. Yet the two disciplines had relatively little interaction. General psychology had little interest in the content, meaning, and distribution of human understandings and social practices; instead, the search was for universal psychic structures and the fundamental processes of consciousness. General anthropology had little interest in the person and his or her psychological functioning; its main goal was to document historical and ethnographic variations in collective representations and social institutions.

Today, after thirty years of intellectual diversification in psychology and anthropology (some disparage it as fragmentation, although we view it as progress), there are many opportunities for fruitful conversation between the disciplines. A semiotic agenda has become more prevalent in both fields. The items on the agenda include such questions as "What is meaning such that a situation can have it?" "What is a person such that what a situation means can determine his or her response to it?" "What meanings or conceptions of things have been stored up and institutionalized in everyday practice and discourse in various regions and cultural enclaves of the world?" "In what ways can different meanings have an effect on the organization and operation of individual consciousness?"

In anthropology there has been a resurgence of interest in person-centered ethnography, the study of local psychologies, and discourse-centered conceptions of mind, self, body, gender, motivation, and emotion (Abu-Lugod 1985, 1986; Briggs 1970; Crapanzano 1980; D'Andrade & Strauss 1992; Heelas & Lock 1981; Levy 1973, 1978, 1983, 1991; Obeyesekere 1981; Lutz 1988; Shostak 1983; Weisner 1984; White 1992a). It should be noted, however, that some scholars, for example B. Whiting and J. Whiting, have nurtured the anthropological flame of person-centered ethnography and kept it alive for well over half a century. For them interest in the topic has never waned (see

Whiting 1992; Whiting & Edwards 1985; also Spindler 1980). Research in developmental, social, and cognitive psychology has turned to a series of culture- and meaning-saturated topics such as appraisal, construal, conceptual framing, internal working models, expertise, and domain-specific learning (Barsalou 1991, 1992a,b,c; Bond 1988; Doi 1986; Ellsworth 1991; D. G. Freedman & J. Gorman, unpublished; Goodnow 1990; Kakar 1978, 1982; Lave 1990; Markus & Kitayama 1991; Medin 1989; J. G. Miller & Luthar 1989; Ross & Nisbett 1991; Russell 1989, 1991; Semin 1989; Semin & Fiedler 1988; Smith 1991; Stigler 1984; Wertsch 1985, 1991). Narrative, discourse, and situated learning have become familiar concepts on the intellectual landscape (Bruner 1990; Cohler 1991, 1992; Garvey 1992; Heath 1983; Lave 1990; P. Miller & Sperry 1987; P. Miller et al 1990, 1992; Rogoff 1990; Wertsch 1991). Processes once presumed to be fundamental, and hence fixed and uniform (e.g. the fundamental attribution error, self-aggrandizing motivations, patterns of self-other comparison, and moral reasoning as justice reasoning), have been reframed as local regularities embedded in culturally constructed and institutionally supported forms of self organization (Gilligan 1977, 1982; J. Haidt et al, unpublished; Markus & Kitayama 1991; J. G. Miller 1984; J. G. Miller & Bersoff 1992; Pepitone & Triandis 1987).

The semiotic agenda in anthropology and psychology has been reinforced by work in linguistics and philosophy on discourse and implicit meanings and by debates about the ambiguous and shifting boundary between semantic meanings and pragmatic meanings (P. Cole 1981; Flanagan 1991; Gergen 1986, 1990; Goody 1978; Goodman 1968, 1978; Labov & Fanshel 1977; Lakoff & Johnson 1980a,b; Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1986; MacIntyre 1981; Much 1983; Much & Shweder 1978; Shweder & Much 1987; Silverstein 1979; Taylor 1985; Talmy 1988; Wierzbicka 1985, 1991; Wittgenstein 1968; Wong 1984; Ziff 1972). Semantic meanings (e.g. that "bachelor" means a "marriageable unmarried male") are implications which are necessary, and hence unalterable and invariant, across all possible contexts of application and for all possible speakers. Pragmatic meanings (e.g. that "John is a lion" means that "John is brave"), in contrast, are implications that are dependent on the context and speaker. An influential position has emerged in philosophy, linguistics, and literary theory, which argues that necessary and intrinsic meanings (fixed essences) are few, difficult to locate, and perhaps even nonexistent (Derrida 1976; Fish 1980; Gendlin 1991; Gergen 1990; also see Putnam 1987, who argues against the existence of context-free or intrinsic laws of nature in the physical world). The implications of this pragmatic stance for the study of cultural psychology still need to be traced systematically (although see MacIntyre 1981). Nevertheless cultural psychology has grown up in an intellectual climate suspicious of a one-sided emphasis on fixed essences, intrinsic features, and universally necessary truths—an intellectual climate disposed to revalue processes and constraints that are local, variable, context-dependent, contingent, and in some sense made up.

While researchers in cultural psychology are still alert to the possible existence of cross-cultural empirical generalities, which might be derived from comparative research, new presumptions have emerged, e.g. that cultural and institutional factors particular to a population may have a major impact on the processes of psychological functioning and human development, and that local factors of a particular cultural environment typically interact with more widely distributed factors to produce diverse outcomes. While the possible existence of contingent empirical universals in psychological functioning is not denied in cultural psychology—a respectable cultural psychology is both "anti anti-relativist" (Geertz 1984a) and "anti anti-universalist" (Kilbride 1992)—uniformities in functioning are not privileged as deeper or as more fundamental, basic, or intrinsic truths about the life of the psyche.

Indeed one challenging goal for cultural psychology has been to find a way to document, acknowledge, and honor the reality of population or group differences in cognitive, emotional, motivational, and health functioning and in the patterning of the life course without underestimating our common humanity, without dismissing differences as measurement error, and without falling back on the interpretation of the other as a deficient or underdeveloped version of the self (for this view of the "other" as a deficient version of the self see Hallpike 1979 and Kohlberg 1981). For a critique of certain applications of developmental interpretation see Gilligan (1982), LeVine (1990), Shweder (1982a,b) and Shweder et al (1990).

Within the discipline of anthropology, one important historical watershed in the development of a cultural psychology was the initiative undertaken by the Social Science Research Council in 1980–81 to organize a conference entitled *Conceptions of Culture and its Acquisition*. The conference proceedings, later published under the title *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion* (Shweder & LeVine 1984), examined the relevance of a new Geertzian conception of culture for the study of psychological processes and reevaluated some assumptions of earlier forms of psychological anthropology, cognitive anthropology, and culture and personality studies in light of advances in the semiotic conception of the subject or person. That conception of culture (Geertz 1973:89), defined as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men [and women] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life" continues to be influential today in discussions of the cultural psychology of mind, self, and emotion; *Culture Theory,* now in its tenth printing, has become a standard primer for students of cultural psychology.

A second watershed within anthropology was the publication of *Person, Self, and Experience* (White & Kirkpatrick 1985), which contained detailed ethnopsychologies of the culture areas of the Pacific Islands. A third watershed was an important review essay, published in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* (Lutz & White 1986), which catalyzed and legitimized anthropological

research on the cultural psychology of the emotions. It was quickly followed by the publication of *Cultural Models in Language and Thought* (Holland & Quinn 1987), which had a similarly invigorating effect on research on the cultural psychology of cognition. (For a systematic overview of the cultural psychology of cognition see D'Andrade 1990; also Hutchins 1980; Nuckolls 1991).

Simultaneously in the field of psychology, H. Markus and R. Nisbett started a seminar at the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan entitled "Cultural Psychology," which was influential in defining an intellectual agenda for the internationalization of psychological theory and the pursuit of social psychological research related to ethnicity (see e.g. Markus & Kitayama 1991). Similar seminars and activities had long been a standard feature of intellectual life at the University of California at San Diego in Communications (under the leadership of M. Cole) and in Anthropology (under the leadership of R. D'Andrade, R. Levy, T. Schwartz, M. Spiro, and others), but in the 1980s forums relevant to cultural psychology began to flourish at various institutions around the country, most conspicuously at Harvard University (in Anthropology, Education, and Social Medicine under R. A. LeVine, A. Kleinman, B. Good, and others), at the University of Chicago (in the Committee on Human Development under J. Stigler, G. Herdt, P. Miller, R. Fogelson, S. Kurtz, E. Gendlin, B. Cohler, and others), at the University of California at Los Angeles (in Anthropology and Psychiatry under T. Weisner, E. Ochs, and others), at the University of Pennsylvania (in Psychology under P. Rozin, A. Fiske, and others), and at Emory University (in Anthropology under B. Shore, R. Paul, C. Nuckolls, and others, and more recently in connection with discussions at the Emory Cognition Project on the topic of the conceptual self under the direction of U. Neisser).

By the late 1980s a change in intellectual interest that cut across disciplinary boudaries was taking place. The expression "cultural psychology" was gaining currency (see M. Cole 1990; Howard 1985; Peacock 1984; Shweder & Sullivan 1990) and the designation of a new burgeoning subdiscipline was sparking great interest nationally and internationally. In 1986–87 two international and interdisciplinary symposia drawing together anthropologists and developmental psychologists were held at the University at Chicago and were published under the title *Cultural Psychology: Essays on Comparative Human Development* (see Stigler et al 1990). At the 1989 Biannual Meeting of the Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD), during the "Brunerfest"held in honor of Jerome Bruner, the guest of honor delivered a formal presentation to a standing room only audience in which he declared that much of his scholarly activity throughout his life should properly be called "cultural psychology" (see Bruner 1990); a separate SRCD panel session on cultural psychology also attracted a large enthusiastic audience.) By the time of the arrival of the well-publicized last decade of the 20th century it had become apparent to many social scientists that the 1990s was not only going to be the

"decade of the brain," it was going to be the "decade of ethnicity" as well. Indeed, one suspects that the reemergence of cultural psychology is a measure of the culture-sensitive intellectual climate of our times.

The Historical Context

The historical context for the reemergence of cultural psychology can be addressed at both the national and the international level.

Nationally, the current attention of social scientists and policy analysts to ethnic and cultural diversity is largely motivated by the increasing recognition that there is no single population for research in the United States that can be treated as the normative base line for social and psychological functioning or for health and human development. Starting in 1964, US immigration policy resulted in significant changes in the cultural topography of many American cities. For example, between 1970 and 1990 the non-Hispanic white population of New York City dropped from 63% to 43% while there were major increases in the percentage of foreign born residents from Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa. Most major American cities from Los Angeles to Atlanta, from Chicago to Boston have active tribal associations for the Asanti people of Ghana; each community has a King and Queen and an elected group of elders, all anointed by the King of the Asantis in Ghana. Prominent South Asian religious figures now spend more time in temples in Pittsburgh and Queens than in traditional pilgrimage sites in India. A similar story can be told for many other ethnic groups. The United States is becoming a thought-provoking and cosmopolitan place, a land of internationally linked diversity.

Of course there are many complexities, even tensions associated with ethnic diversity in the context of civic norms in the United States. While the legal and political structure of the country, which tends to focus on the individual person as the bearer of rights and privileges, is unlikely to grant formal standing or authority to ethnic groupings, informal social processes have resulted in broad, rough and ready ethnic segmentation at the level of marriage and the family, neighborhoods, work sites, schools, apprenticeships, and patterns of affiliation and social support. Forty percent of plumbers, electricians, and carpenters in New York City trade unions learned their skills from a kin (typically their father) or neighbor. A recent map of Chicago published in *National Geographic Magazine* (May 1991) displays clear residential patterns based on ethnicity and race, with distinct Asian, Afro-American, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic white European neighborhoods.

Work sites and types of occupations can be roughly categorized by ethnicity as well. In New York City the fire department, for example, is predominantly serviced by Americans of Northern European descent (Irish, English, German), while workers in the apparel industry are predominantly Americans and foreign born immigrants of Puerto Rican and Dominican descent. It should be noted, however, that ethnic self-identification is itself a fascinating and complex process. For example, for immigrants to New York from Anglicized

countries in the West Indies such as Jamaica, Antigua, or British Giana, a "West Indies" self-identification is something which follows rather than precedes life in Brooklyn, where everyone wants to be represented in the West Indies parade.

Nevertheless, whatever the social, and political implications of this new multiplicity in American society, the fact of ethnic self-consciousness and the persistence of a middle level of social organization that stands between the individual and the state has raised many questions about the reality and social origins of psychological and ethical diversity among populations, and about the limited appropriateness of presumptive universalizing notions of normal psychological functioning, health, and human development. Cultural psychology addresses these questions in a disciplined way and helps us overcome the unwitting ethnocentrism of much social and psychological theory, and the limitations of various question-begging methodologies for research.

A related concern arises on an international scale. A major intellectual problem facing the Western liberal democracies in the contemporary world is to develop an appropriate understanding of cultural diversity. Perhaps thirty or forty years ago it was reasonable to predict that tribes would be replaced by individuals, that religious meanings would be replaced by scientific understandings, and that history was inclined in the direction of a homogenous world culture of capitalist consumers who all spoke Esperanto (or English). Today these are no longer secure (or even reasonable) predictions. Should current trends continue—the global reemergence of primordial ethnic identifications, the decline in the authority of the hegemonic bureaucratic state, the tension between market values and communal values in the world system—public policy debates are likely to hinge on the answer one gives to the problem of diversity. While it is important to acknowledge that diversity is not always a measure of health or well-being, it is crucial to recognize that differences are not necessarily a mark of deficiency or a lower stage of development. On a worldwide scale there may be no single optimal pattern for social and psychological functioning, although further investigation is necessary. Multiple equilibria states for successful health and psychological functioning must be empirically explored. The very idea of multiple equilibria states must be theoretically enriched.

The Institutional Context

Cultural psychology is concerned, in part, with the contexts (disciplinary, historical, and institutional) that support psychological (including cognitive) functioning, and the development of a discipline of cultural psychology is not independent of the institutions that give life to scholarly activities focused on culture, ethnicity, and the internationalization of social and psychological theory. There are indications from agencies such as the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), the Census Bureau, the General Accounting Office (GAO), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) that interest is

mounting within our public institutions for research on culture and ethnicity, with special interest in psychological and health processes and the role of local cultural models and norms of communication in the production and interpretation of answers to survey questions. One looks forward to the day when there might be an interdisciplinary National Science Foundation panel dedicated to those topics.

Nevertheless in the reemergence of cultural psychology, private research institutions (the MacArthur Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the W. T. Grant Foundation, the Social Science Research Council [SSRC], and others) have been the major innovators in the development of the field.

In particular, the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Successful Mid-Life Development (MIDMAC, chaired by G. Brim), the Research Network on Health-Related Behaviors (chaired by J. Rodin), and the Research Network on Successful Adolescence (chaired by R. Jessor) have supported various activities aimed at making research on health and human development not only interdisciplinary but culturally informed as well. They have sponsored conferences on such topics as *Ethnographic Approaches and Human Development* (organized by R. Jessor and A. Colby) and *Morality and Health* (organized by P. Rozin, A. Brandt, and S. Katz). An important sign of the times is the recent formation at the SSRC of a planning group on "Culture, Health, and Human Development" (co-chaired by A. Kleinman and R. LeVine) and an SSRC–MacArthur Foundation (MIDMAC) working group on ethnic and racial differences in developmental processes in New York City (chaired by L. Aber). The development of a cultural psychology has been relevant to the work of the Russell Sage Foundation on pluralism, immigration, and poverty; in principle, cultural psychology shares many intellectual aims with the international health interest of the Rockefeller Foundation and with the educational interests of the Spencer Foundation. The American Psychological Association recently sponsored the *International Conference on Culture and Emotion* (organized by S. Kitayama and H. Markus), and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences is undertaking a special project to develop the cultural psychology research agenda. Thus, for a diversity of reasons, in a variety of contexts, cultural psychology seems to be in the air at the permeable boundaries of several disciplines and at the place where social science concerns, social policy concerns, and real life concerns deserve to intersect.

CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: SOME ASSUMPTIONS

Our readers are well aware that the social sciences are rife with invidious distinctions and divisive (and arguably false) dichotomies (innate vs learned, internal vs external, quantitative vs qualitative, natural vs cultural, universal vs relative, scientific vs interpretive, essential vs constructed, etc) that greatly

facilitate the process of placing things in pigeonholes but all too often do so by short-circuiting the process of intellectual curiosity. In such an intellectual climate it is easy to misunderstand the aims and methods of a renewed cultural psychology: by mistakenly presuming that it is a version of an empty-organism learning theory, or that it is the study of cultural doctrines and ideologies rather than of lived realities, or that it is the voice of parochialism, solipsism, or radical relativism (see some of the concerns and criticisms expressed by Spiro 1984, 1986, 1990, 1992), or that it commits the error of essentializing group differences (see some of the concerns expressed by Gergen 1990; also Clifford & Marcus 1986; Kondo 1992). In order to clarify the aims of cultural psychology we offer three core assumptions of this reemerging field. We do not set forth these assumptions as canons or as orthodoxy but rather as a sample of the kinds of contestable assumptions that define current debates within the field.

We have already offered several initial definitions of the intellectual agenda of cultural psychology. One hallmark is its concern with cultural and ethnic divergences in the processes of consciousness. Cultural psychology endeavors to understand how such divergences relate to acts of interpretation and to the socially constructed meaning or representation of stimulus events. Systematic differences among populations have been found in the areas of attribution theory, categorization and similarity judgments, moral evaluation, processes of school learning, and in the organization of somatic and emotional responses to distress (Angel & Guarnaccia 1981; Angel & Idler 1992; Angel & Thoits 1987; J. Haidt et al, unpublished; Kleinman 1986; Markus & Kitayama 1992; J. G. Miller 1984; J. G. Miller & Bersoff 1992; Peak 1986; Pepitone & Triandis 1987; Shweder et al 1990; Stevenson & Stigler 1992; Stigler & Perry 1990; Tobin 1989).

For example, there are relatively well-documented systematic differences among populations in the organization of emotional and nonemotional (somatic) feeling states (Angel & Guarnaccia 1981; Angel & Idler 1992; Guarnaccia et al 1990; Kleinman 1986; Kleinman & Good 1985; Levy 1973, 1984; Shweder 1985, 1988, 1992a,b). In some populations various distress conditions (e.g. loss, goal blockage) are experienced and reacted to with nonemotional somatic feelings such as fatigue, chest pain, and headache. In other populations the same conditions are experienced and reacted to with emotional feelings such as anger or sadness. These differences in the processing of feeling states are automatic and unconscious, and display group level effects that call for explication in terms of local systems of meaning, value, and practice.

Whether such differences between populations should be conceptualized as the differential somatization of emotions or alternatively as the differential emotionalization of somatic experience is open for debate. Nevertheless, such group differences seem robust and systematic. They are evident, for example, on health surveys. Some populations seem far more likely than others to

experience or report physical symptoms. These group differences are also revealed in the magnitude and direction of discrepancy scores between self-ratings of health and the health ratings given by physicians after a physical examination. Puerto Rican and Mexican-American populations in the US, for example, tend to rate themselves as being in far poorer health than is indicated by the ratings of their health made by physicians using the standard of a biomedical examination. Discrepancies between self-ratings and physicians' ratings for Euro-American populations are usually smaller, and when there is a deviation, it tends to be in the other direction (Angel & Guarnaccia 1981; Angel & Idler 1992).

Such population differences raise practical questions about the interpretation of health survey responses to standard questions such as "How would you rate your overall health?" It is not just the interpretation of the words "health" and "overall" that is problematic. The meaning of "your" presents some fascinating problems as well. It is a plausible hypothesis that individuals in some ethnic groups are less willing to state that they are in excellent health or are less able to experience themselves in excellent health when other members of the family are suffering; new research is needed on cultural variations in the degree to which personal health and collective health are experienced as separate issues. Such population differences also raise provocative theoretical questions about the cultural construction of emotional and nonemotional feeling states and about the institutionalization of health norms (see below).

The major goals then of cultural psychology are to spell out the implicit meanings that shape psychological processes, to examine the distribution of these meanings across cultural groups, and to identify the manner of their social acquisition. We now discuss three of the core assumptions of the field: (a) that cultural psychology is the study of "experience-near" concepts, (b) that cultural learning is the refashioning of inherited complexity, and (c) that the study of cultural psychology does not necessitate the blanket denial of universals because cultural psychology is a form of pluralism and pluralism is a special form of universalism. Indeed, an appropriate slogan for the discipline of cultural psychology might well be "universalism without the uniformity."

The Study of "Experience-Near" Concepts

It is assumed in cultural psychology that acts of interpretation and representation can take place so rapidly and unconsciously that they are experienced by informants or subjects as indistinguishable from consciousness itself, thereby creating the naive realist illusion that acts of consciousness are unmediated or direct. In other words to study cultural psychology (e.g. of self, emotion, cognition, etc) in some designated population (e.g. !Kung Bushmen, Oriya Brahmans, or Anglo-American college students) is to carry out a study in a realm where it is possible to "know more than we can tell" (Nisbett & Wilson

1977) and where conceptualization (by which we mean equivalence class formation and constrained inferencing) occurs rapidly, subliminally, and without deliberate or reflective calculation.

Cultural psychology is the study of constituted or compiled experiences (what Geertz has called "experience-near" concepts) in contrast to explicated experiences ("experience-distant" concepts). As Geertz notes (1984b:125): "People use experience-near concepts spontaneously, unselfconsciously, as it were coloquially; they do not, except fleetingly and on occasion, recognize that there are any 'concepts' involved at all." In the study of the cultural psychology of self (emotion, cognition) in an ethnic or cultural group, one must determine the concepts and beliefs implicit in the individuals' self-functioning (emotional functioning, cognitive functioning, etc), regardless of whether the members of the group (correctly or incorrectly) acknowledge those concepts and beliefs or spell them out for themselves.

Precisely how, or indeed whether, concepts and beliefs are implicated in psychological functioning is a controversial issue, and the appeal to implicit representations is not everyone's cup of tea. For the sake of argument we shall assume (following Kirsh 1991:164) that there are many aspects of psychological functioning "that do not presuppose use of a [fully] articulated world model... but which clearly rely on concepts [nonetheless]"; that "when [e.g.] a person composes a sentence, he [or she] is making a subliminal choice among dozens of words in hundreds of milliseconds"; that "there can be no doubt that conceptual representations of some sort are involved, although how this is done remains a total mystery"; and that (again following Kirsh) "if in language, why not elsewhere?" (also see Epstein 1992).

We assume, as well, that one can invoke conceptual representations in the study of psychological functioning even if the psychological system does not always (or even ever) operate on conceptual representations per se as long as a conceptual translation of the psychological system is possible and a conceptual story can be told about how the psychological system is designed, constituted, or compiled.

Consider, for example, Markus & Kitayama's (1991) study of the cultural psychology of the self. The focus of the research is on something called a "conceptual representation of the self." A distinction is drawn between an "independent" and "interdependent" conceptual representation of the self, which Markus & Kitayama believe is useful in interpreting population differences (e.g. US vs Japan), in cognitive performance (e.g. counterfactual reasoning, similarity judgments), emotional experience (e.g. the predominant conditions that elicit many emotions, which emotions are expressed and experienced, and their intensity and frequency), and motivational functioning (e.g. the role of hedonic reward and the extent to which the maintenance of high self-regard becomes an addiction or fundamental motive). (With regard to research on contrastive conceptual representations of the self—independent vs interdependent, egocentric vs sociocentric, individualist vs collectivist—see

Bond et al 1982; Cousins 1989; Doi 1973, 1986; Dumont 1965, 1970; Geertz 1984b; Gilligan 1982; Kim & Choi 1992; Lebra 1976, 1983; Marriott 1976; J. G. Miller & Bersoff 1992; Smith Noricks et al 1987; Roland 1989; Rosaldo 1984; Sampson 1988; Shweder 1984; Shweder & Bourne 1984; Shweder et al 1990; Triandis 1989, 1990).

In other words, Markus & Kitayama's theory of "conceptual representations of the self" concerns thought in action, and their claims about cultural divergences in the conceptual representation of the self are not claims about cross-cultural variations in (official or heterodox) doctrines about the self that are encoded in collective representations, or even about an individual's explicit self-concept, except to the extent that collective representations and explicit self-concepts influence thought in action (as they sometimes do when they become part of a socially or personally enforced system of self-construction and control).

In this context a comment by Neisser (1988) is helpful. In his seminal essay on aspects of the self Neisser writes, with characteristic flare, "There is a remarkable variety in what people believe about themselves, and not all of it is true." We think the proper response, from the point of view of cultural psychology, ought to be [and here we paraphrase and extend a formulation in Kirsh 1991], "That's right! Introspection is a misleading indicator of when concepts and beliefs are causally involved in action and an even worse indicator of which concepts and beliefs are causally involved in action." In other words, no practitioner of cultural psychology should claim that a metaphysical speculation in a theological text must directly reflect the true functioning of the self in the everyday life of its author. One might, however, be inspired by the text to construct a theoretical model of a conceptual representation of the self that may prove useful in accounting for some people's psychological functioning.

The implication of the assumption that cultural psychology is first and foremost the study of experience-near concepts is this: If we study the cultural psychology of self (emotion, cognition, etc), we must construct our own theories about when, which, and how concepts and beliefs may be causally involved in a person's actions and reactions to the world. We must be careful not to confuse the study of the explicated self, which is conceptual all right because all articulated world models must be, with the study of the constituted or compiled self, which is not only conceptual but is (by our definition) that aspect of psychological functioning in which concepts and beliefs are causally involved in action.

In other words, "conceptual representation" designates a theoretical model, constructed by the investigator, that identifies those experience-near concepts that organize and help make sense of the actual psychological functioning of some person or people. Because the focus of research in cultural psychology is on experience-near concepts, the conceptual representations studied in cultural psychology are not necessarily equivalent to the native's explicit model of his

or her psychological world. Nevertheless, in principle, one cannot rule out the possibility that, in any particular study, the conceptual representation constructed by the investigator and the native's articulated model of his or her psychological world might converge. In practice they sometimes do.

Thus, for example, a cultural psychology study of a conceptual representation of a self with "permeable boundaries" does not primarily refer to a person's explicit self-concept or to a people's articulated folk concept. Instead it refers to a way of theoretically representing certain aspects of a person's or people's functioning, e.g. that they are vulnerable to spirit attack, trance, or hypnosis; that many personal events (a bad dream, a dark or ignoble thought) are experienced as ego-alien forces or pollutions that have entered the body and can be exorcised or washed away. The status of such theoretical models of the self is analogous to the status of a grammarian's representations of speech performance. Competent speakers of a language may have explicit folk models or theories about the grammar of their language (and those who study ethnolinguistic theories will want to document them), but such folk models are not a primary focus for the grammarian's theory of constituted or compiled language use.

In other words, explicated concepts and beliefs—for example, that the human body may become polluted because it is a temple for the soul (Shweder 1985), that mental life is animated by a god who makes perception and experience possible (Parish 1991), that part of a person cannot be seen and is also part of another world, that good beings are part of that world, that this unseen element enables one to be a good person, that this aspect never dies, that this part of a person connects one to a divine realm (Wierzbicka 1989), or, to switch from a Hindu and Christian to a Buddhist conceptualization of the self, that the sense of self is epiphenomenal and illusory and there really is no self at all (Huebner & Garrod 1991; also see Minsky 1985 for an analogous Buddhist-like conceptualization of artificial intelligence)—are theoretical constructs that have relevance for the study of the constituted or compiled self only to the extent that they illuminate some person or people's lived experience.

The question of the proper unit of analysis for cultural psychology, however, is not so readily resolved, and is thus far more interesting and dynamic than the easy separation of explicit models from constituted actualities or metaphysical musings from hard realities. In certain types of communities, with certain processes of social control, an explicated model (of self, emotion, etc) can be more than a metaphysical speculation or a hazardous personal hypothesis about oneself. With Neisser's cogent comment in mind, one might say that while there is remarkable cross-cultural variety in what people believe about themselves, there are also many processes at work—political processes involving power (sanctioning systems), social communication processes comprising the selective flow of symbols and meanings (for example, story-telling), intra-psychic processes involving self-monitoring and feelings of dignity,

esteem, shame, guilt, disgust, pollution, and humiliation—designed to make those beliefs and doctrines true, to compile the constituted self on the model of an explicated self, and to articulate and canonize a representation of a self that is modeled on what has already been constituted or compiled (see e.g. H. Fung, unpublished; Garvey 1992; LeVine 1984, 1990; M. Mahapatra et al, unpublished; P. Miller et al 1990, 1992; Ochs & Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs 1986; Shweder & Much 1987; Shweder et al 1992).

We predict that those who link the study of cultural psychology (the theoretical representation of the experience-near concepts that organize psychological functioning) with the study of ethno-psychology (the documentation of a culture's explicit models of and for psychological functioning; see D'Andrade 1987; Kurtz 1992; M. Sullivan, unpublished; White 1992a) will discover that some of the best theoretical models are derived from the articulated models of those cultures where what is explicated and what is constituted do not live separate lives. It is misleading to think that cultural conceptions must be located either outside the person or inside the person. In an authentic culture, cultural conceptions are likely assembled or reproduced in both places at once, and probably for good psychological reasons. Gibson's (1979) account of "affordances" seems relevant here. Culture and psyche "afford" each other, which is another way of saying they make each other up.

It has been necessary to discuss in detail the assumption that experience-near concepts are the proper unit of analysis for cultural psychology and to consider some of the complexities of that assumption. This emphasis is essential because there is considerable ambiguity in the anthropological literature about the meaning of the expression a "cultural conception of ... ." Where there is ambiguity there is bound to be "cross-talk," misunderstanding, and difficulty in fixing the topic for any debate (e.g. see the transcripts of the colloquy entitled "What is the problem of the self anyway?" in Shweder & LeVine 1984:12–17).

Thus, when some anthropologists write about a cultural conception of the self, they mean the explicated self—in the sense of church doctrine or another's official view of the self. This view is associated with a definition of a culture as a "cognitive system encoded in collective representations" (Spiro 1984:323–25). For Spiro, a cultural conception of the self, emotion, body, or gender is a tradition-laden set of ideas or meanings that can be formulated as a series of propositions and is encoded in collective representations rather than in the thoughts, feelings, or actions of any or all individuals. For Spiro a "cultural conception" of self, of emotion, etc) is definitely not in the head, or in the heart, or in the guts; it is something outside the person. (See also Spiro 1992, although his critique of cross-cultural studies of the self is somewhat vitiated when it is recognized that in cultural psychology a cultural conception refers primarily to the theoretical spelling out of an experience-near concept and not to an explicit ethno-psychological formulation by the native.)

For other anthropologists a cultural conception of the self means the consti-tuted or compiled self. This view is associated with a definition of a culture as precisely those meanings, conceptions, and interpretive schemes that are acti-vated, constructed, or brought on-line through participation in normative so-cial institutions and practices (including linguistic practices). In our own theoretical elaboration of this view (e.g. Shweder 1991b:18), a culture is a subset of "mind"; mind (assumed to be latently available and accessible through each individual's nervous system) is conceptualized as an "etic grid," a heterogeneous and inherently complex collection of all possible or available meanings. A culture, from this analytic perspective, is that subset of possible or available meanings, which by virtue of enculturation (informal or formal, implicit or explicit, unintended or intended) has so given shape to the psycho-logical processes of individuals in a society that those meanings have become, for those individuals, indistinguishable from experience itself. From this point of view, one important aspect of the study of cultural learning is to identify the social, political, and psychological processes that explain how, when, and which meanings are brought "on- and off-line," are turned into local essences, or are kept more or less permanently suppressed. A second aspect of the study of cultural learning is described below.

Cultural Learning as the Refashioning of Inherited Complexity

Cultural psychology assumes that cultural learning is usefully conceptualized as the refashioning of what is inherited, prior, built-in, or given. In human beings, as in other species, learning processes are not incompatible with the existence of an inherited system of complex forms. Indeed, learning may be thought of as the transformation of what is given by the past, and one of the goals of cultural psychology is to develop a theory of how those transforma-tions take place for the semiotic subject of cultural psychology, for whom the culturally and historically activated meaning of a situation or stimulus event is a major constraint on his or her response to it.

Sometimes cultural learning transformations take place because received or inherited forms that lacked meaning have been turned into symbolic forms (i.e. they become vehicles for local systems of signification). We refer to this type of cultural learning as a transformation through symbolization. This process is illustrated by the inversion of affective associations that takes place when English speakers listen to the sound patterns "queep" and "deep" (Whorf 1956:257). "Queep" is a sound pattern that has no meaning and, as a nonsense syllable, elicits a universal set of affective associations: Throughout the world the sound pattern "queep" is experienced in terms of affective tone as fast (not slow), narrow (not wide), sharp (not dull), light (not dark). Yet from a phonetic point of view "deep" and "queep" are very similar sound patterns, and indeed, on a worldwide scale they elicit the same set of associations (fast, narrow, sharp, light) from those peoples for whom both sounds are nonsense sounds. Yet "deep" is not a nonsense sound for English speakers; it is a sound pattern

with significance. Uniquely for English speakers the affective associations of the sound pattern "deep" are transformed, indeed inverted, by its meaning. Embedded in or appropriated to the semantics of the English lexicon, "deep" has acquired a parochial or culture-specific set of routine, automatic, and self-involving affective associations as slow, wide, dull, and dark.

A second type of cultural learning transformation takes place when the structures for experience made available within a local cultural world result in the differential activation, maintenance, or loss of available mental or symbolic forms. Following Werker (1989) we shall refer to this type of cultural learning as a "maintenance-loss" transformation. As Werker has shown through her research on listening in infants, infants come into the world with a detailed and elaborated capacity to detect categorical distinctions in sound. They are able to perceive exotic language-specific phonemic distinctions (e.g. the difference between an aspirated and unaspirated "t" sound in Hindi) that do not exist in the ambient language environment of their parents and that their own parents are unable to hear and have difficulty learning.

If this capacity of the infant is kept activated through even a small amount of second language learning during the second year of life (e.g. an American infant with English speaking parents who lives in India for the first 18 months of life and produces a few words of Hindi before returning to America), it is maintained into adulthood. More typically it disappears by the end of the first year of life, with the onset of exclusive single language learning. Here we have a case of apparent "unlearning," where a smaller subset of preexisting forms are kept alive, while a larger subset of preexisting forms become lost, dormant, or difficult to access.

One implication of our examples of cultural learning is that infants do not come into the world innocent or as blank slates. There is no tabula rasa. Cultural learning does not presuppose an empty organism. Infants are complex at birth and already primed with a nervous system that responds in structured ways to "deep" and "queep" as fast, sharp, light, and narrow, and is able to detect a heterogeneous set of exotic language-specific phonemic contrasts. Learning is the transformation of what is given and does not necessarily presuppose that infants come into the world naive or identical. In other words, human beings enter the world already equipped with a complex and heterogeneous array of differentiated interpretive schemes, some of which are activated and transformed throughout the life course.

A second implication of our examples is that there may be aspects of psychological functioning that are empirical universals in infancy but are not cross-cultural universals for adults. We do not mean to suggest that everyone is uniform at birth (see e.g. Freedman 1974; Super 1981 on population differences in neonatal response tendencies). Rather, it is our point that some things that are universally present in infancy are differentially lost or suppressed as a result of cultural learning, and the complexity and sophistication of the inherited past, which semiotic subjects bring with them into the world at birth, can

be reworked or refashioned in different ways through participation in the practices (including language and discourse practices) of a local and particularizing cultural world.

Universalism Without the Uniformity

A primary concern of cultural psychology is the divergences in the experience-near concepts that organize and make sense of population differences in normal psychological functioning. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that because cultural psychology is concerned with the divergent, discretionary, or optional aspects of normal psychological functioning, it denies that within a certain range of environments there may exist widely distributed or even universal features of a normal mental life (see Edgerton 1992). Whether or not there are empirical universals of the mental life, and what they are, is an empirical issue, which implies very little about the existence of an inherent or intrinsic feature of normal psychological functioning (again see Putnam 1987 for a critique of the intrinsic).

One can be an "anti anti-relativist" and an "anti anti-universalist" at the same time. Cultural psychology documents divergent forms of normal psychological functioning and critiques the idea of necessary or intrinsic processes of mind. Cultural psychology does not deny the possibility of empirical or contingent universals, for it is a mistake to assume that the idea of the intrinsic implies a universal distribution or that processes that are widely distributed must be intrinsic.

For example, we suspect that very few researchers would quarrel with LeVine's observation (Shweder & LeVine 1984:14) that "in all cultures there [is] some perception of the self as a continuous entity in time and as, in some sense, the same person. There [is] some kind of distinction between internal experience and external things." In other words, although the boundaries between internal and external may vary in scope and permeability across cultural communities, the concept of an individuated person or self is widely distributed across a broad range of cultural and informational environments, and there may in fact be no place where normal members of the society (religious virtuosos aside) conduct their lives as though they simply merged with one another.

Geertz (1984b:126), for example, whose essay on variations in the self in Bali, Java, and Morocco is both influential and controversial, is often quoted,

> The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural

background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures.

The beginning of the paragraph, however, is rarely quoted:

> But at least some conception of what a human individual is, as opposed to a rock, an animal, a rainstorm, or a god, is, so far as I can see universal.

Dumont, whose relativistic writings on the Western conception of the individual (1965, 1970) have also been influential and controversial, begins *Homo Hierarchicus* by drawing some distinctions. He writes,

> To start with, much imprecision and difficulty arises from failing to distinguish in the "individual": 1- *the empirical agent present in every society* in virtue of which he is the raw material of any sociology. 2- the rational being and *normative subject* of institutions; this is peculiar to us as shown by the value of equality and liberty.

In other words, Geertz and Dumont are not only anti anti-relativist; they are apparently anti anti-universalist as well. So are most researchers in cultural psychology, who believe that the constituted self is variable across temporal and spatial regions of the world, and that it is possible to characterize that variation with theoretical contrasts between independence vs interdependence, individualistic vs communal, egocentric vs socio-centric, autonomy vs community vs divinity, bounded vs permeable, and so forth (see e.g. Gaines 1982; Kim & Choi 1992; Markus & Kitayama 1991; Marriott 1976; J. G. Miller 1984; J. G. Miller & Bersoff 1992; Shweder & Bourne 1984; Shweder et al 1990; Shweder et al 1992; Triandis 1989, 1990). Essences reside in theoretical models. That is a proper place for them, before they are psychologically brought "on-line," only to be maintained or transformed through processes of cultural learning.

That the study of variety in psychological functioning is not burdened by a blanket denial of universals can be demonstrated by the study of the cultural psychology of the emotions. In recent years there has been much excitement in cultural psychology about research on variations in the emotional meanings (e.g. Ifaluk "fago," Pintupi "watjilpa," Newar "lajya," American "happiness," Ilongot "linget") that are brought "on-line" or constructed among different ethnic groups and in different regions of the world (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1985, 1986; Appadurai 1985; Brennis 1990; Briggs 1970; Epstein 1984; Fajans 1983; Geertz 1959; Gerber 1985; Good & Kleinman 1984; Heider 1991; Herdt 1990; Jenkins & Karno 1992; Kapferer 1979; Keeler 1983; Kleinman & Good 1985; Levy 1984; Levy & Wellenkamp 1989; Lutz & White 1986; Lynch 1990; Mesquita & Fridja 1992; Lutz 1982, 1988; P. Miller & Sperry 1987; Myers, 1979a,b; Parish 1991; Rosaldo 1980, 1983, 1984; Rozin & Nemeroff 1990; Russell 1991; Scherer et al 1986; Schieffelin 1976, 1983, 1985; Seymour 1983; Smedslund 1991; Solomon 1984; Stearns & Stearns 1988; Swartz 1988; Wierzbicka 1986, 1990; Wikan 1984, 1989). An approach to the com-

parative study of emotions is emerging in which, for the sake of establishing translation equivalence, emotions are viewed as complex intentional states that can be decomposed into parameters, components, frames, or "narrative slots" (see e.g. Ellsworth 1991; Lewis 1989; Mesquita & Fridja 1992; Russell 1991; Shweder 1985, 1992a,b; Stein & Levine 1987).

The cultural psychology of the emotions investigates whether cultural groups are alike or different in their emotional functioning by dividing that question into several more specific ones. While the questions or parameters vary somewhat from scholar to scholar, the following are worthy of note:

1. Environmental determinants: Are members of different cultural groups alike or different in the antecedent conditions of the world (e.g. violating a rule, job loss) that elicit somatic and affective feelings?
2. Self-appraisal: Are members of different cultural groups alike or different in the perceived implications for the self (e.g. status loss, fame, goal blockage) of those antecedent conditions of the world?
3. Somatic phenomenology: Are members of different cultural groups alike or different in their somatic reactions (e.g. muscle tension, headaches) to those antecedent conditions of the world?
4. Affective phenomenology: Are members of different cultural groups alike or different in their affective reactions (e.g. feelings of emptiness, calm, expansiveness) to those antecedent conditions of the world?
5. Social appraisal: Are members of different cultural groups alike or different in the extent to which displaying those somatic and affective reactions has been socially baptized a vice or virtue or a sign of sickness or health?
6. Self-management: Are members of different cultural groups alike or different in the plans for the management of self-esteem that are activated as part of an emotional action routine (e.g. withdrawal, celebration, attack)?
7. Communication: Are members of different cultural groups alike or different in the iconic or symbolic vehicles (e.g. facial expressions, voice, posture) for expressing the whole cluster of interconnected components (Questions 1–6 above)?

Given this decomposition of an emotion into its narrative slots, the cultural psychology of the emotions becomes, in part, the study of whether the variables from each of those slots display the same pattern of relationships across human groups. Notice, however, that this type of research in cultural psychology, which is aimed at characterizing differences in emotional functioning across human groups, presupposes the existence of a set of analytic or conceptual universals, which is the particular meta-language for comparison, in terms of narrative slots such as self-appraisal, social appraisal, and somatic phenomenology.

These various examples illustrate that one of the goals of theory in cultural psychology is to understand variety in the mental states and processes of others while avoiding the philosophical pitfalls and incoherences of claims of

variety without unity. Its aim is to document genuine differences without turning the other into an incomprehensible alien (or "stranger" as Spiro 1990 put it).

There are undoubtedly many ways to reconcile human variety with our common humanity. One way is to argue that what everyone has in common, what unifies and in a sense universalizes us is itself a heterogeneous complex of inherited psychological processes and forms. These processes and forms are activated, institutionalized, and rationalized by various cultures selectively and differentially, but considered as a complex whole and examined theoretically as an etic grid, make the study of cultural psychology possible. From this point of view psychic unity is what makes us imaginable to one another, not what makes us the same (see Shweder 1991a, 1991b:18), and the goal of theory in cultural psychology is to develop a conception of psychological pluralism or group difference psychology that might be described as "universalism without the uniformity." The future of the reemergent discipline of cultural psychology depends on the richness of just such a conception. How this theory of "universalism without the uniformity" will develop and whether it can be made fully convincing remains to be seen.

CONCLUSION: THE DECADE OF ETHNICITY

For a variety of compelling reasons—disciplinary, historical, institutional, theoretical, and empirical—a science concerned with diversity in health, human development, and psychological functioning has reemerged at the interface of anthropology and psychology under the banner of "cultural psychology." The 1990s is the decade of ethnicity. It should also be the decade when anthropologists and psychologists (and linguists and philosophers) unite to deepen our understanding of the varieties of normal human consciousness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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