

Grand Valley State University
ScholarWorks@GVSU

Papers from the International Association for Cross-
Cultural Psychology Conferences

IACCP

2009

An Emerging Integration of Universal and Culturally Specific Psychologies and its Implications for the Study of Psychopathology

Gregory T. Smith

University of Kentucky, gsmith@email.uky.edu

Nichea S. Spillane

Brown University

Agnes M. Stairs

University of Kentucky

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers

 Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, G. T., Spillane, N. S., & Stairs, A. M. (2009). An emerging integration of universal and culturally specific psychologies and its implications for the study of psychopathology. In G. Aikaterini & K. Mylonas (Eds.), *Quod Erat Demonstrandum: From Herodotus' ethnographic journeys to cross-cultural research: Proceedings from the 18th International Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*. https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers/33/

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the IACCP at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Papers from the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology Conferences by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

An Emerging Integration of Universal and Culturally Specific Psychologies and its Implications for the Study of Psychopathology

Gregory T. Smith, *University of Kentucky, USA*, gsmith@email.uky.edu

Nichea S. Spillane, *Brown University, USA*

Agnes M. Stairs, *University of Kentucky, USA*

There is an emerging consensus among researchers on the need to integrate universal and culturally specific psychological perspectives. Important tasks in this process have included identifying the appropriate level of generality for putatively universal processes, how to understand culturally different processes in light of shared universal capacities, and the development of transparent scientific means for investigating cultural differences. In this chapter, the authors discuss each of these issues. It appears to be true that many psychological processes appear to reflect culturally-specific instantiations of universal capacities. The authors then consider implications of this emerging integration for psychology, by applying it to the study of psychopathology. They report on formal models that explain why some cultures embrace dysfunction among members. They then use the integrative framework to describe methods for determining whether putative disorders bring universal or contextual life dysfunction, and to clarify etiological models of three disorders. Models of psychopathology can be more informed and precise if they include careful consideration of both universal and cultural influences on behavior. Cultural psychology is not a separate discipline within psychology; rather, it informs, and should be integrated with, the various content domains within the field.

In this chapter, we first describe the nature of an emerging integration between universal and culturally specific psychologies and give examples of that integration. Second, we consider recent thinking on the process of cultural evolution, because doing so provides a relatively transparent, scientific way to understand cultural differences. Third, we apply this integrative perspective to the study of psychopathology. Specifically, we evaluate possible universal and culturally specific etiological factors for three disorders: alcoholism, bulimia nervosa, and anorexia nervosa. We do so to demonstrate the value of the systematic consideration of universal psychological capacities, forces that influence the emergence of cultural variability, and culturally specific psychological processes. We argue that the emergence of the science of cross-cultural psychology has made this integrative perspective possible, and that systematic consideration of these different processes is essential for the development of sound psychological theories.

Nature of the Emerging Integration

We believe there is growing evidence for the following broad integration of the universal and the culturally specific. There are universal human psychological capacities and there are culturally distinct responses to distinct histories and circumstances. The culturally distinct responses to distinct circumstances require that universal psychological capacities are made manifest in different ways in different cultural contexts. Thus, there appear to be content-free, universal capacities that are instantiated differently as a function of cultural factors. Psychological processes that can appear to be very different are sometimes the expression of the same universal capacity. In the next section of this chapter, we consider three examples of this process.

Good Self but not Self Enhancement. Historically, most theorists considered the need to maintain a positive view of the self (i.e., self enhancement) as universal. Theoreticians have argued that self enhancement serves to maintain status (Barkow, 1989), to increase one's desirability as a mate (Nesse & Lloyd, 1995), and to facilitate belongingness (Heine, 2003). However, consider some of the differences between Eastern, collectivist cultures and Western,

individualist cultures. Members of collectivist cultures are thought to emphasize the welfare of the group rather than of the self, to set aside one's interests for the sake of group harmony, and to emphasize self-improvement rather than past successes (Kitayama, 2002; Kitayama & Markus, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Personal self enhancement seems inconsistent with this cultural representation of the self. Indeed, a recent meta-analysis found strong evidence for self-enhancement among Westerners (average $d = .86$), but there was no evidence of the process among East Asians living in East Asia (average $d = -.02$: Heine & Hamamura, 2007).

There appears to be a striking difference between Westerners and Easterners: Westerners appear to engage in many psychological processes in order to maintain a positive self-view, but Easterners do not. Identification of this difference may be considered one of the many successes made possible by the emergence of cross-cultural psychology as a scientific discipline. At the same time, this difference between Westerners and Easterners may also be understood on a broader level. There appears to be a universal content-free human psychological capacity that underlies both Western self enhancement and the Eastern focus on self-improvement: the capacity/orientation to be a good person in one's context (Heine, 2003). It is expressed differently in different cultures, leading in the West to the process of self enhancement but leading to something very different in the East. It is universally adaptive to be viewed as good and worthy of high regard in one's culture (D'Andrade, 1984; Heine, 2004; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Kluckhohn, 1962). Whether in the West or in the East, the good person, i.e., the successful, valued person, has improved status, the opportunities for survival and reproduction that follow from that status, as well as the day-to-day rewarding correlates of those opportunities (Heine, 2004). Expression of the universal need to be a good person looks very different in different group contexts, because human behavior must be contingent on the context and the behavior of others (Cohen, 2001; Kenrick, Li, & Butner, 2003). Self-enhancement, then, can be understood as one cultural instantiation of a universal desire to be a good self. This perspective enables one to understand both important cultural variability and a shared, underlying psychological process that gives rise to the cultural difference.

Autonomy but not Individualism. The Western presumption that individualism is universal has been criticized as "alien to the Asian ethos" (Ho, 1998). Interestingly, Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan (2003) identify autonomy as a likely universal, following their examination of the construct in multiple cultures. To integrate these two perspectives, it is crucial to appreciate that in the Chirkov et al. (2003) definition, autonomy is a more general, abstract concept than individualism. One is autonomous when one's "behavior is experienced as willingly enacted and when [one] fully endorses the actions in which [one] is engaged and/or the values expressed by them" (Chirkov et al., 2003, p. 98). Heteronomy is the contrasting concept. One is heteronomous when one's actions are experienced as controlled or compelled by others, regardless of one's values or interests. From this point of view, one can be autonomously dependent on another, if one's dependence is willingly enacted and one fully endorses it, just as one can be autonomously independent. Similarly, one can be heteronomously dependent on others, or heteronomously independent. Chirkov et al. (2003) found that members of individualist cultures tended to autonomously embrace individualism, and members of collectivist cultures tended to autonomously embrace collectivism. Thus, the need for autonomy is content-free: it describes a desired outcome, but does not specify the means to that outcome.

When one autonomously embraces culturally normative behaviors, one's needs are more likely to be met. In contrast, individualism identifies a particular set of interests and priorities and so may be a culturally-specific instantiation of a general need for autonomy.

Personality. To discuss the universality and cultural specificity of personality is a slightly different enterprise from the foregoing. The focus is not on universal needs and their specific instantiations, but rather on individual differences in the experience of events and in behavioral responses to events. Individual differences in personality can be discussed in terms of their universality and

cultural specificity, though. There is an emerging consensus that there are largely universal dimensions along which individuals differ, but there are also culturally specific antecedents to personality-based reactions and there is culturally specific content to the behavioral expression of universal traits. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the role of personality requires attention to both universal and culturally specific processes.

The universality of personality has been examined using both etic approaches, in which investigators translate Western personality instruments and examine their structure and validity in different cultures, and emic approaches, in which investigators develop new personality measures “from the ground up” in different cultures, relying on the existing trait language in those cultures (Church, 2000; Smith, Spillane, & Annus, 2006). Strikingly, the findings have been consistent with the two methods and across personality scales. Lexical studies in 12 non-English languages have generally produced variants of four of the five broad factors of personality recognized in the West (neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness), with some lack of clarity concerning the fifth factor of openness to experience (De Raad, Perugini, Hrebickova, & Szarota, 1998; Peabody & De Raad, 2002; Saucier & Goldberg, 2001). In addition to the structural consistency of the domains of personality across cultures, there is considerable evidence for the construct validity of trait measures across cultures (Smith et al., 2006). Although, of course, the antecedents to trait-based reactions vary across cultures, and expression of these traits varies across cultures, there nevertheless appears to be a noteworthy level of consistency in the domains of individual differences in personality across cultures.

To summarize this first section of the chapter: there appear to be psychological universals that are content-free psychological processes or needs. As a function of their membership in different cultural contexts, individuals instantiate the universal processes and needs in different ways. There appear to be common dimensions of personality across cultures, but within different cultural contexts, individual differences in personality are triggered by different events and are expressed differently. We next summarize current thought concerning how pronounced cultural differences emerge.

Cultural Evolution Theory

In this section, we will sample from cultural evolution theory in order to show how researchers have come to understand some contributors to cultural differences. This work will also provide a means for understanding the emergence of cultural norms that turn out to be maladaptive. One of the important contributions of cultural evolution theory is that investigators have provided explicit, mathematical models for understanding cultural change. This advance is important, because current cultural evolution models are transparent and subject to critical review. The possibility of critical review of this work is crucial, in order to minimize the ethnocentrism and racism that characterized past models of cultural comparison (Dickemann, 1989). We will not provide a review of cultural evolution theory (see Durham, 1991; Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Instead, we will highlight a few key aspects of this body of theory.

Humans Rely on Cultural Processes. Humans’ ability to survive ecological challenges appears to have depended on their capacity to engage in rapid, cultural learning. For example, analysis of very deep ice cores in Greenland has indicated that during the last 500,000 years of the Pleistocene era (the last block of significant human evolutionary time before the emergence of modern, complex societies), temperature changes of 10 degrees per century appear to have occurred (Anklin, Barnola, Beer, Blunier, Chappellez, Clausen, & Dahljensen, 1993; Broecker, 1996; Ditlevsen, Svensmark, & Johnsen, 1996; Lehman, 1993). Changes of this magnitude produced rapid, ongoing, and perhaps chaotic changes in the environment. The locations where species could survive were in regular flux, producing species movement and cascading effects on local ecologies. The changes were much too rapid for many species to adapt successfully (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). To survive this period, humans must have had the capacity to change economic, social, and cultural processes very rapidly (Richerson & Boyd, 2005).

Cultural and Ecological Circumstances. The demands of a group's physical environment may directly influence the nature of its social structure (Cohen, 2001). For example, in the Mediterranean plains region, abundant, easily traversed, and arid land may, together, have facilitated the appearance, more than 2,000 years ago, of powerful individuals who could influence others by providing or withholding irrigation. It is possible that the emergence of such individuals facilitated the development of strong clans, and centrally controlled, rigid social orders (Braudel, 1972; Wilson, 1993). In contrast, much of northwestern Europe had arable land that could be carved out of dense forests or steep hillsides. Peasants could provide for themselves, and they were less accessible to, and controllable by, the would-be powerful. Perhaps peasants acted more for their own survival, rather than acting for the benefit of a controlling other. One result may have been a greater influence toward individualist psychological perspectives on northwestern Europeans than on those living in the Mediterranean plains.

A group's physical environment may influence or constrain its economic choices, and those choices, in turn, influence the emergence of social structures (Cohen, 2001; Wilson, 1993). Diamond and Bellwood (2003) reviewed extensive evidence that the ready availability of domesticable plants and animals in areas within Eurasia, following warming of the climate, appears to have led to food surpluses as early as 5000 B.C. Food surpluses likely had extraordinary influences on economic and social conditions. Rather than spend each day hunting and gathering food for survival, many groups in Eurasia may have had the luxury of having members devote their time to other tasks. Perhaps the invention of new tools and the specialization of labor, along with the social structures necessary to accommodate their emergence, were among the results.

A crucial thing to appreciate about the evolution of cultures, though, is that cultures do not necessarily adopt the most efficient norms for success in their current ecology. Evolution is shaped by prior conditions: existing social practices both facilitate and constrain the emergence of new social practices. A cultural group's solution to a particular environmental challenge is thus likely to be an adaptation constrained, shaped, or facilitated by the current social structure (itself perhaps, in part, an adaptation to some prior ecological circumstance: Cohen, 2001; Forde, 1934). Cohen (2001) argued persuasively that initial social conditions, developed partly in response to initial ecological circumstances, have a disproportionate influence on subsequent social conditions, often for centuries (see also Nisbett, 1993; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

Processes of Cultural Learning and Cultural Change. Even given the limitations of physical demands and past history, cultures appear able to change very rapidly (Richerson & Boyd, 2001). Some of the processes by which rapid cultural change occur have recently been described. For example, indirect bias (or differential modeling or role selection) refers to a process in which individuals adopt an ideal, symbol, or behavior because it characterizes important, powerful people (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Behaviors that are adopted range from the innocuous (hairstyle) to the harmful (extreme thinness). Boyd and Richerson (1985) presented mathematical models of how indirect bias processes can produce rapid change, even resulting in a kind of "runaway" embracing of behaviors of no, or even negative, adaptive significance.

Frequency-based bias refers to a process in which individuals adopt a practice because of its frequency in the cultural population; the term is analogous to psychology's use of conformity bias (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Direct bias (Richerson & Boyd, 2005) refers to the transmission of cultural perspectives because they are believed to provide benefits to the group. Mathematical models of the operation of these processes suggest they may be responsible for the rapid rate at which cultural norms change (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Cohen, 2001; Richerson & Boyd, 2001).

To summarize: we have a growing understanding of that which is universal, that which is culturally specific, and the processes by which cultures diverge. We also have a growing understanding of the means by which cultures come to develop different norms and practices. In the third section of this chapter, we will consider the implications of these developments, both in general and in the specific example of the study of psychopathology.

General Implications of this Emerging Integration

The implications of the work reviewed above have not yet been fully realized by researchers in many psychology subdisciplines. Researchers should seek to understand both the universal and cultural components of the psychological phenomena they study. Use of cross-cultural methods makes the assertion of universals, as well as the assertion of contextual phenomena, open to scrutiny, thereby reducing the degree of bias and ethnocentrism in our work. Researchers' understanding of many content domains within psychology will become more informed, precise, and clear as they integrate these perspectives into their work.

In short, cultural psychology is not a discipline distinct from the rest of the field. Rather, it has produced an integrative framework that can inform many topics of concern in psychology. We are particularly interested in how researchers studying applied areas of psychology can take advantage of these advances. In what follows, we illustrate this process by applying these findings to the study of psychopathology.

Implications for Psychopathology

The study of psychopathological processes focuses on psychological content that is quite removed from the examples of universality and cultural specificity considered above. But, the implications of the emerging integration for psychopathology, as for many subdisciplines within psychology, concern basic organizing, theoretical principles rather than specific content. To show the importance of the emerging integration for psychopathology research is to illustrate its importance across content domains within the field. And in fact, on a basic, theoretical level, consideration of the integrative framework illuminates several concerns that should occupy psychopathology researchers. First, the concept of dysfunction needs to be understood from an integrative perspective. Just as there appear to be universal needs, and individual differences in the ability to meet those needs, there are likely to be behavior patterns that are universally dysfunctional: that, in any context, interfere with successful functioning. In the same way, just as there appear to be culturally specific psychological processes, it is important to determine empirically whether a given behavior pattern is dysfunctional within a given context. Thus, somewhat analogous to considering whether a psychological process is universal or culturally specific, one can consider whether a behavior pattern is universally dysfunctional or dysfunctional only in context.

Second, because psychological characteristics may be universal or cultural, researchers need to consider whether causes of dysfunction include components characteristic of humans cross-culturally, components characteristic of individuals specific to a culture, or a combination of the two. Etiology researchers need to develop models that identify maladaptive psychological properties that can characterize individuals from any culture, and distinguish them from maladaptive properties that are shaped by particular cultural events. Explanations for the emergence of dysfunction will become more precise and complete as researchers do so. Relatedly, the documented and striking differences in cultural contexts illustrate that universal psychological characteristics may lead to dysfunction in one context but not another, or they may lead to one form of dysfunction in one setting and to another form in a different setting.

Third, researchers should consider the possibility that characteristics of a culture tend to facilitate maladaptive psychological functioning in one or more domains. With the advent of formal models for understanding the emergence of cultural processes and cultural change (Richerson & Boyd, 2005), it has become possible to evaluate claims that a culture's current practices are maladaptive in some ways.

Cultural Systems Can Embrace Dysfunction. Just as is the case with biological evolution, cultural evolution refers to change, but not necessarily to progress. Suppose an existing cultural system reflects some degree of successful adaptation to ecological circumstances. Should some physical circumstance change, or should some new individuals with different norms come into proximity

with the group, what was once adaptive may now not be. Change would then be necessary. But, the possibilities for change would be constrained by the prior norms. One result may be an inability to change in the adaptive direction.

Another way in which cultural change may not serve adaptation is when the change occurs as a result of a group being conquered or dominated by another group (Durham, 1991). Cultural change by imposition is, of course, far more likely to serve the needs of the dominating group than the needs of the dominated group. Conquered groups may take on maladaptive practices as a result of both direct coercion and indirect pressure (Durham, 1991; Richerson & Boyd, 1999). Simple examples may be slavery, servitude, or engagement in high-risk occupations on behalf of the dominant group. Complex social structures tend to have underclasses, whose practices may have the functional value of not threatening the dominant class, and may even serve the interests of the dominant class—and they may play a maladaptive role for the underclass (Richerson & Boyd, 1999). Since current practices are necessarily predicated on the possibilities present from past practices, once maladaptive structures are in place, they constrain future options.

In short, there is no theoretical reason to think that any particular cultural system represents optimal adaptation for its members. Sometimes, in some circumstances, cultures support maladaptive practices, and cultures vary in the extent to which they do so. We next argue that there are accountable systems for determining whether behaviors are dysfunctional: the systems operate independently of whether the behaviors are so defined by a given group.

Identifying Dysfunction within Context and Independent of Context. Mental disorders are so labeled because they produce negative life outcomes. It is crucial to determine empirically whether a given behavioral syndrome represents mental disorder within a target cultural setting. Specifically, if the presence of the syndrome and degree of life dysfunction are unrelated in a given culture, the syndrome is not maladaptive in that culture. Independently of that process, one can also assess whether the syndrome is dysfunctional independent of context. Some syndromes are not identified as dysfunctional within a target culture, but are nevertheless maladaptive universally. For example, among the Fore tribe of New Guinea, eating the bodies of deceased relatives was a valued and normative behavior, but the tribe was slowly dying off because the resulting illness kuru was fatal (Durham, 1991): the culturally sanctioned behavior was harmful. On the other hand, some syndromes are not dysfunctional in a basic or general sense, but are dysfunctional within a culture because they violate social norms (openly cooking and eating cats and dogs in the U.S.).

We suggest that behaviors are universally dysfunctional if they bring physical harm, regardless of context, or if they bring social or personal harm regardless of context. A syndrome that brings physical harm is alcohol misuse. A syndrome that likely brings social, personal harm regardless of context is active psychosis. Psychosis typically involves responding to stimuli that are not present (DSM-IV, 1994). Psychotic individuals often hear voices, and those voices often tell them they are worthless, they should die, they should commit suicide, or perhaps they should kill (DSM-IV, 1994). For psychotic individuals, those voices are often so compelling that they respond to the voices, rather than to other aspects of their current circumstance. They do not control the timing of the occurrence of the voices, the content of the voices, nor their responses to the voices. Psychosis is likely dysfunctional in any social context.

Universal and Culturally Specific Causes of Dysfunction: Alcoholism among reservation-dwelling American Indians (AIs). AIs have higher mean levels of problem drinking than do Caucasians in North America (Akins, Mosher, Rotolo, & Beauvais, 1992; Beauvais, Oetting, & Edwards, 1985; May, 1982). Spillane and Smith (2007) recently argued that culturally specific factors were responsible for the high mean levels of AI problem drinking, and universal factors were responsible for individual differences in drinking among AIs. To understand the influence of culture/context on AI problem drinking, they used the concept of Standard Life Reinforcers (SLRs), which are the basic set of rewarding circumstances or experiences that persons strive for across cultures: examples are

housing, economic security, work opportunity, family closeness, and knowledge. For many reservation dwelling AIs, access to SLRs is either guaranteed (for example, reservations typically provide housing and health care); essentially unavailable (employment opportunities tend to be rare and of low quality on reservations, so work opportunities and economic security are largely unavailable); or access to them is not contingent on sobriety (it appears that family closeness among AIs is not contingent on sober status: Spillane & Smith, 2006).

In contrast, for North American Caucasians (NACs), alcoholism can bring significant loss of SLRs. Following repeated failures to maintain sobriety, well-paying jobs can be lost, as can housing, health insurance, opportunities for education, and even family closeness. Thus, the systemic incentive structure for NACs provides clear disincentives for heavy drinking, but that is not true within reservation culture for many AI tribes. That incentive structure, which appears to be an indirect consequence of the history of domination and conquest (Spillane & Smith, 2007), does in fact appear to relate to higher rates of problem drinking rates among many reservation-dwelling AIs (Spillane & Smith, 2006). The force of frequency-based bias may also help to maintain those problem drinking rates. In this way, contextually/culturally specific factors can explain the high mean levels of AI problem drinking.

There is evidence that personality and learning factors combine to increase problem drinking risk in each of the cultures yet studied. Individual differences in certain target traits and learning processes appear to play an important role in the risk process. It may therefore be true that individual differences among AIs in their drinking levels can be understood in ways similar to how individual differences among NACs or other groups are understood. Indeed, Spillane and Smith (2006) documented parallel personality and learning influences between NACs and AIs (Anderson, Smith, & Fischer, 2003; McCarthy, Kroll, & Smith, 2001).

Bulimia Nervosa (BN). Recent qualitative and meta-analytic work appears to indicate that BN is a culture-bound syndrome; there is no evidence of BN except in Western cultures or in countries heavily exposed to Western culture (Keel & Klump, 2003). Perhaps this is not surprising: never before in human history has a set of cultures combined massive food surpluses with an extreme value on thinness. Over 50% of the 40,000 TV commercials US children watch concern food (mostly junk food: Strasburger, 2001), and the standard of beauty has gotten progressively thinner over the last 30 years (Rubinstein & Caballero, 2000). Women who respond to these forces by developing Bulimia Nervosa (BN) tend to endorse the thin ideal for beauty more strongly than others, hold higher expectations that thinness leads to overgeneralized life improvement, and simultaneously hold higher expectations that eating helps alleviate negative affect (Hohlstein, Smith, & Atlas, 1998). They tend to report that binge eating helps alleviate their subjective distress and improve their mood (Crowther, Sanftner, Bonifazi, & Shephard, 2001; Stice, 2002).

BN appears to be somewhat heritable (Bulik, Sullivan, & Kendler, 1998). But, heritability in this case is not inconsistent with cultural specificity. Perhaps the heritable component of BN involves a universal psychological factor that is not specific to BN, but rather increases the likelihood of many different behaviors. The trait of urgency may be implicated: urgency reflects the tendency to act impulsively in response to distress. High urgency scores may identify those individuals whose distress is most likely to lead to action in general, and so to BN symptoms among some women in the West. Investigators have found that urgency correlates much more highly with BN symptom level than do negative affectivity and other forms of impulsivity (Fischer, Smith, & Anderson, 2003; Fischer, Smith, & Cyders, 2008). Nothing about urgency automatically commandeers BN symptoms; it is likely a risk factor for a variety of risky behaviors. In other cultural contexts, urgency might lead to engagement in other risky behaviors for mood improvement. Because urgency appears to be heritable (Jang, McCrae, Angleitner, Reimann, & Livesley, 1998), individual differences in urgency may be part of the heritable cause of BN.

Anorexia Nervosa (AN). In a cross-cultural review of AN, Keel and Klump (2003) found that AN occurs in roughly the same frequency in different cultures, and has through recent history; they

argued that the disorder itself appears to be universal. If they are right, many of the putative risk factors investigators study in the West, such as societal emphasis on thinness (Heinberg, Thompson, & Stormer, 1995; Stice, 2002) and expectancies for overgeneralized reinforcement from thinness (Hohlstein et al., 1998), are artifacts, because they do not exist in other cultures with similar prevalence rates of AN. Instead, they are likely culture-bound, post hoc explanations women construct for themselves in order to try to explain behavior that is actually driven by a presumably biological, universal cause.

Women suffering from AN in other cultural contexts may have constructed other explanations for their disorder. Keel and Klump (2003) reviewed several fascinating accounts of what appear to have been post hoc explanations for AN. For example, in the 17th and 18th centuries some Catholic nuns fasted for religious purity. A subset of nuns who identified themselves as fasting for religious reasons may have been suffering from AN. Those nuns appear to have been unable to control their food refusal: some described their inability to eat and others were treated by their peers for self-starvation.

In the case of AN, what may be universal is the disorder itself, and what may be culturally specific are the causal explanations constructed by AN patients and the researchers who study them. This possibility came to light not from specific findings in the universal-cultural literature, but from application of cross-cultural research techniques designed to identify the universal and the culturally specific (Keel & Klump, 2003; Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). Although the nature of the apparently universal cause is not yet entirely clear, researchers have begun suggesting specific genetic loci for susceptibility to AN (Grice, Halmi, Fichter, Strober, Woodside, & Treasure, 2002; Koronyo-Hamaoui, Danziger, Frisch, Stein, Leor, Laufer, et al., 2002; Westberg, Bah, Rastam, Gillberg, Wentz, Melke, et al., 2002). The genetic mechanism may well be specific to weight-loss or food aversion, in contrast to the likely more general heritable process related to BN.

Conclusion

A fresh look at the etiology of three disorders, using the methods of cross-cultural psychology, appears to have helped clarify the risk process for each. That work could not have been conducted without the methods of cross-cultural psychology. Nor could it have been conducted without consideration of universality. Cross-cultural psychology, and the integration of the universal and the culturally specific, are beginning to inform basic and applied research programs throughout psychology. One is unlikely to do successful psychological research without systematic consideration of culture.

References

- Akins, S., Mosher, C., Rotolo, T., & Griffin, R. (2003). Patterns and correlates of substance use among American Indians in Washington state. *Journal of Drug Issues, 45*, 45-71.
- Anderson, K. G., Smith, G. T., & Fischer, S. F. (2003). Women and acquired preparedness: Personality and learning implications for alcohol use. *Journal of Studies in Alcohol, 64*, 384-392.
- Anklin, M., Barnola, J. M., Beer, J., Blunier, T., Chappellaz, J., Clausen, H. B., Dahljensen, D., et al. (1993). Climate instability during the last interglacial period recorded in the GRIP ice core. *Nature, 364*, 203-7.
- Barkow, J. H. (1989). *Darwin, sex, and status: Biosocial approaches to mind and culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Beauvais, F. (1992). Characteristics of Indian youth and drug use. *American Indian and Alaskan Native Mental Health, 5*, 51-67.
- Beauvais, F., & Oetting, E. R., & Edwards, R. W. (1985). Trends in drug use of Indian adolescents living on the reservations: 1975-1983. *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse, 11*, 209-229.
- Boyd, R., & Richerson, P.J. (1985). *Culture and the Evolutionary Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Braudel, F. (1972). *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Translated by Sian Reynolds. New York: Harper & Row.
- Broecker, W. (1996). Glacial climate in the tropics. *Science, 272*, 1902-1903.

- Bulik, C. M., Sullivan, P. F., & Kendler, K. S. (1998). Heritability of binge eating and broadly defined bulimia nervosa. *Biological Psychiatry, 44*, 1210-1218.
- Chirkov, V., Ryan, R. M., Kim, Y., & Kaplan, U. (2003). Differentiating autonomy from individualism and independence: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization of cultural orientations and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 1, 97-110.
- Church, A. T. (2000). Culture and personality: Toward an integrated cultural trait psychology. *Journal of Personality, 68*, 651-703.
- Cohen, D. (2001). Cultural variation: Considerations and implications. *Psychological Bulletin, 127*, 451-471.
- Crowther, J. H., Snafner, J., Bonifazi, D. Z., & Shepherd, K. L. (2001). The role of daily hassles in binge eating. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 29*, 449-454.
- D'Andrade, R. (1984). *Cultural meaning systems*. In R. A. Shweder & R. A. Levine (Eds.), *Culture theory: Essays on mind, self, and emotion* (pp. 88-119). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- De Raad, B., Perugini, M., Hrebokova, M., & Szarota, P. (1998). Lingua Franca of personality: Taxonomies and structures based on the psycholexical approach. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 29*, 212-232.
- Diamond, J., & Bellwood, P. (2003). Farmers and their languages: The first expansions. *Science, 300*, 5619, 597-603.
- Ditlevsen, P.D., Svensmark, H., & Johnsen, S. (1996). Contrasting atmospheric and climate dynamics of the last-glacial and Holocene periods. *Nature, 379*, 810-812.
- DSM-IV (1994). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition*. Washington, D. C.: American Psychiatric Association.
- Durham, W. (1991). *Coevolution: Genes, Culture, and Human Diversity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fischer, S., Smith, G. T., & Anderson, K. G. (2003). Clarifying the role of impulsivity in bulimia nervosa. *The International Journal of Eating Disorders, 33*, 406-411.
- Fischer, S., Smith, G. T., & Cyders, M. A. (2008). Another look at impulsivity: A meta-analytic review comparing specific dispositions to rash action in their relationship to bulimic symptoms. *Clinical Psychology Review, 28*, 1413-1425.
- Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An alternative "description of personality": The Big-Five factor structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*, 1216-1229.
- Grice, D. E., Halmi, K. A., Fichter, M. M., Strober, M., Woodside, D. B., Treasure, J. T., et al. (2002). Evidence for a susceptibility gene for anorexia nervosa on chromosome 1. *American Journal of Human Genetics, 70*, 787-792.
- Heinberg, L. J., Thompson, K. L., & Stormer, S. (1995). Development and validation of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 17*, 81-89.
- Heine, S. J. (2003). An exploration of cultural variation in self-enhancing and self-improving motivations. In V. Murphy-Berman & J. J. Berman (Eds.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation: Vol. 49. Cross-cultural differences in perspectives on the self* (pp. 101-128). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Heine, S. J. (2004). Positive self-views: Understanding universals and variability. *Journal of Cultural and Evolutionary Psychology, 2*, 109-122.
- Heine, S. J., & Hamamura, T. (2007). In search of East Asian self-enhancement. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 11*, 1-24.
- Heine, S. J., Lehman, D. R., Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1999). Is there a universal need for positive regard? *Psychological Review, 106*, 766-794.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1998). Indigenous psychologies: Asian perspectives. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 29*, 88-103.
- Hohlstain, L. A., Smith, G. T., & Atlas, J. G. (1998). An application of expectancy theory to eating disorders: Development and validation of measures of eating and dieting expectancies. *Psychological Assessment, 10*, 1, 49-58.
- Jang, K. L., McCrae, R. R., Angleitner, A., Reimann, R., & Livesley, W. J. (1998). Heritability of facet-level traits in a cross-cultural twin sample: Support for a hierarchical model of personality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 1556-1565.
- Keel, P. K., & Klump, K. L. (2003). Are eating disorders culture-bound syndromes? Implications for conceptualizing their etiology. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*, 747-769.
- Kenrick, D. T., Li, N.P., & Butner, J. (2003). Dynamical evolutionary psychology: Individual decision rules and emergent social norms. *Psychological Review, 110*, 3-28.
- Kitayama, S. (2002). Culture and basic psychological processes—toward a system view of culture: Comment on Oyserman et al. (2002). *Psychological Bulletin, 128*(1), 89-96.

- Kitayama, S., & Markus, H. R. (1999). Yin and yang of the Japanese self: The cultural psychology of personality coherence. In D. Cervone and Y. Shoda (Eds.), *The Coherence of Personality: Social Cognitive Bases of Personality Consistency, Variability, and Organization* (pp. 242-302). New York: Guilford Press.
- Kluegel, D. *Dissociation: Culture, Mind, and Body*. Washington: American Psychiatric Press.
- Kluckhohn, C. (1962). *Culture and behavior*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Koronyo-Hamaoui, M., Danziger, Y., Frisch, A., Stein, D., Leor, S., Laufer, N., et al. (2002). Association between anorexia nervosa and the hskCa3 gene: a family-based and case control study. *Molecular Psychiatry*, 7, 82-85.
- Lehman, S. (1993). Ice sheets, wayward winds and sea change. *Nature*, 365, 108-9.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253.
- May, P.A. (1982). Substance abuse and the American Indian: Prevalence and susceptibility. *The International Journal of the Addictions*, 17, 1185-1209.
- McCarthy, D. M., Kroll, L. S., & Smith, G. T. (2001). Integrating disinhibition and learning risk for alcohol use. *Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology*, 9, 389-398.
- Miller, M. N., & Pumariega, A. J. (2001). Culture and eating disorders: A historical and cross-cultural review. *Psychiatry-Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 64, 93-110.
- Nesse, R. M. & Lloyd, A. T. (1995). The evolution of psychodynamic mechanisms. In Barkow, J. H., Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (Eds.) *The adapted mind: Evolutionary psychology and the generation of culture* (pp. 601-626). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Nisbett, R. E. (1993). Violence and U.S. regional culture. *American Psychologist*, 48, 441-449.
- Nisbett, R. E., & Cohen, D. (1996). *Culture of Honor*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Norenzayan, A., & Heine, S. J. (2005). Psychological Universals: What Are They and How Can We Know? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 763-784.
- Peabody, D., & De Raad, B. (2002). The substantive nature of psycholexical personality factors: A comparison across languages. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62, 1025-1035.
- Richerson, P. J., & Boyd, R. (1999). Complex societies: The evolutionary origins of a crude superorganism. *Human Nature*, 10, 253-289.
- Richerson, P. J., & Boyd, R. (2001). Built for speed, not for comfort: Darwinian theory and human culture. *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 23, 423-63.
- Richerson, P. J., & Boyd, R. (2005). *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rubinstein, S. & Caballero, B. (2000). Is Miss America an undernourished role model. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 283, 1569-1569.
- Saucier, G., & Goldberg, L. R. (2001). Lexical studies of indigenous personality factors: Premises, products, and prospects. *Journal of Personality*, 69, 847-879.
- Sheldon, K. M., Elliot, A. J., Ryan, R. M., Chirkov, V., Kim, Y., Wu, C., Demir, M., & Sun, Z. (2004). Self-concordance and subjective well-being in four cultures. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 35, 209-223.
- Shweder, R. A., & Sullivan, M. A. (1993). Cultural psychology: Who needs it? *Annual Review of Psychology*, 44, 497-523.
- Smith, G. T., Fischer, S., Cyders, M. A., Annus, A. M., & Spillane, N. S. (2007). On the validity and utility of discriminating among impulsivity-like traits. *Assessment*, 14, 155-170.
- Spillane, N. S., & Smith, G. T. (2007). A Theory of Reservation-Dwelling American Indian Alcohol Use Risk. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133, 395-418.
- Spillane, N. S., & Smith, G. T. (2006, June). Empirical support for a multifaceted model of American Indian Drinking. Paper presented at the annual international meeting of the Research Society on Alcoholism, Baltimore, MD.
- Stice, E. (2002). Risk and maintenance factors for eating pathology: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 825-848.
- Strasburger, V. C. (2001). Children and TV advertising: Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 22, 185-187.
- Triandis, H. C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural contexts. *Psychological Review*, 96, 506-520.
- Westberg, L., Bah, J., Rastam, M., Gillberg, C., Wentz, E., Melke, J., et al. (2000). Association between a polymorphism of the 5-HT2C receptor and weight loss in teenage girls. *Neuropsychopharmacology*, 26, 789-793.
- Wilson, J. Q. (1993). *The Moral Sense*. New York: Free Press.