



Lifespan Development and Culture

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GLOSSARY

apprenticeship A cultural mode of learning where the child (learner) is considered to be a novice who participates in cultural activities as performed by parents (knower) or other experts.

attachment The unique emotional bond that develops between an infant and his or her primary caregivers; the internalization of the mode and quality of these special relationships is supposed to influence the development of later relationships.

collectivism A value system that maximizes and prioritizes harmony and interdependence of the group, especially the family; other terms that are sometimes used to denote this value framework are sociocentrism and communitarianism.

cultural conflict The confrontation of different cultural value systems within an institutional setting (e.g., a school) or a quasi-institutional environment (e.g., a pediatrician's office); in particular, individualist and collectivist value systems

have been described as cultural scripts that often specify mutually exclusive choices for individuals' behavior.

cultural learning The processes of verbal interaction, participation in cultural activities, observation, and instruction so as to acquire cultural knowledge.

individualism A value system that maximizes and prioritizes individual choice, independence, and technological mastery.

life stages Functional historical units during ontogeny that can be characterized by universal developmental tasks such as development of attachments during infancy and becoming a productive worker during adulthood (not everyone is a parent); the optimal solution of the universal tasks depends on the sociocultural environment and, therefore, is context and culture specific.

parental ethnotheories Belief systems that specify values with regard to children, parents, and developmental processes; parental ethnotheories are shared among members of cultural communities and set the frame for parental behavior.

peer relations The socioemotional bonds among age mates and between younger children and older children; peers are differentially defined in different cultural environments, being mainly unrelated friends in individualist societies and related children (e.g., siblings, cousins) in collectivist societies.

socialization The process of growing up in a cultural environment; it stresses the active acquisition of information and knowledge of the developing child in the context of a social relational matrix.

Culture can be perceived as external to the individual in terms of artifacts and institutions; internal to the individual in terms of knowledge, skills, and values; and interactive to the individual in terms of social practices and social interactions. The role of culture in behavior is pervasive and should be considered carefully in any examination of human development over the lifespan. Human development can be understood as the lifelong interactional processes of perceiving and experiencing culture as triggered from the outside, created from the inside, and cocreated with others. Thus, processes of development and processes of culture are inextricably intertwined. Although groups of people share culture and negotiate cultural issues conjointly, at the same time, culture is a subjective individual process.

1. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN CULTURAL LIFESPAN PSYCHOLOGY

This section first presents the ecocultural approach as informed by cross-cultural methodology. Then, it presents the sociohistorical approaches that mainly represent the cultural perspective. Finally, it introduces the developmental pathway approach as a new synthesis that incorporates the ecocultural and sociohistorical approaches and takes the whole lifespan into account.

1.1. The Ecocultural Approach

The ecocultural approach emphasizes the role of culture in adapting to the environment and derives from the work of John Berry as well as John and Beatrice Whiting. Berry performed large-scale studies in 21 different sites around the world to analyze how ecocultural information is transformed into styles of perception and cognition. He demonstrated how parameters of the ecological environment (e.g., spatial layout of the landscape) and the mode of subsistence (e.g., farming, foraging) shape the perceptual style of field dependence/independence as the boundedness of perception of patterns to the surrounding visual field.

The Whittings' six-culture study, including research sites from the major parts of the world, was designed on the basis of their ecocultural model linking ecology to modes of subsistence, modes of subsistence to child rearing, child rearing to child personality, and child personality to adult personality. The Whittings' study

examined this developmental trajectory using a set of consistent methods across different cultures.

Recent theoretical formulations of the ecocultural approach have moved research practice away from the cross-cultural transfer of a set of consistent methods to a more cultural approach with methods appropriate for study in each culture. For example, in 1984, Weisner developed a theory in the Whittings' tradition that considers different aspects of the ecocultural model such as subsistence patterns, child-rearing behavior, and assigned roles for men, women, and children—all of which affect behavior. Subsequently, in 1997, Harkness and Super applied the ecocultural approach to their concept of the developmental niche. The developmental niche is defined as the physical and social settings in which children live, the customs of child rearing, and the psychology of caretakers. Their approach emphasizes the importance of parental cultural belief systems as the link between elements of the larger culture to parenting practices and the organization of the daily routine.

Moreover, the ecocultural approach has become synthesized with evolutionary considerations, specifying the course of development conceptualized in the ecocultural model as following an implicit reproductive logic of optimizing an individual's inclusive genetic fitness resulting from his or her own reproductive success as well as from the reproductive success of genetically related individuals.

1.2. The Sociohistorical Tradition

The sociohistorical research tradition in developmental psychology is derived from the work of Vygotsky. It emphasizes that human development is constructed through social interaction, cultural practices, and the internalization of symbolic cultural tools. An example of a cultural tool that is internalized is money; each culture's system of currency influences the development of certain mental strategies for doing mathematics. Cultural practices and tools are developed over long periods of time. Therefore, they have an important historical dimension.

In addition to artifacts taken in isolation, some cultural psychologists, such as Gauvain and Schliemann and colleagues, have explored the cognitive effects of subsistence practices and trades in terms of representation and cognitive operations, respectively. Cultural practices involve everyday experiences and education (both informal and formal). Therefore, practices such as reading and writing, candy selling, and tailoring shape cognitive development. For example, it has been found that carpenters in Brazil have formal operations in the

domain of proportional reasoning that they use for their trade, even though they do not use this level of reasoning when solving some of Piaget and Inhelder's original tasks. These latter tasks use the much less familiar domains of chemistry and physics.

The locus of social interaction is most often between parents and children due to the importance of parents' caring for their young and for transmitting cultural knowledge from generation to generation. However, teacher-child and peer interactions are also important influences on children's development. Some researchers, such as Maynard and Zukow-Goldring, also recently found that sibling interaction is an important socialization force in both technological and nontechnological societies. Social contexts and the interactional patterns within these social dyads and groups influence both cognitive and social development.

Some researchers, such as Bruner, Tomasello and colleagues, and Shweder, have developed some generalized conceptual approaches to cultural psychology. Bruner noted how the structure of language embodies a structuring of human action in terms of agency and intentional actions. The mutual understanding between people of these categorical structures of intentional action is diagnostic of a theory of other minds. It follows that as language develops, so does this mutual understanding of intentional human action. It is the comprehension of other minds that is central to social sharing and, therefore, to culture.

Tomasello and colleagues, in contrast, emphasized the apprenticeship processes, such as imitation and direct teaching, that enable cultural knowledge to be transmitted from generation to generation. Moreover, they emphasized that cultural learning depends on people's empathic understanding of other minds.

Shweder has developed a notion of environmental constraints versus cultural preferences. This distinction integrates an ecocultural approach with the values approach discussed in the next section. Preferences in cultural practices are guided by an individual's cultural value system. However, the nature of the environment provides constraints to which ideal practices must be adapted.

1.3. Cultural Pathways through Universal Development: A New Synthesis

LeVine was the first to argue that developmental goals guide cultural practices of child care and parenting.

He proposed a universal hierarchy of parental goals with survival and health as the foundation, followed by goals relating to economic independence and finally by goals related to the cultural definition of the personality. Systems of developmental goals and values that guide child rearing and socialization for particular parents or groups of parents are called parental ethnotheories of development. Parental ethnotheories can also be thought of as a stage in the lifespan development of cultural values. Two particularly salient models, derived from the industrial and social psychologies of Hofstede, Triandis, and Markus and Kitayama, are individualism and collectivism. These two models are considered to represent different cultural value systems. Each model is adaptive in different ecological environments, thereby incorporating the ecological approach. Each model is actualized through different kinds of social interactions and emphasizes different kinds of social activities and cultural tools, thereby incorporating the sociohistorical approach.

The cultural models are supposed to be linked to the individual's conception of the self in terms of an independent (cf. autonomous, self-contained, and separate) self linked to individualism and an interdependent orientation (cf. allocentrism and relationalism) toward self linked to collectivism. Accordingly, the primary goal of socialization in the independent model is an autonomous, individuated, self-fulfilled person who enters into social relationships and responsibilities by personal choice. The primary goal of socialization in the interdependent model is for the mature person to be embedded in a network of relationships with responsibilities to others. Personal achievements are ideally in the service of a collectivity, most importantly the family. With these cultural goals in mind, many researchers (e.g., Greenfield and Cocking in 1994) have examined the influence of independent and interdependent goals on parenting styles and child development.

The independent pathway can be characterized as follows. Parents and society socialize children to see themselves as predominantly separate from the social context, that is, as bounded individuals who are unitary and stable by definition. The tasks of development are for children to express themselves, their uniqueness, and their own goals. The role of others is to provide reflections for self-evaluation. This model is fostered by, and adapted to, large-scale commercial societies with complex technologies.

The interdependent pathway can be characterized as follows. Parents and society socialize children to

see themselves as connected to the social context and as having flexible and variable selves. The tasks of development are for children to occupy their place in society, to fit in, and to promote the goals of others. The role of others is to provide self-definitions. This model is fostered by, and adapted to, small-scale subsistence societies with simpler technologies.

There are important developmental changes in both of these orientations over the lifespan and over historical time. From a lifespan perspective, the two pathways travel through universal developmental nodes with particular issues that must be negotiated at particular points in each person's lifespan. Each issue presents a particular transformation of the basic value orientations.

For example, a universal node of infancy is attachment, which can be negotiated by maximizing independence (e.g., with a separate crib and baby room as cultural practices) or interdependence (e.g., by cosleeping between mother and baby, by carrying the baby on the caregiver's body). However, Shweder's distinction between preferences and constraints would also call attention to the fact that if a family is living in a small space, ecological constraints might dictate closer sleeping arrangements than their preferred ideal.

Another universal node of development is peer relations. In a culture that prioritizes independence (e.g., mainstream U.S. culture), peer relations focus on separating from the family. In contrast, in cultures that prioritize interdependence, peer relations often focus on relationships with cousins and siblings. Inherent in the pathway approach, with the conception of nodes that organize developmental progress, is the assumption that life trajectories are meaningful, continuous, and coherent. This implies that the early socialization experiences set the stage for the subsequent developmental tasks during the lifespan. After childhood socialization has resulted in an early conception of a more independent or more interdependent self, adolescence constitutes the transition to adulthood. The independent pathway conceives of adolescence as an educational moratorium with the distinct socializing instruction to develop a separate and unique identity. The interdependent pathway conceives of adolescence as a short transition period that is immediately followed by starting one's own family. Accordingly, ages at marriage and birth of the first child differ significantly across these cultural orientations. Adulthood in the interdependent pathway is primarily defined by procreation and parenting. For example, in Cameroonian Nso, a person is considered

an adult only if he or she has children (a badge of interdependence), irrespective of age and expertise. Adulthood in the independent pathway is defined, apart from legal boundaries, mainly through educational attainments and economic independence from the family of origin. Finally, old age differs with regard to the greater integration in the families of offspring and especially the respect and care that is focused on the older generation in the interdependence framework. From the historical perspective, Greenfield in 2000 explored the impact of historically driven ecological change on cultural apprenticeship and cognitive representation. Studying two generations of Zinacantec Mayan families over a period of two decades, she demonstrated that the historical transition from a subsistence ecology to a commercial ecology transformed the apprenticeship from a more interdependent style of cultural learning to a more independent one. At the same time, artisanal products, the fruits of a changing apprenticeship process, moved away from a model of community creativity toward a model of individual self-expression.

Critics of these views often argue that the conception of these two cultural orientations is overly simplistic and does not cover the complexity of human psychology within and across cultures. Although everyone exists as both an individual and a group member, and although this dualism is part of the evolutionary heritage and is a structured part of each social group, each social group also denotes a complex system with its own set of priorities. A system of priorities, by its very nature, includes both kinds of components. It is simply that the independence components dominate in one kind of system, whereas the interdependence components dominate in the other. In addition, individualist systems prefer certain forms of social relationships, whereas collectivist systems prefer others. Logically (although less is known about this), individualist systems prefer certain forms of independence, whereas collectivist systems prefer others. Adding to the complexity, priorities shift through processes of ecocultural change and intercultural contact.

Nonetheless, it is heuristic to envision two idealized systems that form two extremes of ecology and values. Each system is not simply a collection of individuals with their individual traits. Instead, each system constitutes a deep structure paradigm that generates many characteristics in a multitude of domains and developmental periods. Although every culture has individual differences, one must note that these differences play a

larger role and are valued more in individualist cultures. Note too that each orientation has its own mode around which individual differences are organized. The two cultural types are structured systems; they are not simply overlapping distributions on a common scale or two. Finally, cultural traits are, by definition, coconstructed and shared among a defined group of people. Consequently, they are less variable than non-cultural characteristics.

The nature of development as an individual acquisition process precludes the development of uniformity. Thus, even if there is an ideal modal picture of personality in a cultural community, different real pictures of personality constitute the actual spectrum of the population. Nevertheless, there are obvious differences in developmental pathways that can be captured best by these different value orientations. Indeed, the concept of two paradigmatic pathways allows continuities across developmental pathways to be revealed for the first time. In addition, individuals develop genuine profiles from which they experience themselves as consistent and coherent.

2. DEVELOPMENTAL PATHWAYS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY: CONSEQUENCES FOR APPLICATION

Intergroup contact is a major source of diverse developmental pathways in multicultural societies such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. As conflicting ethnotheories of development come into contact, many different combinations of values and practices arise. Often, the developmental pathway of the dominant majority tends to be taken for granted as normative, or even universal, rather than as cultural. Intergroup contact raises ethnic identity awareness, often bringing the self-identity of racially distinctive groups to the forefront of developmental issues. This generates more complex processes of cultural learning such as those involved in bilingual and bicultural development.

The distinctive patterns of socialization and development manifest in various groups in the United States and other multicultural societies derive, to a great extent, from ancestral values. Therefore, the specific values that ethnic groups maintain must be understood with respect to ancestral homelands. However, the type of power relation between dominant groups and less dominant groups, as well as the

interactions among various groups, also molds cultural development.

Acknowledging cultural influences as a genuine component of development also implies that there is not one (normative) conception of health and psychological well-being. Rather, the definition of healthy development is relative to overarching developmental goals that vary from culture to culture. The following section highlights the implications of incorporating culture into our understanding of developmental problems and health. It introduces two examples. First, it discusses different views on developmental regulation during infancy. Second, it discusses intercultural misunderstandings and their alleviation in the school setting.

2.1. Application of Cultural Pathways During Infancy

As discussed earlier, the early socialization environment reflects cultural values pertaining to highly valued developmental goals within specific contexts. During infancy, developmental contexts and parenting practices that support interdependent developmental goals imply a close union between mother and baby. Cosleeping, nursing on demand, and constant close body contact constitute the invisible foundation of cultural practices with babies. In this context, mothers often meet their infants' needs before such needs are explicitly expressed.

In contrast, in cultures that subscribe to independent developmental goals, developmental contexts and parenting practices during infancy imply separateness and early autonomous functioning. From birth onward, infants are geared to sleep alone and to sleep through the night to establish the circadian rhythm as early as possible. From early infancy, mothers orient their babies to the object world to foster the infants' exploration and to develop attachment to objects that can potentially replace the caregivers (e.g., security blankets, snuggly toys). As a consequence of these different cultural views on closeness and separation, what is regarded as ideal in the interdependent model of the early parent-child relationship (e.g., establishing constant bodily contact between baby and mother) is evaluated as pathological through the cultural lenses of the independent developmental pathway.

For multicultural societies, conflicts between cultural value systems are the inevitable consequence. These conflicts become especially pertinent when both cultural value systems need to interact. For example, the ideology of a society's health care system, including the

expressed views of pediatricians, is usually oriented to the value system of the majority culture.

When the first Turkish families immigrated into Germany during the 1950s, the common practice of Turkish mothers to swaddle their infants for at least a couple of hours per day was strongly discouraged by pediatricians and health care professionals. They claimed that the infants' freedom of movement and their possibilities to explore their environments were largely disrupted by the swaddling; that is, the Germans' independent cultural values did not mirror the interdependent value system of the Turkish immigrants. In this example, the trust of parents in the health care system on which they must rely is deeply affected and constitutes a major risk factor for minority children's development.

Therefore, culturally sensitive developmental counseling and intervention with babies should rely on the assessment of the preferred modes of parenting as related to the cultural values, resources, and constraints that are available to a particular group. Instead of orienting the parents to the cultural ideals of the majority culture (e.g., encouraging working-class Turkish parents to allow their infants more freedom of movement and exploration possibilities), the cultural reality of the parents must be negotiated in terms of meeting the needs of both the infants and the parents.

2.2. Applications of Cultural Pathways in Schools

Another locus of conflict for the interaction of diverse cultural value systems is the school environment, including school-home interaction. Research on Asian American and Latino children in the United States indicates that their families maintain interdependent and collectivist cultural orientations, although the collectivist orientation becomes more restricted in its expression across the generations (e.g., reserved for family celebrations such as weddings). This reduction across the generations results from a contrasting set of priorities in the individualist host culture. These individualist priorities are especially salient in the institution of the school, where they are strongly socialized.

Children and adolescents often experience these divergent value systems as they go between home and school environments in their daily lives. Greenfield, Raef, and Quiroz analyzed the cultural values of parents, teachers, and children in two schools in Los Angeles. In one study, the sample in one school

consisted of groups of predominantly European American children. As expected, the value systems of parents, teachers, and children were consonant with each other (the expressed values were primarily individualist) and there was no cultural conflict among the three groups.

In the other school, the population consisted entirely of Latino immigrant families from Mexico and Central America. As expected, the value systems of parents, teachers, and children differed markedly from each other. The parents held mainly interdependent or sociocentric values, and the teachers held mainly individualist values. The value systems of the children either were between those of the teachers and the parents or were more similar to those of the teachers. Therefore, the children had to serve incompatible developmental goals at the same time (e.g., being obedient and self-effacing at home while being verbally expressive and self-enhancing at school). This type of conflict can produce emotional distress and alienation from either home or school. Although the teachers in both schools were multiethnic, they were monocultural. Regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, their education and teacher training had made them highly individualist in their teaching practices and educational values.

In a subsequent phase of the research, Greenfield, Rothstein-Fisch, and colleagues developed "Bridging Cultures," a series of teacher training workshops to help teachers understand the two developmental pathways and create a bridge between them for students and their families. In this way, it was hoped that the developmental stress caused by the conflict between the two cultural pathways could be ameliorated. Teachers and researchers found that parents participated more in school activities and that children were less conflicted in their classroom interactions.

Another source of developmental stress may emerge from the peer interactions of children with different value systems. In still another study, Suzuki and colleagues analyzed the reactions of adolescent girls to praise and criticism on school sports teams in Los Angeles. These authors demonstrated that reactions to praise and criticism differed with respect to self-enhancement and self-effacement, as predicted by the ethnic origins of the families. Asian American and Latina players valued self-effacing strategies to a greater extent, whereas African American and European American players valued self-enhancing strategies to a greater extent. Self-effacement serves the collectivist goal of fitting into the group, whereas

self-enhancement serves the individualist goal of standing out from the group. In line with their own value preferences, Asian Americans and Latinas generally evaluated self-enhancement negatively (e.g., as conceit), whereas European Americans and African Americans generally viewed self-effacement negatively (e.g., as hurting the team). In sum, there was a tendency to view as negative violations of one's own cultural model. These negative interpretations of differences may form the roots of cross-cultural misunderstanding and conflict.

During a later phase of the project, an intervention was carried out to try to use the same workshop methodology to help teams and coaches understand the two cultural orientations. The goal was to increase intercultural understanding by introducing the notion of distinct basic value systems. Rather than increasing tolerance and understanding for different points of view, the intervention simply made students more collectivist. Further research is needed to develop means appropriate to the high school level to increase tolerance and understanding of values for the two contrasting pathways of development.

3. CONCLUSION

The sociohistorical approach to the role of culture in development emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural tools as socializing forces in individual development. The ecocultural approach notes that socialization practices that are typical of a particular culture mold behaviors that are adaptive in particular ecocultural niches. The cultural pathways approach organizes cultural differences into two underlying paradigms that guide universal developmental tasks, such as attachment and peer relations, in distinctly different directions. Each of these pathways is created through cultural processes identified by the sociohistorical approach, and each is adapted to a different type of ecocultural niche. Most important, each pathway provides a cultural lens for viewing and evaluating the social world. Therefore, different cultural frameworks may affect people's relationships with each other, resulting in conflicts in multiethnic societies. Many such conflicts could be avoided if understanding of cultural frames of reference were part of the educational system. In conclusion, the theory of cultural pathways through universal development provides an important theoretical framework for real-world application.

See Also the Following Articles

Child Development and Culture ■ Family and Culture

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