




# **CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES IN CROSS CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY**

*By*

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**CONTRASTING CULTURE,  
RACE, PERSONALITY, and  
POPULAR CULTURE**

# Culture and Race

- Race is not culture
- Race is a social construction and therefore boundaries & definition of race differ across cultures
- We need a clear understanding of the underlying causes of similarities and differences observed between races

# Culture and Personality

<b>Culture</b>	<b>Personality</b>
Macro, social, group-level construct	Individual differences that exist among individuals within groups
Social psychological framework within which individuals reside	Unique constellation of traits, attributes, qualities, and characteristics of individuals within those frames
Shared among individuals and transmitted across generations	Not shared among individuals
Stable across individuals	Different across individuals

# Culture and Popular Culture

- Popular culture: trends in music, art and other expressions popular among people
- Like culture, sharing of expression and its value by people involved

<b>Culture</b>	<b>Popular Culture</b>
System of rules that cut across attitudes, values, opinions, beliefs, norms and behaviors	Does not involve sharing wide range of psychological attributes across various psychological domains
Stable over time across generations	Values or expressions that come and go as fads or trends within few years

# Cross-Cultural Psychology's Mission and Focus

- How does Culture Influence Human Behaviors and Mental Processes?
  - Contribution of the Study of Culture
    - In all fields of psychology: clinical, social, developmental, etc.
  - Cultural Revolution in Psychology
    - Does current research reflect all people?
    - Need to change theories, and adapt our models, to incorporate all people.

# Theoretical Roots of Cross-Cultural Psychology

- Science is about understanding the natural world, and psychology is about understanding the observer.
- During the 1800s, psychology was (still) generally treated as a type of philosophy.
- Some scientists “dabbled” in some areas of psychology. Most were physiologists.

# Wilhelm Wundt?

- Most historical scholars attribute the origin of modern experimental psychology to Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt (1832-1920).
- In 1874, published *Principles of Physiological Psychology*.
  - The book was part of Wundt's efforts to create an independent science of psychology.



## Wundt (Cont.)

- His early work at Leibniz Laboratory provided the foundation for psychology becoming a scientific discipline.
- By 1990, Wundt succeeded in creating the first school of psychology, where psychologist would go for training.

# Wundt's Experimental Methods

- Reaction Time (RT)– methods had been introduced earlier by Helmholtz & Donders.
  - Hoped to create a “mental chronometry,” or a record of various mental activities and the time they took to be performed.
  - Found reaction times to be too varied, and gave up on “standard” reaction times.

# Wundt's Other Side

- What is not commonly known about Wundt is that he also laid the foundation for cultural psychology.
- Volkerpsychologie  
(Ethnic or cultural Psychology)  
--study of collective activity, in particular, language, myths, & customs

# Higher Mental Processes

- Wundt believed that higher processes could not be studied and understood via experiments. The essence of higher mental processes could only be captured by studying collective human activity (group, social, and cultural activity).
- For Wundt, the most challenging problem for both psychology and philosophy was to understand the relationship between individuals and society.

# Wundt's Cultural Psychology Contributions

- For Wundt, cultural psychology included

“those mental products which are created by a community of human life and are, therefore, inexplicable in terms merely of individual consciousness” (1916)

# Wundt's Cultural Psychology Contributions (Cont.)

- Wundt wrote 10 books on Cultural Psychology:
  - 2 books on language,
  - 3 books on myth and religion
  - 1 book on art,
  - 2 books on society,
  - 1 book on law, and
  - 1 book on culture and history.

# Carl Gustav Jung

- Jung proposed the notion of the “Collective Unconscious” to explain how all humans are interconnected at the unconscious level.
- He conducted cross-cultural research to demonstrate how similar archetypes are present in all humans regardless of vast differences in language and culture.

# Types of Cross-Cultural Research

- Cross-Cultural Comparison Studies (most common)
  - Compares two or more cultures on some psychological variable of interest.
- Ecological-Level Studies use countries or cultures as the unit of analysis rather than individual participants.
  - i.e. Hofstede's (1980, 1983) study of 50+ cultures & Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca's (1988) study of individualism-collectivism in eight cultures



# Types of Cross-Cultural Research (Cont.)

- Cross-cultural Validation Studies
  - Test the equivalence of psychological Constructs and measures across cultures.
- Unpackaging Studies
  - Examine why cultural differences occur.
    - Culture is treated as an unspecified variable and is replaced by more specific variables in order to truly explain the causes of cultural differences.
- Ethnographies
  - Being immersed in a culture for an extended period of time (anthropologists)

# Issues with Cross-Cultural Comparisons

- Equivalence (bias)-similarity in conceptual meaning and empirical method between cultures.
  - If any aspect is not equivalent across cultures then comparison not valid.
- Theoretical Issues
  - Theories are bound by the culture of the theorists.
  - One theoretical framework may not have the same basis in a different culture.