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Edited by Theodore Schwartz, Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz

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Introduction

Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz

While once almost synonymous with American cultural anthropology, psychological anthropology remains one of the largest subdisciplines of the field. It also remains the field most centrally concerned with putting people and experience into theories of culture and society. Increasingly more diverse in their approaches and interests, psychological anthropologists have been energized by a series of recent debates and by historical and institutional factors contributing to a renewed interest in the field. The chapters in this book, which emerged out of several years of organized reassessment of the field, reflect on an ongoing revitalization indexed by numerous recent collections focusing on the intersection of culture and psychology (e.g. Lee 1982; Marsella, DeVos, and Hsu 1985; Shweder and LeVine 1984; Stigler, Shweder, and Herdt 1990; White and Kirkpatrick 1985).

These theoretical and institutional changes have together facilitated more dialogue within the subdiscipline as well as with other kinds of anthropologists. The short history of these changes could be written in many ways but would include the development of interpretive approaches to culture compatible with (and challenging to) clinical and Freudian perspectives; the reflexive turn in methodology which has raised the question of how North American ideologies of self and person might structure our thinking as a discipline and as enculturated human beings doing fieldwork; the breakdown of monolithic views of culture which has encouraged person-centered ethnographic approaches (e.g. LeVine 1982); and narrative experimentation in ethnographic presentation, some of the earliest examples of which dealt with classical issues in psychological anthropology (e.g., Briggs 1970; Crapanzano 1980; Riesman 1977; Shostak 1981). These and other factors will be briefly considered in this introduction.

Institutionally, the growth in the 1970s and 1980s of important new university centers of work in psychological anthropology at the University of California at San Diego and Emory University as well as the continued vitality of work at places such as the interdisciplinary centers at

Cambridge University Press

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Excerpt

[More information](#)2 *Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz*

Chicago, Harvard, and University of California, Los Angeles has also been crucial to the renaissance in the field. Also important – at least for such areas as human development or psychiatric anthropology – has been the strong growth of the cognate fields of psychology and psychiatry. The ubiquity and strength of the psychological paradigm – both in popular culture and in academic circles – must in large part be a function of the resonances of that discipline’s individualistic perspective with American conceptions of person. The cultural and social conditions that helped create this state of affairs include such things as the medicalization of psychiatry (see Good and Scheper-Hughes, this book) and the American cultural obsession with self-awareness. However challenging the anthropological perspective on the self can be to the universalizing claims of psychology, some of the same cultural foundations underlie the vitality of both fields.

A more immediate prompt to this book was the efforts of Theodore Schwartz who promoted a stock-taking of the field, or what he called “appraisal and prospectus.” He, together with Catherine Lutz and Susan Abbott, organized three years of such comprehensive sessions at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in 1986, 1987, and 1988. The chapters in this book are the outgrowth of the first two of those years of sessions, meetings which were heavily attended and rife with the excitement of a watershed period of new questions and research directions and renewed collegial dialogue. The contributors to those sessions – all central figures to their respective fields – were asked *not* to review recent work comprehensively or dispassionately, but to give their vision of where research has been and where it ought to go. They were asked to stimulate discussion and debate rather than to attempt closure or balanced overview.

The present set of chapters emerged from this charge.¹ In this introduction, we do not attempt any kind of heroic synthesis or statement of fundamental principles. In fact, such an effort would misrepresent the diversity and debates that characterize this book. Mindful of these differences, we offer a reflection on themes that emerge in these papers and their significance for research directions. Whereas the recent collection edited by Stigler, Shweder, and Herdt (1990) has articulated the theoretical bases for an emerging interdisciplinary field of “cultural psychology,” the authors in this book orient their discussions toward problems that characterize psychological anthropology (historically and at present) – whether cognitive, developmental, biological, psychoanalytic, or psychiatric, to name some of the areas addressed. Out of this mix emerges a broad spectrum of overlapping approaches that nonetheless share anthropology’s root concerns with problems of meaning, cultural analysis, and the

Cambridge University Press

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

3

study of persons in society. Offering neither reports on ongoing research nor sweeping reviews of the literature, the papers in this book rather seek to raise issues and offer assessments of promising directions for future research.

Through the postwar years, a number of books have intermittently appeared which attempt to survey the field (e.g., Bourguignon 1979; Spindler 1978). In each, current philosophies of science can be seen structuring the notion of what this or any other “field” is. The present mood is reflected in these chapters, many of which are concerned with charting the terrain of the shifting psychocultural borderlands between mind, culture, and society – a terrain which is increasingly seen as reflecting the cultural and social context of its inhabitants rather than merely an intellectual history of questions which follow naturally from previous questions.

It then also seems useful to draw attention to the similarities between the constitution of psychological anthropology as “a field” and processes of group identity generally. Ethnic, gender, or class identities and symbolizations are most evident at their peripheries, where contacts with others evoke articulations and dramatizations of the self. In this view of identity as emergent, culturally constructed, and context dependent, psychological anthropology may be seen not as a set of essential definitions but as what individual psychological anthropologists do or have historically done. The contributors to this book are all concerned in some way with boundary issues, with questions that arise at the interstices of anthropology and related fields. In often new and creative ways, many contributors critique the dualisms and boundaries presented by received theoretical categories of mind and body, psyche and society (see also Lutz 1988). In thus drawing attention to the social and cultural processes involved in academic work in psychological anthropology, these analysts have begun to find new paths through and around old terms of debate (see also Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987).

Periods of intellectual fragmentation have the effect of calling into question definitional assumptions that are relegated to the background during periods of “normal science.” Developments inside and outside anthropology in recent decades have posed problems and opportunities for psychological anthropology – not the least of which is the definition of the niche within which the subdiscipline locates itself theoretically. During the heyday of culture and personality studies in the 1940s and 1950s, the Parsonian division of the world into personality systems, cultural systems, and social systems provided a clear agenda for research on relations between personality variables and culture. As framed by many practitioners, the objective of “culture and personality” studies was

4 *Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz*

to apply the theories and insights of personality theory (with Freudian psychoanalytic theory being the modal type) to analyzing the meaning and motivating force of cultural forms for individuals. The theoretical niche occupied by culture and personality became much less secure, however, with a variety of movements elsewhere in social science and society. These included (1) the development of interpretive and praxis theories which expanded the role of symbolic and institutional forces in accounting for social action; (2) the challenge to the utility of the psychoanalytic focus on personality and affective hydraulics by revitalized cognitive, language-based, and biological perspectives on the person; (3) renewed emphasis upon intracultural variation that has made problematic any simplistic splitting of culture as collective and personality as individual; and (4), more generally, by a postmodern, poststructuralist suspicion of depth models of human experience that not only questions the pre-eminence of the private individual in explanatory models, but seeks to deconstruct the very notion of a human psyche beneath history and culture. While these changes at first appeared to signal the end of a psychological anthropology, their challenge has resulted in some important reformulations of the problem of the individual. These new antidualistic approaches have shifted and opened up the boundaries between “psychological” and other kinds of anthropologies.

More specifically, numerous responses to these developments might be traced in the work of psychological anthropologists since the 1960s, with some continuing to apply and adapt psychoanalytic theory during an era of interpretive social science, and others pursuing cognitive, linguistic, and semiotic approaches to self and experience. Overall, however, psychological anthropology since the 1960s has been characterized by increasingly diverse methodologies focused on more narrowly drawn problems. Previous interest in global assessments of personality or character has largely given way to investigations of particular psychocultural processes and strategies of adaptation. These developments are reflected in the organization of the book *The Making of Psychological Anthropology* into two sections labeled sparsely “Part I” and “Part II” with the latter including topics of symbolism, consciousness, and cognition that, according to the editor George Spindler, had “only recently emerged as primary concerns of psychological anthropology” (1978: 2). This change was an effect both of specialization occurring everywhere in an increasingly populated academy and of a relative downturn of interest in global universalizing theories rooted in depth psychology. The “return of grand theory” (Skinner 1985), particularly in the last decade, has only slowly and recently come to psychological anthropology.

It may seem ironic or contradictory that the initial decline of interest in

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

5

culture and personality and psychological anthropology more generally since the 1950s has occurred despite a simultaneous explosion of interest in and resources devoted to academic, popular, and clinical psychology. Some of these reasons have to do with the lack of interest in other people's psychology, as well as the therapeutic and applied bent of much of psychology in contrast with anthropology's version. Whereas psychology may appear to the society at large to be about helping one's self, anthropology, less enticingly, appears to be about explaining an other. Calls for communication across disciplinary boundaries (between anthropology and psychology, anthropology and biology, and psychological anthropology and sociocultural anthropology proper) may ring hollow and/or fail if the kinds of institutional, cultural, and historical factors influencing formation of the field in the first place are ignored.

The present collection further extrapolates the ongoing transformation of psychological anthropology and its relations with other subdisciplines and social sciences. While we offer no unified definition of psychological anthropology, the chapters included define a loosely integrated field of investigation by outlining a series of overlapping foci for current research. The fact that these focal areas shade into the work of other disciplines is evident in the extent to which each chapter draws from the perspectives and methods of other fields. Without exception, each contributor to this volume addresses the possibilities for interdisciplinary communication and exchange as a basis for enriching the work of anthropology and neighboring disciplines. Consider the range of modifiers of "anthropology" that appear in the table of contents for this volume: "psychoanalytic," "biological," "psychiatric," and "cognitive" – all designating some facet of that subspecies referred to here as "psychological anthropology." Whereas prewar culture and personality studies largely relied upon a theory of mind derived from psychoanalysis, contemporary psychological anthropology is engaged in a broader range of dialogues with other human sciences. While psychoanalysis continues to be a major influence – as articulated in the chapters by Katherine Ewing, Bertram Cohler, and Vincent Crapanzano – we now find that biology, psychiatry, developmental psychology, linguistics, discourse analysis, praxis theories, and cognitive science are having a greater impact than was evident in earlier decades.

The view of culture as emergent, contested, and temporal (Clifford 1988) – a view itself emergent, contested, and temporal – has had a significant impact on the field of anthropology as a whole. This movement is important to the field covered in this book for two reasons. It is influencing theory building in psychological anthropology, where recent developments suggest a more social, less essentializing model for concep-

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Excerpt

[More information](#)6 *Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz*

tualizing psychocultural processes. In addition, this view of culture leaves new room for the reinsertion of the person as agent, for models of consciousness and motivation to which psychological anthropologists have something significant to contribute (Shweder and Sullivan in press). Renewed interest in performance has also encouraged description and theorization of the social enactment of psychological process, that is, of psyche's social life.

To varying degrees, the bridgework in these chapters addresses deep divisions in our conceptual apparatus – divisions between mind and body, reason and emotion – that have not only guided theory building in the social sciences, but underlie the social organization of knowledge into disciplinary spheres of biology, psychology, and sociology (or between general medicine and psychiatry, or social and psychological brands of anthropology, among others). The force of these divisions is continually replayed in our attempts to specify a framework for comparative work. For example, in a recent article on “Concepts of Individual, Self, and Person in Description and Analysis” Grace Harris defines three terms that have been key words in psychological anthropology (individual, self, and person) as grounded in “biologistic, psychologistic, and sociologistic modes of conceptualizing human beings” (1989: 599). The chapters in this book are, in general, far less prepared to enshrine these divisions as bedrock concepts from which to begin comparative investigations. Each chapter suggests strategies for exploring these domains as mutually intertwined and contingent regions of experience.

One of the anthropological challenges to social-scientific assumptions about personality derives from a series of studies by Shweder and D'Andrade showing that much of the consistency in personality assessment results from cultural or semantic associations that systematically skew social perception and memory (Shweder and D'Andrade 1980). While there is by no means universal agreement about the significance of these findings, acknowledgment of the importance of cultural constructs in dynamically shaping understanding and experience is directing a considerable amount of work towards the interrelation of linguistic, cognitive, and communicative processes in constituting personal and social realities. As White discusses in his chapter, anthropologists have recently begun to pay close attention to ethnopsychological understandings – of self, emotion, person, and the like – as one way of doing justice to the complexity and variety of the culturally constituted subjectivities in which people live their lives. The traffic between symbolic, cultural approaches and work on psychological issues has become heavy, marked particularly by the upsurge of anthropological studies of emotion in social life (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1986; Lutz 1988; Myers 1979; Rosaldo 1980; see Lutz and

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

7

White 1986 for a review). It is here more than at the biology/culture boundary that discussions have actually and intensively taken place. The contributions of ethnopsychological investigation, however, have yet to have these kinds of reverberation in other areas of the field of psychological anthropology (with the exception of human development research, see below).

Cognitive anthropology is discussed in this book by D'Andrade, Holland, and Keller. In the original symposium D'Andrade's paper was discussed by both Keller and Holland. Because their presentations complemented one another closely, the papers are presented here as a trilogy of chapters that make up a three-way conversation about the field. Proceeding from the view that human experience necessarily entails the thinking of active, aware, and interested agents, cognitive anthropologists have taken the problem of human understanding (conscious and otherwise) as a primary domain of investigation. The rapid growth of interest in studying cognition follows from the recognition that thought and understanding are amenable to analysis through language and other semiotic systems applied in social interaction.

As cognitive theories were developing in psychology and linguistics in the 1950s as a challenge to the dominant behaviorist paradigms, Anthony Wallace (1961) noted that their formulations were consistent with anthropological views of culture organized in terms of "schemata" and "mazes" that mediate the responses of social actors. It was not long, however, before anthropologists in the sociocultural mainstream found the narrowly linguistic and terminological approach of the "new ethnography" or "ethnoscience" to be misdirected for the purposes of broader social and cultural analysis. One of the early salvos fired by symbolic anthropology in its efforts to differentiate itself from ethnoscience or ethnosemantics was Geertz's (1973: 11–12) assertion that meaning could not be discovered in people's heads, but rather needed to be studied as emergent in the public marketplace of interactively produced ideas and institutions. It now seems as if such proclamations contributed to an overly textual and homogeneous conception of culture, cut off from, among other things, the micropolitics of personal experience and cognition. Ironically, perhaps, the role of social and situational factors in structuring understanding is now a major area of research in cognitive anthropology (see Lave 1988; Holland 1988, this book). Additionally, some of the most exciting work on problems of intracultural diversity and the social distribution of knowledge and belief has come from psychological and cognitive anthropology (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986; Schwartz 1976; Wallace 1961).

The discussions of cognitive anthropology in this book show that

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Excerpt

[More information](#)8 *Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz*

“schema theory” has developed considerably in the intervening thirty years since Wallace wrote about schemas and mazes. The papers here discuss strategies for investigating conceptual processes and their relations with such things as metaphor and narrative as well as social processes (see Casson 1983; Holland and Quinn 1987; Luhrmann 1989). One of the central theoretical tensions that emerges from the conversation between D’Andrade, Holland, and Keller concerns the degree to which cognitive models attempt to incorporate contextual factors associated with the variation and flexibility inherent in cultural understanding (see also Strauss 1990). Holland’s argument for attending to the social and situational factors that organize and shape cognitive processes resonates with the emphasis on communicative practices evident in much of the current research on language acquisition and socialization.

In her chapter dealing with the role of language in child development and the process of enculturation, Miller outlines issues that have fueled the rediscovery of Vygotsky’s pragmatic theories of language and learning by psychologists, linguists, and anthropologists working on developmental issues (Holland and Valsiner 1988; Wertsch 1985). The Vygotskian emphasis upon the communicative processes that mediate human thought views technologies and social activities as integral extensions of cognitive process, and so challenges the often dichotomized oppositions of inner/outer and ideational/material. And it is these dichotomies that have tended to locate culture either “inside” the head in cognition or “outside” in public symbols, producing often fruitless debates about whether the locus of culture is in the minds of individuals or the signs and activities of daily life. By going beyond these dichotomies, this and other perspectives discussed in this book are provoking a rethinking of the ways we conceptualize relations between mind, self, and society.

Another source of challenges to individuated theories of personality comes from correlational studies of child behavior. The review by Sara Harkness of cross-cultural research on human development describes a history of interdisciplinary work focused to a large extent on testing the generalizability of theories of developmental processes or stages (whether about personality, cognitive abilities, language, or moral reasoning). Beyond the largely descriptive role of “cataloguing similarities and differences,” Harkness argues that comparative research at its best aims “to reformulate existing psychological theories of development and to elaborate new perspectives.” She mentions several areas of recent anthropological work, including studies of child language socialization as well as cognitive and emotional development, as contributing to the emergence of new perspectives on old problems addressed in psychological theories.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

9

The resulting overview suggests a broad shift in emphasis in anthropological studies of child development from research on socialization conceived as personality formation to greater concern with processes of enculturation (see Schwartz 1981).

One example in particular noted by Harkness (and one which shows links between developmental and cognitive research in psychological anthropology) is reflected in Shweder's (1979a, b) interpretation of the accumulated findings of cross-cultural research on child social behavior done by John and Beatrice Whiting and their colleagues over a period of many years. Shweder argues, among other things, that the concept of personality as the central, organizing link between early experiences and patterns of adult behavior does not hold up under scrutiny (see also Riesman 1983). His critique and others have had broad repercussions for social scientific models of the person, including reexamination of the concept of motivation and its relation to culture (D'Andrade and Strauss 1992).

Biological factors have been an everpresent component of psychological anthropology's agenda, although usually in the background as "givens" rather than in the foreground among the topics and variables to be examined in research. The common framework of human physical capacities, needs, and their ontogenesis has been invoked repeatedly as the basis for the psychic unity of humanity – a framework within which to conduct comparative examinations of variations in the perceptual, conceptual, and emotional life of peoples around the world (Spiro 1986). The theoretical dilemmas posed by such a project – emblazoned in familiar dualisms of universalist/relativist, positivist/interpretivist, materialist/idealist, and the like – are even more problematic today than they were earlier in the century when Margaret Mead and others set off to use the "laboratory" of human cultural variation to dislodge the natural status ascribed to concepts of race, gender, and developmental stage. However, the chapters in this collection indicate that, even if these dualisms remain problematic, approaches being tried on a variety of fronts hold the possibility of novel solutions and integrations.

The two chapters in this book that deal directly with relations between biological and psychological research, by James Chisholm and Carol Worthman, challenge dichotomous conceptions of mind and body that regard biology as a source of fixed, determinant features in human experience. As Worthman writes, "Over a century of progress in life sciences has blurred [this] dichotomy by abundantly demonstrating that biology, too, is emergent in life histories." Ironically, the conception of biology as a domain of invariant and universal processes which has given biological variables a privileged position in Western theories of human

Cambridge University Press

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Edited by Theodore Schwartz, Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz

Excerpt

[More information](#)10 *Geoffrey M. White and Catherine A. Lutz*

development has also had the effect of removing physiological factors from serious consideration in research on psychocultural variation. The privileged position of biology also meant that few researchers in either discipline seriously expected that anthropological techniques developed for the study of culture would be useful for research on biological processes. In contrast, Chisholm and Worthman both argue that certain biological problems require detailed studies of the cognitive, perceptual, and socioemotional processes that structure subjective experience – that is, the primary subject matter of psychological anthropology. They identify a number of topics that have long been subjects of anthropological research as promising areas for collaboration between biological and psychological anthropologists. Prominent among these are comparative studies of child development (such as those discussed in this book by Sara Harkness) and anthropological studies that incorporate biophysical factors (such as Scheper-Hughes' studies of the psychological and social responses to hunger and to high infant mortality rates in Brazil: this book and 1985). On the biological side of this relationship, these authors point to the emerging field of "life-history theory" as an area of research that stands to benefit from greater "investigative syncretism" (Worthman's term). The biological notion of "life-history" views culturally mediating devices (such as strategies and ethnotheories of parenting) and psychological changes as necessary, interactive processes in human phenotypic variation.

The chapters in this book that examine relations between the biological and the psychocultural may be seen as working at one of the "edges" of psychological anthropology where concerns with subjectivity and consciousness shade into psychological research. Differences between the types of problems and methods that characterize biological and psychological anthropology reflect more than simply the methodological preferences of two subdisciplines. These contrasts reflect differences between two varieties of science – varieties that proceed from quite different assumptions about the sorts of generalizations and truths they seek to derive. To use terms employed by D'Andrade (1986), biology, a "natural science," deals in contingent generalizations about complex adaptive machine-like systems while cultural anthropology, a "semiotic science," pursues contingent generalizations about the creation of intersubjective realities that shape, guide, and constrain social action. As Richard Shweder has observed (*Anthropology Newsletter* 1989: 19), psychological anthropology is "some kind of hybrid form" – a semiotic natural science. As a result, ambiguities and disagreements about the types of methods and truths that ought to characterize this hybrid field have been abundant.