

PART I

REFLECTIONS ON CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY



In the first chapter of this section, Berry presents a broad framework within which we can examine the current psychological research traditions on culture. His analysis not only reveals the diversity of the current field but also points to its underlying unity by showing that competing orientations can be understood within his framework.

Questions to keep in mind while reading Berry's chapter are as follows:

- What is Berry's framework?
- Are the three dimensions Berry outlines the most appropriate dimensions on which to classify various research traditions in culture and psychology?
- Berry's framework consists of continuous dimensions, as opposed to discrete categories. To what extent does this contribute to a more insightful analysis?

Bond's chapter advocates the significance of seeking to establish unity in a multicultural society. The diversity in multiculturalism is often considered to be a negative force that threatens to destroy the social fabric. However, he suggests that it is possible and desirable to find ways in which to improve social harmony.

Questions to keep in mind while reading Bond's chapter are as follows:

- Bond's chapter presents a very clear value orientation in studying the relationship between culture and psychology. Is the value-laden nature of his perspective a problem?
- What is the value orientation that he advocates? What are the strategies that he suggests we should employ?
- How effective do you think these strategies are in promoting a harmonious multicultural society?

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ON THE UNITY OF THE FIELD OF CULTURE AND PSYCHOLOGY



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This celebration of Harry Triandis's contributions to the field offers an opportunity to take stock of how the study of human behavior in cultural context has evolved over the past 30 years. Note that I have not given a name to "the field" but prefer to focus on the substance of what we are interested in ("behavior in cultural context"). Although not dismissing the name issue (see Dasen, 1993; Diaz-Guerrero, 1993; Krewer & Jahoda, 1993; Lonner, 1992; Poortinga & Van de Vijver, 1994; Segall, 1993), I believe that it may be more fruitful to explore the space between (and overlapping) psychology and anthropology with an "outlook that takes culture seriously" (Dasen & Jahoda, 1986, p. 143). Because I have previously used many and various names, I feel no need to be rigid: I began teaching a course called "cultural psychology" in 1970, gave my International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology presidential address (Berry, 1985) on "cultural and ethnic psychology," and have participated in associations, textbooks, and handbooks all with the term "cross-cultural" attached to them.

My core position is that, in studying behavior, one has to be "cultural" before being "cross," but by remaining only "cultural," one loses out on the possibility of attaining generalizations about what is fundamentally (pan-) human. In my view, both of these approaches are necessary; neither is sufficient by itself.

In my first articulation of this position (Berry, 1969; Berry & Dasen, 1974), the field was seen as a sequenced set of steps: *imposed etic*, *emic*, and *derived etic*. These corresponded to the three goals of "transporting and testing" extant psychological knowledge (mainly

from the West to other cultural groups), “exploring and discovering” psychological phenomena in these other cultures (essentially from the indigenous point of view), and finally “integrating and generating” findings and insights from the first two activities to achieve a psychology that is “universal” (see below).

Such a “universal” perspective, though currently being challenged by some scholars, has a long history not only in Western thought (Jahoda, 1992) but also in Chinese and Indian texts. In the *San Zi Jing* and the *Vedas*, the following couplets are fundamental:

*Basic human nature is similar at birth;
Different habits (customs) make us seem remote (different).*

*Reality is one;
But it is expressed in different forms.*

*Truth is one;
But scholars interpret it in diverse ways.*

It might be appropriate to note here that the *Vedas* also claims that “the genius lies in seeing the unity”!

The fundamental question for me, then, is not what little corners can we carve out and name but what are the overarching dimensions and unifying issues for “the field”? To take culture seriously into account when understanding human behavior is a value we all share; we diverge primarily with respect to *how* and *where* we do this. What follows is an attempt to define the culture-behavior space in which we all work, using three *dimensions* of variation in contemporary discussion of three underlying *issues*. The goal of this exercise is to exhibit our similarities, and the strategy is to be inclusive and eclectic.

ISSUES

Within and Across

Quite early on, it was evident that there are conceptual and methodological problems to be faced when studying human behavior across cultures (Berry, 1969; Frijda & Jahoda, 1966). A key issue lies in the common observation that general psychology is both “culture blind” and “culture bound.” That is, general psychology had ignored culture as a possible influence on human behavior, and, furthermore, general psychology had taken little account of theories or data from cultures other than Euro-American. The solution to these problems was twofold: to conceptualize and study culture as an important context for human psychological development (a “cultural” approach) and to engage in comparative (“cross-cultural”) studies of the influence of features of various cultures on human development and behavior.

The *emic-etic* distinction was prominent in these early writings. Although it too had a “naming” problem, the consensus was that *both* perspectives were necessary to the

developing field. Local knowledge and interpretations (the *emic* approach) were essential, but more than one was required to relate variations in cultural context to variations in behavior (the *etic* approach); this joint perspective was advocated from the beginning by Pike (1967). These two notions became elaborated. First was the notion of *imposed etic* (Berry, 1969), which served as the starting point for comparative research, because it was obvious that all psychologists necessarily carry their own culturally based perspectives with them when studying other cultures; these perspectives were initial sources of bias (usually Euro-American), to be confronted and reduced as work progressed in the other culture(s). Second was the *emic* exploration of psychological phenomena and their understanding in local cultural terms; this provided the important indigenous culturally based meanings that were most likely missed when making the initial *imposed-etic* approach to psychological phenomena in various cultures. Third was the *derived-etic* approach, which might possibly be discerned following extensive use of *emic* approaches in a number of cultures; it was expected that some similarities in psychological phenomena might be derived by the comparative examination of behavior in various cultures. If so, then psychological universals (even a universal psychology) might emerge.

These three concepts, in turn, gave rise to three goals of cross-cultural psychology (Berry & Dasen, 1974): to *transport and test* current psychological knowledge and perspectives by using them in other cultures; to *explore and discover* new aspects of the phenomenon being studied in local cultural terms; and to *integrate* what has been learned from these first two approaches to generate a more nearly universal psychology, one that has pan-human validity. The existence of *universals* in other disciplines (e.g., biology, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology) provided some basis for the assumption that we would be able to work our way through to this third goal with some success.

Finally, these three goals have become identified with three theoretical orientations in cross-cultural psychology: *absolutism*, *relativism*, and *universalism* (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992). The *absolutist* position is one that assumes that human phenomena are basically the same (qualitatively) in all cultures: "Honesty" is "honesty" and "depression" is "depression," no matter where one observes it. From the absolutist perspective, culture is thought to play little or no role in either the meaning or display of human characteristics. Assessments of such characteristics are made using standard instruments (perhaps with linguistic translation), and interpretations are made easily, without alternative culturally based views taken into account. This orientation resembles the *imposed-etic* approach. It was also characteristic of the early work that was undertaken by those who called themselves "cross-cultural" psychologists. Despite having moved beyond this initial orientation, cross-cultural psychology is still stereotyped and unfairly criticized for being in this earlier research mode.

In sharp contrast, the *relativist* approach assumes that all human behavior is culturally patterned. It seeks to avoid ethnocentrism by trying to understand people "in their own terms." Explanations of human diversity are sought in the cultural context in which people have developed. Assessments are typically carried out employing the values and meanings that a cultural group gives to a phenomenon. Comparisons are judged to be problematic and ethnocentric and are thus virtually never made. This orientation resembles the *emic* approach. It also resembles the approach currently espoused by those calling

themselves “cultural” psychologists, although many do make comparisons (see Miller, 1997).

A third perspective, one that lies somewhere between the first two positions, is that of *universalism*. Universalism assumes that basic human characteristics are common to all members of the species (i.e., constituting a set of psychological givens) and that culture influences the development and display of them (i.e., culture brings about different variations on these underlying themes). Assessments are based on the presumed underlying process, but measures are developed in culturally meaningful versions. Comparisons are made cautiously, employing a wide variety of methodological principles and safeguards, whereas interpretations of similarities and differences are attempted that take alternative culturally based meanings into account (see Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). This orientation resembles the *derived-etic* approach. It is characteristic of much of contemporary “cross-cultural” psychology, and it is also advocated by some “cultural” psychologists (e.g., Greenfield, 1997). It thus serves as a communal basis for convergence (see Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997; Poortinga, 1997).

Different approaches can be distinguished according to their orientation to this issue. Though few today advocate a strictly absolutist/imposed-etic view, the relativist/emic position has given rise to numerous approaches: “ethnopsychology” (Diaz-Guerrero, 1975), “societal psychology” (Berry, 1983), “indigenous psychology” (Enriquez, 1990; Kim & Berry, 1993; Sinha, 1997), and, to some extent, “cultural psychology” (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). And the derived-etic view has given rise to a “universalist psychology” (Berry et al., 1992). A mutual compatibility between the emic and derived-etic positions has been noted by many; for example, Berry et al. (1992, p. 384) and Berry and Kim (1993) have claimed that indigenous psychologies, while valuable in their own right, serve an equally important function as useful steps on the way to achieving a universal psychology.

To summarize this first issue, I believe that, from the beginning, there has been widespread acceptance by most cross-cultural psychologists of the necessity for *both* the *within* and *across* approaches to understanding relationships between cultural context and human experience and behavior. To rephrase my opening comment on this issue, it is not possible to be “cross-cultural” without first being “cultural,” but to be only “cultural” (or to pretend that it is possible to be so) eliminates the attainment of general principles to which all sciences aspire.

Culture Contact

Equally early on, there was a recognition that studies in the general domain of culture and behavior had to take into account the fact that cultures are not static but change for a variety of reasons (Berry, 1980b). One reason is that when cultures come into contact with each other, the phenomenon of *acculturation* occurs. This process involves changes in both *group* or *collective* phenomena (e.g., language, politics, religion, work, schooling, and social relationships) and *psychological* phenomena (e.g., identity, beliefs, values, attitudes, and abilities). A good deal of early cross-cultural psychological work took place by comparing peoples who were not in contact with each other; indeed, this was a

methodological necessity for comparisons requiring independence of cases. However, some early psychological work also took place in situations of intercultural encounters, often as a result of colonization, migration, or the continuation of culturally distinct communities living side by side in plural societies (e.g., Taft, 1977). This contact dimension was also identified by Taft (1974) as an essential part of the field.

Over the years, many cross-cultural psychologists have adopted the view that *both* kinds of work are legitimate and important ways of understanding human behavior as it is influenced by the cultural context in which it occurs (Berry, 1985). For example, in my own early work, samples were drawn from those that were relatively “traditional” cultural settings (minimally influenced by Euro-American culture) and from those that were “transitional” (in a process of change as a result of substantial Euro-American contact). Later, my “ecocultural framework” (Berry, 1976) explicitly included two major exogenous variables: *ecology* and *acculturation*. The former identified sources of cultural and psychological variation as a collective and individual adaptation to habitat; the latter sought such explanation for psychological variations in the historical and contemporary influences stemming from contact with other cultures. One major difference between these two lines of influence is that psychological phenomena during contact may be more difficult to understand and interpret than in noncontact situations because there are at least two sources of cultural influences; hence, *comparative* studies may be even more important here to tease out the relative cultural contributions to psychological phenomena (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987). A second major difference is that opportunities to create new cultural forms may be greater during the process of acculturation.

This interest in psychological phenomena resulting from culture contact has given rise to the suggestion that there could be an “ethnic psychology” or a “psychology of acculturation” concerned primarily with group and psychological acculturation phenomena (e.g., Berry, 1985; Berry & Annis, 1988). Another field to emerge has been that of “psychologie interculturelle,” mainly in the French-language tradition (e.g., Claret, 1990; Retschitzky, Bossel-Lagos, & Dasen, 1989). As intercultural contacts increase, this area of psychology will almost certainly grow in importance.

Culture as Given or Created

Alongside these changes in psychology has been a virtual revolution in anthropology’s conception of “culture.” Earlier conceptions of culture included the views that culture was “out there,” to be studied, observed, and described; culture was a shared way of life of a group of socially interacting people; and culture was transmitted from generation to generation by the processes of enculturation and socialization. That is, culture was viewed as a “given” that preceded in time the life of any individual member (see Munroe & Munroe, 1997).

This long-standing view of culture has had a major influence on thinking in cross-cultural psychology. The main task was to understand how the established culture *influenced* the psychological development of individuals and *guided* their day-to-day behaviors. In recent years, along with the emergence of more cognitive approaches in many branches of psychology, individuals have come to be viewed not as mere pawns or

victims of their cultures but as cognizers, appraisers, and interpreters of them. Thus, different individuals are now widely considered to experience different aspects of their culture, and in different ways. One example of this more cognitive orientation is in the framework for analyses of cultural contexts (Berry, 1980a) in which more subjective and individual "experiential" and "situational" contexts were distinguished from more objective and shared "ecological" and "cultural" contexts as factors influencing human behavior.

In sharp contrast to this established perspective on the nature of culture is one advanced by those adopting a "social construction" perspective (Misra & Gergen, 1993). From this perspective, culture is not something that is given but is being interpreted and created daily through interactions between individuals and their social surroundings. This view is one espoused by those identifying with "cultural psychology," which has been defined as "a designation for the comparative study of the way culture and psyche make up each other" (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993, p. 498).

This core idea, however, has been a part of the field for some time. There are numerous examples of interactions between context and person (e.g., feedback relationships in the ecocultural framework) and of reaction to contact (as one form of adaptation associated with acculturation) in the cross-cultural approach (e.g., Berry, 1976). This reciprocal relationship between person and culture, leading to the modification and creation of new cultural forms as a result of acculturation, has been of long-standing interest in the field and is not exclusive to those calling themselves "cultural" psychologists (Segall, 1993).

DIMENSIONS

Up until now in the literature, these three issues have been usually presented in polarized form: emic versus etic; traditional versus acculturated; culture as given versus culture as created. However, my description has tried to present them as points on underlying dimensions and as points that possess legitimacy. To me, it is evident that emic and etic approaches are part of a sequence, possibly a continuous circle of research activity (as it was for Pike, 1967). It is equally evident that no societies are untouched by acculturative influence, and none is so strongly acculturated that nothing is left of its original culture. Finally, it is clear to me that individuals are born into some extant set of social arrangements and they adopt most of them, but it is also clear to me that individuals are in constant interaction with their cultural surroundings, a process that results in both psychological and cultural changes.

POSITIONING

My firmly held view is that there can and should be a coherent and integrated approach to the study of relationships between human behavior and culture. I believe that there is a *common space* within which we all can work and that it really does not matter what this space is called. As outlined earlier, this space has three dimensions, based on the three issues. Different people, with somewhat different interests and at different

times in their careers, explore, advocate, and emphasize different sectors of this space, but I contend that it is a unitary space.

During the course of this discussion, a number of names of approaches have been noted. Where might they be placed in this three-dimensional space? Figure 2.1 depicts this space, with the three issues defining the dimensions. The first dimension (comparative perspective) incorporates the sequence from absolutist/imposed-etic to relativist/emic to universalist/derived-etic variation; the second (acculturation) depicts the noncontact to contact variation; and the third shows the distinction between culture-as-given to the culture-as-created. Within this three-dimensional space are located the various approaches.

The absolutist/imposed-etic approach is rarely advocated now by researchers interested in the relationships between culture and behavior. However, it remains a dominant point of view in Western Academic Scientific Psychology (the "WASP" approach) and is also much in use among psychologists who work with cultural groups in plural populations (the "minority" approach); in both approaches, there is little interest in the culture of the groups involved. More commonly accepted in the field are the relativist/emic and universalist/derived-etic approaches. In the former are all those that emphasize the need to understand human behavior in local cultural context but not (at least initially) in comparison with others; these include the ethnopsychology, indigenous psychology, societal psychology, and cultural psychology approaches in noncontact situations and the ethnic psychology approach in culture-contact situations. At the derived-etic end of the dimension are the universal psychology approach in the noncontact area and the acculturation psychology and intercultural psychology approaches in the contact situation.

With respect to the third dimension, once again, conceptions of culture are irrelevant to the WASP and minority approaches. But for the relativist/emic and universalist/derived-etic positions, there are some important variations. Cultural psychology is most clearly advocating the view that culture is created rather than a given. Those concerned with psychological phenomena in contact situations are intermediate on the dimension (ethnic and acculturation psychologies) or more toward the created end (in the case of intercultural psychology). More toward the other end of the dimension (culture as given) are those that are rooted in, and advocate the importance of, a definable cultural tradition (ethnopsychology, societal psychology, and indigenous psychology) and that seek to explain psychological phenomena in terms of those traditions. Finally, universal psychology occupies a position closest to the culture-as-given end of the dimension. This placement is because a universal psychology operates at a fairly high level of abstraction and generalization, somewhat removed from the finer details of the day-to-day context of behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

Much has been made recently of relatively small differences in approaches to the study of relationships between culture and behavior. I believe that the main goal of the field is to convince general psychology that culture is an important contributor to the

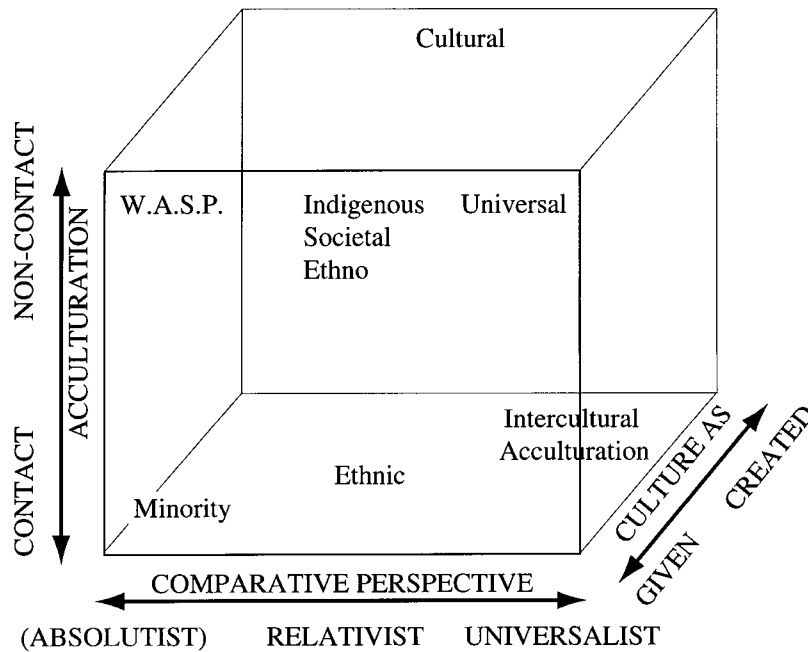


Figure 2.1. Common Space for Understanding Relationships Between Culture and Behavior

development of human behavior and is essential to our understanding and study of it. I also believe that our combined efforts should be directed toward achieving this goal, rather than toward establishing claims of the correctness of one particular orientation. I have tried to show that we all share common interests and that differences are matters of emphasis on common dimensions rather than matters of oppositions. There is much work to be done, both in the approaches that are already identified and in the sectors of the space that have so far been unclaimed. My fear is that if our internal relations are overly conflictual, our external relations (with a culture-blind psychology) will be neglected, and the role of culture will remain marginal to psychology as a whole.

Important steps toward achieving unity in the field have been undertaken by Harry Triandis, in both his leadership roles and his own scholarship. It is probably true to say that the editing of the first edition of the *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Triandis et al., 1980) was the most important factor in *consolidating* the field. Earlier activities, such as the founding of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (of which he was an inaugural member and early president) and of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, had served as *founding* activities, but the *Handbook* enterprise really established the field as a coherent body of knowledge.

In his research and writing, Harry Triandis has attended to all three dimensions of the field (as portrayed in Figure 2.1). In his development and use of the concept of *subjective culture* (Triandis, 1972), Harry has clearly distinguished between what is inside people's heads (the subjective representation of their culture) and what resides externally as part of social structures and cultural practices (objective culture). He has also clearly

sought to establish relationships between subjective culture and features of the cultural context (Triandis, 1994a), using comparisons to gain access to variations in both sets of phenomena. These comparisons have made extensive use of both international and intranational cultural variation, representing both the noncontact and contact approaches to the field. And because he clearly thought of individuals as cognizers and interpreters of the day-to-day context in which they live, Harry can also be said to have partially bridged the culture-as-given/culture-as-created dimension. Such inclusive and generous perspectives are Harry's hallmark, and the field has been much enriched by it.

