



University of Pennsylvania
ScholarlyCommons

Journal Articles (Literacy.org)

Literacy.org


1978

Cross-Cultural Salad: A Bit Mixed. Review of Neil Warren, *Studies in Cross-Cultural Psychology*

Daniel A. Wagner

University of Pennsylvania, wagner@literacy.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/literacyorg_articles

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [International and Comparative Education Commons](#), and the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wagner, Daniel A., "Cross-Cultural Salad: A Bit Mixed. Review of Neil Warren, *Studies in Cross-Cultural Psychology*" (1978). *Journal Articles (Literacy.org)*. 24.

https://repository.upenn.edu/literacyorg_articles/24

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/literacyorg_articles/24

For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

Cross-Cultural Salad: A Bit Mixed. Review of Neil Warren, *Studies in Cross-Cultural Psychology*

Abstract

Neil Warren has put together a volume containing contributions from five well-known cross-cultural investigators. According to the foreword, this book was intended to meet "the need for detailed high-level presentations and evaluations of particular areas of enquiry in cross-cultural psychology . . ." (p. ix). And, Warren says, the book was designed primarily for graduate students and "professional peers" who are interested in cross-cultural psychology. The two inferred goals would be: (1) an up-to-date and detailed account of particular research domains and (2) coverage of a variety of topics useful for graduate-level courses. Despite some individual instances of excellence, the volume as a whole fails on both accounts. As the author admits, the volume was delayed so much that more recent chapters by the same investigators (covering much the same research) have already appeared or will soon appear elsewhere. Also, a paucity of only five unrelated contributions leaves the book scattered over a domain so large that only the cross-cultural eclectic would find each chapter of interest.

Disciplines

Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education | Education | Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research | International and Comparative Education | Language and Literacy Education

Social Work. She has been a member of the national board of the National Organization for Women and President of the Detroit NOW chapter. She was Director of Operation Friendship, a psychiatric rehabilitation center, and a faculty member at the Merrill-Palmer Institute. Kenneth Israel is a psychiatrist. A University of Michigan MD, he is also a faculty member in the Residency Training Program at Sinai Hospital. His primary research interests include individual psychotherapy, and family and marital therapy.

*Asenath LaRue is Assistant Research Psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California (Los Angeles) and Lecturer in life-span development at California State University, Dominguez Hills. A PhD of the University of Iowa, she was previously Assistant Professor at Northern Illinois University. LaRue wrote a chapter with L. F. Jarvik on aging and intellectual functioning in the future in *Aging into the Twenty-First Century* (edited by L. F. Jarvik).*

Looking Ahead is 216 pages devoted to the theme of transition—transition in the lives of individual women and for women en masse in an epoch of societal change. There is a blending of feminist dialogue with research on adult development as the editors seek to explore their own evolution from youth to late adulthood.

There are 24 chapters, each by a different author or authors, organized into seven sections. The contributions span most of the major issues in late-life womanhood, from objective physical change to the more elusive construct of power. The list of contributors is impressive (e.g., Jacquelyne Jackson, Robert Atchley, Florine Livson, and Robert Kastenbaum), but the significance of their observations is often masked by the brevity with which the topics are discussed.

The causes and correlates of physical aging are described in an initial section. Ruth Weg presents an informative account of age-related changes in nutritional needs and sexual physiology, while Joan Israel provides a personal glimpse of her awakening to the signs of physical aging. The exhortation to take pride

in our bodies as we age becomes more credible with the knowledge that Israel, a feminist, has herself experienced a difficult moment of reckoning.

From concern with the body, the contents shift to identity, roles, and subgroup differences. Rosalyn Saltz's documentation of the success of older women in foster grandparent programs is a welcome addition to this part of the book, and Jacquelyne Jackson and Mildred Seltzer provide much-needed insight into the adjustment of older black and Jewish women. One of the final sections is entitled "Help," but paradoxically, its contents are unlikely to assist the reader. Disparities are noted in perceptions of service needs between older people and the agencies that serve them, but little guidance is given as to how the older woman might work the helping system to greater advantage. Individual psychotherapy is championed, but the relative efficacy of alternative methods of treatment is not sufficiently explored.

The editors expressed a desire to make information about the develop-

ment of women accessible to the general public. In this, their volume may be a success. The selections are written in nontechnical language, and cameo accounts of individuals' growth are interspersed among more general articles. This book compares favorably in readability with the more original, research-based *Four Stages of Life* by Lowenthal and her colleagues (1975), and is broader in scope than many popular volumes pertaining to older women (e.g., Caine's *Widow*, 1974). It would be an interesting auxiliary text for lower division college courses on adult development or female identity.

In concluding, it may be useful to convey the reactions to *Looking Ahead* of two of my older friends, Paul and Helen Davis. "There's nothing new here," said one; the other emphatically agreed. Did they fail to grasp the purpose behind this volume? More probably, their own successful transitions have provided them with the very knowledge that this book attempts to convey

Cross-Cultural Salad: A Bit Mixed

Neil Warren (Ed.)

Studies in Cross-Cultural Psychology, Vol. 1. London: Academic Press, 1977. Pp. xvii + 212. \$16.65.

Reviewed by DANIEL A. WAGNER

*Neil Warren is Reader in Social Psychology in the School of African and Asian Studies of the University of Sussex (England). He previously held positions at Brunel, Makerere (Uganda), and Australian National Universities, and at the Papua New Guinea Institute of Social and Economic Research. Warren is coeditor with Marie Jahoda of *Attitudes and wrote a chapter in Social Implications of Developmental Psychology* (edited by J. Sants, in press).*

Daniel A. Wagner is Assistant Professor and Director of Interdisciplinary

*Studies in Human Development in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. A University of Michigan PhD, he has been a Social Science Research Council Foreign Area Fellow for Africa and a Summer Fellow at the East-West Research Center. Wagner is coeditor with H. W. Stevenson of *Cultural Perspectives of Child Development and wrote a chapter in Ideological Bias in the Social Sciences* (edited by J. Adelson), both forthcoming.*

NEIL WARREN has put together a volume containing contributions from five well-known cross-cultural investigators. According to the foreword, this book was intended to meet "the need for detailed high-level presentations and evaluations of particular areas of enquiry in cross-cultural psychology . . ." (p. ix). And, Warren says, the book was designed primarily for graduate students and "professional peers" who are interested in cross-cultural psychology. The two inferred goals would be: (1) an up-to-date and detailed account of particular research domains and (2) coverage of a variety of topics useful for graduate-level courses. Despite some individual instances of excellence, the volume as a whole fails on both accounts. As the author admits, the volume was delayed so much that more recent chapters by the same investigators (covering much the same research) have already appeared or will soon appear elsewhere. Also, a paucity of only five unrelated contributions leaves the book scattered over a domain so large that only the cross-cultural eclectic would find each chapter of interest.

Nonetheless, in a volume consisting of a limited number of in-depth reviews, each chapter must be considered on its own merits. There seems to be no particular arrangement of chapters in the book, although the first and longest chapter ("Human Categorization") by Rosch is the most empirically and theoretically impressive. In this chapter, Rosch reviews her research of how human beings categorize (read: cognize) informational domains. Her theoretical position was originally based on some cross-cultural experiments on color categories and memory for colors in New Guinea. This work, contained in the first half of the chapter, has been influential among those who search for universals in human cognition. The remaining 25 pages deal primarily with laboratory experiments on human categorization, which, while potentially important for a general theory, will be of only limited interest to the cross-cultural researcher. It is worth mentioning that Rosch's chapter provides a fine discussion of cross-cultural methodology, including a brief critique of the influen-

tial work of Cole and Scribner (*Culture and Thought: A Psychological Introduction*, 1973). Rosch rightly claims that the mere demonstration of "abstract thinking" in a culturally appropriate context with culturally meaningful tasks is the use of a "method . . . that really ought to go without saying" (p. 8). She hints that "culturally meaningful tasks do not of themselves produce well conceived research." This is an important point, since some investigators seem to have accepted the simplistic notion that all peoples are alike—that it is entirely the psychologist's tests that make differing peoples appear cognitively different.

THE chapters by Kline ("Cross-Cultural Studies and Freudian Theory") and Taft ("Coping with Unfamiliar Cultures") are helpful in several respects: the former because an up-to-date review for a general audience is not easily available, and the latter because this real-life topic is almost never included in academic-theoretical volumes. However, while each author has a number of important comments to make, both chapters are somewhat disappointing. Although it includes a well-conceived methodological critique of earlier culture and personality (mainly Freudian) research studies, Kline's chapter cites only a handful of references to work in the 1970s. Despite his suggestion that there is only a single "very promising" study in the literature (from 1958!), Kline remains an optimistic believer in "the prize that awaits the cross-cultural investigator of Freudian theory" (p. 86). Taft's chapter on culture learning should be of general and personal interest to many readers, since cross-cultural social scientists are among those who must strive to adapt to new cultures and who experience "culture shock." There are quite a few reasonable insights about cultural adaptation that demonstrate Taft's in-depth understanding, particularly with respect to what he terms the "enculturation" or "reculturation" of refugees and immigrants. Nevertheless, the sometimes undefined (or ill-defined) use of terms (e.g., *going native*, *anticipatory identification*, and *cognitive area*) and not

a few unsupported claims (e.g., "when a culture learner has established sufficiently high levels of probability in confirmation of his expectations, he can afford to lay down his crutch," p. 137) may be disturbing to the reader, especially in a volume of otherwise empirically based research.

Little need be said about the two remaining chapters by Klein et al. ("Malnutrition and Mental Development in Rural Guatemala") and Dasen ("Are Cognitive Processes Universal? A Contribution to Cross-Cultural Piagetian Psychology"), as the well-known research of both authors has been published in numerous places. Of particular interest in the Klein et al. chapter is the increased focus on the malnourished mother as a link to subsequent postnatal mental development. Dasen's chapter provides a brief overview of cross-cultural Piagetian work that has just appeared in considerably more detail (P. R. Dasen (Ed.) *Piagetian Psychology: Cross-Cultural Contributions*, 1977). Each of the above chapters is a clear and current review of the author's research program.

IN sum, it is difficult to see how this volume alone will be the "major contribution to an important branch of psychology" that the book's dust cover suggests. With the appearance of future volumes in this series, however, it is quite possible that—as in some definitions of culture—the whole will be greater than the sum of its parts.

Post criticism: For those who would hope that this volume would be a useful bibliographic resource, there will be some disappointment. For reasons that remain unknown, titles of published articles are not given in the references.

The quantity principle was not an isolated thought-form in professional brains; it was the instrument through which social power was actually developed.

—LANCELOT L. WHYTE
The Next Development in Man

Take care of the means, and the end will take care of itself.

—GANDHI