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Using Individualism and Collectivism to Compare Cultures—A Critique of the Validity and Measurement of the Constructs: Comment on Oyserman et al. (2002)

Alan Page Fiske
University of California, Los Angeles

Analyzing national and ethnic differences in individualism and collectivism, D. Oyserman, H. M. Coon, and M. Kemmelmeier (2002) showed that small differences in scales or samples produce markedly divergent results, challenging the validity of these constructs. The author examines the following limitations of research on individualism and collectivism: It treats nations as cultures and culture as a continuous quantitative variable; conflates all kinds of social relations and distinct types of autonomy; ignores contextual specificity in norms and values; measures culture as the personal preferences and behavior reports of individuals; rarely establishes the external validity of the measures used; assumes cultural invariance in the meaning of self-reports and anchoring and interpretation of scales; and reduces culture to explicit, abstract verbal knowledge.

> Psychologists are interested in cultural data if and only if the data challenge one of their findings. (H. Triandis, personal communication, June 27, 2001)

For more than a century, one of the most widely theorized approaches to cultural comparison has been the contrast between two types of society, roughly corresponding to the current constructs of individualism (IND) and collectivism (COL). Revival of these constructs by Hofstede (2001), Triandis (1995), Markus and Kitayama (1991), and many others was the most important factor in the emergence of cultural psychology. These researchers developed this contrast into two distinct dimensions of cultural comparison and subsequently (Triandis, 1995) described component factors of each. The IND-COL heuristic stimulated new research testing the cross-cultural validity of some of the core theories of social cognition, and the results from many studies showed that several basic psychological processes are culturally contingent. Finally acknowledging important cultural differences in human psychology, psychologists have widely assumed that this research supports the concepts of IND and COL. Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002) have given the field the first meta-analyses of these studies, going beyond the literature reviews previously available and providing the big picture. They permit psychologists for the first time to take stock of these constructs objectively and examine their validity.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Alan Page Fiske, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Box 951553, Los Angeles, California 90095-1553. E-mail: afiske@ucla.edu

The implications of their meta-analyses and reviews are not what most cultural psychologists expected. Graphed together on IND and COL axes, the samples from the nations that have been studied form a globular cluster, with no correlation between sample means on IND and COL. Clearly, IND is not the opposite of COL or empirically related at all. Residents of the United States and Canada (NAs; also, North America, NA) are a bit more individualistic and less collectivistic than most others but nowhere near the end of either range. Compared with NAs, one study found strikingly high levels of COL among Peruvian students, and another study reported very low levels of IND among Egyptian students, but these results have not been replicated, even using the same scales. Oyserman et al. (2002) reported that there are no standard scales and that different scales produce quite different results. Nearly all the samples are college students. Nevertheless, when Oyserman et al. compared results from different studies, they found there is far too much heterogeneity to allow generalization to effect sizes for most differences between NA students and students in most other nations. There is enormous heterogeneity among the results from studies comparing Japan with NA, and even comparisons of NA with Korea did not produce differences of consistent magnitude. This is remarkable because Japan and Korea are among the most culturally homogeneous nations in the world, and one would expect student participants, who are highly selected on numerous dimensions, to be more homogeneous than national populations. Perhaps one source of heterogeneity among estimates of differences between NA and nations elsewhere is that different studies may have sampled NA college students who differ with respect to social class, ideology, religion and religiosity, regional culture, urbanism, college ethos, college major and occupational goal, citizenship, or ethnicity. This conjecture cannot be tested, though, because such studies virtually never report these culturally relevant parameters of their samples. It seems few have looked for gender differences, either.

However, it is still possible to look at mean differences across all scale types and samples; I consider first IND. As expected,

college students from Chinese cultures (People's Republic [PR] of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) are somewhat less individualistic than NA college students. When Japanese and Indian samples were averaged across studies that used a variety of mutually inconsistent scales, they looked a little less individualistic than NA students, but the mean weighted effect sizes were quite small (Oyserman et al. 2002). Moreover, in the comparisons between NA and Japan, NA samples scored more individualistic only on the scales that include uniqueness; the four studies using other scales found Japanese substantially more individualistic than NAs. The two samples of Puerto Rican students support the conclusion that they are more individualistic than NAs.

What about COL? The data suggest that students from Taiwan and PR China, Israel, and Nigeria are appreciably more collectivistic than NA students, while students from India and Mexico are somewhat more collectivistic than NAs. But again, the studies are too heterogeneous to draw conclusions about effect size, except in the case of India. The only two studies comparing Israelis coincide in suggesting they are much more collectivistic than NA students. There are enough studies with Hong Kong samples to permit comparison among scales, showing there are no appreciable differences with NA samples if the scales exclude items of any of the following three types: harmony, defining the self in groups, or focus on hierarchy and preference for working in groups. Indeed, three studies that used scales including the pleasures of belonging to groups show NAs slightly but significantly more collectivistic than Hong Kong samples. Even when one limits comparisons to studies using similar scales, the *Q* homogeneity coefficients are high, invalidating inferences about the magnitude of any differences between NA COL and levels in any of these nations. On average, the Japanese and Korean studies show levels of COL comparable to NAs, but NAs were significantly more collectivistic than Japanese when compared along some scales, especially the six studies using scales that did not include preference for working in groups and scales that included wanting to belong to groups or defining oneself in context.

This is the most striking finding of Oyserman et al.'s (2002) meta-analyses: In most cases the results from any nation are quite heterogeneous, suggesting that there is something wrong with these constructs and/or scales as national difference measures. Evidently, some unidentified factors moderate or determine the differences in mean scores. We might hope that the variable content of the scales used for measuring IND and COL would explain the lack of agreement among studies. But alas, even when the results are broken down according to specific kinds of items excluded in the scales, the results in almost every case are still far too heterogeneous to permit valid inferences about the magnitudes of national differences measured with a given type of scale. The results are simply not convergent.

Oyserman et al. (2002) found that very few of the international comparisons included any information on the ethnic composition of their samples—researchers making international comparisons apparently did not think that cultural differences within nations could be important enough to consider. However, there are many other studies comparing major "ethnic groups" within NA. Taken together, these studies seem to show that Asian American students are a little more collectivistic and slightly less individualistic than European American students. (However, there were no significant differences on either dimension in two studies that compared nonstudent Asian American adults with European American adults.) Latino Americans are somewhat more collectivistic than European Americans (particularly adult nonstudents) and equally individualistic. On COL, African Americans look no different than European Americans. But once again, results from different studies are too heterogeneous to generalize to the magnitude of effects sizes for differences between these ethnic groups. Perhaps this should not be a surprise, because the term *Asian American*, for example, includes people culturally identified with thousands of cultures comprising more than half the world's population. *Latino American* lumps together Americans identified with Cuba, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, and many other nations, each of which includes diverse cultures and social classes. There is only one set of results consistent enough across studies to warrant generalization to the ethnic category as a whole: African American students are more individualistic than European Americans. (This contrasts with two nonstudent adult samples that found no difference between African Americans and European Americans. It also contrasts, not surprisingly, with the African samples, of which three of four nations showed less IND than among NAs and one measured no difference.)

What about regional differences, say, comparing NA with East Asia or Latin America? To satisfy our curiosity, it is possible to analyze geographical aggregates composed of dozens of nations and hundreds of cultures—but those continental aggregations are pretty much irrelevant to a project formulated in terms of culture rather than plate tectonics (contra Huntington, 1996). Indeed, the heterogeneity among the nations in each region is strikingly confirmed by the authors' statistical tests. It is notable, for example, that Oyserman et al. (2002) show that *East Asia* cannot be used as a cultural construct because Chinese, Japanese, and Korean samples are quite different. As far as one can tell from indirect comparisons, Taiwan looks quite different from Japan and Korea—neither of which looks very different from NA. Unfortunately, all the comparisons reported in Oyserman et al. are with NA: differences among the world's "other" cultures (let alone differences among East Asian cultures) have rarely been studied.

A potentially serious limitation of most of the international comparisons in Oyserman et al.'s (2002) meta-analyses is that they sampled college students, who may be more Western, more individualistic, and less collectivistic in outlook than other adults. Indeed, two studies found a trend for IND differences between NA and Japan to be larger among adults than among students in other studies, but the difference was not significant and the effect sizes for both nonstudents and students were too heterogeneous to generalize to either category. However, this was not true in PR China, where the differences between COL in NA and PR China were smaller for adults (mostly business managers) than for college students. Similarly, within the United States, IND differences between European Americans and either African Americans or Asian Americans tended to be smaller in the few nonstudent studies, compared with the studies with student samples (without significant differences). In some nations at some points in history, students are highly ideological and may be more nationalistic or anti-Western than other citizens or more extremely economic in their outlook, which could result in extreme or atypical responses. Therefore, it is not safe to assume a universal student culture without knowing the local situation. Limited as these samples are, they may be the best obtainable; in many third world countries it

would be extremely difficult to collect any large, representative, random, or stratified samples of people who can fill out attitude questionnaires in a meaningful way.

Implications of National Comparisons

These results invalidate many conclusions in the literature based on contrasts imputed to the differing effects of Japanese (or East Asian) COL compared with American IND. Japan is no more collectivistic than NA, and on several types of scales, including reliable ones, Japan is less collectivistic and more individualistic. Given the zero correlation among sample means on the two dimensions, there is no support at all for treating IND and COL as opposite types of cultures or contrasting poles on a continuum. Comparisons between nations find few substantial, replicated differences and hardly any differences that are consistent across measures or samples. Oyserman et al. (2002) repeatedly found markedly different results in comparisons of samples from pairs of nations using scales differing only in the exclusion or inclusion of one kind of item. True, studies consistently show NA students to be more individualistic than Hong Kong students (albeit with heterogeneous differences), but in every other international comparison in which there are multiple studies, the direction of the differences between nations changes depending on the scale contents.

This can only mean that the various scales are not measuring the same two constructs—in other words, the various scales that are intended to measure IND are actually measuring several different, still unidentified attributes of the respondents and that scales designed to measure COL are measuring a variety of unknown attributes as well. There is no way of knowing what they are measuring, but these divergent results suggest either that IND and COL are not meaningful constructs or that we do not know how to measure them. In principle and from a purely statistical perspective, the high—often extremely high—*Q* coefficients do not invalidate the reliability of the often small but significant national differences that were found. However, most of the analyses of possible moderating factors did not do very much to clarify the nature of the heterogeneity of the differences. Until the nature of this heterogeneity is determined, we cannot know whether aggregate national differences result from characteristics of the nations and ethnic groups as such or whether these differences reflect some other factors that are only incidentally reflected in sampling from populations defined by political entities and census categories.

Incurable optimists might hope to construct better scales, but nothing in the results of these meta-analyses suggest that this is worth trying. Even the reliable scales exhibit highly heterogeneous results in every country for which there are multiple studies. If a single type of method—even comparing sets of scales with similar content—does not produce consistent results even when restricted mostly to student samples, there is little hope for convergent–discriminant validation of the theorized constructs using more divergent methods on more representative samples. Restricting measurement to a particular scale that happens to produce the expected results in a couple of comparisons between key nations is not the answer: This amounts to an operational definition of the constructs. If a theoretical construct is valid, it can be measured in innumerable conceptually appropriate ways, and different measures will yield convergent results (Campbell & D. W. Fiske, 1959; D. W. Fiske, 1986).The bottom line is that Oyserman et al.'s (2002) meta-analyses of these studies of national and ethnic differences in IND and COL indicate that these two constructs, as measured, are not valid.

Effects on Self-Concept, Well-Being, Cognition, and Relationality?

Is the validity of these constructs supported by studies of their effects on cognitive or social psychology? Oyserman et al. (2002) reported that a great many studies did not measure IND or COL at all. Many of these studies relied on assumptions about national differences that the meta-analyses contradict or (like Hofstede, 2001) mistakenly assumed a negative correlation between national IND and COL. A number of studies found that the self-esteem of Japanese students is affected by factors differing from the factors that affect the self-esteem of NA students. However, these differences cannot be the result of the slightly greater American COL and probably are not related to the small and extremely heterogeneous differences in IND. Most studies of well-being do not support the contention than IND or COL moderates the effects of experience on life satisfaction, although there is evidence for effects on depression. Self-reported embarrassability correlates positively with COL and negatively with IND, but this may represent the effects of social desirability on self-reports because no one has studied embarrassability directly. Many studies show substantial differences between tendencies toward dispositional attributions of NAs and more situational or relational attributions of Asians (especially Indians). Three studies of personality and six of persuasion found the results they predicted. Five studies showed that COL is related to perceptions of objective obligations to help others, while IND is associated with the conviction that helping is a matter of choice, affection, affect, and need—as well as personal relationship.

Participants' reports of their sense of obligation to their families are unrelated to COL. Studies consistently show that NAs are more at ease interacting with strangers and interact more freely with out-groups than students in some other nations. Several studies have found that COL is related to heightened favoritism and accommodation to in-group members and preferences for equality rather than equity within the group. IND is related to more direct communication and speaking up more often.

A few recent studies used priming methods to manipulate construct accessibility. However, construct accessibility is a transient effect that cannot be equated with the enduring, objective social entity that is culture. Some individuals are flexibly capable of participating in multiple cultures, of course. But does a person's culture change in response to questions such as "How are you different from other people?" Does reading that sentence change a Chinese communal farmer into a cowboy? Sort of, a little bit, for a moment? No. If it did, then IND and COL scales would alter culture instead of measuring it. Priming does not change institutions, practices, or systems of communication and coordination. Priming does not affect socially constituted entities, relations, and practices in relation to which a person lives: rodeos, poker, cattle brands, Colt 45s, and gunfights. If one does not know Wyatt Earp and the OK Corral, they cannot be primed. Mere accessibility can hardly be an important factor mediating the effects of these con-

stituents of culture on the psyche, unless one postulates that all humans have cognitive representations of all significant aspects of all cultures.

An even more fundamental problem is that the studies in the meta-analyses provide no evidence that culture affects these psychological processes. None of the reported differences can be attributed with confidence to IND or COL per se. The international research reviewed by Oyserman et al. (2002) compares groups from two or more nations—nations that differ on innumerable, uncontrolled, mostly unmeasured dimensions. Other studies measure individual differences within one culture, for example, in sense of independence or uniqueness or in sense of duty to ingroup. But individual differences are individual differences, not cultural differences. Scores on a trait cannot be attributed to culture unless there is evidence that these scores reflect something socially transmitted or socially constructed. At a minimum, researchers need to show that the trait they are measuring is closely linked to membership in groups or participation in networks.

On the whole, much of the research looking for effects of IND and COL does not yield very meaningful or very consistent results, most of the effect sizes are not very large, some are in the wrong direction, and very few, if any, have been replicated using diverse scales. The big picture is that research does not support the theory that East Asian COL produces a psychology that contrasts with the psychology of NA IND. This is the discouraging news that Oyserman et al. (2002) brought us.

What Is the Matter With the IND and COL Constructs?

Well, then, if IND and COL do not work, what is wrong with these constructs and the way psychologists have been using them? These constructs and their advocates inspired renewed, systematic efforts to discover psychological differences among cultures. This research, using standard psychological techniques, has finally persuaded many skeptical psychologists of the truth that anthropologists have always argued in vain: Many important psychological processes are contingent on culture. Why, then, have these constructs generally failed as explanations for cultural differences among nations?

First, everyone agrees that nations are political units, none of which coincide exactly with cultural units and very few of which correspond at all. Most nations comprise many diverse cultures—sometimes sets of cultures ideologically defined in contrastive opposition to each other. The United States, Mexico, Congo, Nigeria, India, and Indonesia each consist of scores or hundreds of dramatically different cultures. Many cultures, from Chinese to Irish to Vai, are widely represented in several nations. So it rarely makes sense to use citizenship as a proxy for sampling culture.

The psychometric methods of these studies pose a bigger problem. The experimental situation is not a constant. There are profound cultural differences in the meaning of filling out forms, let alone asking personal questions. For American students, this is commonplace and boring. In some other cultures, however, written questions about oneself are intrusive and threatening, while the abstract, context-free questions may be confusing or meaningless. Danish participants are reluctant to write 20 "I am" statements; the task makes them very uncomfortable because in Denmark declaring one's distinctive identity is unusual and improper (Thomsen, Sidanius, & Fiske, 2002). For Americans, it is a routine practice. As Harry Triandis (personal communication, June 27, 2001) pointed out, this means, ironically, that the more different the culture is from our own, the less valid are rating scales and other measurements requiring reflective self-report. American psychologists know that even within their own culture, respondents are unable to generate valid and reliable responses to abstractly formulated global statements such as "How I behave depends on who I am with, where I am, or both" (D. W. Fiske, 1981). Cross-cultural measurement assumes that there are absolute anchors and universal ways of choosing responses for rating scales, despite evidence to the contrary (Hui & Triandis, 1989; Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997). As cultural psychologists should be especially aware, people cannot answer such questions in an absolute framework; they necessarily use frameworks relative to their culturally organized experience. This is more than an issue about relative adjectives such as *great* or *many*; even putting aside the many insoluble problems of translation, respondents presumably have diverse, culturally framed ideas of what constitutes "my group," "spending time with others," and "avoid disagreement." Inuit, Balinese, or Moose responding to an item about "privacy" are likely to think about concealing their feelings from the people around them—not being alone. They may want to have others constantly in physical proximity, without ever wanting to disclose emotions, plans, or personal histories.

Problems like these are not trivial, as Peng et al. (1997) showed in their valuable review of the cross-cultural methodological literature. They found that undergraduates from Beijing and Michigan used rating and ranking scales so differently that, using the minimal standard of direction of value difference between the two cultures, the ratings Peng et al. collected agreed at only chance levels with ranking scores that were a composite of scores from previous studies. Furthermore, the direction of the cultural difference in rating scores that they obtained agreed at only chance levels with a previous study using the same rating items. In a second study, they compared University of Michigan students with ethnic Chinese students from Singapore, looking at four different kinds of value items. As a validity criterion, they compared student responses with expert judgments about cultural values made by 17 knowledgeable graduate students in Chinese studies at Michigan (who showed very good agreement with each other). Again they used a minimal standard: whether any type of item agreed with expert judgments about the direction of cultural differences. Cultural differences measured by rating, ranking, and attitude scales did not agree with these criterion judgments beyond chance levels. When Peng et al. used a scenario instrument, differences between-student scores corresponded with expert judgment in 18 of 25 scenarios. This set of results suggests that the usual cross-cultural methods may not have any convergent validity.

A more fundamental epistemological problem is that all of these methods rely on verbal responses. The use of rating scales, free responses, or interviews is appropriate only to the extent that one conceptualizes culture as declarative semantic or episodic knowledge. Most contemporary theories posit, and fieldwork confirms, that culture consists of diverse, loosely connected constituents, only a few of which are articulable. The core of culture consists of practices and competencies, needs, motives, emotions, institutions and constellations of relationships, and artifacts and technologies. Most of the intangible constituents of culture generally are not accessible to consciousness, reflection, or explicit linguistic ex-

pression. People simply are not aware of these aspects of their culture and cannot report them, even in terms of their own behaviors and preferences. Studying most of these aspects of culture through self-report is worse than useless; self-reports are likely to be distorted, biased, and confabulated representations. The core of culture is procedural competence, not abstract propositions. This is why cultural and psychological anthropologists use (or should use) participant observation fieldwork as their principal method (A. P. Fiske, 2001). The best way to study a culture is for researchers to learn it pretty much the way informants do, by observation and imitation. Researchers should not rely on informants to translate their cultural practices into declarative semantic language. Researchers themselves must do the reflection and analytic abstraction on the basis of their lived experience as cultural participants. Only then should they consult and check back with informants or attempt to verify their semantic analyses by testing deductions.

Whatever culture consists of, it is an empirical question how those components fit together. Some practices may not be closely linked to verbally stated values, and institutions may not map onto either practices or values. There are always some discrepancies between semantically expressed norms and other aspects of culture such as symbol systems and implicit practices, but this makes it all the more important to investigate all of the components of culture rather than assume that attitudes or norms represent everything. Furthermore, whatever component of culture psychologists study, we need to establish the external validity of our measures. Do item ratings and responses to other verbal instruments correspond to everyday discourse? What phenomena in the social world do current IND and COL measures represent? We need to find out before we rely on responses to artificial stimuli.

Conflating Distinct Types of Sociality

Even if these measurement problems could be solved, the IND and COL constructs themselves have other vitiating limitations. As a construct, COL conflates social bonds with all kinds of groups and networks. There are many kinds of sociality, and there is no reason to believe that cultural emphasis on one kind of relationship, identity, membership, or obligation is positively correlated with emphases on other kinds. Using the relational models taxonomy (A. P. Fiske, 1991), for example, one could ask whether cultural emphasis on Authority Ranking (AR) is correlated with emphasis on Market Pricing (MP), Equality Matching (EM), or Communal Sharing (CS). Consider a culture in which morality and everyday practice center around respect for elders and ancestors (AR) together with pooling of labor and resources (CS). It seems likely, and ethnographic evidence suggests, that such a culture cannot simultaneously emphasize balanced exchanges and even distributions (EM) or wage labor, rents, and equity-based moral principles (MP). All of these social forms are present in every culture, but each aspect of each activity has to be one or another; a status-graded distribution in which chiefs get the most and elders get a lot (AR) is not an even distribution (EM). If a task is organized in a CS framework so that everyone just pitches in until the work is done without keeping track of individual responsibilities or contributions, people cannot be paid a per hour or per piece wage (MP). CS, AR, EM, and MP are four distinct alternatives; therefore it is hard to see how one could find high positive correlations among all four—or why one would conflate them into a single construct of COL.

Indeed, some negative correlations among relational commitments are logically necessary because time and effort allocated to one relationship cannot be allocated to other relationships. Relationships make competing demands, and people must make choices among these conflicts, prioritizing one kind of relationship over others. Furthermore, one kind of implementation of a given relational model may tend to exclude others. For example, different implementations of CS may be at odds with each other, so that cultures that emphasize the immutability of kin groups and obligations to them may devalue age sets, voluntary associations, nationalism, corporate loyalty, or love and marriage. A group of wives sharing a husband differs psychologically from a group of husbands sharing a wife, although both are COL. Cultures that implement AR in terms of age, gender, and caste cannot simultaneously structure those same hierarchies according to achievement, and differ from cultures that do.

Cultures that value groups may devalue dyadic relationships. Among cultures that emphasize dyadic partnerships, some emphasize romantic love, some emphasize marriage, some emphasize compadres (one's relationship with his or her child's godparents), some emphasize bond friendships (blood brotherhood), and some emphasize siblingship. Even if family ties are important, Hsu (1983) theorized that psychology differs according to which family dyad is given cultural precedence.

Relationships of any given type may be important in different ways. There are theoretical contexts in which the theorist wants to distinguish between the cultural perception of a given kind of relationship as natural or inevitable; the perception of the relationship as valuable, right, and proper; the subjective desire to form such relationships; and the satisfaction people experience in these relationships. In addition, people are intensely interested in, excited to discover, and eager to discuss relationships they disapprove of—that is what makes Jerry Springer and the tabloids successful and culturally salient. Furthermore, among cultures that value a given kind of relationship, there are striking differences depending on the substitutability of the partners or participants. Tahitians desire heterosexual cohabitation and value parent–child relationships but think of both as mutable; they feel it is easy and proper to find a new partner or to send a child to live with foster parents (Levy, 1973). It is very good to have a partner and very good to have children and parent figures, but compared with many other cultures, it is not so important to Tahitians who the partners and children are or whether they change. For a contrast, think of Victorian English culture or traditional Hindu India, in which widows could not remarry. COL conflates all these kinds of sociality, treating them as if they resulted from the same psychological processes and had the same psychological consequences.

Conflating 10 Types of Autonomy

Is IND a coherent cultural kind, constitutive of a consistent psychology? Probably not. Independence can take many forms. The United States is focused on individual rights and liberties, which, of course, are something totally social: Other people give you rights, namely third parties (constitutions, judges, police) who constrain the actions of those who might interfere with your rights. The extreme of this kind of IND is libertarianism, the doctrine that

each person should be free to do anything without constraint or social obligation, provided he or she does not infringe others' liberties. Libertarianism has little in common with hermitism or urban isolation, which are extremes of a more widespread sort of IND in which people seek separation without relationships (Douglas, 1978). Withdrawal has various flavors. Zen Buddhist meditation is other worldly; practitioners focus inward to transcend the self and merge with the ultimate unity. Buddhists passively ignore or abandon relationships by turning inward, while other forms of IND involve active resistance or antipathy toward relationships. This resistance to relational constraints takes distinctly different forms; the Friends (Quakers) peacefully reject hierarchy and quietly resist most authority, while some anarchists throw bombs. Another entirely different antisocial psychology is evident in psychopaths who lack sociomoral emotions and in cultures like Nazi Germany that foster a kind of sociopathy.

Hermits may be countersocial, but they are not characterized by antisocial personality disorder. Buddhists differ from Quakers, and libertarians differ again from libertines. In turn, the self-indulgence of libertines is different from the individual self-fulfillment fostered by some cultures, for example in the quest for religious salvation or aesthetic satisfaction. Compare the "do your own thing" hedonism of late 1960s drug countercultures with the Plains Indians' vision quests. In these vision quests young men went out alone to starve themselves, expose themselves to extreme cold, or hang themselves by hooks through their chest muscles to induce visions that informed them of the identity of their guardian spirit. Hippies were not into religious self-torture.

Competitiveness is not integrally related to any of these, as Margaret Mead (1937/1961) pointed out on the basis of ethnographic comparisons and Oyserman et al. (2002) showed statistically. Scandinavians are extremely individualist and extremely noncompetitive (Thomsen et al., 2001). Competitiveness takes many forms; it may be oriented toward winning for the pleasure of beating others or toward pursuit of adulation and fame. Both pure competitiveness and status seeking are relative to other persons such that one person's success excludes others' success. Thus, competitiveness and status seeking contrast with *achievement motivation*, which is something else again; like hedonism and self-fulfillment, it differs from competition and status seeking because it is intrinsically unrelated to social comparison. Achievement motivation is a kind of maximizing rationalism according to which one planfully does the most with what one has.

Of course, self-indulgent hedonism, self-realization, achievement motivation, status seeking, and competition are all highly social relationships in other respects, organized with respect to socially constituted goals, means, and rules of the game. Whether any of these varieties of IND are empirically associated remains to be determined. I am not aware of any published convergent–discriminant analysis of measures of individualism. In Denmark, the standard measures of individualism are uncorrelated (except for two measures that are negatively correlated), nor are these measures correlated in analyses combining Danish and US participants (Thomsen et al., 2001). Particular cultures may emphasize one or another of these forms of IND, combine any subset, or link one of these forms of IND with an emphasis on certain kinds of relationships. Hippies combined self-indulgence with active resistance to authority, a joyfully anarchist rejection of certain social obligations and a communal spirit of shared identity and mutual love. In Scandinavia, strong IND goes along with socialist economic transfers (e.g., extremely high taxation to support social services and health care) and even stronger egalitarian norms and practices. Scandinavians greatly value autonomy and independence of opinion, yet interpersonal competition is discouraged in most areas of life, such as education, and it is highly improper to compare oneself with others, much less think of oneself as better than one's peers. Scandinavians assiduously avoid self-promotion and are embarrassed at the disclosure of accomplishments that place them above others. Recent results demonstrate that Danes score at least as highly on all measures on independence as do Americans, and significantly higher on most measures. Yet Danes do not show self-enhancing false uniqueness bias. Furthermore, measures of independence are unrelated to measures of self-enhancement within the Danish sample (Thomsen et al., 2001). This cultural combination of autonomy with modest self-effacement is common in traditional foraging societies as well (Mead, 1937/1961).

IND conflates all these empirically and conceptually distinct phenomena, positing a psychology common to them all. IND amalgamates Thomas Paine, Vincent van Gogh, Mahatma Gandhi, Michael Jordan, Hugh Hefner, and Adolf Hitler into one category!

Another problem with the IND and COL constructs is that they disregard the context specificity of cultural precepts and prototypes. Americans who are very individualistic at work, while painting, or while playing chess may yet be highly collectivistic at home, in church, or on a submarine patrol. The IND and COL constructs (and the items used to measure them) assume that attitudes and behaviors are uniform across cultural domains ("I always state my opinions very clearly"; "I like my privacy"; "Before making a decision, I always consult with others"; "I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact"). Psychologists know from personality research that behavior varies greatly according to situation and that cultural precepts and prototypes are context contingent as well. Consider how privacy is relative: What people expect to disclose to therapists they may conceal from their spouses, and vice versa; what they eagerly reveal to a stranger on an airplane they may not want disclosed to neighbors. Respect is context dependent as well. In many cultures, wives show quiet respect and deference to their husbands in public, whereas they are assertive and forthright with their husbands when the two are alone. The Japanese wife who humbly serves tea to her husband and his guest nonetheless controls the family finances, giving her husband his weekly allowance. If norms and values are defined contextually and are meaningful only with respect to situationally defined factors, it does not make sense to ask respondents to answer global questions that require them to average across contexts. For Moose in Burkina Faso and people of many other West African cultures, it is absolutely essential to maintain privacy about personal affairs and plans because disclosure makes one vulnerable to fatal attacks by sorcerers and witches. Men planning to leave the country for a couple of years to seek work abroad typically tell no one ahead of time, not even their wives and siblings. However, they have no desire to work, eat, relax, or sleep alone and they often invite a companion to come along and stay in the vicinity when they go off into the bushes to urinate or defecate. For Moose, self-disclosure is dangerous and foolish, but a desire to be alone is regarded as bizarre, hostile, or an indication of illicit activities. It does not make sense for researchers to assess average

levels of such cultural traits because their meaning is not constant across contexts within the culture.

Perhaps the reason that IND makes intuitive sense to Americans and some Western Europeans is that, although it is a hodgepodge, it is our hodgepodge. IND is the concatenation of features that, in our own ideology and folk sociology, Americans perceive as defining our culture. COL is an abstraction that formalizes our ideological representation of the antithetical other, a cultural vision of the rest of the world characterized in terms of what we imagine we are not. If so, then the implication of Oyserman et al.'s (2002) meta-analyses is that, as it turns out, a major contribution of cross-cultural psychology in the last 2 decades is to show that American popular ideology does not make very good scientific theory.

Confusing the Individual With the Collective

From a meta-theoretical point of view, the funny thing about research on IND and COL is that it has often approached culture as if it were psychology. The research reviewed by Oyserman et al. (2002) treats culture as another individual trait, measuring individual differences as if culture were a personality dimension. This does not make sense—especially if the goal is to see how culture and psychology are related. A culture is not an attribute of a person, nor is it the mean value of the attributes of some aggregate of individuals. Individual differences in IQ, musical ability, extraversion, achievement motivation, or preference for chocolate are not cultural differences per se. Such differences might result from cultural differences, but attributes of individuals cannot be culture, by definition. Taking the mean of a group of individual scores does not make such variables into measurements of culture. If the IND and COL scales measured culture, then there would be a wide range of cultures in every family, neighborhood, and ethnic group—and of course within each of the most culturally homogeneous nations.

Read the sample items Oyserman et al. (2002) used in Table 1 to illustrate the aspects of IND and COL. They are first-person statements about what "I" like or what "I" do. These are items written by (methodological) individualists; they are about personal attitudes and preferences and as such do not tap the social obligations, roles, and reference groups that, theory says, ought to matter to collectivists. Moreover, none of them assess what anthropologists consider culture: norms ("It is good to have more than one husband"), values and fears (wanting to appear on TV, concern about inadvertently violating a taboo with fatal imminent sanctions), cultural prototypes (Snow White, Tiger Woods), technology and artifacts (HTML, cell phones, hoes, amulets), and above all, institutions (schools, judicial systems, threshing bees) and practices (placing prayer offerings in front of your door every morning, jogging with headphones on, clitoridectomy).

Even if psychologists go beyond measuring attributes of individuals, it is not clear that the current mainstream approach is workable. Psychologists are trained to think in terms of quantitative dimensions or polar oppositions, but these styles of theorizing may not work for studying cultures or their psychological consequences and substrates. Cultures are somewhat like systems, with some fundamental qualitative differences in how they operate. As an analogy, consider kinds of engines or propulsion systems such as electric motors, internal combustion engines, jet engines, ion propulsion, sails, and oars. The differences among them are not captured by any dimensions or even contrasts between polar opposites (What is the opposite of rowing?). Similarly, it would not make much sense to use dimensions or binary oppositions to compare animals, green plants, fungi, bacteria, and viruses. Chlorophyll is not a dimension and has no opposite. Of course, important differences among societies can be measured and turned into dimensions by averaging across individuals, but that does not make every quantifiable dimension theoretically coherent nor every dimension cultural. Per capita income, life expectancy, and suicide rates have pervasive consequences that are likely to be linked to psychological processes, and they are influenced by culture, but they are not culture as such.

Cultures have always overlapped and interpenetrated to some degree, with some persons able to function in—or identify themselves with—more than one culture. This is increasingly the case today, yet it is still easy to identify thousands of separate cultures, that is, ways of life that are qualitatively distinct. Cultures theoretically can be, and occasionally are, discrete, bounded social systems. However, when comparing samples from different nations, one never finds qualitative differences in IND or COL; scores overlap enormously, with similar ranges and mean differences mostly much less than one standard deviation. In contrast, consider what one would get if one asked people whether they know the meaning of *sangenaado,* can pronounce *three,* know how to play a clapping game while pounding millet in a mortar, eat dogs, plan to excise their daughter's clitoris, or carve jack-o-lanterns and go trick-or-treating. Suppose one asked people whether they would like to make the hadj, wish to interview deceased kin to determine moral responsibility for the death, or regard the emperor as in some way sacred. Meaning systems, collective practices, coordinative competencies, and socially constituted goals such as these demarcate fairly discrete cultural boundaries; IND and COL do not.

What Methods Would Be Better?

I anticipate that many cultural psychologists reading my critique will become cross cultural psychologists. They will probably respond to this article in one of two ways. They may argue that IND and COL are the best dimensions for comparing cultures but that current scales inevitably contain a lot of random error. In that case, they should use taxometric analysis to see whether these inevitably noisy, error-full measures do tap latent qualitatively distinct taxa—that is, cultures (Haslam & Kim-Whatford, 2001; Waller & Meehl, 1998). If IND and COL measure culture, taxometric analyses will confirm the existence of latent, qualitatively distinct cultural types (see Haslam, 1997). Alternatively, some (cross) cultural psychologists will respond that, of course, IND and COL are not culture but rather are mediators of the effects of culture on psychological processes. If so, then my recommendation is to collect categorical data on cultural participation and do something like structural equation modeling to see if IND and COL are indeed the mediators of cultural effects on basic psychological processes. But both of these approaches are predicated on the validity of the two constructs, which Oyserman et al.'s (2002) meta-analyses do not support. We need another way to study culture.

Can psychologists find alternatives to rating scales? Dumont's (1986) work illustrates one alternative approach to IND from

anthropology and social theory. Psychological anthropologists rely primarily on participant observation, on the premise that culture is that which is socially transmitted or constituted. To grasp a culture you must participate in the transmission relationships and interactive processes of constitution. There may be approaches that are quicker, more cost effective, or less personally demanding than participant observation—although they may not be as much fun or as rewarding as studying culture by living it. Another approach that is justifiably growing in popularity is collaboration among researchers from different cultures. However, it is essential to keep in mind the fundamental fact that even social scientists cannot readily perceive or abstractly articulate most aspects of their own cultures—at least not until they have participated deeply and extensively in a very different culture. That fact that one has a psyche does not make one a psychologist, and having a culture does not necessarily make one an anthropologist, either. Practical competence does not imply exegetical competence because procedural knowledge is not semantic knowledge; it takes a lot of training to translate one into the other. Furthermore, a century of fieldwork has proven that it is the outsider who is able to articulate cultural practices that are invisible and commonsensical to insiders. That is why Americans read Alexis de Tocqueville: Outsiders remark and reflect on practices, institutions, meanings, and goals that violate their own implicit expectations.

To tap implicit knowledge, competence, motives, and evaluations, researchers have used depth interviewing and life-history collection (e.g., Hollan & Wellenkamp, 1996; Kurtz, 1993; Levy, 1973) as well as projective tests (e.g., Edgerton, 1971). Such methods work best in conjunction with participant observation, as these authors have demonstrated (see also Spiro, 1956).

Responses to scenarios have some promise (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Peng et al., 1997; Triandis, Chen, & Chan, 1998). However, scenarios share some of the limitations of other reflective verbal self reports, have met with mixed success, and still require validation against other methods. Consider recent work on honor and violence. In a landmark book, Nisbett and Cohen (1996) found that among White men, homicide in response to insults occurs at rates several times higher in the South than in the North of the United States. Nisbett and Cohen attributed this to an *honor complex* involving distinctive norms and expectations about others' attitudes toward those who respond aggressively to insults. Yet in several carefully conducted subsequent studies using scenarios, responses to videotaped interactions, and staged incidents, there were no differences between Southern and Northern participants in predictions of their own emotions or aggression in response to provocations, in attitudes toward or preferences for interacting with aggressive actors or those who ignored insults, or in endorsements of potential violent responses (D'Andrade, 2001; Vandello & Cohen, 2001). This lack of difference in verbal responses is especially striking because in one experiment, participants watched a videotape of an incident resembling the staged events in a study conducted by Nisbett and Cohen. That study measured the actual responses of University of Michigan students when insulted unexpectedly. When insulted, the cortisol and testosterone levels in University of Michigan students from the South rose much more than in students from the North. Immediately after the insult, Southerners also displayed more aggression in a covert measure of how closely they approached before stepping out of the way of a large man walking down the middle of the hall toward them. Taken together, these studies suggest that persons from the North and the South have the same norms of civility, have the same preferences for polite, mild-mannered others, and make the same predictions about their own feelings and actions when insulted—yet Southerners are several times more likely to assault or kill those who insult them. There are dramatic differences in cultural practices and endocrine responses yet no differences in norms, emotional introspection, participants' expectations about their own responses, or participants responses to others' reactions to insults. In these studies, the attitudes do not predict the murders. Yet in other studies, Southerners were found to be more courteous and more ready to condone violence in response to insults (particularly against women) than Northerners (see review by Cohen, Vandello, & Rantilla, 1998).

The bottom line is that no method is valid unless it builds on deep, extensive prior knowledge of the cultures being assessed. Sitting at one's desk, one cannot design a universal psychological instrument. On the other hand, this does not mean that participant observation is infallible or that unverified ethnographies can all be trusted—in fieldwork as in the lab, not all results are replicable. The only sound approach is to use a variety of complementary methods, each replicated against similar studies and checked against results from the other methods.

What Is Culture, and How Should We Compare Cultures?

Well then, what do we mean by *culture*? A culture is a socially transmitted or socially constructed constellation consisting of such things as practices, competencies, ideas, schemas, symbols, values, norms, institutions, goals, constitutive rules, artifacts, and modifications of the physical environment. These components may be homologous in the sense that they map closely onto each other so that the relations among, say, symbols, and correspond closely to the relations among, say, artifacts or practices. These components may be causally determinative of each other, and they may be mutually constitutive in the sense that some exist at all only because of some others. We don't know for sure; the degree and nature of integration among components has always been debated but is not well understood. In particular, verbal responses to artificial probes may or may not correspond to other kinds of discourse or cultural components of other types. Indeed, the extent of integration may vary from culture to culture and may depend on the type of component.

How, then, should cultural psychologists characterize, compare, and contrast cultures? Anthropologists—who have been working on this problem for over a century—have some answers that may be useful to psychologists. The following are some (overlapping, cross-cutting, and interlocked) aspects of cultures that have pervasive consequences for everyday life and probably for psychological processes.

Subsistence and economic systems. Subsistence and economic systems affect every aspect of life. Analyzed in terms of extraction and ecology, the basic types are foraging, farming, pastoralism, and the varieties of manufacture and service for exchange. In East Africa, at least, there are personality differences between people from pastoral and farming communities (Edgerton, 1971). However, contra Marx (1857–1858/1973), subsistence systems are not necessarily the core of culture; the personality differences among

adults from the same East African culture engaged in different subsistence systems are smaller than the differences among farmers of different East African cultures or among pastoralists of different East African cultures. This preeminence of culture over economy in personality traits is especially striking because in East Africa the pastoralism–farming contrast itself is quite culturally loaded.

Another way to approach this is to compare economic systems—social systems for producing, transferring, and consuming goods and services (Polanyi, 1968).[1] Economic systems apparently have some psychological sources (McClelland, 1971) and are likely to have widespread psychological consequences as well. (Indeed, the conceptual ancestors of IND and COL were comparisons between household production and market economies.) Studying the psychology of subsistence and economic systems would be a relatively easy but theoretically important step beyond IND and COL.

Religion. Religious practices and beliefs may define the ultimate purposes of human life; perceptions of human nature; paths to truth; the importance or irrelevance of everyday action; the nature of good and evil; the immediate and final consequences of good and evil deeds; the possibilities for redress and forgiveness; the meaning of birth, death, pain, and misfortune; the existence of cycles of rebirth or an afterlife; important bases of enmity and solidarity; and the character of the home and the body (see, e.g., Spiro, 1970). Imagine the psychological consequences of the belief that your salvation or damnation is predetermined (Weber, 1905/1949) or the emotional impact of knowing that after you die innumerable generations of your descendants will pray to you and feed you while you watch over them, protecting and punishing.

Marriage. Systems of marriage affect the age at which men and women marry, where they reside when they marry, who makes the choice of spouses and the factors that affect that choice, possibilities for and rates of divorce, options for widows if they remarry, the number of spouses and the relations among them, the number and parentage of children, the composition and economic nature of the household, and many other aspects of daily life. Surely these have profound effects on psychology. Imagine, for example, the implications for a woman married to a man 40 years older than she is and the knowledge that when he dies, she will choose a husband from among his younger brothers and sons. Or imagine having several women who are all your "mothers" (Kurtz, 1993).

Kinship systems. Kinship systems define identities and lifelong relationships, including residence patterns and cooperation in production and mutual aid. In matrilineal systems, for example, people belong to the descent group of their mother and inherit real property, chattels, political offices, and key social roles from their mother's brothers. Men pass on most of their estate and social responsibilities not to their own sons but to their sisters' sons. What are the psychological results of growing up in a household where primary responsibility for discipline rests with your uncle, whereas your father is only a sort of household guest? How does it affect people's psyche to move out of their natal household at adolescence, either to form a new village composed only of their peers (Wilson, 1951) or to join a roving communal group of cattle-rustling, free-living, vainglorious warriors (Spencer, 1988)?

Relational models. Implementations of relational models determine the kinds of relationships that are important and the character of those relationships (A. P. Fiske, 1991). What are the effects of living in a society where MP relations (e.g., selling, lending at interest, working for wages, or just calculating rates of return) are denigrated and limited to semihostile interactions with strangers? How does it affect the psyche to mark hierarchical differentiation in nearly every interaction and to have to defer obediently to the wishes of all your elders and betters of more noble birth? What kind of psychology results from sharing everything you have with your kin and giving anything you have to anyone else who asks for it (Marshall, 1976)?

Sex and food. Rules regarding sex and food channel, orient, and shape basic needs. What is the mentality of people who must be celibate for life or who starve themselves (sometimes to death) in the quest for religious salvation (Babb, 1996; Brown, 1988)? How do they manage the self-control this requires? Conversely, consider life in a culture in which people regularly engage in rituals of extreme sexual license in which normal taboos are suspended so that adultery and even some kinds of incest are expected; how does this shape desire, jealousy, guilt, and self-control? How do mandatory, universal homosexual relations affect the solidarity of warriors (Herdt, 1984)? In nearly all traditional African societies, men and women never share a meal; how does this affect male–female relationships? What are the differences between identity based on religion, identity based on undergoing initiation together, and identity based on *milk kinship* with the families of women at whose breasts one nursed? What are the emotional and relational consequences of eating one's own kin and of knowing that when one dies, one's kin will consume one's body in turn (Gillison, 1983)?

Institutions and practices. Specific institutions and practices that permeate certain cultures undoubtedly have profound psychological effects. There appear to be substantial psychological consequences of literacy (see Goody, 1986), schooling, constant warfare or feuding with perennial threat of attack, the honor complex (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Peristiany, 1966), regular use of psychotropic drugs, watching television many hours per day, or (as is widespread in Africa and elsewhere) constant childhood responsibility for care of younger siblings. What are the effects on the psyche of life-long residence in a stable community compared with a nomadic life in which people move frequently to new camps or cities where they must form relationships with new associates? How does it affect self-concept to grow up, as most Africans do, without ever being praised for your efforts, complimented for acquiring skills, or recognized for accomplishments? How does it affect cognitive and social development for African children to grow up under the care of older siblings and, by age 7, take constant responsibility for caring for younger siblings? How does it affect cognition to grow up, as children do in most traditional societies, without adults ever explaining anything?

These are only examples of some of the potentially important distinctions in human lifeways. Some of these distinctions lend themselves to simple taxonomies, some exhibit bewildering phenomenological complexity, challenging the theoretical imagination. But all of them are characterizations of socially transmitted or

[1] The standard typology of economic systems, first clearly elaborated by Polanyi (1968), corresponds closely to the relational models taxonomy (Fiske, 1991).

socially constituted forms of sociality, because humans have evolved to be culturally social animals. Very few of these distinctions have been systematically explored with the tools of modern social and cognitive psychology. When scientific psychology and anthropology first emerged, virtually all psychologists and anthropologists explored cultures in relation to psyches and psyches in relation to cultures. It is time to do this again, by drawing on the combined strengths these two complementary disciplines have developed in the last century.

Some of my best friends are psychologists, I even have some in my family. Reading this, some of them have said, "We psychologists want to study dimensions because we want to find factors that are universal. Studying practices and institutions is too particularistic; there are just so many of them. Anyway, we have to use verbal reports; participant observation is too hard—it takes way too long and it's too hot in those villages!" Some will say, "Realistically, psychologists have to publish six articles a year, and you just can't do that if you're hanging out in some village far from your lab. Let anthropologists do the fieldwork."

I say, "You can't get something for nothing!" Where would neuropsychology be if psychologists all said, "Neurons! We can't study neurons—there are too many of them, and they're so small!" Just imagine if developmental psychologists never studied children "because they take too long to grow up—and besides, those babies can't circle the numbers on our scales." Lorenz and Tinbergen did not give up their research on account of the bird droppings (or win their Nobel Prize by studying dimensions). Eric Kandel didn't abandon sea slugs because they were too slimy, and he didn't use verbal reports, either. If one wants to know how the mind works and how cultural processes interact with psychological processes, one has to get close to the phenomena. Culture is in everyday life; to study it the researcher has to live it and learn it the way informants do (A. P. Fiske, 2001). Psychologists should use other methods to complement participant observation and use participant observation to validate other methods. But other methods cannot replace the criterion instrument, which is the researcher, being socialized through social participation.

If psychologists do participant observation and study systems of kinship, religion, taboos, and other institutions and practices, does this mean we have to limit ourselves to idiographic descriptions and cultural relativism? Not at all. Darwin started with finch beaks, but he got pretty nomothetic in the end. Beginning with close analyses of particular practices, we can compile cases, make comparisons, observe patterns, make inductive inferences, build deductive models, and test them. That is how science works, beginning always with detailed observations of nature. Freud, Durkheim, Piaget, and Weber: all began with closely analyzed case studies; from these they built their grand nomothetic theories.

The characterization of cultures according to IND and COL was a tremendously important advance for psychology because it stimulated researchers to examine their cultural presuppositions and to investigate whether psychological processes identified in the West also operate in other cultures. Psychologists have now reached the point where we need to go beyond testing whether cultural data challenge our findings. We must transcend our ethnocentric framework and not just study how other cultures differ from the United States but explore what they are intrinsically. It is time to analyze culturally constituted institutions and practices to discover innumerable new, hitherto unsuspected psychological processes that shape culture and are shaped by it.

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