

A Social Psychological Understanding of Cultural Psychology  
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**Welcome!** Social psychology is the study of humans in social contexts. It is a relatively new field that emerged rapidly in response to the need to understand whether (and how) contexts matter as compared say to intelligence, personality, psychopathology, relationships with parents and other foci of psychological analysis. In a sense, culture has always been both implicit in our understanding of human experience. William James (1890) is seen as a father of modern psychology – he proposed that thinking is for doing. That we think about ourselves and our social world in order to act on them. Despite this implicit inclusion of both immediate and larger context in what we mean by psychology, terms such as ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘cultural’ have, in the past, been used as modifiers to describe some parts of psychological research, implying that without these modifiers, there is a more core or general study of psychology. In other words, the assumption was that whatever psychologists studied in the West (with college students and middle-class children) was generally true and that if other groups differed; this was due to their ‘culture.’

**Goal** an overview of the social psychology of culture and examination of implications for theory and real-world application. We start by operationalizing what we mean by culture (as a set of stable yet dynamic syndromes or meaning-making systems) and then focus on two key questions: First how does culture influence the sense we make of the world, what we see and remember, what seems reasonable, right and true (and what seems silly, false, and wrong)? Second how can culture be studied in ways that both are relevant to real-world dynamics and allow for causal inference.

**Overview** Social psychology as a field is moving beyond this initial stance that culture is either something that is mostly irrelevant or only for subpopulations for a number of reasons. First, there are more people contributing to the body of research whose firsthand experiences lead them to question prior assumptions about what is ‘general.’ Second, the methods used to study cultural influences have shifted from more qualitative, ethnographic or quantitative but correlational approaches to more experimental approaches that provide better control, better ability to make causal arguments, more predictive power, and the ability to test process models. Taken together, the body of work representing ‘culture’ is now more nuanced and more accessible to use in applied fields. This shift in attention and in methodological plurality has highlighted that there are competing assumptions about what culture is. One possibility is that humans share core psychological processes, superficially differing due to a cultural veneer. Another possibility is that humans from different cultures are fundamentally distinct kinds with differences in core psychological processes or even physiological structures. A third possibility is that culture is part of what it means to be human and that it is both a veneer, and something that is deeply embedded, and a general set of procedures that can be cued in the moment.

Rather than social stereotypes along the lines of ‘Chinese people are hardworking’ or ‘Americans like to stick out’ a social psychological approach to culture focuses on predictive statements about how information is likely to be perceived, which cognitive styles are likely to be cued, how people are likely to make sense of their worlds. This approach avoids treating

culture like a personality factor but has the risk of simplifying the complexity of culture to an elegant process model that loses important detail. An emerging focus on the specifics of culture has led to an examination of what cultural expertise is and what it is for, focusing on the details of everyday and sacred events in meaning-making.

**Philosophy** Grades should reflect both the work you have done and your ability to show me that you can use course material in your research. My hope is that you will be able to later use what you learned. Long term learning and short-term recall differ. Long term learning requires actively engaging with the material, elaborating on what you read and discriminating between different readings, considering what an author is trying to explain, how each week fits with prior weeks and integrates with or conflicts with other things you know, and new questions readings raise for your own interests. Such learning requires active engagement with the material. Active engagement is also more fun than just sitting. We profit when active engagement is rewarded in the deep structure of the class.

**Grades, Requirements, Class structure** This philosophy is operationalized in your grade, made up of the following parts, each briefly described below. Participation in classroom activities and discussion (25%). An initial outline of the topic you want to apply this class to due midway through the semester (10% due Feb 24). Brief verbal presentation of your work (15%). The final paper (50% due May 4).

*Participation and discussion* I'll assume that you have read the readings before class. To assist in structuring reading, leaders will develop a set of discussion points pass them by me and then email out a refined set of target discussion points prior to class (e.g., by Friday, to direct weekend reading). I will pass out a sign-up sheet for the 10 classes in which we will have student-leader led class discussion. Each discussion leader group should have about 4 people, so each person should sign up for two sessions if there are 20 of us in the class. *Initial outline* Your initial outline focuses on what your question is, why it is important and not yet answered and how taking the cultural approach you have learned in class reveals issues not yet addressed. Length should be no more than 5 pages. *Presentation* This is your final paper draft, it forces you to articulate clearly what the question is, why it is important and not yet answered and how you will study it using what you have learned in this class. *Final paper* is the final version of your presentation developed as a research proposal (introduction including why the question is not yet answered and important, methods, and discussion of likely findings and implications). Length should be about 15 pages.

## 1. Overview (Jan 13)

How has culture been conceptualized in social psychology? What is its interface with related constructs – race, ethnicity, personality? Is culture a useful social psychological variable (in your area of psychology)? What is culture, what are attributes of culture, what does it influence, how stable is it, how big or small a group constitutes a culture? Come prepared to talk about the topic you are interested and your current thoughts as to how culture influence matter (beyond demonstrating that it does).

### **Core Readings:**

Chiu, C-Y. & Hong Y-Y (2013). What is culture? (Chapter 1, pp 1-21) in *Social Psychology of Culture*. Part of Principles of Social Psychology, Series Editor A. Kruglanski. NY:

Routledge.

Mendoza-Denton, R. & Worrell, F. (2019). Culture, race, ethnicity, and personality, pp 748-767. In Cohen, D. & Kitayama, S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. NY: Guilford Press.

Oyserman, D. (2015). Culture-as-situated cognition. *Emerging trends in the social and behavioral sciences: An interdisciplinary, searchable, and linkable resource*, 1-20.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0067>

**Optional:**

Nisbett, R. (2007). A psychological perspective: cultural psychology—past, present, and future, In Kitayama, S. & Cohen, D. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp 837-844). NY: Guilford Press.

Triandis, H. (2007). Culture and psychology: A history of the study of their relationship. In Kitayama, S. & Cohen, D. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology* (pp 59-76). NY: Guilford Press.

**2. A general lens: cultures, subcultures, and cultural change (Jan 20)**

Making sense of culture requires an organizing framework. Hong, Markus, and Oyserman provide organizing lenses.

**Readings:**

Hong, Y.-y., Morris, M. W., Chiu, C.-y., Benet-Martínez, V., (2000). Multicultural minds: A dynamic constructivist approach to culture and cognition. *American Psychologist*, 55, 709-720.

Markus, H. R., & Hamedani, M. G. (2019). People are culturally-shaped shapers: The psychological science of culture and culture change. In Cohen, D. & Kitayama, S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp. 11-52). NY: Guilford Press

Oyserman, D. & Yan, V. (2019). Making meaning: A culture-as-situated cognition approach to the consequences of cultural fluency and disfluency. In Cohen, D. & Kitayama, S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp. 536-565). NY: Guilford Press

**3. Cultural frames (Jan 27)**

Culture can be thought of as universally accessible frames or mindsets, universally available but differentially accessible across societies, three cultural mindsets are most studied (individualism, collectivism, and honor). You will notice in the readings the tension between a between-group difference approach and a situated approach to understanding how culture works.

**Core Readings:**

Oyserman, D. (2017). Culture three ways: Culture and subcultures within countries. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, 435-463.

Oyserman, D., Coon, H. & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 3-72.

Uskul, A. K. & Cross, S. E., Günsoy, C., & Gul, P. (2019) Cultures of honor. In Cohen, D. & Kitayama, S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp. 793-821). NY: Guilford Press.

**Optional:**

Lin, Y. & Oyserman, D. (R&R). Upright and honorable. *Personality and Social Psychology*

*Bulletin.*

#### 4. Culture and memory (Feb 3)

Culture organizes memory and memory reflects culture, as described in this week's readings.

##### Readings:

- Ji, L., Schwarz, N., & Nisbett, R. (2000). Culture, autobiographical memory, and behavioral frequency reports: Measurement issues in cross-cultural studies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 586-594.
- Schwarz, N., Oyserman, D., & Peytcheva, E. (2010). Cognition, communication, and culture: Implications for the survey response process. In J. A. Harkness, M. Braun, B. Edwards, T. P. Johnson, L. Lyberg, P. Mohler, B.-E. Pennell, & T. W. Smith (Eds.) *Survey methods in multinational, multiregional and multicultural contexts*, pp. 177-190. NY: Wiley.
- Wang, Q. & Ross, M. (2007). Culture and memory. In Kitayama, S. & Cohen, D. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp 645-667). NY: Guilford Press.

#### 5. Methods – how is culture studied/assessed/manipulated? (Feb 10)

How is culture actually studied: Applying Hofstede, assessing scale response, examining 'bicultural' or 'bilingual' or 'multicultural' individuals, 'cueing' culture (with icons, with more abstract tasks)

##### Readings:

- Cohen, D. (2019). Methods in Cultural Psychology. In Cohen, D. & Kitayama, S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp. 163-203). NY: Guilford Press.
- Oyserman, D. (2016). What does a priming perspective reveal about culture: Culture-as-situated-cognition. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 12, 94-99.
- Pages 263 to 268** of Oyserman, D. & Lee, S. W-S. (2007). Priming "culture": Culture as situated cognition, In Kitayama, S. & Cohen, D. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp 255-282). NY: Guilford Press.
- Especially pages 6 to 8** of Oyserman, D., Coon, H. & Kimmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 3-72.
- Pages 311 to 316** of Oyserman, D., Kimmelmeier, M., & Coon, H. (2002). Cultural psychology, a new look: Reply to Bond (2002), Fiske (2002), Kitayama (2002), and Miller (2002). *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 110-117.

#### 6. Process models linking cultural processes to social psychological processes (Feb 17)

We consider how to understand culture as part of what we know about social psychological processes generally, especially social comparison, social relations, and the common ground of communication.

##### Readings:

- Buunk, A., & Gibbons, F. (2007). Social comparison: The end of a theory and the emergence of a field. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*, 102, 3-21.
- Fiske, A. & Fiske, S. (2007). Social relationships in our species and cultures. In Kitayama, S. & Cohen, D. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp 283-306). NY: Guilford Press.
- McNamara, R. A., Willard, A. K., Norenzayan, A., & Henrich, J. (2019). Weighing outcome vs. intent across societies: How cultural models of mind shape moral

reasoning. *Cognition*, 182, 95-108.

Oishi, S., Kesebir, S., Miao, F. F., Talhelm, T., Endo, Y., Uchida, Y., ... & Norasakkunkit, V. (2013). Residential mobility increases motivation to expand social network: But why? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49(2), 217-223.

**Focus on Study 7** Klein, R. A., Vianello, M., Hasselman, F., Adams, B. G., Adams Jr, R. B., Alper, S., ... & Batra, R. (2018). Many Labs 2: Investigating variation in replicability across samples and settings. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 443-490.

Miyamoto, Y., & Kitayama, S. (2018). Cultural differences in correspondence bias are systematic and multifaceted. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 497-498.

## 7. Process models linking cultural processes to evolutionary processes (Feb 24)

**Paper outline due.** We consider how to understand culture as part of human evolutionary processes.

### Readings:

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33(2-3), 61-83.

Mesoudi, A. Mesoudi, A. (2019). Cultural evolution and cultural psychology. In Cohen, D. & Kitayama, S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Psychology*. (pp. 144-162). NY: Guilford Press.

Oyserman, D., Kemmelmeier, M., & Coon, H. (2002). Cultural psychology, a new look: Reply to Bond (2002), Fiske (2002), Kitayama (2002), and Miller (2002). *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 110-117.

Osiurak, F. & Reynaud, E. (forthcoming). The elephant in the room: what matters cognitively in cumulative technological culture. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

## 8. Culture and cognition: Mental Procedures, Mindsets, Cognitive Styles (March 2)

In the next weeks, we focus on mental procedures, how people think. The readings focus on some possible processes, speculating on others. Come prepared to speculate on each of the following as possibly culturally distinct procedures: Compromise or don't. Time is cyclical (circular) or linear. Time horizon is long (past, future) or short (present). Causes are likely singular or multiple causes. Causes are likely in oneself, in social connections, in the unknowable (fate, luck).

### Readings:

Choi, I., Nisbett, R. E., & Norenzayan, A. (1999). Causal attribution across cultures: Variation and universality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(1), 47-61.

Ji, L., Nisbett, R. E., & Su, Y. (2001). Culture, change and prediction. *Psychological Science*, 12, 450-456.

Norenzayan, A., Smith, E.E., Kim, B. J. & Nisbett, R. E. Cultural preferences for formal versus intuitive reasoning. (2002). *Cognitive Science*. 26(5), 653-684.

**Focus on Study 19** Klein, R. A., Vianello, M., Hasselman, F., Adams, B. G., Adams Jr, R. B., Alper, S., ... & Batra, R. (2018). Many Labs 2: Investigating variation in replicability across samples and settings. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 443-490.

Norenzayan, A. (2018). Some Reflections on the Many Labs 2 Replication of Norenzayan,

Smith, Kim, and Nisbett's (2002) Study 2: Cultural preferences for formal versus intuitive reasoning. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 499-500.

### 9. Culture and cognition: Mental Procedures, Mindsets, Cognitive Styles (March 9)

This session examines an additional trio of related mental procedures: Include-exclude, assimilate-contrast, connect-separate.

#### Readings:

Kühnen, U., & Oyserman, D. (2002). Thinking about the self influences thinking in general: Cognitive consequences of salient self-concept. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 492-499.

Oyserman, D., Sorensen, N., Reber, R., & Chen, S. X. (2009). Connecting and separating mind-sets: Culture as situated cognition. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 97(2), 217-235.

### 10. Culture and cognition: Mental Procedures, Mindsets, Cognitive Styles (March 23)

This week we focus on with the ways in which thinking has been described as culture dependent in terms of reasoning holistically vs. analytically, in a field dependent vs. a field dependent manner. Come ready to think about your own physical environment and ways to set up contexts that might cue holistic or analytic thinking and how this would relate to judgment and decision-making. Topics for this session are:

#### Reading:

Miyamoto, Y., Nisbett, R. E., & Masuda, T. (2006). Culture and physical environment: Holistic versus analytic perceptual affordances. *Psychological Science*, 17, 113-119.

Ng, A. H., & Hynie, M. (2014). Cultural differences in indecisiveness: The role of naïve dialecticism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 70, 45-50.

Savani, K., Stephens, N. M., & Markus, H. R. (2017). Choice as an engine of analytic thought. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 146(9), 1234-1246.

Talhelm, T., Haidt, J., Oishi, S., Zhang, X., Miao, F. F., & Chen, S. (2015). Liberals think more analytically (more "WEIRD") than conservatives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(2), 250-267.

**Focus on Study 20** Klein, R. A., Vianello, M., Hasselman, F., Adams, B. G., Adams Jr, R. B., Alper, S., ... & Batra, R. (2018). Many Labs 2: Investigating variation in replicability across samples and settings. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1(4), 443-490.

### 11. Culture and cognition: Mental Procedures, Mindsets, Cognitive Styles (March 30)

This week picks up a related set of procedures: global-local, concrete-abstract. Some of the readings suggest that language is the carrier of procedural style, and others suggest that it is power. The power article is not specifically focused on culture – but clearly respecting authority and responding to power are part of culture, perhaps more the aspects related to honor and traditional (binding) morality. Come ready to try these models out on your topic of interest.

#### Readings:

Oyserman, D. (2006). High power, low power, and equality: Culture beyond individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 16(4), 352-356.

Smith, P. K., & Trope, Y. (2006). You focus on the forest when you're in charge of the trees: Power priming and abstract information processing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*, 578-596.

Torelli, C. J., & Shavitt, S. (2010). Culture and concepts of power. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *99*(4), 703.

Semin, G. R., Görts, C., Nandram, S., & Semin-Goossens, A. (2002). Cultural perspectives on the linguistic representation of emotion and emotion events. *Cognition and Emotion*, *16*, 11-28.

### **12. Class Presentations (April 6)**

We will use this class for presentations. Each presenter should present their project and then we will open the floor for improving suggestions and useful critiques or alternative explanations. Assume about 30 minutes for presentation and question set.

### **13. Class Presentations (April 13)**

We will use this class for presentations. Each presenter should present their project and then we will open the floor for improving suggestions and useful critiques or alternative explanations. Assume about 30 minutes for presentation and question set.

### **14. Scaling up culture-based insights. How can we use our knowledge about culture to make sense of extremism? (April 20)**

Our guest will be Arie Kruglanski, who will supply readings.

### **15. Class Presentations (April 27)**

We will use this class for presentations. Each presenter should present their project and then we will open the floor for improving suggestions and useful critiques or alternative explanations. Assume about 30 minutes for presentation and question set.