CHAPTER 5

Culturally Sensitive Research Questions and Methods in Social Psychology

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Social psychology is distinguished by its attention to the power of the situation and to the dynamics of social groups. It also is highly sensitive to the active role of the observer in making sense of experience. However, even with this sensitivity to context and to processes of individual construal and meaning making, the field gives little weight to culture in its theories and methods. The present chapter offers methodological strategies for enhancing the cultural sensitivity of social psychology, strategies that are critical in increasing the field's theoretical power and explanatory breadth, as well as its applied relevance. While involving design decisions, entailing such issues as sampling, choice of procedure, and interpretation of findings, the strategies also involve key conceptual issues, with strategies for enhancing the cultural sensitivity of research methods in social psychology depending on understanding the theoretical role of culture in informing the field's core conceptual notions. It must be recognized that psychological experience always occurs in and is, in part,

constituted by sociocultural processes, resulting in a need to take culture into account in all research designs, even in work conducted with single populations.

There are many answers to the question of why cultural considerations must be considered in social psychological research. It is perhaps most commonly recognized that we need to attend to culture for *methodological control purposes*. It is critical to take into account culturally related differences in individuals' background, knowledge, experiences, or outlooks that may differentially affect their understandings of methodological procedures and lead to such procedures not having equivalent meaning for different subgroups. Thus, for example, populations that are unfamiliar with certain research stimuli may perform poorly on some of the standard items included on intelligence tests (Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1983). Likewise, even such mundane methodological strategies as tapping background information at the start of a questionnaire can have detrimental effects on

performance for certain subgroups, as research on stereotype threat has documented (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

A second motive for attending to cultural issues is for *theory-testing purposes*. This type of effort is guided by concerns with assessing the assumed universality of existing psychological theories through sampling culturally diverse populations, as well as with identifying mediating or moderating variables that affect the manifestation of particular psychological effects. An example of this type of approach may be seen in comparative research that has tested the universality of Baumrind's highly influential model of parenting, a framework that was developed initially based on data from middle-class samples (Baumrind, 1996). This research has uncovered the important phenomenon that authoritarian parenting practices that had been found to have negative effects in middle-class environments tend to have positive effects in the context of dangerous and impoverished neighborhoods, in which they are associated with the provision of higher levels of support and supervision (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Cole, 1990).

Notably, culturally based research is also increasingly guided by *theory construction goals*, with this aim central to the newly reemerging perspective of cultural psychology (e.g., Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996; Miller, 1997, 1999; Shweder, 1990). This type of approach is concerned not merely with uncovering diversity in modes of psychological functioning but also with identifying the previously unrecognized cultural dependence of existing psychological theories. It was this type of agenda, for example, that motivated my early cross-cultural developmental investigation contrasting the everyday social explanations of samples of Euro-American and Hindu Indian adults and children (Miller, 1984). Previous developmental research had documented an age increase in dispositional inference (Damon & Hart, 1982; Livesley &

Bromley, 1973), a trend not only believed to be universal but also assumed to result from developmental changes in young children's cognitive facilities in abstraction and in the range of their experiences. My research documented that Hindu Indians do not display the age increase in dispositional inferences observed among U.S. respondents. Rather, they show an age increase in their emphasis on contextual factors—an age effect notably not observed among U.S. children. This work was important in offering a new explanation of the processes underlying developmental change in social attribution. It became clear that previous cognitive and experiential interpretations of age changes were incomplete and that it was critical to recognize that enculturation processes contribute to such age changes. It also became clear that the direction of developmental change in social attribution is culturally variable rather than universal, as previously assumed.

In sum, taking cultural considerations into account in social psychological research is needed not only for the methodological reasons of ensuring the validity of assessment techniques but also for the theoretical reasons of testing the universality of psychological theories and of formulating new conceptual models. Extending beyond merely an understanding of diversity in psychological functioning, such attention can provide new process understandings of the psychological functioning of widely studied Western populations.

DOWNPLAYING OF CULTURAL ISSUES IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Although recent years have seen a renewed interest in cultural issues in social psychology, such considerations nonetheless remain in a peripheral position in the field. Whereas increasing efforts are being made to sample culturally diverse subgroups, most contemporary social psychological research centers on

the predominantly middle-class Euro-American college populations that historically have constituted the prototypic population for social psychological inquiry. Within the major textbooks and substantive handbooks in the field, basic theory tends to be presented in universal terms. Thus, in some illustrative examples, recent major handbooks of social psychology include only a single chapter devoted to cultural psychology, with the indexes revealing relatively few references to culture in the other chapters in the volumes (e.g., Gilbert, Fiske, & Lindzey, 1998; Higgins & Kruglanski, 1996).

To give increasing weight to sociocultural considerations in social psychology, it is critical to understand the reasons why culture tends to be downplayed in the field. It is these types of concerns that can be addressed through gaining a greater understanding of the nature of cultural processes and their role in psychological phenomena as well as through the adoption of more culturally sensitive methodological strategies.

Key Reasons for Downplaying of Culture

The reasons for the downplaying of culture in social psychology are both conceptual and empirical. They reflect long-standing assumptions in the field about the nature of social psychological explanation as well as disappointment with the findings from various traditions of culturally based social psychological research.

Culture-Free Approach to Situations

One of the landmark contributions of social psychology is that it has highlighted the power of situations in affecting behavior. It is this insight that underlies some of the early groundbreaking programs of research documenting ways in which situational influences can lead to antisocial behavior, such as in the Milgram conformity experiments (Milgram,

1963) or in the prison simulation study of Zimbardo and his colleagues (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973). In another example, this type of insight also informs contemporary research on priming and on the mere exposure effect, work that is documenting the power of situations to influence behavior in ways that are outside individuals' conscious awareness (e.g., Bargh, 1996; Bornstein, Kale, & Cornell, 1990). As approached within this dominant perspective, the situation is treated as presenting a veridical structure that can be known through inductive or deductive information processing. No consideration is given to culture as necessarily implicated in the definition of the situation or to cultural presuppositions as constituting prerequisites of what is considered objective knowledge. It is assumed that variability in judgment arises from differences in the information available to individuals or from differences in their informative processing, resulting in certain judgments being more or less cognitively adequate or veridical than others (Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

This realist view of situations gives rise to explanatory frameworks focused on factors in the situation and in the person. Within such frameworks, culture is viewed merely as a distal causal factor with impacts on psychological effects through its influences on proximal situational or person factors, rather than as a factor that itself contributes additional explanatory force. Thus, for example, in certain early models in cross-cultural psychology, such as the eco-cultural model developed by Berry (1976), the situation is treated as presenting varied resources and constraints that are seen as making varied forms of psychological response adaptive, such as field dependence being linked to agricultural modes of subsistence and field independence being linked to hunting and gathering modes (Berry, 1976; Witkin & Berry, 1975). This type of treatment of the situation, it should be emphasized, is important in taking into account that individuals from different backgrounds may

be exposed to different ecological experiences. However, it treats culture merely as a consideration that is already accommodated in the social psychological focus on situational factors.

Equally, culture may be treated as an individual difference factor, a stance that is seen, for example, in the enthusiasm shown for assessing culture through individual difference approaches, such as scale measures of individualism/collectivism (e.g., see the recent review by Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). From such a perspective, cultural group membership is viewed as giving rise to individual differences in attitudes, understandings, and available information. Thus, it is viewed as a consideration that already is taken into account in social psychological explanation, through the field's present attention to individual differences or person factors.

Physical Science
Ideals of Explanation

The tendency to downplay cultural considerations in social psychology also stems from the field's embrace of an idealized physical-science model of explanation. As Higgins and Kruglanski (1996) recently explained, this type of stance involves a view of psychological science as the search for deep structural explanatory mechanisms:

> A discovery of lawful principles governing a realm of phenomena is a fundamental objective of scientific research. . . . A useful scientific analysis needs to probe beneath the surface. In other words, it needs to get away from the "phenotypic" manifestations and strive to unearth the "genotypes" that may lurk beneath. (p. vii)

From this perspective, psychological processes are viewed as resembling the laws of physical science in being timeless, ahistorical, and culturally universal. In adopting this

vision as its dominant research paradigm, social psychology has a tendency to consider cultural considerations as mere content effects and thus as factors that ideally should be held constant in order to focus on isolating more fundamental underlying psychological mechanisms (Malpass, 1988).

Apparent Universality
and Explanatory Breadth
of Psychological Theories

The limited interest shown in cultural research within social psychology also reflects the sense within the discipline that social psychological findings, in fact, have been documented in most cases to be cross-culturally robust and to have considerable explanatory scope. It is thus concluded that no significant cross-cultural variation exists in basic psychological phenomena (Brown, 1991).

The conclusion of apparent universality in cross-cultural research is linked with methodological strategies of administering existing research instruments in diverse cultural settings, after making only minor changes in their content to ensure familiarity, and narrowing the scope of the phenomena being investigated in ways that exclude possibly significant cultural variation. An example of the first type of approach may be seen in the extensive body of cross-cultural research that tested the universality of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, through administering standardized Kohlbergian research protocols in more than 45 different societies (Snarey, 1985). Although the results revealed that the distribution of the highest levels of moral development were highly skewed and the highest levels tended to be found primarily in Western urbanized cultures, Kohlberg and his colleagues interpreted the results as confirming the universality of his stage model, because all responses could be seen as either higher or lower stages of Kohlbergian moral stage development (Kohlberg, 1984; C. Levine,

Kohlberg, & Hewer, 1985). In turn, an example of the strategy of adopting methodological procedures that arguably exclude potentially significant sources of variation may be seen in research on the coding of emotional facial expressions. The widely accepted conclusion of fundamental similarity in basic emotion concepts that has emerged from the extensive cross-cultural research conducted on this topic (e.g., Ekman, 1992; Izard, 1992) stems, at least in part, from the use of procedures that tend to gloss over potentially significant sources of variation in emotion concepts, such as differences in how emotion concepts are expressed in everyday language usage, and that downplay the significance of lexicalized emotion terms whose translation into English-language concepts is inexact (see critique in Russell, 1994).

Indirect evidence for the universality of psychological theories also comes from the high levels of intercorrelation observed between psychological constructs. To illustrate, support for the universality of the theory of self-determination developed by Deci, Ryan, and their associates (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1990) is based not only on research indicating that scales of autonomy support show the same empirical relationships in a country such as Bulgaria as they do in U.S. samples (Deci, Ryan, Gagne, et al., 2001) but also through studies demonstrating that self-determination constructs predict psychological functioning in related domains. In this regard, for example, it is demonstrated that self-determined motivation is related empirically to such variables as adaptive parenting, higher self-esteem, and higher stages of Kohlbergian moral development (e.g., Deci, Ryan, Gagne, et al., 2001; Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

Disappointment With Recent Cultural Traditions of Research

Finally, the downplaying of the significance of cultural research also reflects certain

disillusionment with cultural research that was stimulated by Markus and Kitayama's (1991) groundbreaking article on culture and the self, with its introduction of the distinction between independent and interdependent cultural self-construals. One of the most widely cited articles ever in social psychology, this work has given rise to extensive research that has been inspired by this latter construct, with the focus on examining the extent to which variation in psychological functioning can be predicted by scale measures of this construct (Singelis, 1994; Triandis, 1995).

However, as recent criticisms of this rapidly growing literature make clear, the results observed utilizing scale measures of interdependent/independent self-construals have been disappointing (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Matsumoto, 1999; Oyserman et al., 2002). Much of the work has been associated with a stereotypical stance that glosses over important distinctions between and within cultures and that gives insufficient attention to the impact of context on behavior. The same type of sophisticated understanding of situational influences that is evident in mainstream social psychological research is not evident in this type of social psychological work, which much of is focused on cultural questions. Notably, work in this tradition is also yielding findings that, in some cases, appear to contradict directly the claims of the interdependent/independent self-construal paradigm, such as the findings reported by Oyserman et al. (2002), based on their extensive meta-review, that "relationship and family orientation are not empirically closely linked to collectivism" (p. 43).

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN GIVING MORE ATTENTION TO CULTURE

The remainder of this chapter focuses on specific methodological research strategies that are important to adopt in enhancing the

cultural sensitivity of social psychological research. Before turning directly to these methodological strategies, however, attention first focuses briefly on some of the conceptual issues that must inform such methodological efforts and that respond to some of the reasons for the field's downplaying of culture noted above. These considerations bear on the nature of culture and its influences on psychological processes.

Views of Culture

From an ecological perspective, culture is understood as adaptations to the varying requirements of contrasting physical and social structural environments (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Ecological approaches to culture are of value in highlighting the varied resources and constraints that individuals from different sociocultural communities experience and that influence their behavior. For example, ecological frameworks have informed most contemporary psychological studies with U.S. minority populations, and this work is calling attention to ways in which individuals' access to differential resources and their experiences of bias and discrimination affect important intellectual, social, and health outcomes (e.g., McLoyd & Flanagan, 1990; Neighbors & Jackson, 1996). It may be noted, however, that whereas ecological approaches to culture extend the dominant social psychological models in their recognition that the adaptive context for psychological development is culturally variable, rather than universal, these approaches retain a view of the context as an objective environment. In this respect, then, while essential, such approaches do not challenge the traditional social psychological explanatory focus on features of the person and of the objective situation. For this reason, it is critical to complement ecological approaches to culture with approaches that are symbolically grounded.

Symbolic approaches treat culture as shared meanings that are embodied in artifacts and practices and that form a medium for human development (e.g., Cole, 1995; D'Andrade, 1984; R. A. LeVine, 1984; Shore, 1996). It is recognized that cultural meanings and practices not only represent experience but also are constitutive of experience, in serving to create socially constituted realities (Bartlett, 1932). For example, not only do social categories and institutions depend on cultural definitions (e.g., "bride," "marriage"), but even psychological concepts are recognized to be, in part, culturally based. Thus, as seen in the example of the Japanese concept of amae[1] (Doi, 1992; Russell, 1991), even psychological phenomena, such as emotions, depend in part on cultural distinctions embodied in natural language categories, discourse, and everyday social practices (Shweder, 1984; Wierzbicka, 2002).

Challenging the identification of cultural processes exclusively with the situational factors taken into account in social psychological explanation, a symbolic approach to culture highlights the need to recognize that cultural meanings do not bear a one-to-one relationship to objective aspects of the situation. Culture then cannot be understood merely by consideration of the objective affordances and constraints of particular contexts but instead requires taking into account cultural beliefs, values, and practices that are not purely functionally based. To give an example, research has shown that Japanese teachers consider the ideal teacher/student ratio in preschools to be considerably higher than do their U.S. counterparts (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989). The decisive consideration notably is not the consideration of higher cost in teacher salaries but the value of socializing children to be competent members of social groups. As one Japanese teacher explained, "Children need to have the experience of being in a large group in order to learn to relate to lots of kinds of children in lots of kinds of situations" (Tobin et al., 1989, p. 37).

Integrating Cultural Considerations With Situational and Person Factors

Finally, it must be recognized that cultural considerations complete but do not replace the focus on situational and person factors in social psychological explanation. This implies that hypotheses involving cultural influences need to be formulated in ways that take into account both contextual variation and individual differences. Equally, it must be recognized that in many cases the impact of individual difference and of contextual factors may themselves be culturally variable. For example, research has shown that whereas U.S. respondents utilize more abstract self-references in a task context that is abstract as compared with concrete, Japanese respondents display the opposite effect of context (Cousins, 1989).

In sum, the key to enhancing the cultural sensitivity of social psychology is understanding culture and its role in psychological functioning. Attention must be paid to culture as an ecological context that presents certain objective affordances and constraints, as well as to culture as a symbolic environment that entails certain meanings and practices that are not entirely functionally based. It must be recognized that a consideration of culture does not replace an attention to person and situational factors but contributes an additional dimension to social psychological explanation.

METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Building on the conceptual issues discussed above, this section identifies methodological strategies that are valuable to adopt in efforts to enhance the cultural sensitivity of social psychology. The strategies discussed include considerations that are important not only in comparative research designs but also in research that does not focus explicitly on cultural questions and/or on tapping culturally

diverse populations. Given the reality of psychological experience always occurring in specific cultural contexts, sensitivity to cultural issues is needed in all social psychological investigations.

Cultural Understanding

As a field, social psychology bases many of its research hypotheses, in part, on informal observations made by researchers about behavioral effects that they have observed or personally experienced. In this regard, it is not uncommon for social psychologists to draw on informal personal anecdotes as a preliminary way of communicating to readers the nature of a particular effect. In fact, it has even been argued that much of the success of social psychology, in terms of the generative nature of its ideas and its applied relevance, reflects this interplay between lay understandings and formal scientific inquiry. As Moscovici once commented:

> The real advance made by American social psychology was ... in the fact that it took for its theme of research and for the content of its theories the issues of its own society. Its merit was as much in its techniques as in translating the problems of American society into sociopsychological terms and in making them an object of scientific inquiry. (1972, p. 19)

A concern that may be raised about this type of stance, however, entails its cultural boundedness. The assumptions that make the research questions and hypotheses of social psychology compelling for North American psychologists, because they speak to issues that are familiar and socially meaningful, contribute to making them less significant for researchers from other cultural groups who may not share these same cultural experiences and outlooks. As conveyed in the following firsthand account by a Chinese psychologist, individuals from other cultural backgrounds

may find that their own assumptions and concerns are not adequately taken into account:

> I found the reasons why doing Westernized psychological research with Chinese subjects was no longer satisfying or rewarding to me. When an American psychologist, for example, was engaged in research, he or she could spontaneously let his or her American cultural and philosophical orientations and ways of thinking be freely and effectively reflected in choosing a research question, defining a concept, constructing a theory and designing a method. On the other hand, when a Chinese psychologist in Taiwan was conducting research, his or her strong training by overlearning the knowledge and methodology of American psychology tended to prevent his or her Chinese values, ideas, concepts and ways of thinking from being adequately reflected in the successive stages of the research process. (Yang, 1997, p. 65)

As Yang suggests, there is a sense in which culturally specific themes influence all phases of the research process, often unintentionally excluding certain other cultural sensibilities.

The present considerations highlight the importance, as part of the initial phase of any program of psychological research, of researchers working to enhance their understanding both of their own cultural backgrounds and of those of their participant populations and of challenging the tendency within psychology to privilege the perspectives of middle-class Euro-Americans. As Reid (1994) observed:

> Culture has not so much been ignored in mainstream research as it has been assumed to be homogeneous, that is, based on a standard set of values and expectations primarily held by White and middle-class populations. The research literature across the subdisciplinary areas in psychology demonstrates clearly this assumption of cultural homogeneity. For example, in developmental psychology, *children* means White children

(McLoyd, 1990); in psychology of women, *women* generally refers to White women (Reid, 1988). When we mean other than White, it is specified. (Reid, 1994, p. 525)

It must be recognized that there is no single human population that can serve as a normative baseline for understanding human development (see also Miller, 2001a; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993).

In working to gain an understanding of cultural sensibilities that differ from the researcher's own background, it is important to seek cultural knowledge that, as far as is feasible, is nuanced and specific to the particular group under consideration. This implies that researchers should avoid turning to the widely utilized scale measures of individualism/collectivism to provide this type of insight, because of the limited cultural sensitivity of such measures (Miller, 2002). Fortunately, whereas some commitment is required on the part of the researcher to make the necessary effort to acquire a greater understanding of other cultural viewpoints, many strategies are available for achieving this goal.

One valuable strategy for obtaining knowledge about other cultures involves drawing from relevant research literature in related fields, such as anthropology and sociolinguistics, work that in many instances may be ethnographic in nature. In the case of my own research in India, for example, I was able to develop insight into Hindu Indian culture through reading available anthropological and philosophical literature on Hindu Indian beliefs, practices, values, and everyday family life. Notably, one can see the same kind of stance as having informed the perspective adopted by Markus and Kitayama (1991) in their seminal article on culture and the self. Thus, although they proposed a global distinction linked to individualism/collectivism, the references cited in the article are grounded primarily in interdisciplinary research focused specifically on Japan.

Collaborating with a member of the comparison cultural community under consideration represents another valuable strategy for gaining cultural knowledge, one that may be particularly useful in cases in which there is little or no available research literature on a particular community. Ideally, such collaborations should include researchers who have both insider and outsider knowledge of the cultures under consideration (Greenfield, 1997a). Collaborations of this type have been extremely generative in recent cultural research in social psychology, as illustrated by the growing numbers of studies being conducted involving researchers drawn from the United States and from various East Asian cultural groups (e.g., Ji & Nisbett, 2000; Peng & Nisbett, 1999).

Greater cultural understanding also may be obtained through building into research projects, as a prelude to formal data collection, activities and procedures that focus on gaining insight into the outlooks and practices of particular cultural populations. This can entail spending time in such communities conducting informal observations. For example, in the case of my first series of studies in India, I lived for several months in Mysore, India, prior to initiating any formal data collection, as a means of gaining insight into the culture through observing and participating in everyday life. In cases in which it is not feasible to undertake informal preliminary observations of this type, focus group techniques provide a highly valuable approach that may be utilized to gain cultural insight (Hughes & DuMont, 1993; Knodel, 1993). A form of organized small-group discussions, focus groups constitute small groups that investigators assemble and engage in processes of informal group discussion, as a means of tapping participants' personal experiences and reactions to particular topics (Powell & Single, 1996, p. 499). The goal of focus groups is to make possible the gathering of qualitative information regarding the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of participants,

as expressed within a group context. Focus groups offer the advantage of being highly flexible and can be employed effectively both to explore general cultural concerns and to tap respondents' open-ended reactions to issues identified as of theoretical interest in a particular research program.

Sampling

Attention needs to be given to the cultural implications of different types of sampling strategies. In this regard, effort should be made to go beyond the present tendency for most social psychological research to be conducted on convenience samples of college students. In fact, the need to go beyond convenience samples has been emphasized in the National Institutes of Health's recent mandate to address minority inclusion (or scientifically justify exclusion) explicitly as part of all currently submitted grant proposals.

Noncomparative "Prototypic" Sampling Strategies

The prototypic sampling strategy in social psychology is noncomparative, with such research experimentally manipulating situational effects or assessing individual differences, while tapping a population (generally college students) that is treated as though it is homogeneous and can provide grounds for making universal claims. In efforts to increase the cultural sensitivity of this type of sampling practice, it is essential not only for researchers to acknowledge potential limitations on the generality of their findings from this type of design but also to give greater conceptual attention to the nature of these limitations. Thus, qualifications on the generality of results should not be issued in a perfunctory way. Rather, it is important for researchers to address in what *specific* respects a claim may be anticipated to be culturally bound or, alternatively, the question of for what *specific*

reasons it is likely to prove universal. In short, serious attention needs to be given to the cultural meaning of research findings, even when employing sampling designs that are noncomparative in nature and not explicitly focused on cultural questions.

Equally, greater effort must be paid to unplanned sources of cultural heterogeneity that exist within particular research samples and that are commonly overlooked in the default stance of treating populations as though they are culturally homogeneous. Thus, whenever there are sufficiently large numbers of participants in different cultural subgroups to make this feasible, effort should be made to conduct separate analyses of effects within subgroups to observe empirically whether similar results obtain in all cases. It is recommended that subgroups be analyzed at levels that are linked with cultural traditions and that attend as well to issues of socioeconomic status. It is important that analyses of this type be undertaken in ways that are sensitive to areas of overlap and intermixing between subgroups. As theorists have emphasized (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Phinney, 1999), cultures assume hybrid forms as a result of the many interconnections and transformations occurring between populations, and thus it is problematic to conceptualize cultures as discrete geographically defined entities. Nonetheless, taking group membership into account provides a vehicle for giving "voice" to the outlooks of different communities, perspectives that may be obscured in stances[2] that deny the possibility of making any distinctions between groups on cultural grounds (Jahoda, 1986; Miller, 1997).

Noncomparative Cultural Sampling Strategies

Sampling of noncomparative cultural populations also may be utilized effectively in research that is focused explicitly on cultural questions. These projects generally are motivated either by a concern with obtaining normative data or by the methodological requirements of particular research methodologies, such as ethnographic or case study approaches.

Sampling of single cultural populations is increasingly being adopted in research as a means of working to expand the normative baseline for psychological theory, with such efforts encouraged by major U.S. funding organizations, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), in their issuing of specific calls for research with underrepresented minority populations. It is recognized that psychological theory can effectively be made more culturally inclusive only when its descriptive base is broadened to include information about psychological functioning in diverse cultural samples. This type of sampling approach, it may be noted, also is occurring through the increasing internationalization of social psychology, with new journals, such as the *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, supporting work on exclusively Asian samples, even as the journal also publishes comparative studies.

Sampling of single cultural populations represents the strategy of choice in ethnographic or case study research, in which the focus is on a single cultural setting, if not on a single population from that setting. To illustrate, ethnographic work conducted with inner-city African American families is providing highly informative and in-depth accounts of the multiple environmental stresses experienced within such communities and of the complex patterns of coping observed (e.g., Burton, Allison, & Obeidallah, 1995; Jarrett, 1995), whereas recent ethnographic work among urban street gangs is affording access to study populations and settings that generally remain untapped by questionnaire or survey approaches (e.g., Heath, 1996). In another example, ethnographic case study techniques are adopted commonly in work by sociocultural theorists

(e.g., Cole, 1996) in their examination of how use of cultural tools or modes of cultural social organization affect cognition.

Comparative Cultural Sampling Strategies

Comparative cultural sampling designs are employed commonly in research that tests the universality of particular psychological effects or that examines cultural variation in basic psychological constructs and theories. In such work, it is important for sampling decisions to be culturally nuanced.

In utilizing comparative studies to examine cultural influences on social psychological phenomena, greater consideration must be given to the distinctive nature of cultural orientations (e.g., Dien, 1999; Harkness, Super, & van Tijen, 2000). Equally, greater attention needs to be paid to the overlap and heterogeneity of cultural perspectives. To illustrate, cultural research is pointing to fundamental variation in psychological processes that is subtler in form than is captured in the individualism/collectivist dichotomy. Thus, for example, the concern with affection and respect that Robin Harwood, Nydia Irizarry, and I (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995) have found to be central to the outlooks on attachment emphasized by Puerto Rican mothers differs not only from the focus on balancing autonomy and connectedness emphasized among Euro-Americans and assumed within attachment theory (e.g., Ainsworth, 1978) but also from the concern with *amae* identified within Japanese populations (Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; Yamaguchi, 2001). Equally, the voluntaristic outlook on interpersonal morality that is assumed in Carol Gilligan's morality of caring model (Gilligan, 1982) differs not only from the interpersonal moral outlooks based on *dharma*[3] that tend to be emphasized among Hindu Indian and Buddhist populations (Huebner & Garrod,

1991; Miller, 1994) but also from the focus on maintaining good interpersonal relations that is more central in Japan (Shimizu, 2001). Notably, these examples do not imply that distinct psychological theories need to be formulated for every cultural or subcultural group (see arguments for generality in Miller, 2001b, 2002); however, they caution against the tendency, which is reflected in the contemporary widespread reliance on measures of independent/interdependent self-construals, to adopt comparative designs that gloss over this type of significant variation.

As emphasized in recent anthropological work on culture (e.g., Shore, 1996; Strauss & Quinn, 1997), it also is important to give more attention to within-culture variation in perspectives related to factors such as socioeconomic status and even place. This implies adopting more fluid outlooks on cultural boundaries and avoiding the common tendency in psychology to identify cultures with nation states or even larger units, as when speaking of "East Asian" or "North American" cultures. Illustrating the informative nature of such a stance, research has uncovered variation in individualism across different regions of the United States (Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002; Vandello & Cohen, 1999) as well as documented qualitative variation in forms of individualism linked to socioeconomic status (Kusserow, 1999).

Representativeness and Equivalence in Sampling

Although it is important to address concerns about the anticipated cultural generality of results, it also must be recognized that representative sampling is not an essential feature of culturally based research designs and, with the exception of large-scale surveys, it is rarely achieved in social psychology. Just as there is no expectation that researchers who are sampling U.S. college students need to tap a representative sample

of college students from across the nation, much less the world, there should be no expectation that researchers who may be comparing the responses of U.S. and Japanese college students need to tap populations that are representative of all Americans, much less of all Japanese. This implies that reviewers should not utilize representative sampling as a criterion in evaluating culturally based psychological research because such a standard would lead to all such work being appraised negatively, with the exception of large-scale survey designs.

In lieu of the criterion of samples being representative, however, concern needs to be given to achieving equivalence in the populations tapped in comparative studies and in individuals' responses to research stimuli. Given the skewing of samples that can result, matching samples on preexisting background characteristics should be avoided or utilized only to a minimal extent. Rather, it is preferable, to the extent feasible, to identify naturally occurring samples that are as comparable as possible, in terms of background characteristics salient in the particular study (Cole & Means, 1986). To control for possible confounding preexisting group differences, use also may be made of such statistical control techniques as covariate analysis or the partialing out of variance. To illustrate, in one study in which we assessed U.S. and Indian respondents' moral appraisals of hypothetical research vignettes, we observed that the two groups differed in their perceptions of the commonness of the vignettes portrayed (Bersoff & Miller, 1993). To control for this a priori difference, we utilized a regression procedure to partial out the variance predicated by participants' commonness ratings from their moral reasoning responses (Bersoff & Miller, 1993).

The inclusion of control samples in research designs is a valuable strategy that may be employed in efforts to rule out alternative interpretations of particular effects related to sampling—a technique that is particularly

valuable in two-group research designs, given the many uncontrolled sources of variation that may influence any effect (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Use of this type of comparative sampling is illustrated in my early cross-cultural research on social attribution (Miller, 1984). In that investigation, the central cross-cultural comparisons involved middle-class Hindu Indian and middle-class Euro-American samples. However, to evaluate potential alternative interpretations of the results, additional sampling was undertaken both of a lower-class Hindu Indian sample and of a Westernized middle-class Christian Anglo-Indian sample. The finding that no effects of socioeconomic differences were observed within the two Hindu subgroups provided evidence to suggest that differences in wealth could not explain the attributional variation observed in the main U.S./India cross-cultural comparison. The finding that Anglo-Indians displayed a pattern of social attribution that was intermediate between that observed among the middle-class Hindu Indian and middle-class U.S. samples lent support to the claim that a tendency to emphasize personality factors in social attribution is related to Westernization.

Culture as Process

Within contemporary social psychology, widespread use is made of the scale measure of independent/interdependent self-construals developed by Singelis (1994) as well as of other measures of individualism/collectivism developed by researchers in the tradition of cross-cultural psychology (see, e.g., Triandis, 1995). Interest also is shown in priming as a way of simulating cultural effects under experimentally controlled conditions (e.g., Hong et al., 2000; Oyserman et al., 2002). However, serious limitations exist in both of these strategies, leaving a need to adopt more dynamic methodological approaches.

As critics have noted (e.g., Miller, 2002; Strauss, 2000), scale measures of individualism/

collectivism and of independent/interdependent self-construals subsume cultural variation into two fundamental types, a stance that glosses over variation in outlooks that exists between and within different cultural communities. Furthermore, individual items on these scales tend to portray collectivist cultures in somewhat pejorative terms and to lack adequate construct validity. Such characteristics may be seen in the inclusion of items that portray the self as subordinate to the group in collectivist outlooks.[4] As recent research has shown, however, the self may be experienced as satisfied and fulfilled, rather than as subordinated, in the fulfillment of the types of role expectations emphasized in various collectivist communities (e.g., Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Miller, in press-b; Miller & Bersoff, 1994). Measures of individualism/collectivism also are problematic in treating psychological processes as bearing a one-to-one relationship to cultural outlooks, a stance that fails to recognize the extent to which behavior is normatively based rather than reflective of individual attitudes or personality (Shweder, 1979; Takano & Osaka, 1999). Given these many weaknesses, it is not surprising that many results obtained utilizing individualism/collectivism scales are of questionable validity (Matsumoto, 1999; Oyserman et al., 2002; Takano & Osaka, 1999). For example, whereas findings within the United States based on individualism/collectivism scales show Latinos as no higher in collectivism than Euro-Americans (Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2001), such a finding does not accord with the conclusions stemming from research that does not rely on individualism/collectivism measures (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Harwood et al., 1995).

It also is problematic to utilize priming approaches to simulate cultural processes and to measure individualism/collectivism. As discussed elsewhere (Miller, 2002), it is not possible to interpret a particular behavioral response, such as a dispositional inference, that might be primed as reflective of an individualistic or collectivist outlook without understanding other cultural meanings to which the response is linked. Dispositional and situational inferences are generated in all cultural groups, with their display affected by contextual factors. Thus, when individuals make a dispositional or situational inference in a priming task, this may be merely because the prime is serving as a contextual manipulation and not because it represents a manipulation of cultural outlook per se.

In lieu of utilizing scale measures to assess individualism/collectivism or priming approaches to tap cultural processes,[5] it is recommended that researchers adopt process-oriented approaches to culture (Greenfield, 1997a). This includes tapping more directly the psychological processes that are implicated in particular culturally variable psychological responses as well as assessing the everyday cultural routines and practices that support such responses.

Methodological approaches that tap the psychological processes underlying particular effects include such strategies as assessing online processing as well as identifying culturally variable patterns of functional relationships (Kitayama, 2002). Online processing involves evaluating information immediately as it is encountered and contrasts with cognitive processing based on long-term memory The use of online processing to explore cultural influences is illustrated in a recent comparative study on the correspondence bias, an attributional tendency in which an individual's dispositions are seen as corresponding to his or her behavior even when the behavior is socially constrained (Miyamoto & Kitayama, 2002). This investigation not only demonstrated that Japanese respondents are less vulnerable to this bias than are U.S. respondents but also importantly showed that this difference is linked to contrasting types of online attitudinal inferences. Thus, it was demonstrated that, in contrast to the U.S. respondents, the Japanese respondents were more situationally focused in their online

inferences. In turn, the approach of identifying culturally variable patterns of functional relationships is illustrated in cross-cultural research highlighting the contrasting cultural meanings accorded to shyness. Thus, it has been demonstrated that whereas social reticence tends to be linked to negative outcomes in family and school contexts within North American cultural settings (Kagan, 1994), it is linked to positive family and school outcomes within China (Chen, Rubin, & Li, 1995).

Greater effort also needs to be paid to assessing cultural practices (see, e.g., Greenfield, 1997a; Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997; Phinney & Landin, 1998; Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus, & Miller, 1998). The value of this type of approach is illustrated in recent research by Evans (2001) which showed that differences in the receptivity to creationist beliefs among fundamentalist vs. nonfundamentalist U.S. Christian families could be explained, in part, by the families' everyday social practices such as having books on dinosaurs in their homes and attending church regularly. Likewise, in a different example, it has been by focusing on differences in everyday social practices in schools and homes, such as time spent on academic tasks and styles of teaching, that Stevenson and his colleagues have been able to identify the cultural processes that underlie the dramatic differences in mathematics achievement that distinguish U.S. from Chinese and Japanese schoolchildren (Stevenson & Lee, 1990; Stigler, Lee, & Stevenson, 1987). (For work utilizing situation sampling techniques to assess cultural practices, see, e.g., Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997.)

Culturally Appropriate Measures

Finally, it is critical that the procedures that are adopted in social psychological research be culturally sensitive. Presupposing cultural understanding, this sensitivity is a matter of ensuring both that measures are equivalent in meaning for different populations and that they are culturally informative. The first issue represents a long-standing concern in cross-cultural psychology and bears fundamentally on issues of reducing bias in comparative research designs (for extended discussion of these issues, see, e.g., Greenfield, 1997a, 1997b; van de Vijver, 2001; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). In turn, the second issue, which to date has received more limited attention, bears on ensuring that the constructs tapped in psychological measuring instruments are sufficiently culturally inclusive to accommodate diverse outlooks.

In terms of ensuring the equivalence of measuring instruments in different cultural or subcultural populations, it is critical not merely to adopt such conventional strategies as the use of back translation but also to take into account the contrasting expectations, social knowledge, values, and modes of communication maintained by individuals of different sociocultural backgrounds. To illustrate, certain populations may be unfamiliar with the convention that psychological tests are not designed to measure socially useful information and thus may respond to an IQ-type measure with an answer that is pragmatically useful but that is scored as incorrect according to the norms of the test (e.g., Greenfield, 1997b). For example, village populations have been observed to respond spontaneously in object-sorting cognitive tasks by grouping items into functionally meaningful pairings (e.g., grouping a knife and potato together because the knife is used to cut the potato) rather than into the taxonomic groupings expected by the researchers (e.g., grouping all implement items together, all food items together) (Cole, Gay, Glick, & Sharp, 1971). Interestingly, this type of difference can lead, in certain cases, to various populations experiencing difficulty in responding to multiple-choice questions. Thus, in research among the

Zinacantecan Maya, Greenfield and Childs (1977) observed that respondents with limited schooling treated the multiple options provided in multiple-choice questionnaires as patterns to be put together to create a larger meaning, rather than as discrete options whose only function is to test understanding. The social context of the test situation also may affect the level of comfort that individuals experience in testing situations and their readiness to respond. Thus, for example, Mexican-immigrant parents within the United States spontaneously use questioning less frequently as a conversational strategy at home than do Euro-American parents, a cultural difference that is reflected in the former being more reluctant to answer questions in standard interviewing situations (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Greenfield, 1997b).

Notably, in working to ensure the cross-group appropriateness of measures, equivalence needs to be achieved at the level of meaning, a feature that may require utilizing somewhat different objective procedures in different groups. As Greenfield (1997b) observed, "the use of *parallel* procedures across cultures . . . works best when cultures are not too different . . . the use of *qualitatively different* procedures across cultures works best when the cultures are very different" (p. 308). To illustrate use of this type of strategy, in my early cross-cultural attribution research (Miller, 1984), my decision to have individuals explain events from their own experiences, rather than to respond to identical experimentally constructed event situations that I supplied to them, was motivated by a sense that greater equivalence in meaning could be obtained in this way, since the behaviors being explained would have greater ecological validity for all cultural and age groups.

In turn, to ensure the cultural inclusiveness of research methods, it is critically important to recognize that many assessment instruments currently in use embody culturally specific assumptions and need to be broadened conceptually to accommodate the diverse outlooks of contrasting cultural and subcultural populations. Until this is done, the field will continue to yield results that, while identifying apparent universals, are based on methods that lack sufficient cultural sensitivity to succeed in tapping the cultural variability that exists. It is this property of present psychological research methodology, in fact, that leads psychological research to form somewhat of a closed system, in which it becomes difficult to produce findings that challenge the explanatory scope of existing theoretical models and in which results on diverse psychological measures tend to be highly intercorrelated (Miller, in press-a). Thus, for example, it was only when researchers developed new conceptual models for understanding morality, such as in Gilligan's (1982) morality of caring framework and in various cultural approaches (e.g., Miller, 1994; Snarey, 1985), as well as provided methodologies that were sensitive enough to tap this variation, that the conclusion of the universality of the Kohlbergian model of moral development was challenged effectively.

The present considerations highlight the need for researchers to be more aware of the extent to which the response options provided on standard questionnaires or coding schemes may lack sufficient cultural sensitivity to succeed in tapping the outlooks of diverse cultural populations. Thus, for example, in the scales utilized in research on self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1987), the "external" motivational orientation is conceptualized as a stance involving the fear of external sanctions, as reflected in items such as "Because I will get in trouble if I don't do well," whereas the "identified" and "intrinsic" motivational stances are conceptualized as involving autonomous individual interest, as reflected in items such as "Because I want to understand the subject" and "Because it's important to *me* to do

my homework." These types of response alternatives, however, do not capture the endogenous view of social expectations emphasized in a culture such as Hindu India, in which the motive to uphold duty relates to spiritual fulfillment, not fear of sanctions or mere social conformity (Miller, in press-b). To give another example, the emphasis on training (*chiao shun*) observed among Chinese Americans, as Chao (1994) points out, includes an emphasis on positive affect in conjunction with highly directive parental behavior. It then is not accommodated in the theoretical framework of parenting developed by Baumrind, which presents a scheme for conceptualizing and coding parental behavior into alternatives that link parenting either to an affectively harsh stance ("authoritarian" parenting) or to stances that are much less directive (i.e., either "authoritative" or "permissive" parenting).

To address the issue of the insufficient culturally inclusive nature of the constructs tapped in many existing psychological measuring instruments, the constructs embodied in our methods need to be expanded. Thus, to give an example, cultural researchers have argued for including the construct of relationship harmony and not only the construct of self-esteem in tapping the predictors of life satisfaction (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997). It is also valuable to utilize assessment instruments that are less constraining of response options and more accommodating to diverse cultural viewpoints. Thus, in my own programs of research, for example, I have tended to rely heavily on methodological approaches that are less directive than standardized questionnaires, such as tapping responses to the projective measure of hypothetical vignette situations (e.g., Miller & Bersoff, 1998) and utilizing open-ended questioning to explore individuals' reasoning (Miller & Bersoff, 1995) (see also King, Chapter 8, this volume; Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, bringing culture more centrally into the methods of social psychology is integrally related to bringing culture more centrally into the constructs and theories of the field. As has been argued here, the relative invisibility of culture in social psychology, and in psychology more generally, stems in part from the limited attention that we give it in our theories, as well as from our adoption of methods that are insufficiently sensitive to the impact of cultural processes on psychological phenomena. As Matsumoto (2001) recently commented, "all psychologists are cross-cultural in some way; the only difference is in whether they are aware of the cultures being studied, and whether this comparison is explicit or implicit in their work" (p. ix).

The effort to make social psychology more culturally inclusive must build on the complexity and sophistication of the discipline, with the onus on cultural researchers to develop approaches to culture that, in their attention to the nuances of cultural outlooks and to the contextual dependence and often implicit nature of psychological phenomena, embody the rich insights of contemporary social psychology. Equally critical, however, is the need to overcome the complacency of social psychology, which has resulted in relegating culture to a peripheral role as a mere descriptive enterprise with little implication for basic theory. As has been shown, the conceptual stances, sampling practices, and methodological approaches that constitute the mainstream perspective of the discipline have, in many cases, obscured significant cultural variation, yielding findings of universality that may be more apparent than real.

Notably, taking cultural considerations into account more centrally in social psychology promises to yield a richer understanding of basic psychological processes and of the diversity of outlooks that characterize human

psychological functioning. Such an effort, which needs to be integrated with efforts to identify brain and other biological foundations for psychological behavior, stands to produce a discipline that is not only more truly universal but also more theoretically sophisticated in its process accounts of psychological phenomena and in its applied implications.

NOTES

1. Experienced in the context of close relationships that entail both attachment and dependence, the Japanese concept of *amae* involves feelings of being able "to depend and presume upon another's love or bask in another's indulgence" (Doi, 1992, p. 8). Individuals experience *amae* in close relationships in being able to presume that their inappropriate behavior will be accepted by their counterpart (Yamaguchi, 2001).

2. Within social psychology, stances that deny the possibility of distinguishing between cultural traditions have been adopted by theorists associated with such postmodern perspectives as social constructionism and discursive psychology (e.g., Edwards, 1995; Gergen, 1992, 1994; Shotter, 1993). As Gergen commented:

> We are not speaking . . . of the blending of all, the emergence of monoculture, but rapid and continuous transformations in cultural forms, as they are subject to multiple influences. . . . If there is a continuous blending, appropriation, dissolution, and the like, how are we to draw distinctions among cultural processes? (Gergen, as interviewed in Gulerce, 1995, pp. 149-150)

3. The concept of *dharma* denotes both moral duty and inherent character and is based on perceived spiritually based laws of nature (Marriott, 1990).

4. This type of assumption can be seen, for example, in the following items that appear on the widely used Singelis (1994) measure of independent vs. interdependent self construals: "I will sacrifice my self-interest for the group that I am in" and "I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I'm not happy with the group."

5. The present recommendation applies only to the use of priming for purposes of simulating cultural effects. There are many other important purposes for which it is appropriate to use priming in culturally based research that assesses cognitive processing.

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