REWRITING CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Transcend Your Ethnic Roots and Redefine Your Identity

David Y. F. Ho

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Part 1 Cultural psychology

Culture is defined, demystified, followed by a distinction made between high (elitist) culture and mass (popular) culture. After a discussion of how culture explains behavior, biological, psychological, and cultural determinism are all refuted. We are used to thinking of evolution as a matter of biology alone. No longer, culture is now part of the process. Moreover, humans can claim uniqueness, once we recognize that humankind is now not only participating in but also directing its evolution by virtue of remaking culture.

Cross-cultural psychology is defined, followed by an explanation of its strengths and promises: to investigate relations between cultural factors and psychological functioning, and to test the generality of psychological principles in diverse cultures. Major concepts used in cross-cultural psychology are introduced. Three conceptual and methodological issues are discussed: How we may distinguish between indigenous and transcultural theories, differentiate one cultural unit from another, and develop multidimensional measurements of culture.

In the last several decades, Asian psychologists have raised concerns about the wholesale importation of Western psychology into Asia. They ask, "How unsettling would it be to have foreign researchers describe how we think and behave? And eventually, define our identities for us?" This leads to a rallying call for indigenous psychology, which I define as *the study of human action and mental processes within a cultural context that relies on values, concepts, belief systems, methodologies, and other resources indigenous to the specific ethnic or cultural group under investigation*. The message, in short, is clear: Let indigenous peoples speak by and for themselves.

The notion of crossing cultures is deceptively simple. I was crossing cultures when I moved from Asia to America. But that is not all. In this chapter, I explain that a person's internalized culture is not the same as his membership in a particular group. Thus, we may even be crossing cultures each time we encounter individual differences in internalized culture between persons belonging to the same group. Following this argument to its ultimate, we may ask further: How does crossing cultures happen within the mind of the bicultural individual?

The reader is invited to take a transcultural journey as an intellectual and experiential exercise to generate a metatheory, with a step-by-step guide provided. First, identify two specific cultures, American and Chinese. The reader assumes the identity of an American (disregarding his actual identity if he is not) and asks himself: In what ways do members from the two cultures think and behave similarly or differently? Next, the reader is asked to actually approach a Chinese person to express his opinions on the same question. Finally, comparing and reflecting on this person's opinions with his own would sensitize the reader to cultural similarities and differences. The result would be making transcultural discoveries, the foundation for generating a metatheory (i.e., a theory of theories).

The thesis of *universalism* presupposes the existence of core values shared by the majority of cultural traditions, although their concrete expression may take different forms. Universalism implies that there are irreducible standards for human conduct. Social scientists who adhere to *cultural relativism* refute this implication. Standards, they claim, are subject to temporal and geographical variations; what is right or wrong, and normal or abnormal, are relative to the cultural group in question at a specific period in history. In this chapter, the practice of genital mutilation provides a focus for elucidating the points of contention between universalism and cultural relativism.

Gaining a knowledge of cultural psychology serves to sensitize counselors and therapists against overgeneralization and stereotyping, promote a comparative frame of reference, and make therapy culturally relevant. I conclude that first, interpersonal understanding requires a heightened awareness of internal cultural processes; second, all therapy or counseling has to confront barriers to interpersonal understanding and, therefore, all therapeutic processes necessarily entail cultural awareness. Transcending one's own internalized culture through self-examination underlies these processes. It helps to combat culturocentrism and, more fundamentally, egocentrism.

In this chapter, I argue that insisting on having a separate treatment for each distinct cultural group is theoretically unsound and practically infeasible. Culture-specific counseling tends to dwell on differences between groups, at the expense of appreciating similarities between groups and individual variation within groups. It fails to attend sufficiently to individual differences in internalized culture, cultural identification, and cultural orientation. To insist on treating the "culturally different" differently would lead to an unmanageable multiplicity of approaches to counseling—into the blind alley of particularism. A great deal of emotional and intellectual energy may be saved by saying simply that what we need is client-specific counseling, rather than culture-specific counseling.

Part 2   East-West dialogues and comparisons

This chapter presents an imaginary dialogue between two psychologists, Dr. East and Dr. West, on ethnic stereotypes, prejudice, and identity. Both are concerned with the reduction of interethnic strife, and the promotion of mutual understanding and acceptance. However, their approaches differ. Dr. East argues that effecting social change should take precedence over educating individuals. Dr. West stresses the need for self-examining our attitudes toward other ethnic groups. Their dialogue touches on various aspects of social science, historical, socioeconomic, political, and psychological.

In this chapter, I present two illustrative analyses, one concerning familial relationships and another concerning social connections. I introduce guanxi as a metarelational construct that holds great promise for advancing not only Asian but also mainstream social psychology.

Part 3 Self psychology

Selfhood is an exclusive preserve of humans. We alone contemplate our own being and nonbeing; entertain ideas about our own nature, origin, and ending; and are capable of imagining what we can become, never actualized before, in the future. In psychology, the generation of self-knowledge is possible, as when the investigator investigates himself. Self psychology is born when the self becomes aware of itself and engages in self-monitoring, self-reflection, and self-exploration. In this sense, self psychology is truly unique among all academic disciplines.

Many authors tend to speak of the East in global terms, without giving sufficient attention to differences among Asian religious-philosophical traditions. To explore more fully Eastern conceptions of selfhood and identity, I turn to four Asian traditions: Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The focus is placed on the philosophical rather than the religious forms of expression of these traditions. The core ideas on selfhood and identity in each tradition are explained and examined.

The East and the West stand in stark contrast to each other in their conceptions of selfhood and identity. To facilitate a contrastive analysis, I have identified five foci of comparisons: the ideal self, subject-object distinction, self-other demarcation and individual identity, centrality and sovereignty, and psychological decentering. Western and Eastern (Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Hinduism) conceptions of selfhood and identity are conveniently summarized along these five foci.

The construction of the dialogical self has gained increasing recognition in the West. This construction integrates two cardinal ideas, dialogue and self, into a single construct. Dialogical Self Theory, developed by Hubert Hermans and his colleagues, represents a contemporary construction of relational selfhood. In this chapter, I attempt to construct the dialogical self informed by Eastern traditions. To describe dialogical phenomenology, I turn to three resources: Chinese intellectual traditions, dreams, and experiences in daily life.

Part 4 Emotions and face dynamics

Rich in psychological and anthropological meanings, guilt, shame, and embarrassment are universal emotions. In this chapter, I study these emotions from a Chinese cultural perspective, relying on linguistic and cultural data on expressions of emotion as well as empirical studies of losing face. Using additional evidence abstracted from multilingual and multicultural clinical practice, I propose a scheme for differentiating guilt, shame, and embarrassment that has transcultural applicability.

I use the term *face dynamics* to refer generically to social processes or interactions, directly observable or inferred, involved in face enhancement, maintenance, protection, restoration, and derogation. In this chapter, I invite the reader to take a journey through the territory of

face dynamics. Two definitions of face are distinguished: The first is the face (in the sense of compliance, respect, deference) that a person expects or claims for himself from others; the second is the face accorded to a person by others. This approach to definition acknowledges *directionality* (self-to-other and other-to-self) in social interactions. Discrepancies between perceptions of face between two interacting parties will act as a source of strain in their relationship.

The idea of face is Chinese in origin. A common stereotype held by Westerners is that Asians are particularly preoccupied with face. My intention is not to refute this stereotype, but to make clear why Westerns must also be concerned with face in social interactions. No, face is not just an Asian preoccupation. It is universal and distinctively human. The desire to gain face, to avoid losing face, and to restore face that has been lost is a powerful social motive in any cultural context. Anyone who does not want to declare his social bankruptcy must claim for himself, and extend to others, some degree of compliance, respect, and deference. In short, face is essential to the maintenance of adequate social functioning. Defined at a high level of generality, face is a universal.

Part 5 Biculturalism and bilingualism

As a native speaker of Chinese (Cantonese), I am particularly sensitive to the fact that I am, at this moment, using English as the tool for expressing my thoughts. Furthermore, I am aware that using English has had a profound effect on my cognition. In a way, I have been altered *forever* by English as the language-tool I use. It has left its indelible marks on my cognition, and my being. Such is the awesome power of language-tools to transform their users. A frightful thought? Fear not. I now feel I have more than one language-tool at my disposal to express my thoughts.

I suffer from mild *orthographic dyslexia* specific to reading and writing Chinese. Orthographic dyslexics like myself have difficulty in storing the mental representation of Chinese characters. But I suffer no disability in English. Thus, English has saved me from being a laggard in all walks of life by circumventing my disability in Chinese! This chapter presents an account of my experiences and thoughts on learning a second language, as well as practical advice for parents, teachers, and adult learners.

The brain in which my language organons are housed is a curious thing. I am a native speaker of Cantonese who has taken to English like a duck to the water. But I took to German like a rock thrown into a pond. Why is there such a difference between English and German? This brings us to the question: What are the factors that determine success or failure in learning a foreign language? This is an awfully complicated question, even when it is delimited to learning by adults. This chapter is my attempt to provide an answer to this question.

Part 6 Socialization

Confucian filial piety is the guiding principle for governing Chinese socialization; it is also an exemplar of the cultural definition of intergenerational and, by extension, authority relations. Research findings point to the conclusion that the psychological consequences of filial piety

appear to be negative from the perspective of most contemporary psychologists. Socialization in China compels us to alter our thinking about culture as being conservative in nature: enduring, resilient, and largely resistant to alteration. Why? Because the rapid pace with which changes have taken place means that the temporal dimension becomes salient. Family life has turned upside down, from traditional elder-centeredness to modern child-centeredness—moving closer to that of American society.

The legend of the Sage-King Shun is a superb example of a historical figure mythologized. Shun personifies the model man extolled by Confucians. He may claim the distinction of having been the model to the greatest number of people in world history. Shun's exemplary filial conduct is customarily regarded as the essence of his legend. Largely neglected is a common theme that the legend shares with many other popular Chinese children and opera stories: the danger of being killed by one's own father. Another theme that deserves attention is self-sacrifice for the sake of one's parents. In this chapter, I explore the deeper psychological implications of legends and stories in Chinese culture.

In this chapter, I explore family dynamics through literature, focusing on intergenerational relationships as they are reflected in Chinese as well as Western novels, legends, and myths. The psychological implications with respect to how authority relations differ between China and the West are explored. An issue of special importance concerns the interpretation of the Oedipal myth. It should be noted that the house of Oedipus is a history of family violence, with filicide being far more typical than patricide over generations. In the Freudian interpretation, the theme of filicide is neglected. Because of Freud's towering influence, patricide has become the dominant theme in standard interpretations of the Oedipal myth. It is time to redress this bias.

Nezha ranks as one of the most colorful characters in Chinese literature. He is irascible, aggressive, and disobedient—the very antithesis of the ideal Chinese character. His story is most unusual in terms of a son's defiance of paternal authority. Refusing to acknowledge one's father as a parent is unthinkable enough; challenging him in combat is worse; intending to kill him is the worst and the most unforgivable act. Yet, Nezha emerges as one of the main heroes in the novel, one who outshines his father. Still, Nezha remains a lonely hero because there is simply no other like him in Chinese folklore.

The *Dream of the Red Chamber*, written in the 18th century A.D., is generally reputed to be the greatest Chinese novel ever written. It is a gold mine of information about life in prominent families in traditional Chinese society. As a psychologist, I confess that I have learned more from it than from psychological journals about child training, family dynamics, and heterosexual relations in traditional China. In this chapter, I confine myself to how the hero of the novel, JIA Baoyu, was disciplined—more accurately, not properly disciplined; in particular, the episode about the severe beating he received from his father is described and analyzed in some detail.

FOREWORD

After reading this profound and eloquently written book, I realize how valuable it is when a dedicated psychologist like David Ho not only reflects critically on significant developments in his scientific field but also shares with us his rich experiences as a person living in different cultures. It is precisely the combination of personal experiences and scientific thoughts that makes this book a unique integration of a semi-autobiographical work and broad-scope analyses of classic themes and controversies in psychology and the social sciences.

Living parts of his life in Asia and in North America, Ho is authorized to give a critical analysis of the popular distinction between collectivist and individualist cultures. He notes that in cross-cultural and management literatures, Chinese are typically classified as collectivists and Americans as individualists. He objects to the usage of these concepts as mutually exclusive and argues, instead, that they are rather mutually inclusive. In collective cultures individuality is not necessarily lost, whereas individualist cultures can survive only if there is sufficient room for building collective communities. This coexistence of a collectivist and individualist culture is even reflected in Ho's own name. The English name David refers to an individual who, as Ho, finds his origin in a so-called "collective" culture. He can only think of himself as a livable combination of the two and, as such, he arrives at many fertile insights as a culture-transcending individual living in an increasingly interconnected global civilization.

Rather than thinking in terms of mutually exclusive opposites or categorizations, David Ho systematically elaborates on a fundamentally relational view of culture and self. When the idea that life is identical to living-in-relationships is taken seriously, human behavior follows less from individual particularities than from relationships with other individuals and groups. This view contradicts the portrayal of the autonomous individual with unbound freedom of choice, which for so long has been the idealized, predominantly Western, version of human existence. The far reaching implication of this view is that self and identity are much more relation-bound than one would expect on the basis of the traditional Western conception of individualism with its typical pursuit of individual happiness. Ho's perspective not only uncovers a weakness of the traditional Western conception but also has ethical implications inspired by Confucianism. How can an individual be happy when the people and groups with whom he is connected are not? At this point, this book invites its readers to reflect on the moral implications of the intrinsic relatedness of community and individuality.

Instead of treating culture and self as different fields of study, David Ho interconnects them in a way that we can better understand their mutual inclusiveness. In his view, culture is self-inclusive and self is culture-inclusive. An important implication is that selves are not

simply formed by their culture or cultures; selves are also able to contribute to the cultures in which they participate and to confirm, change, and renew them. In reverse, culture is not simply a social environment of the self, but produces, develops, or constrains it in its deepest inner regions. A self-reflecting individual becomes conscious of and critically reflects on itself, and is able to create alternative cultural or subcultural perspectives. Self-reflection, self-monitoring, and self-exploration are manifestations of a culturally organized self. Along these lines, Ho provides us with a broad conceptual framework in which a relational view is applied not only to the connection between different cultures but also to the connection between culture and self.

In *Rewriting cultural psychology: Transcend your ethnic roots and redefine your identity*, David Ho productively thinks and writes as an embodied dialogical self. Similar to his views on intercultural and self-culture relationships, Dialogical Self Theory brings together two concepts that, traditionally, are treated as separate. Usually, the self is considered as something that is taking place within the limits of an inner mind, whereas dialogue is seen as a something external, taking place between different individuals. As a composite concept, the dialogical self brings the internal (self) to the external (dialogue) and, in reverse, organizes the internal on the basis the influences coming from the external social and cultural environment. In this book Ho presents an audacious attempt to construct the dialogical self as informed by Eastern traditions. In his portrayal of a dialogical phenomenology, he delves into the Asian traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

In contrast to authors in cultural psychology and cross-cultural psychology who tend to dwell on intergroup differences at the expense of commonalities, this book takes a dialectical stance. Succinctly, David Ho states that "cultural diversity without unity leads to factionalism; unity without diversity is boring uniformity"—just as I would pronounce that multiplicity without unity is cacophonous, unity without multiplicity is boring. This position is as timely as it is revealing. Contemporary Western society is faced with at least two challenges: narcissism and divisive identity politics. According to many, narcissism becomes a serious problem characterized by alienating individualism and egocentricity. Self-admiration, self-absorption, and self-aggrandizement often develop into such proportions that some researchers refer to this phenomenon as a "narcissism epidemic."

At the social level, identity politics has received the status of a buzzword in contemporary society. It refers to political identity positions based on the interests and perspectives of social groups with which people identify. Typically, those positions are based on nationality, religion, social class, gender, sex, race, ethnicity, or age. When identity politics are affirming people's social positions at the costs of their commonalities with other identities, the risk of societal fragmentation rises to hamper the integration of groups as parts of a community. A relational and dialogical perspective as presented in this book might give an answer to both exaggerated individualism and divisive forms of identity politics. Ho is very well aware of this when he emphasizes the value of taking a *human* position that transcends the walls of individual and social divisions.

With this book, David Ho exposes himself as a passionate scientist who presents valid and convincing arguments against any divisive conception of human life, as expressed in alienating individualism, social divides, or pretentions of universality. His book serves an enriching document that is valuable for any reader who wants to integrate self and culture from a relational and dialogical perspective.

Hubert Hermans
Author of Dialogical Self Theory
Milsbeek, The Netherlands

PREFACE

The title of this volume, *Rewriting cultural psychology: Transcend your ethnic roots and redefine your identity* makes clear that it refutes cultural determinism, the idea that that culture shapes our lives with such potency that we remain trapped in our cultural roots for life. When we think about culture, the first thing that comes to mind is pervasiveness: Culture shapes virtually all aspects of our lives. This volume, however, counters what I would call the bias of unidirectional influence. It informs us of how humans are not just passive recipients of cultural influences but are also active agents of cultural change and creation. Yes, we may transcend our ethnic-cultural roots.

Although we are all products of culture, to be sure, we also have the potential ability to alter cultural forces and thus remake our own being. Accordingly, our identities are not fixed but are subject to change. Yes, we may redefine our identities, individual or collective.

The theme of transcendence reverberates throughout the present volume. In various chapters, illustrations are provided to clarify and expand on its implications. To transcend our ethnic-cultural roots and redefine our identities opens the door not only to personal transformation but also to confront ethnic stereotypes and prejudices for better intercultural group relationships. The theme of *letting no ethnic group be alien to us* echoes the pronouncement of Terence the Roman playwright, "I am human: Nothing human is alien to me."

To me, transcending ethnic-cultural roots is not academic but personal, as explained in my book *Enlightened or mad: A psychologist glimpses into mystical magnanimity*. When I began to embark on the career of a clinical psychologist in the early 1960s, I made a conscious determination to *uproot* myself from Chinese culture—not just to transcend my cultural roots. Why such a drastic measure? Because I thought that it was necessary if I wanted to be true to my chosen profession: Rid me of the cultural roots that breed psychological illiteracy. For several years, I had little or no contacts with Chinese people. I spoke only English during the day, I dreamt in English at night.

Nonetheless, it remains a fact that I have two cultural parents, one Chinese and one Western. Together, they prepared me well to serve as a bridge of understanding between the East and the West. The East is rising, and the West can ill-afford to remain ignorant of the East. It pains me to see them squabbling in mutual misunderstanding.

In all, this volume is at once about the immersion of life in culture and the remaking of culture by human action—reciprocal influence at work. The idea of immersion underscores the powerful cultural forces that shape our perceptions, thinking, and emotions. It is an idea that has traditionally dominated cultural psychology. This volume dwells on the accelerating remaking of culture by human action in the age of the Internet. In doing so, it asserts that the interaction between cultural forces and human action is bidirectional: Humans are not only shaped by culture but are also directing the course of cultural changes.

A book on cultural psychology has to deal with two vital questions. The first, "who we are," concerns our sense of self and identity. The second, "how we live," concerns our way of life. Neither question can be answered adequately without reference to culture.

But which culture? Western culture, of course. Even a casual perusal of the psychological literature would reveal that answers to the two questions have been predominantly anchored in Western values and worldviews. Thus anchored, cultural psychology would be incomplete at best. With this realization, I have been propelled to write the present volume, intent on bringing Eastern cultural traditions to bear on the generation of knowledge in cultural psychology. Accordingly, I draw heavily on the treasure house of Asia's four major traditions, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. My goal is to render cultural psychology less incomplete, more balanced.

That is a tall order from which I recoil. Fortunately, I can fall back on my personal background and professional experiences of over half a century in diverse cultural contexts. By the blessing of circumstance (actually, a twisted educational history), I have been thoroughly transformed into a bilingual-bicultural person. This can be cumbersome, for I find myself having to negotiate between Chinese and English to cope with complex ideas and concepts originating from different cultures. Endless internal dialogues occupy my mind to no end. After decades of bitter-sweet struggle, it occurs to me that I may exploit my bilingual-bicultural advantage through the use of dialogues.

One technique I use is to render my internal dialogues explicit, to put into writing my inner thoughts from my Chinese and my Western selves. In this spirit, several chapters, as well as many passages in other chapters in this volume, are written in the form of an imaginary East-West dialogue—in essence, an internal dialogue between my two selves, one Eastern and the other Western. These passages give a concrete illustration of how I have struggled to achieve an integrated identity in response to the question "Who am I?", rather than to dwell on my psychological marginality in both the East and the West. This technique of writing is a living demonstration of the dialogical self at work.

Authors in cultural psychology and especially cross-cultural psychology tend to dwell on intergroup differences at the expense of commonalities. This volume takes a dialectical stance: Cultural diversity without unity leads to factionalism; unity without diversity is boring uniformity. Why can't we at once cherish our common humanity and delight in its variegated manifestations in different cultural groups? A cultural psychology driven by dialogues as a dialectical process shows the best promise for greater completeness. Daring assertions such as these mark the present volume. They are meant to be stimulants for further dialogues, not to be closing statements of truth.

I have adopted a comparative frame for a critical assessment of my cultural heritage from both the East and the West. I am egalitarian in showing my appreciation of cultural high points in the East (e.g., Daoist conceptions of selflessness and spontaneity in Zhuangzi's writings) and in the West (e.g., freedom of thought and expression). I am no less egalitarian in my disdain to the objectionable aspects of culture, Eastern or Western. Hopefully, the reader will forgive me for making no pretense of being value free; and will appreciate how a comparative frame of mind enhances the understanding of not only other cultures but also one's own.

I mince no words in being critical. To what end? To discard the bad and to absorb the good in intercultural fertilization. Excesses in the East mirror deficiencies in the West, and vice versa. It behooves each of us to subject our cultural heritage to critical scrutiny, from which we may transcend our cultural boundaries to reach for ecumenical ideals. In short, I work toward achieving a creative synthesis of West-West learning and thus a better way of living. Writing this volume affords me an opportunity to fulfill one of my lifelong aspirations: to be an agent of East-West understanding.

The present offering is addressed to scholars as well as a popular audience, aimed to bridge the gap between academia and the general public. Theories and research findings are presented summarily; citations are kept to a minimum. The challenge I face is to be accurate and relevant in presenting psychological knowledge without getting lost in technical details and to be simple without oversimplification. My purpose is to entertain, to inform, and to inspire the reader, who may or may not have a background in cultural psychology.

I have labored to keep the writing style accessible, intelligible, and interest arousing; where appropriate, I attempt to engage the reader in "dialogues." I also take advantage of my bilingual-bicultural background to tell select tales of intercultural encounter along the way of my life journey, put in the context of relevant theories or research. Many passages read like storytelling. The reader will find numerous East-West parallels in sayings, idioms, and verses, quoted from their original sources in English or translated from Chinese sources into English.

My personal experiences have enriched storytelling in the context of cultural psychology. I write with the passion of a person who has lived life from being marginal, neither Eastern nor Western, to being a world citizen; and has turned to English like a duck to the water, thus circumventing my handicap of Chinese orthographic dyslexia.

This is not a textbook of cultural psychology. Rather, it is a collection of essays under the rubric of cultural psychology, each of which is centered on a psychological topic presented in a separate chapter. Each chapter is self-contained and may be read without reference to other chapters—although, of course, cross-referencing would enhance understanding the chapter at hand. Together, the essays encompass diverse domains of cultural psychology, such as biculturalism-bilingualism, emotions and face dynamics in cultural context.

In sum, the present volume amounts to a rewriting of cultural psychology. The reader will recognize its distinctive features, addressed to those ready to receive fresh psychological knowledge from both the East and the West. It invites the reader to engage in internal dialogues of his own; it is also calculated to form a bridge for greater reciprocal understanding between the East and the West and, by extension, between all cultural groupings. As such, it is a parallel to my volume *Rewriting psychology: An abysmal science?*

In the process of writing this book, I have received encouragement as well as helpful suggestions from my colleagues Hubert Hermans, Jaan Valsiner, Michael Bond, and Bell Duran. This acknowledgment goes only some way toward expressing my gratitude to their contributions.

CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

1.1

WHAT IS CULTURE?

"We are redesigning our designs for living—even human life itself—at an alarming accelerating pace."

We all have an idea of what culture is. Yet, many of us find ourselves at a loss for words when asked to define what culture is. In this chapter, I attempt to rid convoluted or arcane expressions from definitions and hence not to disappoint.

Culture is an extremely inclusive concept. It includes the tangibles of *material culture*: buildings, tools, and other artifacts; the intangibles of *nonmaterial culture*: norms, values, beliefs, mores, customs, medicine, law, politics, education, religion. All these are included in the definition that culture is a historically created system of "designs for living," due to Kluckholm and Kelly. Similarly, a succinct definition of culture as the "man-made part of the environment" is due to the anthropologist Melville Herskovits. Psychologist Harry Triandis defines *subjective culture* as the characteristic ways in which the people of each culture view the human-made part of their environment. Subjective culture is, in itself, human-made. Its elements include categorizations, associations, beliefs, and so forth.

Virtually all anthropologists agree on three things. First, culture is created by human beings in the course of adaptation. Second, culture is learned, accumulated, transmitted across generations and periods. Third, culture comprises shared elements among members of a cultural group.

There is also general agreement on other defining aspects of culture. In attacking biologism (the reduction of human behavior to biological mechanisms), Kroeber describes culture as "superorganic." A French baby brought up in Chinese culture will learn to speak Chinese, acquire Chinese habits and customs, and behave in a manner that is indistinguishable from other Chinese—even though his biological givens remain unaltered. Culture may be described, therefore, without reference to particular individuals.

Culture is internalized by members of a cultural group in the process of socialization. Parents and teachers are among the most important agents of socialization and media transmission. I have defined *internalized culture* as the cultural influences operating within the individual that shape (not determine) personality formation and various aspects of psychological functioning (see "What does crossing cultures mean?"). In effect, culture has been translated from an anthropological concept to a psychological or individual-level concept.

Culture exhibits enduring patterned regularities and hence tends to be conservative, resistive to change. The culture to which you belong has existed before you were born, and will

continue to exist long after you have gone: The membership of a culture may change, but the culture remains more or less the same. I hasten to add, however, that cultural changes have accelerated since the age of the Internet.

High culture and mass culture

I would argue that making a distinction between *high culture* and *mass culture* is useful and necessary. High culture is marked by elitist, literary, orthodox, religious-philosophical traditions, which reflect a culture's idealized image of itself. In contrast, mass culture is characterized by folk, vernacular, unorthodox, secular-popular traditions, which reflect the actual life of the majority.

The idealized and the actual, of course, may be separated by a vast distance. Orthodox positions of the elitist intelligentsia are upheld as standards to be followed by the masses. However, in the process of translating those positions for the masses, misunderstanding, distortion, even corruption of their intent often occur. A case in point is the dissemination of Confucian teachings in the mass culture (see "Filial piety moves Heaven: Legend of the sage-king Shun and other stories").

Empirical studies

I have developed the Ideal Values Scale and the Folk Values Scale for measuring traditional Chinese values. These two scales are not correlated, indicating that they measure essentially different, independent value dimensions. The Ideal Values Scale measure core values stemming from Chinese religious-philosophical traditions, including simple virtues embodied in the model person: modesty, contentment, frugality, diligence, observance of propriety; respectful of learning, authority, tradition; loyalty and, above all, filial piety. The Folk Values Scale measures beliefs and values stemming from the mass culture, such as familism-clanism (e.g., caring for relatives), ingroup-outgroup demarcation (e.g., mistrust of strangers), and status distinctions (e.g., superiority of scholars overs manual laborers).

The major findings from my studies are: Ideal values of high culture are held much more strongly than the folk values of mass culture; filial piety is rooted more firmly in the ideal values than in the folk values; traditional Chinese values (both ideal and folk) tend to be positively associated with age but negatively associated with socioeconomic status and, to a much lesser extent, with exposure to Christian influence; among university students over a span of several decades, there has been a moderate decrease in folk values in Hong Kong, but a moderate increase in folk values and a fairly large increase in ideal values in mainland China.

These findings speak to the advantages of making a distinction between high culture and mass culture in the measurement of values. In particular, the large increase in traditional ideal values, which run fundamentally counter to communist ideology in many respects, is a highly revealing finding about the value orientation among the well-educated in mainland China.

Elsewhere, I have made the point that mainland China is "communist in name, but Confucian deep down" (see "The politics of education: My secret thoughts, until now" in *Rewriting psychology: An abysmal science?*).

Academic compartmentalization

Historians, philologists, and other scholars in the humanities study high culture, but typically pay little attention to mass culture; social scientists, in contrast, derive their data from mass culture but are often insufficiently informed about high culture. This academic compartmentalization yields at best incomplete knowledge.

One may question the extent to which psychological conceptions inherited from Asian religious-philosophical traditions are relevant to contemporary realities. To what extent are the peoples in Asia influenced in their everyday life by the precepts of sages, mystics, and holy men? There have never been more than a minute number of such individuals at any time in history. Most people have only faint notions of these precepts and do not catch the subtleties; they continue lead mundane lives, quite untouched by their cultural ideas. Thus, contemporary everyday life may bear only a remote resemblance to the idealized life in religious-philosophical traditions.

I hasten to add that nothing I have stated negates the importance of religious-philosophical traditions in directing how cultures evolve, particularly from a long-term perspective. My argument is that researchers must attend to both high culture and mass culture, as well as to their mutual influence. Undoing academic compartmentalization will go a long way toward yielding a more integrated body of knowledge.

At this point, a thought may pop up in the reader's mind: The same may be said of Western traditions. If so, I encourage the reader to develop this thought further.

Culture as an explanatory construct

Using the concept of culture as an explanatory construct is full of intellectual traps. How do we interpret differences in behavior between cultural groups? There is a temptation is to explain, all too readily, the group differences on the basis of cultural differences. It would be wise to resist this temptation and to reflect on the intellectual traps of invoking the concept of culture as an explanatory construct.

To begin with, very often cross-cultural or cross-ethnic differences decrease or even disappear when socioeconomic class is controlled. Now suppose we systematically control for other potentially relevant factors (e.g., age, sex, cultural loyalty) as well. Differences that survive elimination may then be attributed to cultural differences. In effect, culture is treated as a residual variable. It explains the yet unexplained portion of the between-group variance. Has it now become a wastepaper-basket construct—a victim of having been invoked to explain too much?

In its crudest form, a simplistic but overinclusive cultural explanation reduces to this: People in Culture A behave differently from people in Culture B, because Culture A is different from Culture B. For example, if Chinese are found to be more authoritarian than Americans, it is because Chinese culture is presumed to be more authoritarian than American culture. But what has been explained?

A fuller explanation would trace the difference in authoritarianism, a personality variable, to differences in socialization; in turn, differences in socialization could be traced to specific differences in cultural values, which must then be identified. My research has indeed identified attitudes toward filial piety, a guiding principle governing socialization in Chinese culture, as a correlate of authoritarianism. Confucian filial piety is, of course, markedly different from the corresponding American ethic governing intergenerational relationships.

Thus, to revitalize explanatory potency of the culture concept, we need to go beyond global explanations. A more satisfactory account of cultural effects requires conceptual linkages between culture and psychological functioning. We need to identify specific features of culture that can explain cross-cultural variances as well as constancies. The concept of *internalization* is relevant here. It deals with the crucial question: How do cultural influences originally external to the individual transform into psychological forces operating within the individual? We need to gain knowledge of how cultural differences translate into differences in the individual's psychological experience. In turn, the causal links between individual experience and personality formation, a classic psychological problem, will have to be investigated.

Biological, psychological, and cultural determinism all refuted

Many behavioral theorists have a bad habit. They try to explain human behavior in terms of determinism, biological, psychological, or cultural. In this chapter, I will refute all of them.

Biological determinism

My wife finds it difficult to back up a car straight. I tease her, "That's because you have a female brain." She replies with a barrage of verbal missiles against which I have no defense. I then shut up. This serves to expose the folly of biological determinism—but not to deny the importance of biological factors in human behavior.

Men and women have different cognitive capabilities because they have different brains. This is a crude statement of biological determinism applied to gender differences in cognition or behavior. I now proceed to refute such determinism on the basis of the following research findings.

1. Male brains are typically larger than female brains. But for Homo sapiens brain size does not translate into intelligence: It is fallacious to say that men are more intelligent than women because men have larger brains than women do.
2. Sex differences in brain size vary according to brain areas. So one area may be larger in males, whereas another may be larger in females. Moreover, there is little correlation among

the features. In a sample of more than a thousand, almost half of the brains have a very male version of one feature together with a very female version of another.

3. Brain differences between the sexes may be described as a mosaic pattern. Each human being has a combination of different male and female features.

4. Behavioral differences between the sexes may also be described as a mosaic pattern. Men and women do not fall into two clear types. Variation within each sex group tends to outweigh variation between groups (see "Of what use is cultural psychology to counselors and therapists?").

5. Average sex differences, biological, behavioral, or both, may be altered or even reversed by changes in the environment.

Clearly, biological determinism pertaining to sex differences holds no water. It shows no greater promise with regard to other aspects of human behavior.

Psychological determinism: Operant conditioning—Who controls whom?

I focus on Skinner's operant conditioning as psychological determinism par excellence. One day, at the dinner table, my one-year-old daughter stood up from her baby chair. Fearing that she might fall, I signaled for her to sit down (stimulus). She did (response). I then clapped my hands to indicate my approval and pleasure (reinforcement). She stood up again; I signaled; she sat down; I clapped my hands. This sequence repeated several times. Then she introduced a new element into the situation: After standing up, she signaled to me to clap my hands.

I got the point: My behavioral modification wasn't working; it backfired. Moreover, I realized that she was trying to control my behavior. Far from despairing over my failure as a psychologist, I reveled in being a father. A chain of thoughts entered my mind: social sensitivity, reciprocity of actions, proactivity, sense of control, agency at such a young age!? You underestimate children at your own peril. Knowing the limits of children's capabilities is limited by adults' limitations of observation.

Therapists using behavior modification advise parents to use positive reinforcement to alter their children's behavior. Not infrequently, parents come back and report that it doesn't work. Why? One reason is that children are clever in turning a contingency of reinforcement into bribery. In place of "If you stop crying, you will get your ice cream," the child sets up a different condition, "If you don't give me ice cream, I won't stop crying." The parent gives in, making things worse than before, often unaware that he is now under the child's control. The therapist bears responsibility for inadequate explanation and preparation, of course.

Experimental psychologists set up conditions that control behavior. They assume that control is unidirectional, from experimenter to experimental subject, and conveniently ignores the influence that the latter may exercise on the former. This assumption views human beings as reactive to external (e.g., experimental) conditions, and grossly underestimates their capacity for altering those conditions. What is there to prevent the experimental subject to redefine the condition that has been set up by the experimenter as he sees fit, and wreak havoc in the "results" obtained and reported in the scientific literature?