

---

## PSYCHOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

JACOB R. HICKMAN

*University of Chicago*

**R**esearchers doing work at the intersection of anthropological and psychological phenomena often bemoan the fact that anthropology and psychology are by and large considered separate and distinct disciplines. There are certainly distinct theoretical and methodological differences between what might be considered the prototypical work that mainstream psychologists and anthropologists do, such as controlled laboratory experiments versus ethnographic participant observation. However, historically this has not always been the case, and some contemporary researchers bridge this divide in several interdisciplinary fields that seek to account for both cultural and psychological influences in the mental worlds of people.

While space does not permit a complete overview of even these interdisciplinary efforts to integrate research on cultural and psychological phenomena, this chapter will discuss a few of the key figures and movements in the historical relationship between psychology and anthropology as disciplines, as well as some work that has transgressed these disciplinary divisions. Further, some key theoretical, methodological, and epistemological tendencies in mainstream psychology and mainstream anthropology will be discussed, with particular attention given to differences that have contributed to fragmentation and mutual critique between the two disciplines. Several interdisciplinary fields in which researchers seek to bridge these differences will then be discussed, followed by a summary of some

examples of the main areas of human life and mental function where researchers who are concerned with both mental and cultural phenomena are doing their work. Finally, some future directions for integrated research in psychology and anthropology will be laid out.

This summary cannot account for all of the variations in either discipline, and there will most certainly be areas of each discipline that contradict the summary characterizations made here. This account is not designed to represent either discipline in its totality or to characterize psychological or anthropological research agendas in their entirety, but more to point to general trends in the mainstreams and interstices of these two disciplines that are clearly observable. The references cited and further readings list at the end of this chapter, including the literatures cited by those sources, should be consulted for further consideration of psychology and anthropology as separate disciplines, as well as the interdisciplinary fields that engage both.

### A Brief History of Psychology and Anthropology

---

Before the canonization of psychology and anthropology into separate disciplines, social theorists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had all things both psychological and cultural on the table in their work. During the latter

half of the 19th century, for example, unilinear cultural evolution was a primary paradigm among theorists that anthropologists claim as intellectual ancestors, namely Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward Burnett Tylor, and James Frazer. (See the entries on Culture Change and Social Evolution in this volume for a complete summary of this paradigm.) Chief among their theories was the notion of “the psychic unity of mankind,” an idea propagated by Adolf Bastian, a founding figure in German anthropology (Köpping, 1983/2005). The basic premise of psychic unity is that all humans have the same basic psychological structure, makeup, or evolutionary potential. (For a more comprehensive history of the meanings and assumptions underlying psychic unity as it relates to both anthropology and psychology, see Shore, 1996, Chapter 1.)

Importantly, for the cultural evolutionists, this characteristic made all human societies comparable for placing them on an evolutionary scale from primitive to modern. Without psychic unity, cultural evolution as a framework would dissolve into simple biological differences, and no framework beyond Darwinian evolution would be necessary to explain differences between societies. For cultural evolutionists, however, psychic unity did not equate to cultural relativism. On the contrary, it meant that all humans had the same cultural or psychological (one could argue that these were equated in this framework) evolutionary *potential* but that this potential was realized to differing degrees in differing societies. Thus, industrial societies (i.e., the “West”) were more culturally and psychically evolved than hunter-gatherer societies. However, these more “primitive” societies were seen as having the potential to evolve through the same evolutionary phases as more “advanced” societies, in order to realize the same psychic potential that industrialized peoples were said to have under this framework.

The cultural relativist turn among anthropological theorists in the early 20th century disregarded this evolutionary take on psychic unity for a more relativizing perspective. In *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Franz Boas (1911) argued against the scientific racism inherent in cultural evolutionary approaches. Importantly, during this period and even preceding it, there is no firm line drawn between “mind” and “culture” for these theorists. A modern-day reading of *The Mind of Primitive Man*, for example, leaves one wondering where the psychological content is, but one is left to realize that, for Boas, mind and the cultural milieu are not easily extracted from one another and in fact form elements of the same phenomenon. Similarly, for unilinear evolutionists, cultural practice was conceptualized as indicative of the more-or-less evolved underlying psychic conditions of members in a given society.

Thus, up until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and even afterward, many of the major figures concerned with both culture and psychology did not necessarily separate the two into different domains for research. Certainly, until this point, there existed no institutional

structures to separate them. For example, Franz Boas, who established the first department of anthropology in the United States in 1896 at Columbia University and is widely considered a founding figure of American anthropology, had prior training and taught alongside psychologists. Boas was a student of Wilhelm Wundt, a figure claimed by modern psychologists as a founding figure of their discipline and the developer of the first psychological laboratory. Wundt was also interested in folk psychology (see below), and among his students were both Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski, another important early figure in both American and British anthropology (Mattingly, Lutkehaus, & Throop, 2008). Further, one of Boas’s early academic jobs was in the anthropology division of G. Stanley Hall’s psychology department at Clark University (LeVine, 2007). Hall founded the American Psychological Association and was a key figure in shaping the discipline in America. Briefly, among foundational figures in both psychology and anthropology as modern-day disciplines, there was a significant interchange of ideas, and the institutional and disciplinary boundaries observed in the present day were of little or no issue.

### Disciplinary Fragmentation

Shortly after Boas established the first anthropology department in the United States and helped found the American Anthropological Association, the discipline began to take root in its modern institutional form, including the four-field approach (i.e., emphases on the teaching of biological anthropology, archaeology, sociocultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology). For its part, psychology in the 19th century was not clearly delineated from philosophy or even medicine, but it also began to separate and become a distinct academic discipline in the early 20th century. Originally, this disciplinary fragmentation did not preclude productive research that crossed these disciplinary lines. Some of the founding figures of American anthropology continued to engage psychological theories and research psychological topics within their newly formed discipline (e.g., Benedict, 1934; Malinowski, 1927). Formative figures in psychology also continued to see culture as an essential consideration in their theorizing and empirical work.

However, throughout the course of the 20th century, one could argue that the centers of each discipline drifted away from one another, both theoretically and methodologically, pushing the work that sought to integrate cultural and psychological phenomena further into the peripheries of each discipline. This continued until a recent, reinvigorated interest in the intersection of psychology and anthropology (Cole, 1996; Shweder, 1990) led to increased activity and recognition of the interdisciplinary fields that focus on both culture and psyche in a holistic research agenda. The future looks bright for these interdisciplinary endeavors, but before discussing them, it is important first to outline

some of the different orientations that resulted from the increased factionalization of psychology and anthropology over the course of the 20th century.

## Theoretical Orientations and Explanations

In contemporary psychology and anthropology, each discipline's mainstream has come to adopt distinct theoretical orientations for the explanation of human behavior and the human condition, and these divergent orientations have led to mutual critique. Note that the description that follows temporarily sidelines the interdisciplinary efforts that are designed specifically to either overcome or answer these mutual critiques, in an effort to draw out in high relief the different types of scientific and social explanations that tend to be offered in each discipline. These interdisciplinary efforts and their work will be discussed subsequently.

### Centrality of Individual Psyches

Brent Slife and his colleagues have written extensively on the taken-for-granted assumptions in contemporary psychology in order to analyze the theoretical approaches in the field and offer alternatives to the normative stances. Their work is useful in understanding how these assumptions vary from those normative assumptions that one might find among anthropologists. Perhaps one of the most relevant analyses in this comparison is what Slife terms *atomism* (Slife, 2004). Atomism can be applied to separate levels of psychological analysis, from individuals to individual constructs, but for present purposes one could say that atomism assumes that individuals are akin to hermetically sealed units, self-functioning and self-contained. In other words, under this assumption, an individual's psyche is perceived to be a self-contained unit that can be studied under a microscope, as it were, by itself, in order to discover its nature. This assumption makes the context in which the psyche develops or operates from day to day less important, since the psyche is perceived to *contain* all of the necessary characteristics or attributes worthy of its investigation. Thus, the individual becomes the primary unit of analysis for mainstream psychology.

This assumption becomes clear in a consideration of prominent Western psychological conceptions of personality. The "big five" personality enterprise (see Goldberg, 1993, for a summary and history of the development of this model of personality), for example, is built around the notion of five salient factors that are said to be descriptive at the highest level of personality traits located in individual psyches. Since the emergence and psychometric validation of this model, much psychological research has been devoted to explaining individual psychological differences in many domains and how these variations relate to these personality traits, including the advocating of job

selection and training according to individual personality profiles (Goldberg, 1993). Importantly, this entire conception rests on the explanatory value of individual psyches and their "content." The way that culture often factors into these explanations is on the order of affecting the personality trait outcomes in individuals. Within such a framework and in mainstream psychology in general, culture is primarily conceived of as an explanatory variable for individual psychological variation. This can be juxtaposed to the conceptions of culture in anthropology, as well as the interdisciplinary efforts to integrate psychological and cultural phenomena in research agendas (see below). Suffice it to say that the assumption of atomism and the resulting conception of individuals as hermetically sealed psychic units to be either explained or used as explanatory variables results in a quite different theoretical enterprise than when culture is taken as the primary object of study.

A second important aspect of theoretical work in psychology regards the importance of psychological constructs. A construct is an unobservable entity that is presumed to exist within an individual psyche and that gives rise to observable phenomena, such as behavior. An example would be depression. One cannot directly observe depression, but one can observe the behavioral outcomes of this theoretical construct (e.g., crying, sad facial expressions, etc.). Given the theoretical centrality of individual psyches, different subdisciplines of psychology have built up research enterprises around studying the theoretical constructs in the psyche. The five factors of the big five model are examples. Great effort is devoted to developing psychometric instruments that use information from the supposed observable effects of these constructs in order to test for their salience, nature, or even theoretical existence. Measures of these constructs are often used to predict behaviors or the strength of other constructs.

### Centrality of Culture as an Explanatory Framework

Anthropologists have historically been much less concerned with individual variation but instead have focused on collective differences at the level of a society, group, or subculture. Ever since the time of Boas, fighting scientific as well as banal racism and propagating cultural relativism have been central projects of the anthropological discipline. When translated to theoretical work, this project has often been directed toward taking the findings of other social scientists, or even everyday common sense in Western society, and delivering rich ethnographic detail to show how groups vary (or occasionally how they are similar) on different dimensions, given their cultural milieus. Some prominent examples include Margaret Mead's argument that the social dimensions of the sexual tension and upheaval of adolescents perceived to be universal in the West are not necessarily the case among Samoan adolescents (Mead, 1928/1964). While the ethnographic validity

of this project (her first significant fieldwork) has been questioned, the argument was influential and contributed significantly to this anthropological project of relativizing scientific universalizations derived from Western cultural contexts. Importantly, as compared to normative research among psychologists, the unit of analysis here becomes a group; it is larger than one individual.

Clifford Geertz remarked that psychologism, or psychological reductionism, is one of two “great saboteur[s] of cultural analysis,” along with logicism (Geertz, 1973, p. 405). By this, he means to argue that the reduction of all human phenomena to some addition of individual psychological processes misses a fundamental point. Geertz makes the case that psychologism overlooks the entire world of meaning that predates such individuals and that shapes and gives interpretive tools for the psychological experience of individuals. Thus, Geertz’s realm of analysis is metaindividualistic and is particularly critical of the universalizing explanations offered by psychologists that place an individual psyche at the center of explanatory or predictive models. Geertz seeks to replace the prospect of psychological reductionism with what he terms the “scientific phenomenology of culture.” While Geertz’s analytic material and observations certainly contain what psychologists might label as psychological content, his emphasis is on the process of meaning-making at a level that extends what goes on in individual minds.

Specifically, in his essay “Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali” (1973), Geertz argues that thought is inherently social. In other words, a system of meaning-making must presuppose the interpretation that is engaged by individuals. It is this system of meaning-making—the culture that resides outside of individual minds and in the social interstices of human life (Shore, 1996)—that Geertz took as his object of study. In this essay, he goes on to delineate the rules of naming and keeping time in Bali. Using these ethnographic data, he argues that Balinese conceptions of the person and, indeed, time itself are fundamentally distinct from the corollary Western concepts, which are often held as universal by philosophers and psychologists. The psychological worlds of the Balinese are thus affected, as they see time, for instance, in more qualitative than quantitative terms (i.e., “what kind of time it is” as opposed to “what time it is,” respectively). Compared to the aforementioned psychological emphasis on how individual psychological constructs drive behavioral outcomes, the tension in theoretical orientations between mainstream psychology and anthropology becomes clearer.

### Positivism and Antipositivism

Again, these comparisons certainly cannot account for the variation in approaches and dispositions of variegated theorists in either psychology or anthropology but are designed to point the reader to some trends among prototypical work in each field and some significant differences

between these disciplines. Another significant difference that merits pointing out regards orientations toward positivism. Without consciously doing so, many psychologists tend to see their discipline in more positivistic terms. Importantly, the term would rarely be used among researchers of similar orientations in the nature of science. When referring to *positivism* in this context, one might say that psychological research is generally considered to contribute to additive knowledge toward the supposed end of a complete understanding of the individual psyche, thus conceiving the psychological discipline(s) as a positive science working toward an end of some final or complete truth of their object of study.

While there is certainly wide disagreement among anthropologists on this point, many recent theoretical strains in the discipline have come to use the terms *positivism* and *positivists* in degrading terms, understood by these postmodern critiques to be indicative of some sort of modernist naïveté. This mode of critique is particularly typical of postmodern or poststructural camps in anthropology, and generally it might favor a more socially or culturally constructed view of scientific truth, in which science itself is seen as a cultural endeavor in the most extreme sense. This point is important because of the extent to which interdisciplinary critiques between psychologists and anthropologists focus on the scientific value of each other’s work or question that category in the first place. As a natural response, psychologists, who tend to see their discipline more as an additive or positive science, argue that these modes of analysis are rather unscientific and do not contribute to the greater understanding of human life. This point leads to the next important comparison between these disciplines: epistemological approaches.

## Differing Epistemologies and Methodological Approaches

### Generalizability Versus Deep Understanding

The normative epistemological approaches between anthropologists and psychologists during the 20th century have led to the development of vastly different sets of methods for each discipline. At least to some extent, the differing objects of inquiry in theoretical underpinnings, as outlined above, have driven these epistemological differences, but certainly do not account for the entirety of their divergence.

Most university psychology departments offer methodological training to students in the form of statistical techniques and psychometric measurements. Anthropology departments, on the other hand, tend to stress the importance of in-depth fieldwork, which typically consists of extensive interviewing, observation, linguistic analysis, or archival research. At the heart of this divergence is the

question of how one can “know” one’s subject, be it a cultural system or the nature of the human psyche. Anthropologists tend to argue that depth is the important factor in figuring out the important aspects of one’s research context. This depth tends to be qualitative in nature (see below) and is generally focused on tracking the phenomenon that is of interest instead of taking more superficial observations that might be generalized to some sampled population. This is certainly not the case for all anthropologists and has varied widely throughout the history of the discipline. Indeed, many prominent anthropologists in the 20th century were primarily concerned with quantitative techniques and sampling issues, but the trend at the moment favors other forms of knowing.

Geertz’s oft-quoted term *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) is commonly mobilized to describe the dominant methodological field among anthropologists. By thick description, Geertz meant the extensive documentation of cultural milieus themselves and coming to understand local symbols and phenomena on their own terms and in their own contexts. The object of this form of cultural analysis is to come as close as possible to seeing these symbols through the eyes of members of the community that deal in them, thus enabling the ethnographer to comment comparatively (given one’s native worldview) on them and their significance. Embedded fieldwork has become a hallmark of anthropology. Indeed, it is often seen as essential to anthropology’s identity as an academic discipline. Cultural relativism, as a principle, is partially responsible for this, as early anthropologists sought to refute or at least overcome supposedly superficial observations of armchair anthropologists of the late 19th century, whose accounts were largely based on the reports of missionaries who encountered various peoples around the world. Cultural relativism became important for refuting evolutionary or simply ethnocentric claims about universal humanity, and embedded fieldwork provided the deep perspectives and data to engage in that effort. Briefly, given assumptions of cultural specificity, in order to truly understand local variations in all their idiosyncrasies and permutations, one must become immersed in the cultural contexts in order to be a subject of one’s own analysis.

Psychologists, for their part, have historically largely assumed that, despite cultural superficialities, the psychological structures and processes of all humanity are universal (Shweder, 1990). This assumption, coupled with that of naturalism (Slife, 2004), has led to an epistemology quite distinct from anthropology’s hallmark of qualitative fieldwork. Instead, psychologists have historically favored the testing of psychological phenomena across populations in order to derive generalizations about psychological processes that are assumed to permeate those populations. Methods developed toward this end have been largely quantitative in nature, such that assertions made about samples could theoretically be generalized to embrace entire populations from which samples are drawn.

With regard to psychological constructs, population distributions of constructs and developing quantitative techniques of measuring the existence and correlation of constructs with other phenomena have been central. Ideally, sampling is an essential consideration in this epistemology, but practical concerns sometimes outweigh this importance. Those outside the subdiscipline often levy the criticism that social psychological theories tend to overproject the psychodynamics of undergraduate psychology students to the entire population, as this is certainly the most studied group in this line of research, given their availability for research participation in academe. Even considering sampling limitations, however, the important distinction with regard to epistemological comparison regards the anthropologist’s ethnographic emphasis on deep local knowledge, in contrast to the typical psychologist’s interest in quantitatively deriving the nature of a psychological construct or its relationship to a behavior or characteristic of personality.

### Conceptions of Culture

Interpenetrating both the epistemological and theoretical differences outlined here are the varying conceptions of culture in each discipline. It is certainly not the case that all or even most anthropologists have arrived at a consensus on the nature of culture. In fact, the culture concept has been at the center of the discipline’s most intense debates. (See the “Concept of Culture” entry in this reference handbook.) Psychologists, for their part, have not historically engaged in the philosophical arguments surrounding the nature of culture to any comparable extent. However, this is not to say that one cannot point to systematic differences in the ways that psychologists and anthropologists have treated culture in their work, whether or not the assumptions about the nature of culture are explicit in such work.

As outlined above, prominent anthropologists such as Geertz have strongly advocated that culture is not something that resides in the heads of people but rather in the interstitial social spaces where people live and interact. He famously remarked,

The concept of culture I espouse . . . is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz, 1973, p. 5)

One might well say that the “experimental science in search of law” refers to, among other things, the psychological sciences that tend to operate under the assumptions of naturalism (Slife, 2004).

Not all psychologists are concerned with cultural phenomena or testing their theories in various cultural milieus.

However, for those that do take culture into account, such as the subdiscipline of cross-cultural psychology (see below), the assumption of psychic unity writ large reigns (Shweder, 1990). In other words, it is largely assumed that humans are all basically the same type of psychological beings, but that cross-cultural work should be dedicated to uncovering or revealing the cultural variation in certain constructs. The deep psychological structure, however, is perceived to remain universal across all peoples (Shweder, 1984). In much of the psychological research where culture factors into the models, it is often seen (or at least treated) as one of many variables in a person's psychological profile, much like gender or age. Thus, it can be codified and worked into a regression or correlation model of the psychological construct or phenomena of interest. In this way, as many anthropologists tend to argue, culture is reduced to near insignificance, and the entire point is missed. For Geertzian anthropologists, the webs of meaning that constitute a cultural context are the very phenomena of interest, and they cannot be simply reduced to a variable in a statistical model. Instead, such a context must be treated as the very means through which psychological worlds are enabled to exist. Thus, anthropologists tend to have a much deeper and richer sense of culture per se, or at least a more substantive debate on the topic, and these different disciplinary orientations certainly drive the different epistemological approaches outlined above.

It is also important to note that a similar debate wages around the topic of individual psychological variation. On this topic, psychologists certainly have a more rigorous and developed methodology for dealing with population distributions and individual deviations from the norm. However, these methods are largely quantitative, except perhaps in certain domains of clinical psychology. Thus, psychologists might criticize anthropologists for overemphasizing norms and not paying significant attention to variations.

### Interdisciplinary Fields of Relevance

Despite the above outlined mainstream trends and comparisons of psychological and anthropological approaches to understanding human life, several important interdisciplinary fields have emerged at the intersection of psychological and anthropological research. Each of these various subfields has a slightly different focus, but they share the effort to integrate cultural explanation and meaning with the psychological dynamics of individuals. What follows is a brief description of each field and how they relate to one another. It is important to note that many of the mutual critiques and incompatibilities outlined above are the precise obstacles that researchers in the following fields often strive to overcome in order to develop a more holistic model of both mind and culture. While this description seeks to classify some of

the interdisciplinary approaches into different areas of emphasis, these divisions are not hard and fast, and much research might extend beyond the boundaries of categories laid out below. Indeed, the point here is not to draw boundaries around the different subfields, but rather to signal some of the important trends at the nexus of psychological and anthropological research.

### Cultural Psychology

In an essay designed to clear the field and set an agenda for the (re-)emerging discipline of *cultural psychology*, Richard Shweder describes his take on the historical development of the field as well as many of its distinctions from other, related fields (Shweder, 1990). In this essay, Shweder argues specifically for a model of people and culture that inextricably links them together, so that it is impossible to ferret out the person and the cultural context into separate, distinct, independent, and dependent variables. Instead, Shweder argues that cultural psychology takes an integrated, holistic view of culture and mind where, in fact, these two categories are impossible in the absence of the other. In this view, culture penetrates mind, and vice versa, to the extent that, in Shweder's terms, "You can't take the stuff out of the psyche, and you can't take the psyche out of the stuff" (Shweder, 1990, p. 22). In other words, this approach to the person and his or her cultural context must take account of the dynamics of both in order to understand either.

This theoretical model has led to some methodological preferences in the field as well. But, as in many interdisciplinary fields, the range of methods spans the gamut of quantitative and qualitative, psychometric and ethnographic methods. Ethnography and a deep understanding of ethnographic context are essential in this approach, which has certainly been influenced by Geertz and his conception of culture. Some cultural psychologists, on the other hand, use more traditional psychological techniques, informed by ethnography. (See, for example, Markus & Kitayama, 1991, including many of the cultural psychological studies they cite.)

In addition to utilizing methods from general psychology and anthropology, many working in this discipline have also developed new techniques designed to investigate the interpenetrating nature of culture and psyche, such as person-centered ethnography and interviewing (Hollan, 2001; Levy & Hollan, 1998). Epistemologically, cultural psychologists tend to be less dedicated to particular methods in an a priori basis but tend to value the approach of any method, qualitative or quantitative, that allows the researcher to investigate psychological and cultural dynamics without the types of reductionism (both cultural and psychological) outlined above. Given this conception of the psyche's coconstitution with the cultural world it inhabits, this orientation would include both sides of the theoretical and epistemological critiques outlined in the sections above, leveled

at both mainstream psychology and anthropology. An overemphasis of the individual psyche at the expense of cultural context, as well as a focus on the context itself without significant regard to the mentalities of those inhabiting the context, are equally seen as partial and inadequate from this point of view. To be clear, it is not the case that all researchers working in the field of cultural psychology have derived an epistemological or methodological consensus. In fact, Shweder points out that this is an important arena for future debate in the field (Shweder, 1990).

### Psychological Anthropology

One caveat to these descriptions is that much of the contemporary work being done under the umbrella of *psychological anthropology* would actually fit Shweder's classification of cultural psychology (Schweder, 1990), and not all or even most scholars have taken to his classification of the field as such. This cultural psychology–psychological anthropology distinction is one particular area where these classifications of subdisciplines are rather nebulous. In Shweder's description, "classical" psychological anthropology is constituted by the work of people such as Ruth Benedict (Benedict, 1934, 1946) and others of the "culture and personality" school. He points to developments in cultural psychology as an important break with this classical school, particularly with regard to the assumption of psychic unity. However, many contemporary researchers at the nexus of anthropology and psychology use the term *psychological anthropology* to classify their own work, even if it meets the criteria laid out above. Further, the term *psychological anthropology* tends to be more inclusive than Shweder's and others' delineation of cultural psychology. Indeed, one of the more significant professional organizations for this type of multidisciplinary work is the Society for Psychological Anthropology, a section of the American Anthropological Association. As a result, this classificatory title may be said to encompass the work in anthropology that has psychological ramifications, but perhaps it does not fit under the banner of cultural psychology. As such, ethnography tends to be more central and indispensable for psychological anthropologists than it is for cultural psychologists, particularly in comparison to those who might solely claim cultural psychology but not also psychological anthropology as their discipline.

Beyond what overlap psychological anthropology has with the previously outlined cultural psychology, this field tends to be considered inclusive of several subfields in anthropology, such as cognitive anthropology, psychoanalytic anthropology, and ethnopsychology.

### Cognitive Anthropology

Roy D'Andrade defines *cognitive anthropology* in its simplest terms as "the study of the relation between

human society and human thought," particularly with regard to "the objects and events which make up their world, including everything from physical objects like wild plants to abstract events like social justice" (D'Andrade, 1995, p. 1). While on the surface this may seem to coincide with the general emphasis of psychological anthropology or cultural psychology, the emphasis here is on thought. Similar to the emphasis in cognitive psychology on thought processes such as memory or learning, the emphasis in cognitive anthropology is on the thought content in various cultural contexts and on understanding how culture shapes these thought processes. The domain of cognitive anthropology can thus be seen as a subset of psychological anthropology.

A central concept in cognitive anthropology is the notion of a *cultural model*, sometimes also referred to in psychological terms as a *schema*. The basic idea behind a cultural model is the collection of knowledge about a topic in a form that is intersubjectively shared among a group of people, although the group need not be explicitly recognized as such (D'Andrade, 1990). These models organize cultural information, such as what constitutes a goal in soccer, a good person, or a shamanic ritual. Bradd Shore argues that this concept is useful for anthropologists in overcoming some of the debates surrounding the nature of culture and the recent poststructural relegations of culture to the ambiguity of "power" and "discourse" (Shore, 1996). Shore presents a more extensive theorization of cultural models toward this end.

### Psychoanalytic Anthropology

Psychoanalysis influenced early anthropologists, particularly those identified with the history of *psychological anthropology*, although the modern field of psychoanalytic anthropology did not solidify as such until the 1960s (LeVine, 2001). Some prominent earlier works did engage psychoanalytic theories in fieldwork, however. A notable example is Bronislaw Malinowski's *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927). As psychoanalytic theory was gaining ground in society, Malinowski challenged the presumed universal nature of the Oedipus complex, using his ethnographic account of family life in the Trobriand Islands. Importantly, Malinowski did not completely reject psychoanalytic theory on this point, but instead proposed a culturally specific, parallel nuclear complex with similar psychodynamics as the Oedipal complex proposed by Sigmund Freud and his colleagues.

More recently, Anne Parsons carried out a similar effort in proposing a "Madonna complex" in southern Italy as another, culturally specific alternative nuclear family complex (Parsons, 1964). Melford Spiro, an ardent critic of cultural relativism, argues against both Malinowski and Parsons in favor of the universal Oedipal model (Spiro, 1982). Spiro has extended psychoanalytic theory

to functional analyses of his ethnographic data in Burma as well, arguing that the special place of monks in Burmese society provides an acceptable outlet for what might otherwise be dysfunctional psychodynamic problems of the people that fill those roles (Spiro, 1965). These few examples illustrate but a few of the many inroads that anthropologists have found for integrating, critiquing, or adapting psychoanalytic theory and ethnographic accounts.

### Ethnopsychology and Folk Psychology

Two related fields, *ethnopsychology* and *folk psychology*, constitute efforts to derive emic theories about psychological function or how people operate in different societies. These are to be contrasted with the etic theories developed by outsiders to the cultural group of interest. Linguistic data are commonly used in order to gain insight into the (often latent) models of psychological function within a given group, such as moral development, emotional socialization, interpersonal interaction, and so forth. As a brief example, Catherine Lutz used linguistic and ethnographic insight to reveal the Ifaluk model of both the everyday function and the development of emotion (Lutz, 1983). This emic model is important for Lutz's work; if the ethnopsychological model is made apparent, then one can gain deeper insights into the process of socialization among those who ascribe to the model. Notice the affinity of this approach to the emphasis on cultural models by cognitive anthropologists.

### Psychiatric and Medical Anthropology

One large area of research with psychological import, which has gained a lot of ground and grown recently, regards comparative cultural research on mental health. Researchers working on this and related topics find themselves straddling medical and psychological anthropology, and some refer to their field as *psychiatric anthropology*. The important distinction between this vast research agenda and other areas of psychological anthropology regards its focus on the cultural construction, labeling, and means of dealing with mental illness. However, it is construed in different contexts. Some researchers in this domain also integrate psychoanalytic perspectives and many even gain training as mental health care providers as a gateway to understanding the process of mental health treatment ethnographically (Luhmann, 2000).

### Cross-Cultural Psychology

The previously delineated category of cultural psychology is designed to be inclusive of research being conducted from a psychological frame of reference that also ascribes to a notion of the person and culture as interpenetrating

one another and to a need for ethnographically informed research in order to gain an understanding of both the context and the happenings of the mind. However, there is certainly much work being done in psychology that deals explicitly with cultural variation (or lack thereof) in the various phenomena of study, without necessarily ascribing to this particular model of the person-in-context/context-in-person. Much of this would be considered *cross-cultural psychology*. The essential distinction that Shweder makes between cultural and cross-cultural psychology regards the tendency of both to assume psychic unity, albeit at varying levels. Examples of this work abound and often take the form of developing a psychometric technique, such as the big five personality inventory mentioned above, performing a translation of the inventory into another language, and conducting the necessary psychometric techniques (e.g., factor analysis) to validate the measure in the target culture. The objective is to develop psychometric measures that are presumed to measure the same constructs in different linguistic and cultural communities, in order to study the geographic distribution of these constructs, be it personality factors or depression or self-esteem. Cultural psychologists are quick to offer critiques of this enterprise on the basis of the lack of ethnographic grounding of these measures in target cultures in order to derive their cultural relevance in the first place. Thus, cultural psychologists and psychological anthropologists have been quick to criticize such endeavors as scientific imperialism at worst, or preemptive universalizing at best (Triandis & Suh, 2002).

### Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology

It is worth noting briefly that an emergent subfield of psychology is dedicated to dealing with the taken-for-granted assumptions of various subdisciplines of psychology and proposing alternatives to the status quo when it comes to conventional methods and theoretical approaches (see, for example, Slife, Reber, & Richardson, 2005). While the field of *theoretical and philosophical psychology* is not dedicated to psychological matters with cultural import per se, the theoretical work and philosophical critiques leveled in this vein of psychology have great potential to open doors for a more serious consideration of cultural issues in general psychology. These critiques often directly engage many of the assumptions that preclude a more serious and in-depth consideration of the fundamental importance of cultural considerations in psychological research. They address these assumptions in ways that prevent culture from being reduced to a mere independent variable in a person's psychological profile. As but one example of these potential inroads, challenging the assumption of atomism lends itself to a more thorough consideration of the model of person and culture laid out by Shweder as a hallmark for cultural psychology (Shweder, 1990).



## Future Directions

One of the hot forefronts of psychology concerns the major advances in neuroscience that have the potential for technologies, such as neuroimaging, to reveal new findings on the workings of the brain and correlate these with observed behavior and psychological trends. An interesting nascent subfield of anthropology is emerging to take such findings and relate them to cultural data and analysis as well. While some scholars may be cautious about such advancements, particularly with regard to the potentials for biological reductionism, this new field—sometimes termed *neuroanthropology*—shows promise for integrating new findings on the substrates of the brain with anthropology's historical expertise—cultural analysis. (For an example of what these analyses may look like, see Quinn, 2006.) It will be interesting to see the directions in which this field develops.

In conclusion, even given the current directions in which academe and its institutions are proclaiming an increased valuation of interdisciplinary research, institutional structures and practices still remain that hamper genuine interdisciplinary exchange, including theoretical and methodological exchanges between psychologists and anthropologists. Overcoming these challenges and engaging in deeper interchanges will be an important task for those working on psychological issues from an anthropological approach. Those working on issues of anthropological import from a psychological perspective will no doubt contribute to increasing interdisciplinary values at academic institutions. That is not to say that this is not happening on the fringes of each discipline, or that there are not people who genuinely straddle both disciplines, such as many of the authors cited here and the work of other scholars engaged in some of the interdisciplinary fields of study outlined above. These interdisciplinary efforts have certainly gained more traction recently, but varying levels of disciplinary marginalization still remain, and they often revolve around the lack of adherence to methodological orthodoxy of each field. Overcoming these methodological and theoretical tensions between psychology and anthropology will be an important continuing task for researchers cutting across these two disciplines. A related task will be to outline and further develop the methodological foundations of interdisciplinary fields themselves (Mattingly, Lutkehaus, & Throop, 2008), which may indeed help them gain further traction as well as further the research agenda that seeks to genuinely engage phenomena both psychological and anthropological.

## References and Further Readings

- Benedict, R. (1934). *Patterns of culture*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.  
 Benedict, R. (1946). *The chrysanthemum and the sword: Patterns of Japanese culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- Boas, F. (1911). *The mind of primitive man*. New York: Macmillan.  
 Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.  
 Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.  
 D'Andrade, R. G. (1990). Some propositions about the relations between culture and human cognition. In J. W. Stigler, R. A. Shweder, & G. Herdt (Eds.), *Cultural psychology: Essays on comparative human development* (pp. 65–129). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.  
 D'Andrade, R. G. (1995). *The development of cognitive anthropology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.  
 Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.  
 Goldberg, L. R. (1993). The structure of phenotypic personality traits. *American Psychologist*, 48(1), 26–34.  
 Hollan, D. (2001). Developments in person-centered ethnography. In C. C. Moore & H. F. Matthews (Eds.), *The psychology of cultural experience* (pp. 48–67). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.  
 Köpping, K. P. (2005). *Adolf Bastian and the psychic unity of mankind: The foundations of anthropology in nineteenth century Germany*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press. (Original work published 1983)  
 LeVine, R. A. (2001). Culture and personality studies, 1918–1960: Myth and history. *Journal of Personality*, 69(1), 803–818.  
 LeVine, R. A. (2007). Anthropological foundations of cultural psychology. In S. Kitayama & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural psychology* (pp. 40–58). New York: Guilford Press.  
 Levy, R. I., & Hollan, D. W. (1998). Person-centered interviewing and observation. In H. R. Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp. 333–364). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.  
 Luhrmann, T. M. (2000). *Of two minds: The growing disorder in American psychiatry*. New York: Knopf.  
 Lutz, C. (1983). Parental goals, ethnopsychology, and the development of emotional meaning. *Ethos*, 11(4), 246–262.  
 Malinowski, B. (1927). *Sex and repression in savage society*. New York: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.  
 Markus, H., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224–253.  
 Mattingly, C., Lutkehaus, N. C., & Throop, C. J. (2008). Bruner's search for meaning: A conversation between psychology and anthropology. *Ethos*, 36(1), 1–28. (See also this entire issue of *Ethos*, which is devoted to Jerome Bruner's lifelong efforts to facilitate conversation and cross-disciplinary work between psychology and anthropology.)  
 Mead, M. (1964). *Coming of age in Samoa*. New York: William Morrow. (Original work published 1928)  
 Parsons, A. (1964). Is the Oedipus complex universal? The Jones-Malinowski debate revisited and a South Italian nuclear complex. *Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, 3, 278–326.  
 Quinn, N. (2006). The self. *Anthropological Theory*, 6, 362–384.  
 Shore, B. (1996). *Culture in mind: Cognition, culture, and the problem of meaning*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Shweder, R. A. (1984). Anthropology's romantic rebellion against the Enlightenment, or there's more to thinking than reason and evidence. In R. A. Shweder & R. A. Levine (Eds.), *Culture theory: Essays on mind, self, and emotion* (pp. 27-66). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Shweder, R. A. (1990). Cultural psychology—what is it? In J. W. Stigler, R. A. Shweder, & G. Herdt (Eds.), *Cultural psychology: Essays on comparative human development* (pp. 1-43). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Slife, B. D. (2004). Theoretical challenges to therapy practice and research: The constraint of naturalism. In M. J. Lambert (Ed.), *Bergin and Garfield's handbook of psychotherapy and behavioral change* (pp. 44-83). New York: Wiley.
- Slife, B. D., Reber, J. S., & Richardson, F. C. (Eds.). (2005). *Critical thinking about psychology: Hidden assumptions and plausible alternatives*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Spiro, M. (1965). Religious systems as culturally constituted defense mechanisms. In M. Spiro (Ed.), *Context and meaning in anthropology* (pp. 100-113). New York: Free Press.
- Spiro, M. (1982). *Oedipus in the Trobriands*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Triandis, H. C., & Suh, E. M. (2002). Cultural influences on personality. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 133-160.

21st Century  
ANTHROPOLOGY  
*A Reference Handbook*  
Volume 2

Edited by

H. James Birx

*Canisius College and State University of New York at Geneseo*

 SAGE



reference

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi  
Singapore | Washington DC

Copyright © 2010 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

*For information:*



SAGE Publications, Inc.  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320  
E-mail: [order@sagepub.com](mailto:order@sagepub.com)

SAGE Publications Ltd.  
1 Oliver's Yard  
55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP  
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.  
B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area  
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044  
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.  
33 Pekin Street #02-01  
Far East Square  
Singapore 048763

Printed in Mexico

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

21st century anthropology: a reference handbook / editor, H. James Birx.  
2 v., p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-5738-0 (pbk.)

1. Anthropology—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Birx, H. James.

GN25.A144 2010

301—dc22

2009052453

10 11 12 13 14 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

---

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Publisher:</i>                     | Rolf A. Janke                                     |
| <i>Acquisitions Editor:</i>           | Jim Brace-Thompson                                |
| <i>Reference Systems Manager:</i>     | Leticia Gutierrez                                 |
| <i>Reference Systems Coordinator:</i> | Laura Notton                                      |
| <i>Production Editor:</i>             | Carla Freeman                                     |
| <i>Copy Editors:</i>                  | Gretchen Treadwell, Patricia Sutton, Cate Huisman |
| <i>Typesetter:</i>                    | C&M Digital (P) Ltd.                              |
| <i>Proofreaders:</i>                  | Scott Oney, Victoria Reed-Castro, Theresa Kay     |
| <i>Indexer:</i>                       | Julie Grayson                                     |
| <i>Cover Designer:</i>                | Ravi Balasuriya                                   |
| <i>Marketing Manager:</i>             | Amberlyn McKay                                    |