Lesson 1

INTRODUCTION TO CROSS CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Cross-cultural psychology is the scientific study of human behavior and mental process, including both their variability and invariance, under diverse cultural conditions." (Ho & Wu, 2001, p. 4). Through expanding research methodologies to recognize cultural variance in behavior, language and meaning, it seeks to extend, develop and transform psychology. Central themes, such as affect, cognition, conceptions of the self, and issues such as psychopathology, anxiety, and depression, are all re-examined in cross-cultural psychology in an attempt to examine the universality of these concepts. Critics have pointed to methodological flaws in cross-cultural psychological research and claim that serious shortcomings in the theoretical and methodological basis used impede rather than help this scientific search for universality. Cross-cultural psychology is differentiated from Cultural Psychology. The latter is the branch of psychology that holds that human behavior is determined by unique individual cultures that can be compared with each other only to a very limited extent. In contrast, Cross-Cultural psychology includes a search for possible universals in behavior and mental processes. Various definitions of the field are given in Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (1992), including: "the scientific study of human behavior and its transmission, taking into account the ways in which behaviors are shaped and influenced by social and cultural forces" (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1990) (cited in Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen, 1992, p. 1); "the empirical study of members of various cultural groups who have had different experiences that lead to predictable and significant differences in behaviors" (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973; cited in Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen, 1992, p. 1). These authors define [culture] as "the shared way of life of a group of people" (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen, 1992, p. 1). Early work in cross-cultural psychology was suggested in Lazarus and Steinthal's journal *Zeitschrift fur Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* [Journal of Folk Psychology and Language Science] which began to be published in 1860. More empirically oriented research was subsequently conducted by William H. R. Rivers (1864-1922) who attempted to measure the intelligence and sensory acuity of indigenous people residing in the Torres Straits area, located between Australia and New Guinea (Jahoda, 1993).

Two possible approaches of cross cultural psychology:

It is quite common for cross-cultural psychologists to take one of two possible approaches:

Etic approach: emphasizes similarities of cultures.

Emic approach: emphasizes differences between cultures (Smith & Bond, 1982). Generally speaking, it is received wisdom that traditional agriculture-based societies have more collectivist cultures than modern "information societies." Various factors on which cultures have been compared are discussed by Berry et al., including:

1.Child rearing. Berry et al. refer to evidence that a number of different dimensions have been found in cross-cultural comparisons of child-rearing practices, including differences on the dimensions of obedience training, nurturance training (the degree to which a sibling will care for other siblings or for older people), achievement training, responsibility training, self-reliance and autonomy;

2. Differences in personality variables such as locus of control:

Williams and Best (1990) have looked at different societies in terms of prevailing gender stereotypes, gender-linked self-perceptions and gender roles. They both find universal similarities as well as differences between and within more than 30 nations. The rise of cross-cultural psychology reflects a more general process of globalization in the social sciences that seeks to purify specific areas of research have western biases. In this way, cross-cultural psychology together with international psychology aims to make psychology less ethnocentric in character. Cross-cultural psychology is now taught at numerous universities located around the world, both as a specific content area as well as a methodological approach designed to broaden the field of psychology.

Before study cross cultural psychology we should know what culture is.

CULTURE

Some definitions:

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

Culture is communication, communication is culture.

Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning.

A culture is a way of life of a group of people the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Culture is symbolic communication. Some of its symbols include a group's skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives. The meanings of the symbols are learned and deliberately perpetuated in a society through its institutions.

Culture is the sum of total of the learned behavior of a group of people that are generally considered to be the tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation.

Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

Theory of cultural determinism

The position that the ideas, meanings, beliefs and values people learn as members of society determines human nature. People are what they learn. Optimistic version of cultural determinism places no limits on the abilities of human beings to do or to be whatever they want. Some anthropologists suggest that there is no universal "right way" of being human. "Right way" is almost always "our way"; that "our way" in one society almost never corresponds to "our way" in any other society. Proper attitude of an informed human being could only be that of tolerance.

The optimistic version of this theory postulates that human nature being infinitely malleable; human being can choose the ways of life they prefer.

The pessimistic version maintains that people are what they are conditioned to be; this is something over which they have no control. Human beings are passive creatures and do whatever their culture tells them to do. This explanation leads to behaviorism that locates the causes of human behavior in a realm that is totally beyond human control.

Cultural relativism

Different cultural groups think, feel, and act differently. There are no scientific standards for considering one group as intrinsically superior or inferior to another. Studying differences in culture among groups and societies presupposes a position of cultural relativism. It does not imply normalcy for oneself, nor for one's society. It, however, calls for judgment when dealing with groups or societies different from one's own. Information about the nature of cultural differences between societies, their roots, and their consequences should precede judgment and action. Negotiation is more likely to succeed when the parties concerned understand the reasons for the differences in viewpoints.

Manifestations of culture

Cultural differences manifest themselves in different ways and differing levels of depth. Symbols represent the most superficial and value the deepest manifestations of culture, with heroes and rituals in between.

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share a particular culture. New symbols easily develop, old ones disappear. Symbols from one particular group are regularly copied by others. This is why symbols represent the outermost layer of a culture.

Heroes are persons, past or present, real or fictitious, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture. They also serve as models for behavior.

Rituals are collective activities, sometimes superfluous in reaching desired objectives, but are considered as socially essential. They are therefore carried out most of the times for their own sake (ways of greetings, paying respect to others, religious and social ceremonies, etc.).

The core of a culture is formed by values. They are broad tendencies for preferences of certain state of affairs to others (good-evil, right-wrong, natural-unnatural). Many values remain unconscious to those who hold them. Therefore they often cannot be discussed, nor they can be directly observed by others. Values can only be inferred from the way people act under different circumstances.

Symbols, heroes, and rituals are the tangible or visual aspects of the practices of a culture. The true cultural meaning of the practices is intangible; this is revealed only when the practices are interpreted by the insiders.

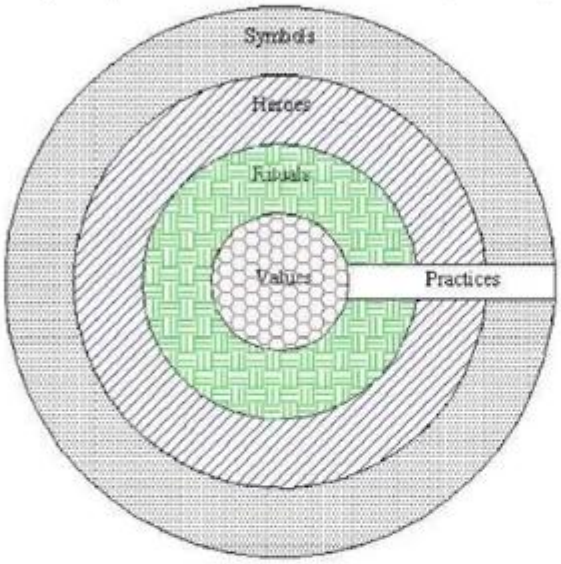

Figure 1. Manifestation of Culture at Different Levels of Depth

Layers of culture

People even within the same culture carry several layers of mental programming within themselves. Different layers of culture exist at the following levels:

The national level: Associated with the nation as a whole.

The regional level: Associated with ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences that exist within a nation.

The gender level: Associated with gender differences (female vs. male)

The generation level: Associated with the differences between grandparents and parents, parents and children.

The social class level: Associated with educational opportunities and differences in occupation.

The corporate level: Associated with the particular culture of an organization. Applicable to those who are employed.

The concepts of culture, ethnicity, diversity, and the misused term "race" (Segall, 1999) have been part of psychology's vocabulary for many years-even going back to Wilhelm Wundt and his interest in Folk Psychology and the 11 volumes he published under that title. But it wasn't until about the mid-1960s that a convergence of independent events and efforts led to what has been called the "modern movement" in cross-cultural psychology. This confluence of activities and initiatives led to the creation, in 1972, of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP), an organization consisting of approximately 800 psychologists from some 70 countries. These individuals strongly identify with IACCP and its basic mission of extending psychology's horizons beyond the traditional Euro-American sphere that has dominated the

discipline for many years. IACCP holds both international and regional meetings, and is central to organizational and professional matters. The 25th anniversary conference was held at Western Washington University in 1998.

What are the important reasons, behind the development of cross cultural psychology.

Most cross-cultural psychologists share the opinion that the only way psychology can reach the highest level of scientific achievement and influence, on par with sciences such as chemistry and physics, is to extend its investigations to all corners of the world. Indeed, if generalizability is a necessary ingredient of what defines a "true" science, then one may ask if psychology falls somewhat short when compared with the so-called "hard" sciences.

Another important point for is, a large number of questions may be asked in the search for commonalities or universals. For example, are laws of learning, memory, perception, and other basic processes as applicable in Afghanistan, Benin, Chile, Egypt, and indeed anywhere else on the planet as they are in Anaheim, Chattanooga, or Bellingham, Washington, where I live? If not, what accounts for variations? Is conformity the same everywhere? Is depression to be understood in exactly the same way in all corners of the world? Open an introductory psychology text to four or five pages at random (perhaps excluding statistics and basic physiological processes--but don't close the book on how culture may influence those, either) and ask yourself if the topics on those pages are culturally invariant. And if you are convinced that they are, what is your evidence?

Why Many Psychologists Ignore or Resist the Challenge of Incorporating Culture in Their Work

There are many reasons why psychologists may not want to get involved with other cultures. Formidable methodological problems (see below) may inhibit many scholars, and difficulties in acquiring adequate funding for research is another reason that may result in researchers deciding to stay home to enjoy the comfortable and familiar trappings of their own laboratories, language, customs, and values. Another inhibiting factor has been a tendency for many people to compartmentalize disciplines, which carries with it the argument that the study of culture should be left to the anthropologists and sociologists. Moreover, many instructors may shy away from cultural topics either because they don't have time in their already jam-packed syllabi or feel ill-prepared to deal with the complexities of culture. Who wants to appear ill-informed in front of admiring students?

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What Do Cross-Cultural Psychologists Do, and Why?

Cross-cultural psychologists would hardly disagree with the definition of psychology and the listing of its goals as found; for instance, in standard introductory psychology texts (e.g., psychology is the systematic study of human thought and behavior). In a very real sense cross-cultural psychology is not a separate, fractionated "field" unto itself but a methodological approach, on par with the experimental, physiological, quantitative, and clinical approaches. The special nature of cross-cultural psychology requires, as noted earlier, that the challenges of rather trenchant methodological problems be met. For example, problems of equivalence (conceptual, linguistic, and metric) must be solved. Also, various problems associated with sampling require creative solutions. In a sophisticated research design, one must ask important questions: Which cultures are to be studied, and why? Which communities and individuals should be selected, and why? And precisely which behaviors should receive detailed attention? These are difficult matters to confront effectively and convincingly. However, there are excellent overviews of how to define and approach methodological problems (e.g., Berry et al., 1997, and van de Vijver & Leung, 1997).

The breadth of what cross-cultural psychologists study is astonishing, and it reflects the heterogeneity of mainstream psychology. Thus we see how emotions are regulated differently in various cultures, how anxiety is manifested and controlled as a function of family type, how culture shapes conceptions of the self, and whether writing Chinese characters affect performance on various Piagetian tasks. Cross-cultural psychologists study the consequences of rapid relocation, they try to determine if Gypsy children develop intellectually like other

children, and they attempt to assess if and how cultural beliefs affect recovery from radical surgery. They frequently attempt to determine if human personality is structured in basically the same way everywhere, and if age-related declines in cognition are pancultural. It is clear that any psychological topic or concept can be extended to other cultures and tested to determine how safe it may be to generalize.

Cultural psychology is a field of psychology which assumes the idea that culture and mind are inseparable, thus there are no universal laws for how the mind works and that psychological theories grounded in one culture are likely to be limited in applicability when applied to a different culture. As Richard Shweder, one of the major proponents of the field, writes, "Cultural psychology is the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, and transform the human psyche, resulting less in psychic unity for humankind than in ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotion" (1991, p. 72).

Cultural psychology has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s but became more prominent in the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the classic texts promoting cultural psychology include Shweder and Levine (1984), Triandis (1989), Bruner (1990) Shweder (1991), Markus and Kitayama (1991), Cole (1996), Nisbett & Cohen (1996), Shore (1996), Fiske, et al. (1998), Nisbett, et al. (2001) and Nisbett (2003). Cultural psychologists generally use either ethnographic or experimental methods (or a combination of both) for collecting data

Cultural psychology is distinct from cross cultural psychology in that the 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. 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.

Cultural psychology research informs several fields within psychology, including social psychology, developmental psychology and cognitive psychology. However, the relativist perspective of cultural psychology tends to clash with the universalist perspectives common in most fields in psychology.

One of the most significant themes in recent years has been cultural differences between East Asians and North Americans in attention (Masuda & Nisbett, 2001) perception (Kitayama, et al., 2003), cognition (Nisbett, et al. 2001) and social psychological phenomena such as the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Some (Turiel) have argued that this research is based on cultural stereotyping and faulty methodology (Matsumoto). However, proponents of cultural psychology have countered these critics with evidence suggesting that such criticisms are based on an over-emphasis of cross-cultural comparisons of self-reported attitudes and values, which are relatively unstable and ultimately misleading (Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002, Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997). Instead, relying on experimental and ethnographic evidence of deeper level mental processes, which are relatively more stable and more reflective of tacit cultural and historical influences, has been what cultural psychology is about (Kitayama, 2002, Nisbett, 2003).

According to Richard Shweder (1991), the main finding of a universalistic approach to cross-cultural psychology has been the repeated failure to replicate Western laboratory findings in non-Western settings. Therefore, a major goal of cultural psychology is to have divergent cultures inform basic psychological theories in order to refine and/or expand these theories so that they become more relevant to the predictions, descriptions, and explanations of ALL human behaviors, not just Western ones (Markus & Kitayama, 2003).

Traditional culture: The term used to describe cultures based largely on beliefs, rules, symbols, and principles established

- predominantly in the past
- confined in local or regional boundaries
- restricting
- mostly intolerant to social innovations
-

Non-Traditional culture: The term used to describe cultures based largely on modern beliefs, rules, symbols, and principles

- relatively open to other cultures
- absorbing and dynamic

- science-based and technology-driven
- relatively tolerant to social innovations

Comparisons between traditional and Non-traditional cultures

Traditional cultures	Non-traditional cultures
Most social roles are prescribed to individuals.	Most social roles are achieved by individuals.
In evaluations of individual behavior, the emphasis is placed on custom and routine.	In evaluations of individual behavior, the emphasis is placed on individual choice.
There is a clear distinction between good and evil in human behavior.	The distinction between good and evil in human behavior is relative.
Truth is not debatable; it is established and does not change.	Truth is revealed through the competition of ideas.
Individuals' choices are restricted to the boundaries of social prescriptions. Example: Premarital, extramarital, and homosexual behaviors are restricted.	Individuals' choices are not strongly restricted to the boundaries of social prescriptions. Example: Premarital, extramarital, and homosexual behaviors are generally tolerated.

Culture:
A set of attitudes, behaviors, and symbols shared by a group of people and usually communicated from one generation to the next.

Ethnicity:
A cultural heritage shared by a category of people who also share a common ancestral origin and language.

Nation:
A large group of people who constitute a legitimate, independent state, and share a common geographical origin, history, and frequently language.

Race:
A large group of people distinguished by certain similar and genetically transmitted physical characteristics.

Lesson 2

METHODOLOGY OF CROSS CULTURAL RESEARCH

Introduction to Cross Cultural psychology:

Cross-cultural psychology is the critical and comparative study of cultural effects on human psychology. As a comparative field, cross-cultural psychology draws its conclusions from at least two samples that represent at least two cultural groups. The act of comparison requires a particular set of critical thinking skills. Cross-cultural psychology examines psychological diversity and the underlying reasons for such diversity. Using a comparative approach, cross-cultural psychology examines the links between cultural norms and behavior and the ways in which particular human activities are influenced by various cultural forces. Cross-cultural psychology establishes psychological universals, that is, phenomena common for people in several, many, or perhaps all cultures. Cultural psychology seeks to discover meaningful links between culture and psychology of individuals living in this culture. At least four types of knowledge about psychology can be recognized: scientific, popular (folk), ideological (value-based), and legal. It is critical for cross-cultural psychologists to treat all types of knowledge with sensitivity, understanding, and respect. No society is culturally homogeneous. There are no cultures that are either entirely similar or completely different. Within the same cultural cluster there can be significant variations, inconsistencies, and dissimilarities. Cross-cultural psychologists establish and conceptualize the main culture's features in terms of cultural dichotomies. Among such dichotomies are high- versus low-power distance, high- versus low-uncertainly avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and collectivism versus individualism. Sociobiology is a theoretical model that explores the ways in which biological factors affect human behavior and thus lay a natural foundation for human culture. The sociological approach focuses on broad social structures that influence society as a whole, and subsequently its individuals. There are particular social forces that shape the behavior of large social groups, and human beings develop and adjust their individual responses in accordance to the demands and pressures of larger social groups and institutions. According to an ecocultural approach to cross-cultural psychology, the individual cannot be separated from his or her environmental context. People constantly exchange messages with the environment, thus transforming it and themselves. According to a "culture mixtures" approach, researchers should switch their attention from traditional views on culture to new cultural mixtures, contact zones, interconnected systems, and multiple cultural identities. An "integrative" approach to cross-cultural psychology emphasizes human activity, a process of the individual's goal-directed interaction with the environment. Human motivation, emotion, thought, and reactions cannot be separated from human activity, which is (1) determined by individual, socioeconomic, environmental, political, and cultural conditions, and also (2) changes these conditions. Two factors, presence of and access to resources, largely determine type, scope, and direction of human activities. Indigenous theories are characterized by the use of conceptions and methodologies associated exclusively with the cultural group under investigation. Indigenous psychology is the scientific study of human behavior or the mind, and is designed for a people and native, not transported from other regions. Ethnocentrism is the view that supports judgment about other ethnic, national, and cultural groups and events from the observer's own ethnic, national, or cultural group's outlook. Multiculturalism is a view that encourages recognition of equality for all cultural and national groups and promotes the idea that various cultural groups have the right to follow their own unique paths of development and have their own unique activities, values, and norms.

Methodology of Cross-Cultural Research

There are four basic goals of research in cross-cultural psychology: description, interpretation, prediction, and management. After identifying the goals, the researcher has to choose a methodological approach that is most appropriate for the implementation of these goals. In general, research methodology in cross-cultural psychology can be divided into two categories: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative research in cross-cultural psychology involves the measurement of certain aspects of human activity from a comparative perspective. The variables chosen for examination have to be studied empirically, primarily through observation, as opposed to other forms of reflection, such as intuition, beliefs, or superstitions. The most common data are measures of central tendency: the mode, the median, and the mean. There are four types of measurement scales: nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio.

Nominal Scale: A nominal scale is really a list of categories to which objects can be classified. For example, people who receive a mail order offer might be classified as "no response," "purchase and pay," "purchase but return the product," and "purchase and neither pay nor return." The data so classified are termed categorical data.

Ordinal Scale: An ordinal scale is a measurement scale that assigns values to objects based on their ranking with respect to one another. For example, a doctor might use a scale of 0-10 to indicate degree of improvement in some condition, from 0 (no improvement) to 10 (disappearance of the condition). While you know that a 4 is better than a 2, there is no implication that a 4 is twice as good as a 2. Nor is the improvement from 2 to 4 necessarily the same "amount" of improvement as the improvement from 6 to 8. All we know is that there are 11 categories, with 1 being better than 0, 2 being better than 1, etc.

Interval Scale: An interval scale is a measurement scale in which a certain distance along the scale means the same thing no matter where on the scale you are, but where "0" on the scale does not represent the absence of the thing being measured. Fahrenheit and Celsius temperature scales are examples.

Ratio Scale: A ratio scale is a measurement scale in which a certain distance along the scale means the same thing no matter where on the scale you are, and where "0" on the scale represents the absence of the thing being measured. Thus a "4" on such a scale implies twice as much of the thing being measured as a "2."
Another important step is sampling.

Definition of sampling:
In research methods and statistics, a number of individuals selected from a population to test hypothesis about the population or to derive estimates of its parameters.

Types of samples
The best sampling is probability sampling, because it increases the likelihood of obtaining samples that are representative of the population.

Probability sampling (Representative samples)
Probability samples are selected in such a way as to be representative of the population. They provide the most valid or credible results because they reflect the characteristics of the population from which they are selected (e.g., residents of a particular community, students at an elementary school, etc.). There are two types of probability samples: random and stratified.

Random sample
The term random has a very precise meaning. Each individual in the population of interest has an equal likelihood of selection. This is a very strict meaning -- you can't just collect responses on the street and have a random sample.
The assumption of an equal chance of selection means that sources such as a telephone book or voter registration lists are not adequate for providing a random sample of a community. In both these cases there will be a number of residents whose names are not listed. Telephone surveys get around this problem by random-digit dialing -- but that assumes that everyone in the population has a telephone. The key to random selection is that there is no bias involved in the selection of the sample. Any variation between the sample characteristics and the population characteristics is only a matter of chance.

Stratified sample
A stratified sample is a mini-reproduction of the population. Before sampling, the population is divided into characteristics of importance for the research. For example, by gender, social class, education level, religion, etc. Then the population is randomly sampled within each category or stratum. If 38% of the population is college-educated, then 38% of the sample is randomly selected from the college-educated population.

Stratified samples are as good as or better than random samples, but they require fairly detailed advance knowledge of the population characteristics, and therefore are more difficult to construct.

Non probability samples (Non-representative samples)

As they are not truly representative, non-probability samples are less desirable than probability samples. However, a researcher may not be able to obtain a random or stratified sample, or it may be too expensive. A researcher may not care about generalizing to a larger population. The validity of non-probability samples can be increased by trying to approximate random selection, and by eliminating as many sources of bias as possible.

Quota sample

The defining characteristic of a quota sample is that the researcher deliberately sets the proportions of levels or strata within the sample. This is generally done to insure the inclusion of a particular segment of the population. The proportions may or may not differ dramatically from the actual proportion in the population. The researcher sets a **quota**, independent of population characteristics.

Two of each species

Example: A researcher is interested in the attitudes of members of different religions towards the death penalty. In Iowa a random sample might miss Muslims (because there are not many in that state). To be sure of their inclusion, a researcher could set a quota of 3% Muslim for the sample. However, the sample will no longer be representative of the actual proportions in the population. This may limit generalizing to the state population. But the quota will guarantee that the views of Muslims are represented in the survey.

Purposive sample

A purposive sample is a non-representative subset of some larger population, and is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose. A researcher may have a specific group in mind, such as high level business executives. It may not be possible to specify the population -- they would not all be known, and access will be difficult. The researcher will attempt to zero in on the target group, interviewing whoever is available.

A subset of a purposive sample is a snowball sample -- so named because one picks up the sample along the way, analogous to a snowball accumulating snow. A snowball sample is achieved by asking a participant to suggest someone else who might be willing or appropriate for the study. Snowball samples are particularly useful in hard-to-track populations, such as truants, drug users, etc.

Convenience sample

A convenience sample is a matter of taking what you can get. It is an accidental sample. Although selection may be unguided, it probably is not random, using the correct definition of everyone in the population having an equal chance of being selected. Volunteers would constitute a convenience sample.

Non-probability samples are limited with regard to generalization. Because they do not truly represent a population, we cannot make valid inferences about the larger group from which they are drawn. Validity can be increased by approximating random selection as much as possible, and making every attempt to avoid introducing bias into sample selection.

One strategy is availability or convenience sampling. Another type of sampling, called systematic, involves the psychologist selecting national or ethnic samples according to a theory or some theoretical assumption. A third sampling strategy is random sampling. In this case, a large sample of countries or groups is randomly chosen, that is, any country or group has an equal chance of being selected in the research sample.

Research methods in psychology

Scientific method in psychology

The scientific method is an approach that practitioners of psychology are interested in for assessing, measuring, and predicting behavior. It is the process of appropriately framing and properly answering questions. It is used by psychologists and those engaged in other scientific disciplines, to come to an understanding about the world.

Scientific Nature of Psychology

Psychology is a science

Science: An approach using the scientific method for the observation, description, understanding, and prediction of any phenomenon

Scientific method: The procedure employing a systematic, pre defined, series of steps for attaining optimal efficiency, accuracy, and objectivity in investigating the problem of interest

Systematic: it follows a specified system, an organized ways of collecting and tabulating information.

Pre defined series of steps: certain steps following a specific sequence that is not to be altered; disruption of the sequence will ruin the essence of the approach

Objectivity: It is unbiased; the researcher's likes and dislikes do not interfere with the study or its findings

Steps of Scientific Method

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Identifying the research problem

The most important step while conducting research is identify and specify the area of interest in which one is going to conduct a research. The research problem can be identified in many ways, including personal interest, brainstorming, scientific developments, knowledge etc.

Review of the related literature

Searching the research findings in relation with the research one is going to conduct, in order to see how others approached the same or similar issues. Also, it can give some idea as to what would be the probable outcome of one's research.

Formulation of hypotheses

A hypothesis is a speculative statement about the relationship between two or more variables. By reviewing the related literature, one is able to formulate the hypotheses pertaining to the variables of interest. Reviewing the related research articles helps one formulate various hypotheses.

Designing and conducting the research

After reviewing the related literature and making hypotheses,

The research is conducted by using different strategies such as Questionnaires, mail interviews, telephonic interviews, face to face

Interviews, etc. A variety of research designs is available to the Researchers can choose the one that best suits their study.

Analysis of data

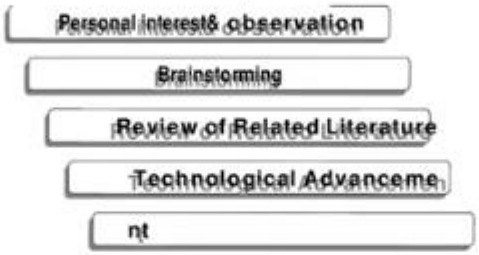
After collecting information, the data will be tabulated with the help of statistical methods and computation in order to see whether the finding prove or disprove the hypotheses.

Drawing conclusions

Conclusions are drawn after the statistical analysis of data. On the basis of this, a decision is made about the rejection or acceptance of the hypothesis.

Identifying a Research Problem

Research problems can be identified in a number of ways:



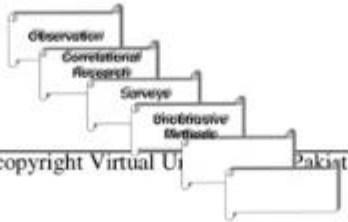
Non manipulative/descriptive Methods

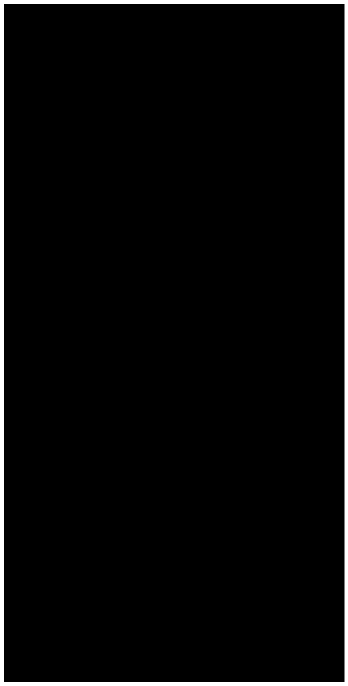
The methods in which the phenomenon of interest is studied the way it exists in nature. The researcher does not interfere with the events, and acts as a passive recorder.

Manipulative/Experimental Methods

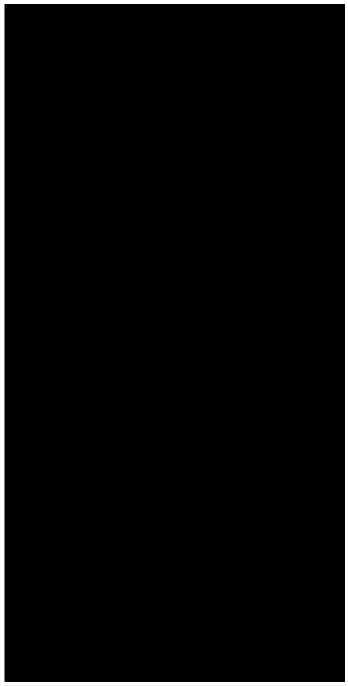
The methods that is responsible for the scientific nature of psychology. In these methods the researcher exercises control over the variables and events. He may introduce variables of interest, or may withhold them. These methods are used for determining cause and effect relationships.

Descriptive Research Methods





Case Studies
Focus groups
Meta
analysis



Observation
Systematic observation is used one of the methods most frequently employed by anthropologists, sociologists and ethnologists.
Phenomenon of interest is observed, studied, and the observations are recorded.
The recorded observations are analyzed.
Conclusions are drawn on the basis of analysis.

Types of observation
1. Observation without Intervention
2. Observation with Intervention

Observation without Intervention
Naturalistic Observation
Type of observation in which the phenomenon of interest is studied/observed in the natural setting without any interference by the observer; The observer may make narrative records, take field notes, use audio or video equipment, or may use a combination of some or all strategies.

Observation with Intervention
The observer intervenes, and manipulates the situation, events and/or variables in order to
Create a situation which does not occur frequently
Test the impact of variables on behavior
Gain access to a situation that is otherwise not accessible or open to observation
Types of "Observation with Intervention"
Participant Observation
Structured Observation
Field experiments

Participant Observation
The observer becomes a part of the situation and plays an active and significant role in the situation, event, or context under study. It can be of two types:
Disguised Participant Observation
Undisguised Participant Observation

Structured Observation
Employed when the researcher intends to study a situation, which occurs infrequently or is inaccessible otherwise.
The observer may "create" a situation or initiate it.
The control exercised by the observer is less than that in many other techniques.
Mostly employed by clinical and developmental psychologists.

Field Experiments
Experiments in the natural setting; the degree of control is far less than that in laboratory experiments.
One or more independent variables are manipulated in the natural setting in order to see their impact on behavior.
Confederate: the researcher is assisted by one or more confederates who behave in a pre-planned manner so as to initiate an experimental condition.

Correlation Research
A method used for identifying predictive relationships among naturally occurring variables.
Correlation Can be said to exist when two different measures of the same individuals, objects, or events vary together e.g. Relationship between I.Q. score & academic achievement or entry test marks & academic achievement. Correlation is a statistical concept.

Nature of Correlation
Positive Correlation
Negative Correlation
Zero Correlation

Measures in Correlation Research
Questionnaires: can be used in- person, can be mailed, or used via Internet.
Interviews: can be personal and face-to-face, or telephonic.
Official Record: Official statistics, raw data, crime records etc.
Remember!!! Correlation is not causation

Surveys
Most frequently used method for obtaining information quickly and evaluating people's interest, liking, disliking and opinions without indulging in long- term procedures and techniques. It is also easily used because it is a cheap method and information is gathered without much difficulty.
Surveys consist of presenting a series of questions or statements to the participants, and asking them to respond.
Surveys are used when quick information is required in limited time e.g. opinion polls, product preference.
Also useful when information is required from a large number of people e.g. population census
More suitable when the goal of the study is to find out about public opinion, attitudes, preferences, like and dislikes etc

Sources of data/information in Surveys:
Questionnaires: in person, mailed, internet
Interviews: personal, telephonic
Newspaper Surveys
Steps involve in conducting the research: There are mainly five steps, which are essential while conducting surveys i.e.

Conceiving the problem:
The purpose of the study must be carefully thought out and precisely defined. How is the information to be used? From whom it is obtained? What kind of information to be gathered etc.

Designing the instrument:
There are numerous ways by which information can be gathered form the general public such as mailed questionnaires, telephonic interviews, through internet etc. It must be carefully thought that which procedure is most effective in obtaining the needed information.

Sampling the population:
The problem of obtaining a representative sample of the population is one of the most difficult as well as significant in the field of measuring popular reactions. The sample to be studied must be drawn in such a manner the each individual has an equal chance of being selected, and that the drawing of one does not influence the chances of any other being drawn. With this procedure, each age, sex, income, religious and ethnic group in the population will be proportionately represented in the sample. Off course there are a number of ways of properly drawing a sample.

Conducting interviews: Even when the questions are carefully worded and carefully designed, a poor interviewer can bias the results. Experiments have shown that females are the best interviewers: at least 21 years of age, who like people, who are unbiased, who are good listeners, who have some college education, and who are fairly familiar with the section they are working in.

Interpreting the results:

Even when all the findings are carried out properly, there is always a chance of misinterpreting the results. Errors in questionnaires, statistical methods, and investigator's own subjectivity can easily bias the results

Unobtrusive Measures of Behavior
Indirect ways of data collection: The person /s that is the focus of interest may not be present at the time of investigation
It may be used for supplementing information collected through observation. It may be used as a replacement of observation. In situations where direct observation is not possible

Unobtrusive measures of behavior include:
Archival data
Physical Traces

Mcqs point of view se

Archival data
Already existing records, documents, different forms of literature, newspaper items, photographs, movies, documentaries, biographies, autobiographies etc are used as evidence/ information e.g. using newspaper records to study the rate of crime during the past 20 years. May be used to supplement data gathered through other sources

Physical Traces Bs dekhna he iskooo
Remains, remnants, fragments, objects and products of past behavior are used as evidence; usually employed to supplement data from other sources.
Physical traces can be of two types
Use traces
Products

Use traces
Cues to the use or nonuse of objects and items provide significant evidence e.g. wall chalking, graffiti on walls of public places, milk cartons or tissue boxes in the garbage bags

Products
Study of products, tools, weapons, sculpture etc used less frequently than physical traces.

Content Analysis
Part of archival research: An approach for systematically categorizing and analyzing the content of the behavior or its related aspects / variables being studied.
The analysis may cover contents of live human behavior, books, journals, magazines, poetry, drama, movies, folktales, TV programs, school textbooks and curricula, advertisements etc.
Inferences are made and conclusions are drawn after objective identification of specific characteristics of contents. Content analysis is done keeping specific goals, objectives, themes and constructs in mind.
Example: Content analysis of textbooks with reference to gender equity and equality; analysis of TV programs with reference to portrayal of women.

Focus Groups
A variety of interviews conducted in a group setting. The researcher talks to the participants in order to learn about their opinions, attitudes, preferences, and likes/dislikes and tries to find out their reasons/cause. Used as a source of data collection in surveys but also used otherwise as well.

Meta Analysis Not important
A statistics based method. A way of reviewing existing research literature in the same field, about the same phenomena The analysis covers the results of several independent experiments within the same field
Computer aided statistical analysis yields overall conclusions

Experimental Research

Experimental method: the use of experimentation for studying a phenomenon.
Experimental design: the plan/structure/lay out of an experiment.
Experiment: the variable of interest (independent variable) is manipulated/ altered and the effect of this manipulation is studied.

Why experiments are conducted?

For testing hypotheses
To test the impact of a treatment or a program on behavior
The main feature of experimentation is CONTROL; keeping all those variables and conditions under control, that can have an impact on the findings of the study i.e., variables that can interfere with the impact of the independent variable.

Variables

Independent Variable b
Dependent Variable
Control Variable

Independent Variable (IV): The variable whose impact is being studied; that is manipulated…in terms of kind or level
Dependent Variable (DV): The measure of behavior on which the impact of independent variable is being studied
Control variable (CV): A potential independent variable that can have an impact upon dependent variable; it has to be controlled
Groups in a Typical Experiment
Experimental Group: This is treated with the independent variable.
Control Group; the no-treatment group that is kept under controlled conditions.

Classical Experiment Design

Standard format:

Ex. group measured on DV	**Ex. group treated by IV & then measured on DV**
Cont. group measured on DV	**Control. group measured on DV**

Example of impact of music on stress:

Ex. group measured on Stress level(DV)	**Ex. group treated by soft music (IV) & then measured on DV**
Cont. group measured on Stress level (DV)	**Control. group measured on DV**

Experimental Designs:

Within- Subjects Design
Between- Subjects Design

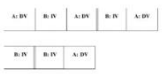
Within Subject Design

The experimental design in which the subjects' performance is compared with their own performance i.e., only one group of subjects is used.

Before-After No Control Group Design:

A: DV	**B: IV**	**A: IV**	**B: DV**

Varieties of Before-after no control group designs:
ABABA and ABABABBA designs



Between Subjects Experimental Design
The experimental design in which two or more groups of subjects are used and their performance is compared with each other:
Classical Experimental Design
After- Only Experimental Design

Problems associated with experimental research:
Artificiality of behavior is a possibility
Subjects may be under stress or pressure
Time consuming and expensive
Ethical issues: can we tell all about the nature of experiment to the subjects???

BUT…the very element of control gives edge to this approach, as this is what makes psychology a science
Among the most important statistical methods used in cross-cultural psychology are co relational methods that establish relationships between two variables and the t test for independent samples, which aims to estimate whether the difference between two samples occurred by chance.
Qualitative research is conducted primarily in the natural setting, where the research participants carry out their daily activities in a non research atmosphere. Qualitative studies are also conducted when there are difficulties in measuring variables, in situations when the subjects cannot read or use answer scales, or when there are no standardized measurement instruments available. Qualitative research is also useful in situations in which variables are not completely conceptualized or operationally defined. The qualitative method can be useful when the experiences and priorities of the research participants heavily influence the research.
Choosing an application-oriented strategy, researchers attempt to establish the applicability of research findings obtained in one country or culture to other countries or cultures. The comparativist strategy, on the contrary, focuses primarily on similarities and differences in certain statistical measures in a sample of cultures.

Analysis of data:
There are at least two approaches to the analysis of cross-cultural data. Psychologists supporting the absolutist approach argue that psychological phenomena are basically the same across cultures. However, the occurrences of certain processes and behaviors may vary from culture to culture. The relativist approach implies that human behavior in its full complexity can be understood only within the context of the culture in which it occurs.
Cross-cultural psychologists should see similarities in different phenomena; likewise, similarities should not overshadow potential differences between samples. The specialist should be aware that to contrast a phenomenon with its polar opposite is to give definition to both terms. All polar opposites are dependent on each other for their very conceptual existence.
Cross-cultural psychologists should avoid biases of generalization. At the same time, it should be understood that cross-cultural psychology requires a great deal of imagination and abstraction. Concrete human activities take place in diverse and unique contexts with a huge variety of underlying factors. To understand and compare psychological phenomena the researcher should assume that the number of such factors is relatively limited.

The Contributions of Cross-Cultural Research to Psychology
According to Matsumoto, culture is very important in understanding human behavior. Matsumoto realize that culture played a basic and important role in understanding and contributing to human behavior as did any other influence on our lives, and to gradually understand its pervasive and profound influence on psychological processes in all areas of functioning.
There are at least three major areas of contributions that cross-cultural research has made to psychology:

The principles given below are intended to apply to research with human participants. Principles of conduct in professional practice are to be found in the Society's Code of Conduct and in the advisory documents prepared by the Divisions, Sections and Special Groups of the Society.

Participants in psychological research should have confidence in the investigators. Good psychological research is possible only if there is mutual respect and confidence between investigators and participants. Psychological investigators are potentially interested in all aspects of human behaviour and conscious experience. However, for ethical reasons, some areas of human experience and behaviour may be beyond the reach of experiment, observation or other form of psychological investigation. Ethical guidelines are necessary to clarify the conditions under which psychological research is acceptable.

The principles given below supplement for researchers with human participants the general ethical principles of members of the Society as stated in The British Psychological Society's Code of Conduct (q.v.). Members of The British Psychological Society are expected to abide by both the Code of Conduct and the fuller principles expressed here. Members should also draw the principles to the attention of research colleagues who are not members of the Society. Members should encourage colleagues to adopt them and ensure that they are followed by all researchers whom they supervise (e.g. research assistants, postgraduate, undergraduate, A-Level and GCSE students).

In recent years, there has been an increase in legal actions by members of the general public against professionals for alleged misconduct. Researchers must recognise the possibility of such legal action if they infringe the rights and dignity of participants in their research.

2. General

In all circumstances, investigators must consider the ethical implications and psychological consequences for the participants in their research.The essential principle is that the investigation should be considered from the standpoint of all participants; foreseeable threats to their psychological well-being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated. Investigators should recognise that, in our multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society and where investigations involve individuals of different ages, gender and social background, the investigators may not have sufficient knowledge of the implications of any investigation for the participants. It should be borne in mind that the best judge of whether an investigation will cause offence may be members of the population from which the participants in the research are to be drawn.

3. Consent

Whenever possible, the investigator should inform all participants of the objectives of the investigation. The investigator should inform the participants of all aspects of the research or intervention that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate. The investigator should, normally, explain all other aspects of the research or intervention about which the participants enquire. Failure to make full disclosure prior to obtaining informed consent requires additional safeguards to protect the welfare and dignity of the participants. Research with children or with participants who have impairments that will limit understanding and/or communication such that they are unable to give their real consent requires special safe-guarding procedures.

Where possible, the real consent of children and of adults with impairments in understanding or communication should be obtained. In addition, where research involves any persons less than 16 years of age, consent should be obtained from parents or from those in loco parentis. If the nature of the research precludes consent being obtained from parents or permission being obtained from teachers, before proceeding with the research, the investigator must obtain approval from an Ethics Committee.

Where real consent cannot be obtained from adults with impairments in understanding or communication, wherever possible the investigator should consult a person well-placed to appreciate the participant's reaction, such as a member of the person's family, and must obtain the disinterested approval of the research from independent advisors.

When research is being conducted with detained persons, particular care should be taken over informed consent, paying attention to the special circumstances which may affect the person's ability to give free informed consent.

Investigators should realize that they are often in a position of authority or influence over participants who may be their students, employees or clients. This relationship must not be allowed to pressurize the participants to take part in, or remain in, an investigation.

The payment of participants must not be used to induce them to risk harm beyond that which they risk without payment in their normal lifestyle.
If harm, unusual discomfort, or other negative consequences for the individual's future life might occur, the investigator must obtain the disinterested approval of independent advisors, inform the participants, and obtain informed, real consent from each of them.
In longitudinal research, consent may need to be obtained on more than one occasion.

4. Deception
The withholding of information or the misleading of participants is unacceptable if the participants are typically likely to object or show unease once debriefed. Where this is in any doubt, appropriate consultation must precede the investigation. Consultation is best carried out with individuals who share the social and cultural background of the participants in the research, but the advice of ethics committees or experienced and disinterested colleagues may be sufficient.
Intentional deception of the participants over the purpose and general nature of the investigation should be avoided whenever possible. Participants should never be deliberately misled without extremely strong scientific or medical justification. Even then there should be strict controls and the disinterested approval of independent advisors.
It may be impossible to study some psychological processes without withholding information about the true object of the study or deliberately misleading the participants. Before conducting such a study, the investigator has a special responsibility to:
(a) Determine that alternative procedures avoiding concealment or deception are not available;
(b) Ensure that the participants are provided with sufficient information at the earliest stage; and
(c) Consult appropriately upon the way that the withholding of information or deliberate deception will be received.

5. Debriefing
In studies where the participants are aware that they have taken part in an investigation, when the data have been collected, the investigator should provide the participants with any necessary information to complete their understanding of the nature of the research. The investigator should discuss with the participants their experience of the research in order to monitor any unforeseen negative effects or misconceptions.
Debriefing does not provide a justification for unethical aspects of any investigation.
Some effects which may be produced by an experiment will not be negated by a verbal description following the research. Investigators have a responsibility to ensure that participants receive any necessary debriefing in the form of active intervention before they leave the research setting.

6. Withdrawal from the investigation
At the onset of the investigation investigators should make plain to participants their right to withdraw from the research at any time, irrespective of whether or not payment or other inducement has been offered. It is recognized that this may be difficult in certain observational or organizational settings, but nevertheless the investigator must attempt to ensure that participants (including children) know of their right to withdraw. When testing children, avoidance of the testing situation may be taken as evidence of failure to consent to the procedure and should be acknowledged.
In the light of experience of the investigation, or as a result of debriefing, the participant has the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given, and to require that their own data, including recordings, be destroyed.

7. Confidentiality
Subject to the requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act, information obtained about a participant during an investigation is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Investigators who are put under pressure to disclose confidential information should draw this point to the attention of those exerting such pressure. Participants in psychological research have a right to expect that information they provide will be treated confidentially and, if published, will not be identifiable as theirs. In the event that confidentiality

Lesson 03

CULTURAL FACTORS IN COMPLEX DECISION MAKING

Introduction:

Small Decisions and Big Decisions

Making decisions is a universal process. Human beings in all ages and cultures constantly find themselves in a position where they have a choice between two or more alternatives. Whether you try to attack the mammoth from the left or the right side, whether you order pizza or pasta at a restaurant, or whether you continue to read this chapter or not mean making a decision. Cognitive psychology has developed quite complicated models to describe human decision making. Although these models do differ in many respects, they are often variations of the "expectation-times-value - principle". This means that humans usually select the one alternative that has both a high subjective value and a high likelihood of success. For instance, you are only supposed to continue reading this chapter if you value the topic and if you expect a fair chance that you understand the text. If one of both conditions is not met, you should by now be thinking of doing something else.

However, different observers have remarked that many of the more important decisions in real do not fit such simple models. For instance, there might be no common "yardstick" against which to measure different alternatives (there is, for instance, no common value involved in spending the same amount of time with a textbook or in a movie). Furthermore, real life decision making is usually more like a series of decisions than a single "one-shot-decision". If you, for instance, decide to make your room more comfortable, you usually don't develop three or four alternatives and then decide among these according to some rational criterion. Rather, you may start by deciding to move your desk from one wall to another. Looking around, you feel that the cupboard also needs a new place, then the bed and so on until you room looks in a way that is well beyond what you imagined when you moved the desk. And finally, the likelihood of success is often not known to the decision maker. If one, for instance, is wondering whether to enroll in Psychology or Medicine, the estimate of one's own liking of and success in these subjects is at best vague. Moreover, other important aspects like job prospects may also be quite unclear.

Therefore, making decisions on issues of importance and with far-reaching consequences is much more difficult than doing simple multiplications of values and likelihood of outcomes. This probably is one of the reasons why many of the "big decisions" are regulated by cultural norms. In many cultures decisions on how to view the world, which gods to believe in, which profession to learn, where to live and whom to marry are, in fact, more influenced by the social and cultural context than by individual decisions. Certainly, this limits individual freedom. On the other side, this also alleviates the burden of constantly making decisions whose consequences can barely be overseen.

Within cognitive psychology, the last two decades have witnessed an increasing interest in studying these "big" decisions. This has to do with the enormous consequences of many technological, ecological and economic decisions. It is generally felt that never before in the history of mankind were decisions made by individuals so potentially harmful (or beneficial) to so many other individuals (the reader may think of, for instance, nuclear power, carbo-monoxide emissions, international trade regulations, or bio-technology). It is quite natural that there is an increasing interest in the nature of these decisions, the psychological mechanisms that regulate them and typical errors that are committed in making them (see Frensch & Funke, 1995; Klein, 1997).

This reading, then, attempts to introduce more formally the concept of "complex decision making", to look at cultural factors that might be important in influencing this form of decisions, and to discuss the results of some empirical studies that have investigated this topic cross-culturally. This is done in the context of observing participants from India and Germany.

A Primer on Complex Decision Making (CDD)

Most "big" decisions share some features that distinguish them from other, more easily tractable problems. These features include:

a) Complexity. In our context, "complexity" means (a) that the decision making situation consists of a large number of variables (or factors) that need to be taken into account and (b) that these variables are highly interrelated. The factors influence each other; they cannot be dealt with independently but form a tight network.

b) Multiple goals. The decision maker(s) usually has (have) not one, well-defined goal. Often there exists only a vague dissatisfaction with the present situation. Sometimes the degree of improvement is open, sometimes possible goals contradict each other.

c) Dynamics. The decision making situation does not remain constant, it does not "wait" for the decision maker to finally come up with something. Rather, it develops independently of the actions of the decision maker. The different variables that make up the situation are subject to trends which, unfortunately, tend to deteriorate rather than improve.

d) Opaqueness. The decision making situation is not obvious. Some of the important variables may be not known, mutual influences may be unclear or hidden, and the current situation of some of these variables may be difficult to assert.

Of course, these features of complex decision making situations have psychological consequences for the decision maker. He or she will usually experience a fair degree of time pressure and there are multiple uncertainties. Knowledge is insufficient and it can be quite unclear what to do at all. Well known solutions may not work and decisions do not only have the intended main effect but also (often detrimental) long-term- and side-effects. The following example may help to further clarify this notion of complex decision making:

In many countries colleges and universities have student bodies that participate (to a larger or smaller extent) in organizing and managing the university. Imagine that at your university the group of people that represents the student population is highly ineffective and even acts against clearly voiced student interests. You, being a politically aware person, are extremely dissatisfied with the situation. You feel that the student representatives only promote their own interests and that important issues get procrastinated or torpedoed.

For you, this situation has all the features of a complex decision-making problem. There are numerous "variables" involved, the variables here being the foul student representatives, the other students, the faculty, the administration. All these "players" are not independent from each other. Any action on the side of one group of players influences the position of other players; there may be factions, temporary coalitions, and animosities. Then, you are dissatisfied with the present situation, but what is your goal? Do you want to influence the present representative's political position? Do you want to "straighten" them? Do you yourself want to become a representative? Are you interested in improving campus policies or do you aim at personal power or do you want to impress parents or friends or do you actually want to compensate for poor academic achievements? While reflecting on this question of multiple goals, you probably don't have too much time. There might be other, equally dissatisfied students that could leave you sidelined. The present representatives might get hunches that you plan something and could take some quick action against you. But the situation not only develops dynamically, it will also be, in some important aspects, opaque to you. You may have a rough idea of who the important players are. But you will not know in sufficient detail what their individual goals are, what their relationships look like and how they really think about issues that are important to you. As has been mentioned before, making decisions in such complex and dynamic situations requires a mixture of different cognitive and behavioral activities such as:

* Clarification of goals, setting priorities, resolving conflicts between incompatible sub-goals;
* Collection of information and acquisition of knowledge about the variables involved, their interrelations and current status;
* Analysis of developmental trends of critical variables;
* Deciding on a general strategy or "game plan";
* Development of possible measures to influence the situation, analysis of their probable main-, long-term-, and side-effects;
* Planning and actually implementing a sequence of steps;
* Effect control, monitoring of results of one's actions;
* If necessary, revision of one's goals and general strategy, acquisition of additional knowledge, and improving on further plans.

And, what is more, these different processes need to be organized in a way that fits the features of the situation at hand.

If we now change the perspective and look at CDD from a more descriptive angle, we find that humans appear not to be very well equipped to meet all these demands. Case studies as well as laboratory experiments have repeatedly pointed to several typical error tendencies (see D"rner, 1996; Reason, 1990; for more details). To

Lesson 5

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING ACROSS CULTURES

Introduction:

All individuals strive to be happy. How they pursue this ultimate human goal, however, seems to vary in interesting ways across cultures. Have you ever thought about how happy you are with your life? "Of course!" might be the immediate reaction of people who have lived most of their lives in highly individualist Western cultures. In fact, the more inquisitive ones might wonder why anyone would even bother to ask such an obvious question. They have a point. Most Western cultural members are highly familiar, if not obsessed, with the notion of happiness. In the West, happiness is a common topic of conversation, the promise of commercial advertisements, and the ultimate goal of many people's lives. The idea that happiness is the most fulfilling and meaningful goal of human existence is more or less taken for granted in Western cultures, a belief that traces back as far as to the Greek philosophers.

Although the general statement that all human beings strive to be happy is true, intriguing findings emerge when researchers scrutinize happiness in more detail across cultures. Ed Diener and colleagues, for instance, have asked Chinese college students the same question mentioned above (how often do you think about happiness?). Quite interestingly, roughly 1 out of 10 of these highly educated Chinese respondents said that they have "never" thought about how happy they are about their lives. American college students, on the other hand, typically reply that they think about happiness several times a week. Even though happiness is a universally cherished goal, the degree to which it is imprinted in a person's mind seems to vary across cultures. There is much more to the story. In this chapter, some of the latest findings from the rapidly growing field of culture and subjective well-being are introduced. Additional sources on this topic can be found in Diener and Suh (1999, 2000) and Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (in press).

Subjective Well-Being

In order to conduct scientific research, first, it is imperative to have a working definition of happiness. A widely used term in the field of psychology is subjective well-being (SWB; for review, see Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Subjective well-being includes three components:

1) Life satisfaction-a cognitive evaluation of one's overall life,
2) The presence of positive emotional experiences,
3) The absence of negative emotional experiences.

Thus, a person is described as enjoying a high level of SWB if she is satisfied with her life, frequently experiences positive emotions (such as joy, affection), and seldom feels negative emotions (such as anxiety, sadness). One hallmark of SWB is that it is judged from the individual's own perspective. Thus, in SWB, a person' subjective perception about her own well-being is of paramount importance, which is shaped in complex ways by cultural factors.

Some Cultures are Happier than Others

There are substantial differences in the mean levels of SWB reported by different cultural members. A cross-cultural research is conducted and the data come from a sample that consisted of more than six thousand college students from 43 nations. The mean life satisfaction ratings, on a 7-point scale, ranged from 3.3 (China) to 5.4 (Netherlands) in this sample. Nations not only differ in how much SWB they actually experience, but they also have different opinions on the ideal levels of SWB (the right columns under "Norm"). Brazilians (6.2 on a 7-point scale), for example, think it is very desirable to experience positive emotions, whereas the Chinese (4.5) show comparably less enthusiasm for the idea of feeling positive emotions. One notable finding is that, across nations, the norms for positive affect correlate significantly with the level of positive affect experienced in everyday life. For instance, students in nations that report high mean levels of positive affect (high PA experience) also tend to think it is very desirable to experience positive emotions (high PA norm). Such a relation between actual experience and norm does not exist for negative affect, although the exact reasons are unclear at present.

Why do cultural differences in SWB occur? Traditionally, many scholars have pointed out the fact that happier nations are simply wealthier. No doubt, there is a strong association between income (e.g., GNP) and SWB

level across nations. However, this "richer = happier" argument is incomplete. One thorny issue is that rich nations are not only economically better off, but they also possess various non-materialistic characteristics that contribute to SWB (e.g., more stable, democratic government, more human rights). Hence, it is not completely clear whether the link between national wealth and SWB is caused by material affluence per se, or by other positive qualities afforded by wealthy societies. Second, there are clusters of nations that challenge the income explanation. The SWB reports of relatively affluent East Asian nations are among the lowest in the world (Japan, being a prime example), whereas individuals in some Latin American nations (e.g., Puerto Rico) report SWB much higher than their economic standings suggest. Finally, but very importantly, after a certain income level, economic factors lose their predictive power. Once a nation becomes rich enough to fulfill most people's basic needs (food, shelter), further economic prosperity does not guarantee further increase of SWB. More and more countries around the globe are surpassing this "threshold" level of income (GNP of roughly $10,000), which means pure economic models will have limited success in predicting national differences in SWB in coming years.

Individualism, Collectivism, and Subjective Well-Being

Variables at the level of entire cultures have recently offered important complementary perspectives on national differences in SWB. One cultural dimension related strongly to SWB is individualism/collectivism. In highly individualist cultures (e.g., U. S., Western/Northern Europe), each individual's right, freedom, and unique feelings are emphasized over the expectations and needs of an in-group, such as family. In more collectivist societies (e.g., East Asia, Central/South America), the goals and needs of a significant in-group tend to take priority over the thoughts, values, and preferences of an individual. Theoretically, there are costs as well as benefits associated with personal freedom. In individualist cultures (high freedom), people freely choose personal goals and lifestyles, but because of the lack of strong social support, adverse life events might have severe negative consequences (such as suicide). In collectivist cultures, on the other hand, strong social support may buffer stressful events, but the drawback is that there is less freedom to pursue personally rewarding goals. Although there seems to be a tradeoff associated with personal freedom, in study after study researchers have found that individualist cultural members are happier than collectivist cultural members (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). Why? Again, a popular explanation is that individualist nations are richer than collectivist nations, implying that differences in objective life conditions affecting their inhabitants account for this cultural difference. As mentioned earlier, however, there are too many affluent collectivist nations (Japan, Hong Kong) that go against this simple economic interpretation. Also, according to Diener et al., when a nation's degree of individualism is statistically controlled, income no longer predicts SWB. There clearly seem to be other reasons, besides income, that contribute to the high SWB of individualist cultures What are they?

The answer cannot be simple, but several possibilities are worth considering (see Suh, 2000). First, when it comes to happiness, it might be more critical to have a high sense of personal choice and freedom than to have a reliable social safety net during difficult times. After all, bad life events happen only occasionally, whereas personal goals constantly affect the quality of daily experience. Another possibility is that the desire to be happy might be stronger in individualist than in collectivist cultures. In individualist cultures where much personal freedom and opportunities are available, each person is highly accountable for his happiness. Being unhappy, in such a cultural context, is indirectly admitting that one has not been able to make the most out of his life opportunities, talents, and capabilities. In many collectivist East Asian cultures, on the other hand, people are believed to have only limited control over happiness. Various factors beyond personal control, such as luck or family background, are thought to play significant roles in determining the ultimate happiness of an individual. Because the responsibility to be happy is more squarely on the person's shoulder in individualist than in collectivist cultures, it is possible that people try harder to be happy in the former culture. Being more eager to be happy, individualists might organize their lives in ways that would give them the best chance to be happy. Furthermore, when making evaluations or reports about their lives, individualists may try more, both consciously and unconsciously, to put a positive spin into them.

Although quite speculative, there is also the possibility that people living in individualist cultures might find it easier to "think" they are happier than people in collectivistic cultures. Everybody has unique strengths in certain domains. For instance, John might drive a golf ball over 300 yards, whereas Chris might make an excellent pasta dish. As long as John and Chris think that athletic talent and culinary skill, respectively, is the most worthy personal quality, they will both feel good about themselves. That is, one effective way to feel

positive about the self is to base self-worth on a domain in which the person excels at. By the same token, it is easier for people to think they are happy if they are freely allowed to base their happiness on domains/experiences they feel particularly good about (e.g., "because I have a great girlfriend," "because I like my job"). The amount of flexibility exercised in the selection of happiness standards, however, seems to vary across cultures.

A defining spirit of individualism is that it greatly respects and even encourages the thoughts and opinions of each single individual. Therefore, in individualist cultures, each person's unique, self-tailored standard or reasons for happiness are highly respected by others. "If John says he is happy because of X (whatever the private reason may be), he is a happy man" is how individualist cultural members typically react to a person who declares to be happy. In collectivist cultures, however, the types of achievements that are worthy of personal happiness are more often decided by the in group or the society, rather than by each individual. For instance, many Korean teenagers believe there is only one specific achievement that would make them and others truly happy-getting an admission

to a top university. These socially established qualifications of happiness are very specific and concrete, which means many people who do not meet this condition are bound to feel dissatisfied and unhappy. Because of this restricted personal freedom in the selection of happiness standards, collectivists may find it more difficult than individualists justify their happiness.

In sum, when it comes to SWB, having a great deal of personal freedom might be very important. In individualist cultures where there is much personal freedom, people have a better chance to choose and invest their time in personally rewarding life projects, evaluate their happiness using more self-flattering standards, and try harder to view their lives in a positive angle. These ideas need to be tested rigorously with much more empirical data. Nevertheless, they offer intriguing insights and promising research directions for those who ask, "which cultures are happy and why?"

Correlates of Happiness

Cultures not only differ in mean levels of SWB, they also tend to base happiness on somewhat different experiences. In the past when SWB research was conducted primarily among North American participants, many researchers assumed that high self-esteem was the single most important ingredient of happiness. After all, what could be more important to happiness than having a positive self-view, that is, high self-esteem? Many Westerners might be surprised to learn, however, that the term self-esteem does not even exist in some cultures (for instance, in the Japanese, Chinese, or Korean language). We might wish to ask the question again: Is self-esteem equally critical for happiness across cultures? The answer is no, according to recent findings (Diener & Diener, 1995; Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997). Self-esteem relates strongly with SWB in individualistic cultures, but the link becomes considerably weaker in collectivist cultures. Among female college students in India, for instance, Diener and Diener failed to find any significant association between self-esteem and SWB.

Another psychological condition traditionally viewed as very important for SWB is the possession of a consistent self-identity. All individuals think, feel, and behave somewhat differently in different social contexts (for example, when with a boyfriend versus when with a boss). Nevertheless, prominent Western psychologists have repeatedly asserted that, in order to achieve high levels of mental health, a person needs to maintain a consistent self-view across situations. This idea fits well with the dynamics of individualist cultures, where the inner self is believed to be the primary source of personal meaning and guidance. Because the self plays such a vital role in everyday life, it becomes necessary to build and maintain a self-system that is well-organized and consistent. In collectivist cultures, however, the utmost concern of everyday life is maintaining a smooth, harmonious relationship with other people. In order to achieve this goal of interpersonal harmony, the self needs to be highly sensitive to social cues, and in many cases, adjust the self according to the needs and expectations of other people. In other words, the self is required to be quite flexible across social situations in cultures where values promoting harmony (e.g., modesty, obedience) often overshadow the importance of consistency.

When recently examined the consistency of Korean and American students' self-views in relation to their SWB. As predicted, the self views of the Koreans were indeed significantly more flexible across social contexts than those of the Americans. Also, as suspected, the degree of identity consistency predicted individual's SWB level significantly better in the American than the Korean sample. The key point claimed in classic theories seems to be right-people with more consistent identity tends to enjoy higher levels of SWB. However, the classic

theories might have overestimated the intrinsic psychological importance of self-consistency. In short, maintaining a consistent self-view, similar to the case of self-esteem, does not seem to be as important to SWB as mainstream psychology theories have traditionally assumed

the U.S. has shown, for instance, that individuals who were pursuing their goals for fun and enjoyment became happier over time when they attained their goals, whereas individuals who were pursuing their goals to please others did not become happier over time, even when they attained their goals (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; see Ryan & Deci, 2000, for a review). Interestingly, a recent study found that Asian Americans and Japanese who were pursuing their goals to make others happy became happier over time when they attained their goals, whereas those who were pursuing their goals for fun and enjoyment did not become happier over time, even when they achieved their goals (Oishi & Diener, 2001). Using an experience sampling method (i.e., participants were beeped at random moments and completed surveys multiple times per day), Asakawa and Csikszentmihalyi (1998) found that Asian-American students were happy when they were engaging in an activity that was related to important future goals (e.g., academic achievement). On the other hand, Caucasian students were happy when they were engaging in an activity that was important to them at that moment. Furthermore, Caucasian students tended to be less happy when they were engaging in an activity that was related to important future goals.

These findings suggest that (a) there are cultural variations in motivation to be happy "now" versus "in the future," and (b) pathways to happiness seem to vary across cultures, depending on socially desirable forms of motivation.

Judgment of Life Satisfaction

Another interesting pattern of cultural difference emerges when people make judgments about their life satisfaction. Evaluating whether one's life as a whole is satisfying requires much cognitive effort. Theoretically, a person might think of all relevant life domains, figure out how well each domain is going, and then mentally combine the evaluations into a numeric response. Rarely do individuals go through this exhaustive process. Rather, they take a mental shortcut. The most common shortcut is to rely on a specific cue or a piece of information that seems to best sum up one's overall life state.

How is this magic cue selected? It is usually chosen from a pool of self-defining cues that are chronically salient to the individual. Culture enters the picture here by determining the types of self-relevant information that are constantly present in the person's mind. In individualist cultures, internal attributes (e.g., emotions) are the key building blocks of the self and are thus easily brought to the person's attention. In collectivist cultures, social elements of the self (e.g., other people's evaluation, social norms) are more chronically salient to the individual. This cultural difference leads to a relatively straightforward prediction: Individualists might base their life satisfaction judgments heavily on their emotions, whereas collectivists might evaluate their lives frequently on the basis of normative information. This is precisely what Suh, Diener, Oishi, and Triandis (1998) found in two large international samples. The more individualist the nation, the more strongly were the life satisfaction judgments based on internal emotions. Basically, individualist cultural members seemed to adopt the logic that "If I am feeling good these days, it must mean my overall life is quite satisfying." Collectivists were less likely to follow such reasoning when evaluating their lives. In addition to emotions, collectivist cultural members tend to pay considerable amount of attention to social cues (e.g., whether significant others approve the way they live) during their life satisfaction judgments.

Conclusion

Ever since people acquired the ability to communicate with others, happiness is likely to have been a topic of debate and discussion. This very ancient concept has only recently begun to be studied through scientific means. Some of the major findings that have emerged from the young field of SWB and culture are: 1) people who inhabit individualistic cultures are happier than those who live in collectivistic societies, 2) psychological attributes characterizing the self (e.g., self-esteem, self-consistency) are more relevant to the happiness of Western individualists than to the happiness of collectivists, and 3) the self-evaluation of happiness is anchored on different types of cues and experiences across cultures. Although those who study SWB across cultures firmly believe that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping human happiness, uncomfortably little is known about the details of this important human experience that seems to make such a difference in the lives of people. A

challenging, but a very exciting future lies ahead.

CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH ON THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL OF PERSONALITY

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) is a comprehensive taxonomy of personality traits, which are tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions. Although it was originally identified in the United States, the model appears to describe personality structure well in a wide variety of cultures, suggesting that personality trait structure is universal. Age changes--decreases in Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness and increases in Agreeableness and Conscientiousness from adolescence to adulthood—also appear to be universal, as are gender differences. Current studies comparing the mean levels of personality traits across cultures show systematic patterns, but their interpretation is uncertain. The FFM is currently in use by psychologists around the world in a variety of applications.

Introduction:

Personality Traits and the Five-Factor Model

Personality traits are defined as "dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions" (McCrae & Costa, 1990). They are familiar to laypersons, who use a huge vocabulary of trait descriptive adjectives (such as nervous, enthusiastic, original, accommodating, and careful) to describe themselves and others. Allport and Odbert (1936) identified some 4,000 trait names in the English language, and similar (although generally smaller) lists of traits have been compiled for many other languages, including Turkish and Chinese (Somer & Goldberg, 1999; Yang & Lee, 1971). It is apparent that trait concepts are important in every human language, and it would clearly be of great interest to compare traits across cultures. Are the same traits found everywhere? Are they organized in similar fashion? Do they show the same course of development and the same correlates? Or are traits products of culture that vary as dramatically as vocabularies and food preferences do?

These intriguing questions have been asked repeatedly by anthropologists and cross cultural psychologists, but until recently, research was severely hampered by the lack of an agreed-upon taxonomy of traits. It is obviously impossible to conduct cross-cultural studies of each of the 4,000 traits identified by Allport and Odbert, and without taxonomy, the selection of a subset of traits is likely to be arbitrary. Personality psychologists like Raymond Cattell and Hans Eysenck had long ago noted that traits could be organized into much smaller clusters of similar traits. For example, the terms careful, cautious, deliberate, and thorough are near-synonyms, and people who are careful are also like to be described as cautious and thorough. In short, personality traits are structured, and a comprehensive yet parsimonious structure would greatly facilitate personality research.

Disputes about which structure was best continued for decades, but toward the end of the last century it became clear to most personality psychologists that most traits could be described in terms of five factors or dimensions. The organization of many specific traits in terms of the five factors of Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C) is known as the Five-Factor Model (FFM; McCrae & John, 1992). Individuals who are high in N are likely to be anxious, easily depressed, and irritable, whereas those who are low in N are calm, even-tempered,

and emotionally stable. Extraverts are lively, cheerful, and sociable; introverts are sober and taciturn. Open men and women are curious, original, and artistic; closed people are conventional and down-to-earth. Agreeableness is characterized by trust, compassion and modesty; Conscientiousness is seen in organization, punctuality, and purposefulness.

Originally, the FFM was discovered through analyses of English-language trait names (Tupes & Christal, 1961/1992), and it is possible to measure an individual's standing oneach of the five factors by asking them to rate themselves on a series of adjectives (Goldberg, 1992). But it is also possible to measure traits through the use of personality questionnaires, in which respondents indicate the extent to which they are accurately described by a series of statements about characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. A wide variety of measures of the FFM have now been developed (De Raad & Perugini, in press), of which the most widely used is the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO-PI-R assesses 30 specific traits, six for each of the five factors, and has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure for the assessment of normal personality traits

The FFM across Cultures

Because the FFM was discovered by American researchers in American samples using instruments based on English-language trait terms, it is reasonable to ask if it is strictly an American structure, or whether it characterizes human beings everywhere. Since 1971, when Guthrie and Bennett (1971) examined the structure of personality perceptions among Philippines, there has been considerable research on this question. Lexical studies, which examine personality factors in trait adjectives from different languages, have had somewhat mixed results. E, A, and C factors almost always appear, but N and O sometimes do not (Saucier & Goldberg, 2001). It is not clear from these studies whether those factors are missing from the culture, or merely from the set of adjectives studied.

More definitive results come from studies of the NEO-PI-R. That instrument has been translated into more than 40 languages or dialects, and studies of its factor structure have been conducted in more than 30 cultures, from Zimbabwe to Peru (McCrae & Allik, 2002). Because the same instrument is used in each case, a failure to find one or more factors would most probably indicate that those factors were truly absent in that group. But in fact, in every case studied so far, a reasonable approximation to the intended structure has been found when adequate samples and appropriate statistical methods have been used.

In this sense, the FFM is a universal structure, and thus should be useful in cross-cultural research. There are two important qualifications to bear in mind, however. First, the fact that these five factors are universal does not necessarily mean that there are not also additional personality factors specific to individual cultures, as Cheung and Leung (1998) have argued. Second, even if all factors emerge when the NEO-PI-R is administered, they may not all be equally important in every culture. For example, individual differences in Openness to Experience may be of little consequence in traditional cultures where life's options are severely limited (Piedmont, Bain, McCrae, & Costa, 2002).

Age and Gender Differences in Personality

Measures of the FFM can be used to address many questions about personality and culture. To date, some of the most important findings have concerned age and gender differences.

Studies of adult personality development in the United States have suggested that there are noticeable changes in the mean level of all five factors between adolescence and about age 30 (McCrae & Costa, 1990): N, E, and O decline, whereas A and C increase. After age 30, the same trends are seen, but at a much slower pace: In terms of personality traits, 30-year-olds resemble 70-year-olds more than 20-year-olds.

These developmental patterns were seen in both cross-sectional age comparisons and longitudinal studies, in which the same participants are followed over years or decades. But their origins were not clear: Were the changes due to features of American culture, with its distinctive patterns of socialization and its role requirements at each age, or were they the result of some intrinsic pattern of maturation, akin to passage through the menopause or the graying of hair?

Cross-cultural studies might shed light here. If very different patterns of age differences were found, we might suspect that age differences are the product of life experiences in different societies with different histories. However, if we find very similar patterns everywhere, it would seem more likely that age changes are intrinsic maturational processes. Data from Germany, Italy, Portugal, Croatia, South Korea, Estonia, Russia, Japan, Spain, Britain, Turkey, and the Czech Republic showed patterns of age differences very similar to those seen in the United States. It appears that age, especially from adolescence to mid-adulthood, tends to make individuals better adjusted, more altruistic, and better organized, but also less enthusiastic and less open to new experience (McCrae et al., 2000). These changes appear to be common to people everywhere.

If age differences follow a universal pattern, what about gender differences? Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae (2001) examined that question using data from 26 cultures where the NEO-PI-R had been administered to college-age and adult samples of men and women. In the United States, women typically score somewhat higher than men on both N and A, as well as some specific facets of E and O (e.g., Warmth, Openness to Aesthetics). Men usually score higher on other facets of E and O, namely, Assertiveness and Openness to Ideas. There are few gender differences in C.

Costa and colleagues also found evidence for cultural differences in the magnitude of gender differences. One might expect that gender differences would be minimized in modern, progressive cultures (like The Netherlands) and maximized in traditional cultures (like South Korea). In fact, however, exactly the opposite

pattern was found: The differences were largest in modern European countries. There are several possible explanations for that unexpected effect, but perhaps the most likely is related to attribution. In countries where women are expected to be subservient, they attribute their low Assertiveness to their role as a woman rather than their traits. By contrast, European women who are equally low in Assertiveness identify it as a part of their own personality.

The Personality Profiles of Cultures

Americans are brash, Chinese are modest, Scots are thrifty--or so many people believe. It is not clear how these national stereotypes arise, or whether they are in any respect correct. One more scientific way to characterize the personality profile of a culture would be by measuring traits in a representative sample of the culture. Because NEO-PI-R data are available from dozens of countries, it should be simple to make these comparisons.

Other FFM Research

McCrae and Allik (2002) have edited a book on The Five-Factor Model Across Cultures. In it, 35 contributors discuss the replicability, validity, and applicability of the FFM in some 40 cultures. Among the topics covered are the relation of personality factors to emotions, the relation of traits to cultural goals among Vietnamese Americans, and cultural differences in the place of Impulsiveness in the FFM. This volume also pointed to some major questions that remain in cross-cultural research on personality: Do trait levels match national character stereotypes, and if not, why not? What are the effects of acculturation on mean levels of personality traits? Are individual differences in adult personality stable around the world, as they are in the United States? Can artifacts of self- report methods account for apparent differences in trait levels across cultures? What can we learn by using alternative methods, such as peer ratings and participant observation?

In addition to these studies in personality and culture, the FFM is also being used around the world in practical applications. Black (2000), for example, has shown that the NEO- PI-R is useful in police selection, adding incremental validity above and beyond cognitive testing. As a result, police applicants in New Zealand are now routinely screened with the instrument. Jang, McCrae, Angleitner, Riemann, and Livesley (1998) showed that patterns of heritability for personality traits were similar in Canada and Germany. Yang and colleagues (2002) have shown that NEO-PI-R scores are valid predictors of clinician ratings of personality disorders in Chinese psychiatric patients. Halim (2001) used the NEO-PI-R to study coping and quality of life in Indonesian breast cancer patients. Blickle (1996) demonstrated that personality traits predict learning style and college grades among German students. Draguns, Krylova, Oryol, Rukavishnikov, and Martin (2000) used the FFM to understand personality and adjustment among the children of Russian Arctic reindeer herders.

Researchers who favor indigenous approaches sometimes argue that imported psychological constructs are likely to be inferior to constructs derived within each culture. Ultimately, this may prove to be true. Certainly it is the case that personality traits are expressed differently in different cultures, and it is unlikely that a single set of questionnaire items would be optimal in every culture. However, the FFM and the NEO- PI-R have shown themselves to be serviceable tools in a wide variety of cultures. Their universality means that we need not start from scratch in each culture to develop a viable trait psychology. The fruits of research anywhere can now be enjoyed everywhere.

Lesson 6

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN NUTRITION, HEALTH, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING

Introduction:

Food and nutrition occupy the daily thoughts of most people, particularly the 170 million children who are malnourished because their weight is too low. While the interactive effect of malnutrition and infection is responsible for over half of child deaths in developing countries, being overweight has been declared the number one health problem in other countries. More food is therefore not necessarily better when talking about health. This reading presents information on the major nutrients important for health and psychological functioning, including energy, protein, vitamin A, iron, iodine, and zinc. It also discusses how cultures differ in their food preferences and their beliefs about the good and ill effects of certain foods. Finally, solutions for tackling the problem of impaired growth and development of children are examined.

Food and nutrition occupy the daily thoughts of most people around the world including children who are preoccupied with their next meal and scientists studying the effects of that meal on health and functioning. Because more is not necessarily better when talking about food, it is important to know what foods, in what quantities, and at what ages produce healthy and productive children and adults. Of course, most people don't have health and productivity in mind when they eat. They may be motivated by the sensory pleasures of eating, the desire for energy, the feeling of being full, or the sociability of eating with others--or they may eat simply out of habit. However, the food preferences of adolescents are very similar to their parents, indicating that family eating influences what we think and like about food. Moreover, there are commonly held beliefs in all cultures about the good and bad effects of certain foods. Consequently, there are many personal, familial, and cultural influences on the food we eat. But what is the cost of a poor diet and how easy is it to change one's diet?

Cost of a Poor Diet

The cost of a poor diet is immense While the interactive effect of malnutrition and infection is responsible for over half of child deaths in developing countries (Pelletier, Frongillo, Schroeder, & Habicht, 1995), overweight has been declared the number one health problem in the United States. Surprisingly, the overweight problem is starting to appear among urban women in developing countries such as India and Chile that are making the transition to better economies. Obesity, whether experienced in Washington, Calcutta, Santiago or Samoa, is bad for one's health because it can lead to heart disease, diabetes, and premature death. In poor countries, many women are short because of poor diets in youth and they are anemic because their diets lacks iron; consequently many die while giving birth to a normal sized baby. However, the most pressing moral dilemma of our times is the wasted human potential in the millions of children who are malnourished either at birth or throughout their first five years. They are more likely than well- nourished children to become ill and to die. More information on these infectious diseases can be found at the World Health Organization's website (http://www.who.int/infectious-disease-report). If malnourished children survive the first five years, their quality of life will be impaired: they will be less able to learn at school, more fearful of unfamiliar people and new experiences, less persistent at solving daily problems, and less sociable. Simply increasing food intake is not a sufficient or even a wise solution--too much food eaten during pregnancy may have little or detrimental effects, too much iron may be toxic, and too much bulk destroys a child's appetite. Specific nutrients along with psychosocial stimulation may be the best mix. This will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Childhood Malnutrition

Almost 30% of children fewer than 5 years of age in the world are underweight; most live in developing countries in Africa and South Asia. Typical malnourished children are not thin or wasted looking, but are short for their age or stunted. They are usually malnourished at moderate rather than severe levels. Even mild and moderate malnutrition lead to physical health, learning and social problems. Most mothers would be surprised if they were told that their child was malnourished because there is no obvious wasting or change in behavior if the child has been this way for months However, when the child's weight and height are compared with other well-nourished children from the same region, the discrepancy is striking. For example, if well-nourished

children of 4 years of age weigh on average 16 kg or 35.2 pounds, a child of 12.5 kg or 27.5 pounds will e considered underweight and therefore malnourished. This is based on a rough definition of moderate malnutrition as less than 80% of the expected weight, though the World Health Organization now uses a more accurate formula based on standard deviations from the average. Likewise, if well-nourished children of 4 years of age measures 102 cm or 40 inches in height, a child of 90 cm or 35 inches will be considered moderately stunted, using a rough calculation of less than 90% of expected height. Adults can calculate their own body mass index (BMI) as the quotient of weight (kg) / height2 (m2). Somewhere between 19 and 23 is considered healthy; over 25 is overweight, 30 obese, and 17 underweight. The new standards published in 2000 by the Centers for Disease Control are available (http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts).Close to 170 million children are malnourished if we use weight as our indicator of malnutrition. Across all developing countries, 28% of children fewer than 5 years of age are malnourished. For example, according to UNICEF (2001) who collects and publishes this information, the figures are 56% in Bangladesh, 53% in India, 47% in Ethiopia, 34% in Indonesia, 31% in Nigeria, 28% in the Philippines, and 5% in Costa Rica. Most of them were not born with low birth weight -- approximately 16% of newborns in developing countries are low birth weight (less than 2500 gm) even though they are full term (37-40 weeks). If breastfed, as most rural children are, they probably thrived in the first 6 months on breast milk alone. However, most of these children probably did not gain enough weight after that point both because of infections such as diarrhea and pneumonia and because the food offered was of insufficient quantity and quality for growth and illness recovery. As a result, their weight and height did not rise as it should, and they did not have enough reserves to cope with the next episode of diarrhea or respiratory infection. In addition to suffering poor health, underweight children suffer long-term problems in their ability to learn and solve problems, and in their emotional and social life.

The most immediate, but not the only, cause of malnutrition is the lack of calories that provide energy and protein for building body cells (Waterlow, 1992). Both are needed to put weight and height on a child. Calories are present in many foods, particularly those high in sugars, starches, and fats. These include fruits such as bananas, tubers such as potatoes, animal or vegetable oil, grains and rice. Fatty acids from oils are particularly important in forming the myelin sheath that surrounds nerves, allowing for a rapid response from the brain; researchers now realize that fatty acids are essential for maturation of the eye nerves and detection of light. Protein is found in certain foods such as meat, fish, eggs and legumes; only 15% of calories need be protein so this is not usually a problem. Recently we have come to realize that other nutrients required smaller amounts are also necessary for physical and mental health. These include vitamin A, iron, iodine, and zinc (World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/nut).

Vitamin A was only recently discovered to have wide-ranging effects in strengthening a child's resistance to illness such as diarrhea and measles, in addition to its well-known effect on vision. Children and adults who lack vitamin A first notice the effects when they walk outside at dusk--they can't see anything. Over time, the eye disease known as xerophthalmia blinds the person as the membrane over the eye becomes dry, wrinkled and eventually opaque. Three million children develop xerophthalmia each year; up to half a million become blind. Children who lack even small amounts of vitamin A have a weaker immune system and so they suffer longer and more severe bouts of diarrhea, measles, and pneumonia. Vitamin A deficiency is so widespread in countries in Africa and Asia, which up to 70% of children are considered at risk. Orange fruits and vegetables are the most common source of vitamin A.

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Iron deficiency leading to anemia curtails the oxygen-carrying capacity of hemoglobin and so prevents full vitality of the brain and its development. Both children and adults who are deficient in iron lack the energy, endurance and activity to remain actively engaged with their environment. Iron-deficient children are less

involved and interested in their surroundings, unhappier and more fearful. Work and learning therefore suffer along with mood. Consequently, anemic children show poorer language, motor, and eye- hand coordination abilities than non-anemic children (Grantham-McGregor & Ani, 2001). In developing countries, particularly in Africa and South Asia, 21.5 million children under 5 years of age, or 40% of preschoolers, are anemic. Iron deficiency is caused not only by an iron-deficient diet but also by malaria and hookworm infections. Hookworms, which are prevalent in feces-contaminated soil, enter through the sole of unshod feet and then sap blood through the intestine wall. They and other geohelminths prevent full use of food intake of school-age children who pick up worms in their travels around the community.

Iodine deficiency is thought to be the main cause of reduced brain capacity through its effect on the thymus and thyroid gland. It is simply bad fortune to live in a region where this element is not naturally found in the soil and so is lacking in plant food. Before iodine-fortified salt became available for purchase several years ago, 15% of school children 6 to 11 years of age in developing countries had an enlarged goiter, the main sign of iodine deficiency. Even today many families do not have access to iodized salt.

The most severe problems in psychological functioning are found in newborns of iodine deficient mothers because iodine is essential for early brain development.

Zinc has newly entered the list of essential nutrients for health, particularly in the early years when children are vulnerable to infections. Zinc supplements in the first year, given in syrup form, were found to reduce the duration and severity of acute and persistent diarrhea and pneumonia, especially in malnourished children. Perhaps because of the protection against infection, children on zinc supplements show better weight gains over the years.

Breast milk is universally acknowledged as the best nutrition for infants. Not only does it provide antibodies that protect the infant from early infections, but it contains all the nutrients listed above, such as fatty acids and protein, which infants may not get from commercially, sold milks. Infants given breast milk alone for the first 4-6 months grow better, are healthier, and develop more mature mental abilities than children fed other commercial or cows' milks. Making sure that mothers offer their infants breast milk is a concern in all countries of the world.

Cultural Influences on Food Choices and Nutrition

It is not surprising that children and adolescents share food preferences with their parents rather than their friends. From birth, parents make most food choices for their children. Choices may be influenced by the foods that are available and the foods are appreciated or avoided by one's cultural group. However, because there is variability within a culture, most parents have some choice between what they learned to appreciate when growing up and what is available currently. The mother's food intake during pregnancy, while important for her health, does not appear to make much difference to her unborn child; rather her long-term nutritional status from well before conceiving determines whether the baby will have a low birth weight or a mental impairment.

A number of unusual feeding practices greet the newborns at birth if they are delivered outside a clinic or hospital. For example, before giving breast milk, Ethiopian newborns might be given a spoonful of soft rancid butter or warm water with sugar to oil the pipes and sweeten the vocal cords. Even hospitals in urban settings were found to interfere with early breastfeeding by supplying commercial milk in bottles. Now, mothers delivering their babies in Nairobi, Bogata, Bangkok and other cities with baby-friendly Hospitals are receiving the message that only breast milk should be given to infants under 4 months of age. Unfortunately, many new urban mothers have the misguided belief that they do not have enough milk and their baby needs more to grow. Consequently, they regularly supplement breastfeeding with other foods and liquids such as cereal, fruit, cow's milk, and tea in the first few months; the supplements in turn impair a mother's milk flow. Others know that breast milk by itself provides everything infants need. So for these and other reasons, the number of mothers giving only breast milk in the first 3 months varies from 9% in Turkey to 50% in India and 84% in Ethiopia.

While breast milk alone suffices for the first 4-6 months, infants after this age need weaning foods, namely semi-solid foods such as fruits, vegetables, oil, cereals, and eggs in addition to breast milk. Many mothers in Africa and Asia, however, believe that one can wait until children have teeth at one year before feeding them adult food. Others believe that a special kind of traditional porridge with lots of mass but few calories will satisfy children's hunger. Both of these diets lead to malnutrition. Weaning foods therefore vary considerably

Theoretical Orientations

Until recently, the underlying theoretical presupposition of the bio-medical model was the so-called absolutist position that assumed that there is an "absolute truth" to the human phenomena (Berry, Segall, Poortinga & Dasen, 1992). Specifically, this position assumed the existence of a "psychic unity" together with a commonality in human experience. Human phenomena were viewed as being basically the same in all cultures, where among other things "depression" was viewed as "depression" just as "aggression" was seen as aggression" no matter where it was observed. From the absolutist position, culture is thought to have no role in either the meaning or expression of human behavior. Assessments of human behavior normally involved the use of standardized instruments where interpretations are readily made without any recourse to an alternative culturally based view. The absolutist position is currently seen as ethnocentric in perspective and its assumptions as only a logical possibility without any supporting evidence (Berry et al., 1992). Virtually, all writers on the subject agree tt culture exerts some degree of influence on the process and manifestation of mental illness (Tanaka-Matsumi & Draguns, 1997). They vary only on the manner and the degree of importance assigned to culture, together with the underlying presuppositions, whether it is a relativist, Universalist or multicultural position.

The relativist position is in sharp contrast to the absolutist position, and in an effort to devoid itself of ethnocentric biases, assumes that all human behaviors are culturally patterned. Its goal is to understand people in "their own terms" without any recourse to an external viewpoint. Consequently human diversity is explained within the cultural context the individual has developed. Assessments are typically carried out using the values and meanings a cultural group gives to a phenomenon. Working within the relativist position are the rich accounts of the onset and manifestations of culture-bound syndromes.

Living in a post-modern age made up of networks of societies that are characterized by globalization and migration, the multicultural position is becoming more important. This position is in reality a hybrid between the relativist and universalist positions. The essence of this position is the need to develop a model to cater to the health and adjustment difficulties that arise as a result of moving from one cultural setting into another. Understanding mental health problems involves swinging between the universalist and relativist perspectives or an amalgam, and the position which eventually is taken depends on the background and inclinations of the helping agency.

The different theoretical positions naturally view and operationalize cultural differently. The universalist position regards culture to be an exogenous force that exerts its influence on behavior and mental illness. In that manner, culture can be manipulated and studied objectively. This view fits very well with the bio-medical scientific model, and has consequently been very prominent. The relativist position sees culture as an integral part of behavior itself and subsequently one cannot speak of mental health illness without taking cognizance of culture, as it is culture that defines normality and abnormality. Before elaborating further on this discussion, we turn our attention to current research.

Current Cultural and Cross-cultural Research in Mental Health

Depression is perhaps the single most common mental health problem; accounting for over 17% of the 8.1% of the Global Burden of Disease (calculated in Disability Adjusted Life Years - DALY) which mental health problems account for. It therefore serves as a good illustrative example when reviewing current cultural and cross-cultural research in mental health. In addition, it is one of the mental health problems that has received much research attention.

A historical landmark in research was a series of studies sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) between 1973 and 1986 (Draguns, 1990; Sartorius, 1983). Among the important results of these studies is the suggestion that the core symptoms of depression include dysphoria, anxiety, tension, lack of energy, and ideas of insufficiency.

In addition, these studies also concluded that patients from Western countries tend to express guilt feelings more spontaneously than their non-Western counterparts. The latter group of patients, non-Western patients, on the other hand, more spontaneously reported bodily complaints when describing their distress than patients from Western countries. The approach taken in these studies has been to use standardized instruments describing the extent to which symptoms are present in different national groups who reportedly have depression or other forms of distress. Without the use of in-depth interviews, many non-Western patients are often described as suffering from something other than depression. For instance, through interviews of 100 Chinese patients suffering from shenjing shuairuo (neurasthenia), Kleinman (1986) concluded that 93 of them

indeed might be suffering from depression. However, instead of spontaneously reporting dysphoria, ideas of insufficiency and the other core symptoms of depression, these "depressed" patients spontaneously reported headaches (90%), sleep problems (87%), and dizziness (73%).

This raises a fundamental question about the universality of depression, and whether these Chinese patients are suffering from - depression, or somatization, as modern Western nosology would call it, following the spontaneous responses of headaches, dizziness, and the like. Furthermore, it is difficult to reconcile Scheiffelin's work (1985) with the universality of depression when in his 20-year work among the Kaluli people of New Guinea he could not find a single case of depression among them.

In his review of depression and culture, Marsella (1980) concluded that "depression does not assume a universal form" (p. 260), and that "the psychological representation of depression occurring in the Western world is often absent in non-Western societies" (p. 201). Jadhav (1995) has also questioned the validity of the use of the term "depression" for symptom patterns that bear little resemblance to Western depression because he doubts that we have sufficient evidence to regard depression as an objective entity that can be transported from one setting to the other.

Although much less common than depression, schizophrenia is a serious and highly stigmatized mental health problem that affects millions of people each year, and has very poor prognosis. In spite of evidence suggesting a biological etiology (see e.g., Chua & McKenna, 1995; Davis, Kahn, Ko & Davidson, 1991), we still lack complete knowledge about the local prevalence rates and prognosis, as well as variations in symptom presentation. Following Spiro's (1984) position that "thinking and feeling are often determined by culture" (p. 324), and the meaning of schizophrenia as "a split between thought and feeling", we are bound to be limited in our understand of schizophrenia (and nearly all other mental health problems) if culture is eliminated from the diagnostic equation.

Over the past quarter of a century, the WHO has undertaken several major studies on the expression, course, and prognosis of schizophrenia in 17 different countries, including Colombia, the former Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, India, Nigeria and the former Soviet Union, Thailand, and the United States. Using standardized instruments, researchers have identified a set of symptoms that were present across all cultures in the schizophrenic samples. These symptoms include lack of insight, auditory and verbal hallucinations, and ideas of reference. However, a phenomenological study of the experience of schizophrenia in Brazil and Chile with patients diagnosed with paranoiac schizophrenia in public psychiatric hospitals showed some important differences (Moreira, 1999a). While the meaning of the experience of bodily alterations (present in outbursts of schizophrenia) is attributed to mental illness in Chile, in Brazil the same experience is attributed to Umbanda (i.e., a kind of spiritism). However, no significant differences were found between the two groups of patients in relation to their sense of space.

Several other studies show that some nosological categories relevant in one culture may be totally invalid in others, and this is the basis for the existence of so-called culture bound syndromes. The biomedical tradition from the West with its underpinnings in universalist position assumes that mental health categories found in either the DSM-IV (APA, 2000) or ICD-10 (WHO, 1992) apply to everyone. Considering the high prevalence of anorexia nervosa in Western countries compared to non-Western Asian cultures, one may wonder why this disorder is not referred to as culture bound syndrome. Another important fact is that the same diagnoses of mental illnesses may appear in different cultures, but their etiology may have different characteristics, as is the case with anorexia. In the West it is associated with a self-image of fatness and to the fear of becoming overweight, while in non-Western cultures anorexia has nothing to do with weight or body mass, but rather to religious beliefs linked to fasting for spiritual purification (Moreira, in press).

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A Critical Approach to the Problem

Cross-cultural studies have in no doubt improved our understanding of culture and mental health. However, there is an ever-increasing need to note that many of the studies done in this area are limited when it comes to measuring the incidence and the expression of the mental illness in the various regions of the world. This restricts the concept of culture simply to the idea of different countries or different regions in the world (Sloan, 2001)The nature of these studies has succinctly been described by Moghaddam and Studer (1997) when they state that:

Cross-cultural psychology has been quick to put on the white lab coat of the scientist as though it had forgotten about culture. It is clear that the researchers have not forgotten culture as an independent variable, as something that could be assumed to be a cause and affect behavior. But who knows that they neglect culture as the manufacturer of the 'mechanisms of central processing... (p. 197).

According to Kleinman and Good (1985) one major limitation to gaining full realization of cross-cultural studies in psychopathology is the lack of a sophisticated anthropological view of culture. These authors emphasize the anthropological and relativist perspective in the studies of psychopathology, which resembles a phenomenological focus of research that searches for the meaning of an experience as lived out by the subject. Tatossian (1997) points out that a fundamental error in classical western cross-cultural psychiatry is its a-priori assumption that western psychiatric categories are universal, and that culture modifies the contents through a 'pathoplastic' action. (Note: The word 'pathoplástic' does not exist in English, but exists in French: pathoplastique. The meaning is of an exterior action (of the culture in this case) which modifies the illness or its meaning). What is then required is to determine the symptomatic forms the psychiatric disorders take in non-Western societies. As it is, "psychiatry" is the way Western society chooses to regulate the problem of its 'disorders'. However, there are other ways to do this where each culture could have its own "psychiatry" as our illustrative examples portray. The Western approach (i.e., psychiatry) should neither be seen as privileged as nor better than the other approaches. It is also important to note that cultures can regulate the problems without constituting "psychiatry" or its equivalent, because the notions of mental illness, of etiology, and of treatment are not universal.

A risk cross-cultural researcher's take is to translate, adapt, and transport the methodology of psychological tests, with the aim of discovering universal truths through testing of hypotheses among groups from different cultures (Moggadam & Studer, 1997). This is both serious and questionable as it involves stripping the value, evidently of ideological character, of the role of culture in the constitution of behavior, of mental health and mental illness. Rather than including issues of power and ideology into the concept of culture, culture is reduced to a simple independent variable that does not require any deeper thought about its meaning. Perspectives from critical psychology show that mainstream psychology is ideologically individualistic in nature and perpetuates a situation of inequality and social injustice (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Sloan, 2000).

It would, however, be a great loss if those studies in cross-cultural psychology were to reinforce this perspective, when they themselves have the potential for critical understanding of mental health and illness, as well as psychology in general, at an anthropological, sociological and political level. Even though a critical approach of psychology recognizes its link to cultural studies (Sloan, 2000), the enormous critical potential of cultural and cross-cultural studies is lost when psychologists 'psychologize' the concept of culture and thus uncharacterized it as such. Consequently, studies that are restricted to measuring symptoms in different cultural settings take off.

When we propose that culture be understood as a constituent of mental health, it is important to recover not only the anthropological definition of the concept put forward by Kleinman and Good (1985) as the intersection of meaning and experience. It is equally important to transcend the concept by explicitly incorporating the inherent political aspects. This deals with a concept which is necessarily not naive (Freire, 2000) but de ideologized (Martin-Baró, 1985). Culture as a fundamental constituent dimension of mental health deserves to be understood as an anthropological, historical, social, and political concept, including, fundamentally, an ideological discussion on its constituents. As Rovaletti (1996) affirms "one does not become crazy as he wishes, but rather as the culture foresees. At the heart of neurosis or psychosis, through which we try to escape, culture still tells us what personality of substitution we should adopt" (p. 125).