Cross-Cultural Psychology
Psy 420

Chapter 13
Culture and Social Behavior
I: Self, and Identity

Self Construal

• What is your concept of a person? How do you experience who you are?
• “I am ....” List at least 20.
• How many abstract? Situational?
• It is not either or, but the relative salience of each.
• There is a difference in how the self is construed in the West and in the East (Markus & Kitayama, 1991):
  – Interdependent construal of self: Asian & Mid. East cultures

Independent Self Construal

• View of self characterized by an emphasis on a bounded, autonomous individual who is relatively distinct from others & the environment.
• Those with this self construal view themselves as unique individuals with a distinct & stable set of internal attributes & goals
• “Right” choices determined by checking them against one's personal satisfaction as a criterion (Bellah, et. al., 1985)
• Major task: Emphasize positive aspects of the self by
  – Thinking of oneself as “unique” & feeling “good” and “special” about it
  – Distinguishing oneself from others through actualizing one's positive inner attributes & through individual achievement
Interdependent Self Construal

• View of self characterized by an emphasis on an unbounded and flexible individual who is interrelated to others and to the environment.
• Internal attributes less salient in consciousness. Those with this self construal cannot describe themselves meaningfully without a context, yet, as Cousins (1989) found, when context specified Japanese provide more abstract internal attributes than Americans.
• “Right” choices determined by checking them against one’s relationships, roles, and duties.
• Major task: To “fit in” and maintain harmony by
  – Establishing meaningful social relationships, feeling a sense of belonging to the group & subordinating personal beliefs & needs to its norms
  – Meeting group’s expectations & standards & not falling behind others

Culture, Self & Psychological Processes

Culture → Self concepts → Cognition (thoughts), Emotions (feelings), Motivation (behaviors) → Culture

Most psychological research carried out on western educated population and its conclusions based on assumption of independent self-construal and so may not meaningfully carry over to non-Western cultures.
Culture, Self & Cognition

• The Fundamental Attribution Error (Morris & Peng, 1994): Attributing observed behavior to dispositional causes more than situational causes.
  – Americans emphasize disposition (individualist orientation) while Chinese emphasize situation (group orientation)
  – Content analysis of newspaper homicide report: English newspaper higher in dispositionalism, Chinese newspaper higher in situationalism.
  – Evaluating importance of causes of murder reported by media: Americans gave more weight to dispositional causes, Chinese to situational ones.

• Ultimate Attribution Error & Actor-Observer bias: Dispositional attributions stronger for outgr. member (& others) than ingr. member (& self).
  – Demonstrated by American participants but not Chinese participants

• False uniqueness effect (Myers, 1987): the tendency to overestimate one’s own uniqueness in social comparisons.

Achievement Motivation

Triandis, 1988

• Interdependent selves
  – Motivated by more social needs and may restrain inner desires in order to maintain the social dynamic.
  – Achievement understood to mean group achievement
  – Self-reliance means not being a burden on ingroup

• Independent selves
  – Motivated to maintain consistency of actions and reactions across situations.
  – Achievement understood to mean individual achievement
  – Self-reliance means independence from ingroup

Relevance in concepts (Triandis, 1988): implications for methods

• Concept of achievement
  – Individualist: associated with individual achievement
  – Collectivist: associated with group achievement

• Concept of self-reliance
  – Individualist: independence from ingroup
  – Collectivist: not being a burden on the ingroup

• Need to look at both levels of each variable in order to make meaningful comparisons.
Motivation Cont’d

– Other possible variables that could account for differences in achievement motivation
  • Child rearing practices (Kornadt, Eckensberger, & Emminghaus, 1980; Segall et al., 1990): Achievement motivation lower, especially among males, if raised by authoritarian parents (especially fathers).
  • Degree of social mobility in a culture LeVine (1966): Positive correlation between achievement motivation themes in the dreams of boys and degree to which social mobility determined by one’s effort and success (vs. restricted by one’s class and status)

Motivation Cont’d

– Achievement Motivation as Contributor to Cultural Differences in Economic Growth
  • McClelland (1970’s): Variation in achievement themes in the literature, folktales, and artwork of cultures positively correlated with economic conditions in a culture. Conclusion: Achievement motivation a prerequisite for economic growth.
    – However, since the 1970’s, most rapid economic growth has been in the East: Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Maybe their cultural emphasis on “hard work” paved the way for economic acceleration?
    – Concept of achievement motivation an emic. Useful for explaining economic growth in Western societies, but may not help us to understand economic development in other cultures.
  • Kornadt et al. (1980): different cultures may value achievement in different areas. One culture may emphasize achievement in economic activities, another may more highly value achievement in religious endeavors.

Culture, Self & Emotions

Types of emotions experienced, their relationship to one another, and their importance for well being depends on one’s self construal:

– Socially disengaged: Make reference to the individuals internal attributes (one’s own needs, goals, desires, and abilities). Expressing them further highlights self-defining internal attributes & serves to affirm, and bolster the construal of the self as an autonomous entity. Emotions that are incompatible with an autonomous sense of self can quickly be transformed to one that is more compatible (Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 92’)
  • Positive (PSD): Pride, self esteem, superior, top of the world
  • Negative (NSD): Anger, frustration, guilt
  • PSD & NSD negatively correlated in Americans (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2003)

– Socially engaged: directed towards the other and the self-in-relation to others. Expressing them requires the presence of others and affirms one’s interconnectedness with others.
  • Positive (PSE): Respect, feeling close to another, friendly feelings
  • Negative (NSE): Indebtedness, Shame, afraid of angering another, Sympathy
  • PSE & NSE positively correlated in Japanese (Dialectical harmony)
Emotions and Well-Being

(Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Norasakkunkit, 2003)

- For Americans college students
  - High positive correlation between general well-being (GWB) (i.e. relaxed, calm, happy, and elated) & PSD emotions
  - Moderate positive correlation between GWB & PSE emotions
  - Positive emotions given weight over negative emotions to allow for the experience of GWB

- For Japanese college students
  - High positive correlation between GWB & PSE emotions
  - High negative correlation between GWB & PSD emotions
  - Positive and negative emotions given same weight in determining GWB

Indigenous Emotions

Through socialization, people experience more frequently, emotions that reflect the culturally prescribed goals.

- Fago: Feeling of compassion, love sadness
- Amae: Feelings of mutual dependence and expectation for others' indulgence. Feel like being babied, like leaning or relying on another
  - Socially engaged. Motivates helping
  - Happiness?

- Korea-Canada: What does the word “we” signify? (Choi & Choi, 1990)
  - Korean group: 55% referred to affection, intimacy, comfort, and acceptance
  - Canadians: only 15% make reference to affective bonds.

Multicultural Identities

- Cultural identity: Individual’s psychological membership is a distinct culture.
- What happens when an individual is affiliated with two or more cultures? Tendency to
  - Use both worldviews in organizing perceptions of self
  - Cultural reaffirmation effect: Evaluate the native culture more positively & identify with it more than natives
  - See the two cultures as being more different than the natives
  - Have more traditional views of the native culture than natives do
- Why?
Examining the Underlying Assumptions

• Researchers tend to blindly assume that:
  – there is a West-East difference in self construals, and that
  – The difference is related to the I-C dimension of culture.
• Must first assess that:
  – Self-construals are different in different cultures
  – Cultures differ on I-C in the predicted direction
• It may be the case that:
  – Differences in self-construals reflect individual level
    differences due to the contexts in which a person operates.
  – Each person has both self-construals.
  – Differences in self-construals exist on the culture level, but are
    explainable by dimensions of culture other than I-C.

Culture and Personality

• Approaches to studying personality:
  – The cultural approach
  – The cross-cultural approach
  – How are they different?

Culture and Personality Constructs

• Some well studied personality constructs:
  – Locus of control: Are EAs higher than others on
    internal locus?
  – Self-esteem: Do EAs have higher self-esteem? Only
    if person with high self esteem is defined as one who
    • Is more “tuned in” to positive attributes about the self than
      to negative attributes (False Uniq. Effect)
    • Tends to explain positive behaviors and outcome more in
      terms of personality traits than in terms of situational
      factors (Self Serv. Bias/ Fund. Attrib. Error),
    • Tends to think that something bad is less likely to happen to
      them than it is to similar others (Unrealistic optm.)
Culture and Personality
Constructs Cont’d

• Does being the target of prejudice & discrimination always result in low self-esteem? Jennifer Crocker, et. al. (1993): Some groups that experience discrimination have low self-esteem (ex. overweight people) while other groups seem to have average or above average self-esteem (ex. Mexican Americans, gay people, & people with some physical disabilities). How to explain this difference?
  – Attributional Ambiguity: when members of stigmatized groups can explain negative reactions from others as prejudice & discrimination, self-esteem is protected.
  – On the other hand, attributing the negative reactions to one’s own behavior or other factors under the control of the individual may lead to lower self-esteem.

Are there Universal Dimensions of Personality?

• Cross-cultural research tends to support universality of the Five factor Model (OCEAN).
• Smith & Bond (1999): cross-cultural differences in the Big Five may be manifested not in the factor structure itself, but in the relative importance of these factors.
• Is the etic nature of FFM evolutionarily adaptive?
  – “this trait variation is universally important to humans in navigating their social environment and thereby solving adaptive problems” (MacDonald, 1998, p. 120)

Assumptions Underlying Anthropological Research on Culture and Personality

• Anthropologists have primarily dominated the study of personality from a cross-cultural perspective. Block (1988) summarized and evaluated their major assumptions and methodologies in studying the relationship between culture and personality:
  – Largely influenced by psychoanalytic theories. Often assume that adult personality is determined by childhood experiences in the different cultures. Available evidence does not indicate that specific childhood experiences always result in particular personality traits (ex. Oral or anal personality).
  – Made extensive use of projective tests (ex. TAT & Rorschach) as a methodology for assessing personality cross-culturally. Responses to projective tests are often difficult to score and quantify. Problem multiplied when projective tests administered in a culture where responses need to be translated and subtle nuances of the responses may be lost. Also, responses may be influenced by their unfamiliarity with the test situation & anxiety generated by the test. Recent research uses more objective techniques.
Assumptions Underlying Anthropological Research Cont’d

– Often attempted to define a single, basic personality type that is consistent across all members of a culture (Ex. Benedict’s 1946 description of the Japanese personality). Many of these studies temporally related to conflicts between these cultures and U.S. Scientists not free of biases. We need to be on guard against the influence of our own attitudes and beliefs on our interpretation of the behavior observed in another culture.

– Often employ circular reasoning. Researchers will study overt behavior in an attempt to infer basic personality characteristics of a culture. Later, they will use the personality characteristics that were originally inferred from behaviors in the culture to explain the occurrence of the same behaviors. Variability in personality is actually be greater within cultures than between cultures.

• Contemporary researchers have basically dropped the assumption that a core personality can be identified for a particular culture and have focused on cultural variables that may contribute to the emergence of specific personality traits.