

# Understanding Cross-Cultural Psychology

# Psychology

- The discipline concerned with behavior and mental processes and how they are affected by an organism's physical state, mental state, and external environment.

# Psychology's Purpose

- To understand, explain, predict, and control behavior.

**If we could, at this time, shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this:  
There would be--**

- **14 from the Western Hemisphere (North and South), and**
- **8 Africans.**
- **70 would be non-white.**
- **70 would be non-Christian.**
- **50% of the world's wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people**
- **All 6 would be citizens of the United States.**



- **70 would be unable to read.**
- **50 would suffer from malnutrition.**
- **80 would live in sub-standard housing.**
- **Only 1 would have a college education.**



# What is Cross-Cultural Psychology?

- Cross-Cultural Psychology
  - Critical & comparative study of cultural effects on human psychology
  - Examines psychological diversity and the underlying reasons for that diversity
  - Linkages between cultural norms and behaviors influenced by different social and cultural forces (Segall et al., 1990, p. 3)
  - Establishes new psychological universals e.g., personality

# Basic Definitions

- Culture
  - A program of shared rules, attitudes, values, and beliefs that govern the behavior of the majority of community members communicated from one generation to the next; has explicit and implicit components

- Race

- a group of people distinguished by certain similar and genetically transmitted physical characteristics; antiquated and meaningless
- A social category reflecting particular experiences shared by many people belonging to a category called race (Gouff, 1994, 1997; Brace, 1995)
- Categories: white, black, Native American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino

- Ethnicity
  - Cultural heritage i.e., common ancestral origin, language, traditions, religion, geographic territory
- Nation
  - People who share common geographical origin, history, language, & political entity
- Traditional culture
  - Cultural construct rooted in traditions, rules, symbols, & principles established in past
- Non-traditional culture i.e., modern
  - Based on new principles, ideas, and practices

# Comparison Between Both

- Social roles prescribed to individuals
  - Evaluation of individual behavior based on custom/routine
  - Clear distinction between good & evil in behavior
  - Truth is not debatable
  - Individual choices restricted to social prescriptions
- Social roles achieved by individuals
  - Evaluation of individual behavior based on individual choice
  - Good & evil is relative
  - Truth is revealed through competition of ideas
  - Individual choices aren't restricted to social prescriptions

# Empirical Examination of Culture

- Power distance = extent to which members of a society accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1980)
  - High-power-distance cultures accept inequality between elite or leaders and subordinates, also between breadwinners and other family members e.g., patriarchy

# Feminine vs Masculine Cultures

- Feminine-
  - Caring, consensus-seeking, gentleness
  - e.g., Netherlands, France Portugal, Costa Rica, & Thailand
- Masculine
  - Responsible, decisive, lively, highly ambitious
  - E.g., Japan, Germany, Britain, Mexico, Phillipines

# Uncertainty Avoidance

- High avoidance groups support beliefs promising certainty & conformity
- Low avoidance groups maintain nonconforming attitudes, unpredictability, creativity, & new forms of thinking & behavior

# Collectivism vs Individualism

Triandis, 1989

- Behavior based on
  - Concern for others
  - Care for traditions & values
  - Prefer harmony in conflict resolution
  - Found in Asian & former communist countries
- Behavior based on
  - Concern for self & one's primary group
  - Prefer competitive strategies
  - Found in Western countries

# Collectivism & Individualism: Further Research

- Vertical Cultural Syndrome
  - People refer to each other from power and achievement standpoints; very hierarchical;
  - Western democracies emphasize freedom (vertical) but not equality
- Horizontal Cultural Syndrome
  - Benevolence and equality
  - Totalitarian regimes emphasize equality, (horizontal) but not freedom

- Traditional cultures tend to be vertical collectivists e.g., India
- People in the U.S. tend to be vertical individualists because tolerate inequality more than Swedes do
- People in Sweden tend to be horizontal collectivists because are willing to be taxed higher to reduce inequality

- Fijeman et al (1996)
  - Collectivist cultures contribute to others & so support them back i.e., interdependence ( to facilitate group harmony)
  - Individualist cultures expect to contribute less to others & tend not to expect support back i.e., independence (to facilitate competition)

# Cultural Syndromes

- Cultural syndromes = shared attitudes, beliefs, etc., organized around a theme of those speaking a specific language during a specific historical period, in a specific geographic region
  - Tightness i.e., specific rules & norms
  - Sanctions for those who violate ↑
  - Cultural complexity i.e., combination of different cultural elements

- Activity & passivity i.e., action vs thought
- Honor i.e., attitudes that support aggression for self-protection
- Collectivism vs individualism
- Vertical & horizontal relationships & egalitarianism

# Sociobiological Approach

- Social Darwinism i.e., natural selection, survival of the fittest
  - Certain biological combinations enhance survival
  - Certain cultural practices facilitate survival
- Competition

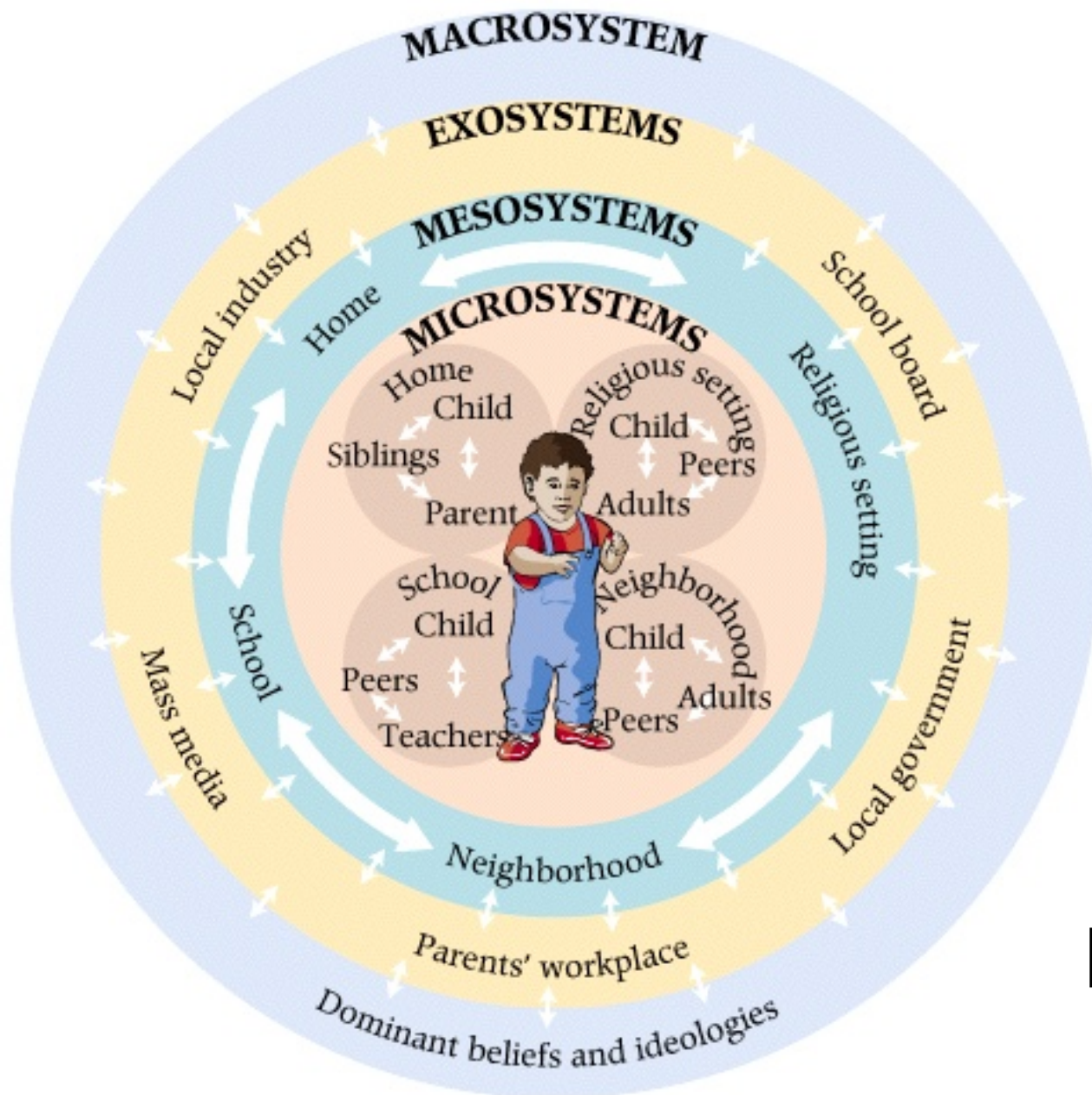
# Sociological Approach

- Focuses on broad social structures that influence society as a whole & therefore, its individuals
  - Imply that society exists objectively apart from our individual experiences
- Durkheim (1924), Talcott Parsons et.al., (1951) society is created to guarantee stability & solidarity, so it demands subordination & conformity; culture then regulates human behavior

- Weber (1922) symbolic-interactionist approach
  - Preindustrial societies develop traditions
    - Pass on traditions and evaluate individual behavior
  - Capitalist societies endorse rationality
    - Rationality is needed as the most efficient way to reach a goal; Calculation replaces intuition and speculation
    - Circle of life: individuals develop their ideas→ influence society→ influence individuals
    - Marx thought people of the same class had more in common than people of the same ethnic group
    - Freeman (1999) thought America was becoming two-tiered i.e., rich vs poor
    - Macedo (1997) social divisions carved on ethnic lines that are really class issues

# Ecocultural Approach

- Harkness (1992) individual interacts and changes the environment
- Bronfenbrenner (1979)
  - Microsystem- involves family, school teachers, friends, & others they have contact with
  - Mesosystem- links 2 or more settings
  - Exosystem- media, extended family, legal & social organizations
  - Macrosystem- customs & beliefs of a society



# The Ecological Approach

- Human development occurs within particular “developmental niches” (Harkness & Super, 1992)
  - Physical & social settings where the individual lives
  - Collections of customary practices that convey messages to and from the individual
  - Caretakers’ beliefs & expectations about children

# Berry (1971)

- Factors influencing individual psychology
  - Ecological i.e., economic activity of the population like food, quality of nutrition, temperature & population density
  - Sociopolitical settings i.e., extent to which individuals participate in global & local decisions; people adjust through genetic transmission, cultural transmission & acculturation that allow them to adjust

# Cultural Mixtures

- Matsumoto et. Al., (1997) found Japanese to not be more collectivist than the U.S. → could be the influence of collectivist cultures in the U.S. i.e., Latino, Asian & African Americans in sample
- Globalization involves psychological values of tolerance & openness (Friedman, 2000; Giddens, 2000)

- Bicultural Identity- based on local customs, norms, & beliefs & global culture
- Identity Confusion- may be the result of globalism for a short period of time
- Fundamentalism- challenges globalism & may be popular because they encourage people to go back to tradition & argue that globalization will end local religious power & power of local authorities i.e., against democracy, choice, tolerance, and openness because globalism undermines power of traditional authority

- Globalization eliminates physical & psychological boundaries
- Fundamentalism aims at separation & isolation

# Integrative Approach

- Activity- process of individual's goal-directed interaction with the environment
  - Determined by individual, socioeconomic, environmental, political, & cultural conditions
  - Changes these conditions (Vygotsky, 1932)
- Access to resources- essential to individual well-being i.e., poverty, malnutrition, oppression as unequal distribution of resources (Fowers & Richardoson, 1996)→ need to look at combination of factors
  - E.g., China being collectivist and vertical (Triandis, 1996)

# Indigenous Psychology

- Scientific study of human behavior or the mind, that is designed for a people and native i.e., not transported from other regions (Kim & Berry, 1993)

# Ethnocentrism

- The view that supports judgment about other ethnic, national, and cultural groups and events from the onlooker's cultural outlook i.e., an implication that one's group of origin is better than others.

# Multiculturalism

- A psychological & theoretical view encouraging the recognition of all cultural/national groups & that promotes the idea that various cultural groups have the right to follow their own paths of development & their own activities, values, & norms