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## History and Future of Development in Cross-Cultural Psychology

Heidi Keller and Patricia M. Greenfield

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Our theme is that better integration of a developmental approach into cross-cultural psychology can enhance the future of cross-cultural psychology—methodologically, theoretically, and empirically. Methodologically, developmental psychology contributes contextualized procedures, such as naturalistic observation, suitable for studying behavior in its cultural context. Theoretically, developmentalists point to the fact that the culturally constructed behavior of adults can be viewed as an endpoint along a developmental pathway and that adults provide cultural socialization to the next generation. Theoretically, development also leads to an understanding of how the biologically-grounded factor of maturational stage influences both the process and content of cultural learning. Empirically, a developmental approach leads researchers to investigate the culture-specific shape of developmental stages. These culture-specific developmental patterns are selections from among a set of biologically evolved propensities. As development progresses, culture-specific stages cohere into developmental pathways. Two pathways leading to independent and interdependent construals of the self are identified.

## HISTORY AND FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT IN CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

HEIDI KELLER

*University of Osnabrueck, Germany*

PATRICIA M. GREENFIELD

*University of California, Los Angeles*

**Our theme is that better integration** of a developmental approach into cross-cultural psychology can enhance the future of our field, both theoretically and empirically. Cultural and cross-cultural psychology have had a big influence in many areas of developmental psychology, in which culture has been more highly integrated than in any other subdiscipline of psychology, for example, in infancy research, adolescence, or cognitive development. The impact of cultural and cross-cultural considerations for developmental psychology is mirrored in recent meetings of the Society for Research in Child Development and the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, which form the major organizations in developmental psychology. Culture dominated the programs of both organizations.

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However, the inverse is not true. Developmental psychology has had much less influence on the field of cross-cultural psychology, as represented by the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP). Although there were some excellent developmental offerings on the program of the Silver Jubilee Conference in Bellingham, Washington, in August 1998, developmental research was,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, in the minority; only about one in seven panels was developmental in nature.

One reason for the lack of influence of developmental psychology within the domain of cross-cultural psychology is intellectual: Developmentalists are interested in socialization and enculturation processes, that is, the processes by which children are taught and acquire competencies as they grow up. This view stresses an understanding of culture as process. Cultural processes are simultaneously interactive—they are socially negotiated and internal—inside the psyche. The environment and the individual are seen as both active and interactive. This perspective contrasts substantially with the prevailing idea in cross-cultural psychology of culture as an independent variable. This latter view sees culture as (a) a consistent entity rather than a dynamic process and (b) external to the individual.

We locate a second reason for the lack of influence in the dominant role of social psychology and social psychologists in this society. This orientation is visibly reflected both in the membership directory and in the prevalence of the measurement paradigms of social psychology. Questionnaires are the most frequent methodological tools in cross-cultural studies, as published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* and the *International Journal of Psychology*. Issues of translation and back-translation receive more attention than the establishment of functional equivalence of measures across cultures. This orientation not only limits data collection to elite samples of research participants (those who have enough formal education to be able to fill out questionnaires) but also restricts research to domains that can be verbally reported. In cross-cultural psychology, we note, accordingly, a substantial lack of attention to methods for observing behavior in context; by contrast, naturalistic observation is an extremely important part of the methodological armory of developmental psychology.

For all of these reasons, the cultural and cross-cultural study of development is in a paradoxical position. It is simultaneously a central player in developmental psychology and a marginal player in cross-cultural psychology.

One result of the marginalized position of development in cross-cultural psychology is the lack of attention to developmental stages and their impact on psychological functioning in cross-cultural research. The majority of participants in research published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*

are college students. Nevertheless, the theoretical emphasis in cross-cultural psychology is on the psychology of adults and not on the many facets of adolescence across cultures.

Moreover, there is an implicit assumption that college students form a homogeneous developmental stage across cultures. However, the cultural definition of developmental tasks for this developmental period and the consequent differentiation of societal expectations (e.g., gender roles) differ substantially across cultures. In India, for example, college education for girls is often secondary to marrying and starting a family, whereas U.S. or German students stress the importance of completing their education and realizing their individual life goals before starting a family. These culturally variable role assignments certainly can influence the expression of psychological constructs in behavior. Generally, subjects are selected for their accessibility (college students are the most accessible "adults" to researchers in the university setting) at the unrealized expense of ignoring the cultural meaning of that particular developmental stage.

Considerations of the culturally variable meanings of developmental stages have to be related to the universal maturational grounding of developmental stages. The biological underpinnings of the life history define possibilities as well as constraints (enabling as well as constraining conditions) for the impact of environmental forces. A developmental perspective, therefore, always deals with the interplay between biology and culture and its varying expressions during different life stages. Thus, cultural learning is based on universal developmental tasks; these result from selective forces operating during phylogeny. Ontogeny can therefore be understood as the interface between biology and culture (Keller, 1996, in press). A developmental approach thus offers the potential to unravel mechanisms of interplay between biology and cultural influences. We will demonstrate this view with the example of two different prototypical life trajectories that express different ethnotheoretic priorities in the realization of universal developmental tasks across the life span.

### **UNIVERSALS IN INFANT DEVELOPMENT AND INTERACTION**

Infants all over the world depend on a special caregiving environment due to their altriciality, or relative helplessness, at the time of birth. From a physiological perspective, the full-term human infant often is considered premature; this immature state is necessary because of the phylogenetic brain development that has produced a large head relative to the size of the human

birth canal. The altriciality allows the infant to invest available resources into growth and development in order to become a “better adult” (Alexander, 1989). Helplessness therefore helps the human infant to acquire the significant patterns and strategies of behavior that have proven adaptive for the parental generation. Accordingly, human newborns are highly susceptible to environmental influences that support developmentally appropriate cultural learning.

From a biological perspective, neonates all over the world are equipped with special propensities for relating to primary caregivers. To receive the physical and psychological care required by such immature and helpless creatures, infants are able to attract their caregivers’ attention and elicit caregiving motivation reliably with a special repertoire of inborn characteristics like their facial configuration (*Kindchenschema* or “babyiness”) (Lorenz, 1969) and attachment behaviors, signaling distress like crying or fussing as well as communicative cues like looking, smiling, and vocalizing (Bowlby, 1969).

Infants are equipped with a perceptual system that prefers the human face to other visual displays (Fantz, 1963), to facilitate the familiarizing of significant others. Their social orientation is expressed in their preference for company over being alone; they behave differently toward persons as compared with objects (Brazelton, Koslowski, & Main, 1974; Trevarthen, 1979). They are able to detect contingencies and expect social responsiveness from their interactional partners. They want to be held and carried and are consoled by body contact. Parents are equipped with complementary behavioral propensities to meet the special characteristics of infant behaviors in terms of intuitive parenting programs: They nurse and carry infants in response to distress, look and smile at them, and talk to them with a special language register (baby talk).

Infant capacities, as well as the basic components of parenting behavior, have been identified across a remarkable range of cultures; thus, they would appear to have their origin in the evolutionary history that is universal across the human species (Keller, Lohaus, Völker, Cappenberg, & Chasiotis, 1999). Basically, four systems of parenting can be differentiated, which address the infant’s different needs and prompt relevant socialization experiences at the same time. The primary-care system (especially nursing) provides the infant with a reliable response to distress, thus promoting the infant’s trust in his or her social partners. The body contact system (especially carrying) relates the infant to the caregiving environment. The body stimulation system promotes an early motor self, and the face-to-face system induces a sense of agency (Keller, in press). Caregiving usually consists of contextually shaped mixtures of these parenting systems, which reflects cultural variability.

**INDIVIDUALISM/INDEPENDENCE AND  
COLLECTIVISM/ INTERDEPENDENCE:  
TWO IDEALIZED PATHWAYS THROUGH  
UNIVERSAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES**

Some combinations of parenting systems can be found more consistently than others. The prevalence of the face-to-face system, for example, has been described as a typically Western (Keller & Eckensberger, 1998) or pedagogical (LeVine, 1994) parenting style. The prevalence of the body contact system is described as a non-Western (Keller & Eckensberger, 1998) or pediatric style (LeVine, 1974, 1994), prevalent in farming or pastoral communities. These early experiences lay the groundwork for developmental trajectories that as cultural ideals, require corresponding socialization scripts across developmental stages.

Keller and Eckensberger (1998) and Greenfield and Suzuki (1998) have identified idealized pathways that can be termed individualism and collectivism, independence and interdependence, or autonomy and relatedness (Greenfield, 1994; Kagitcibasi, 1990, 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Each path involves different cultural interpretations of the same, maturationally grounded stages. These paths are not binary opposites but relative emphases and systems of prioritization. They represent life strategies that have proved adaptive in addressing specific environmental problems. Each pathway is a mode around which variation can occur.

First, we turn to the developmental path of individualism or independence. This scenario, most common in European-derived and industrial, urban, or commercial societies, consists of an impact of exclusive dyadic attention between caregiver (mainly mother) and infant, with a special emphasis on face-to-face exchange, especially promoting face-to-face contingency experiences in the infant. Moreover, the mother orients the child from early on to the material world, often mediating the interaction with toys.

These experiences allow the baby to develop expectancies, predictability, and control and thus foster the development of the self as a causal agent. The cultural value of early independence is further supported, for example, with independent sleeping arrangements (cf. Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim, & Goldsmith, 1992).

The early conceptions of self and relationships with both people and things that are acquired during these early socialization situations may set the stage for specific ways of developing competence in childhood, for example, with active exploration, asking questions, and formal instructions. The development of an independent or individualistic adult, as described by Markus

and Kitayama (1991) or Triandis (1989), might represent the better adult in these environments.

Next, we turn to the pathway to collectivism or interdependence. A developmental trajectory that is more common in rural environments in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, this pathway mainly relies on the prevalence of the body contact system in multiple caretaking environments, with child care as a co-occurring activity. The main socialization context is established through bodily proximity, thus promoting warmth and interrelatedness. The resulting conception of self as coagent is based on feelings of interrelatedness. This developmental pathway continues to socialize skills through observation and participation, finally leading to an interdependent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) or collectivistic (Triandis, 1989) adult. Thus, a developmental approach identifies mechanisms across life span trajectories leading up to the culturally diverse adult forms of development.

Each path involves different cultural interpretations of the same maturationally grounded stage, when the cultural environment selects components of the universal inborn repertoire—for example, the differentiation between object behavior and person behavior (Trevarthen, 1979) for newborns—and shapes the behavioral expressions accordingly. Object behavior is culturally emphasized when an infant is given toys to play with on his or her own. Such an infant learns experientially the cultural value of independence and technological intelligence, as described by Mundy-Castle (1974, 1991). By contrast, person behavior is culturally emphasized when an infant is given other people to play with and is in constant contact with others. This infant learns through experience the cultural value of interdependence and social intelligence, also described by Mundy-Castle (1974, 1991).

Caregiving arrangements carry cultural meanings, and these meanings are reconstructed by infants through implicit messages that may become explicit at maturity or may remain implicit. Thus, the early, biologically predisposed development results in basic cultural learning; the foundation for an emphasis on independence or interdependence is laid. These early conceptions of relationships and self are the basis for divergent pathways through childhood and adolescence (Greenfield, 1994; Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998; Keller & Eckensberger, 1998). For example, in middle childhood, the collectivistic model can be expressed in unconditional in-group helpfulness, whereas the individualistic model leads to conditional or negotiated helpfulness (e.g., Mundy-Castle & Bundy, 1988). The collectivistic model can be expressed in an emphasis on socially shared knowledge, whereas the individualistic model leads to an emphasis on individually possessed knowledge (Greenfield, 1997a, 1997b; Keller & Eckensberger, 1998). The collectivistic model leads

to an emphasis on getting into a group, whereas the individualistic model leads to an emphasis on individuality and uniqueness (Greenfield, Davis, Suzuki, & Boutakidis, *in press*; Keller, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In the collectivistic model, adolescence (contingent on these preceding experiences) is a short transition from childhood to adulthood, which brings early marriage, childbearing, and responsibilities for the economic support of the family. In the individualistic model, adolescence is a period of moratorium reserved for education and other forms of self-development.

These early experiences also lay the groundwork for one's own parenting style, so that intergenerational continuity and transformation are established. This view is supported by demographic analyses indicating that changes in cultural values usually occur one generation, or about 30 years, later than sociodemographic or socioeconomic changes (Birg, 1996). Indeed, Raeff, Greenfield, and Quiroz (*in press*) found that immigrant parents from Mexico to the United States generally hold collectivistic values that they bring from Mexico—for example, the value of unconditional in-group helpfulness. Their elementary school children, however, move in the direction of the more individualistic surround; for example, they more often think that they should help a needy classmate only if it will not interfere with their own task achievement. A potent source for this change in children's values lies in the value system of their teachers (Raeff et al., *in press*). One can see that the parents, having moved into a new demographic situation when they immigrated, are, to some extent, holding onto the values they brought with them. In 30 years, when the children grow up and have their own children, the new parents' values will be somewhat different from those of their parents; because of the influence of their teachers and others, they will, to a greater extent, reflect the individualistic cultural surround of the United States. These offspring will then inculcate these changed values in their children, the next generation.

Will their interdependent orientation be replaced by an independent one or will a new integrative synthesis develop that better responds to changing lifestyles (Kagitcibasi, 1996)? Research by Delgado-Gaitan (1994) indicates that the process by which cultural change and continuity become more integrated in families composed of first-generation parents and second-generation children is by separation of contexts. For example, first-generation Mexican-American parents restrict individualistic socialization practices, such as eliciting the views of children, to the school-like activity of book reading; at the same time, they continue to insist on the collectivistic norms of respectively compliant and silent behavior with grandparents.

Thus, a developmental approach adds a new dimension to the social-psychological approach: Adults can be studied not just as themselves but also

as socializers of the next generation. In addition, by studying interaction between parents and children or between different socializers, such as parents and teachers, acculturation can be studied as a dynamic developmental process, not just as a static product of unknown forces.

### **FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT TO CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY**

We now focus on four main areas where we believe the accomplishments of the past in cultural and cross-cultural developmental psychology have the potential to make a strong future contribution to cross-cultural psychology.

One of these areas is in providing an understanding of how the biologically grounded factor of maturational stage influences processes of cultural learning. An example of maturational factors in processes of cultural learning is that infants can acquire culture by imitation and modeling of action, but only older children can do so through verbal dialogue.

A second area is in providing an understanding of how the biologically grounded factor of maturational stage influences the content of cultural learning. An example of maturational factors in the content of cultural learning is that a 1 year old can learn the behavior of giving, emphasized in the collectivistic developmental script, but, for reasons of cognitive and social development, he or she cannot yet master the behavior of helping, a maturationally later focus of the collectivistic developmental script. In other words, different points on the developmental pathway to collectivism (and individualism) will look phenotypically different.

A third area relates to the teaching and transmission of culture. Here, developmentalists point to the fact that the culturally constructed behavior of adults can be viewed first as an endpoint along a developmental pathway. Having acquired culture themselves in the course of development, adults then serve as a socialization force for the next generation, creating intergenerational change as well as continuity.

The final area of contribution to cross-cultural psychology with a developmental approach is in understanding the culture-specific shapes of developmental stages. Therefore, the developmental approach can unify culture and biology theoretically, providing an understanding of how innate characteristics and universal maturational sequences are given cultural shape. We have outlined two contrasting developmental trajectories to illustrate this contribution. Future research may greatly elaborate the content of, and variability within, each pathway.

In short, our vision for the future is one in which developmental issues and methods will be theoretically, methodologically, and empirically integrated into cross-cultural psychology, thus enabling our field to make significant advances in research and theory.

### NOTE

1. We were very pleased with the choice of developmentalists during the Silver Jubilee Conference of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology in Bellingham, Washington, for an honorary fellow and president of this association.

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*Heidi Keller is a professor of psychology at the University of Osnabrueck, Germany. Her main interest is the interplay between biology, culture, and development. She has done extensive longitudinal research from infancy to childhood and adolescence. Her major publications include a German language handbook of infancy that has been published in the second edition in 1997, and a textbook of developmental psychology (1998). Together with Michael Lamb, she edited a book with the title Infant Development: Perspectives From German Speaking Countries. She is currently directing a multisite, cross-cultural, longitudinal program to identify different developmental pathways.*

*Patricia M. Greenfield received her Ph.D. from Harvard University and is currently a professor of psychology at UCLA, where she is a member of the developmental psychology group. Her central theoretical and research interest is in the relationship between culture and human development. She is a past recipient of the American Association for the Advancement of Science Award for Behavioural Science Research, and she has received teaching awards from UCLA and the American Psychological Association. Her books include Mind and Media: The Effects of Television, Video Games, and Computers (Harvard, 1984), which has been translated into nine languages. In the 1990s, she coedited (with R. R. Cocking) Interacting With Video (Elsevier, 1996) and Cross-Cultural Roots of Minority Child Development (Erlbaum, 1994).*