Culture and Personality

Chapter 10

Outline

- Defining personality
- Measuring personality across cultures
- Cross-cultural studies of personality traits
- Where do these traits come from?
- Are there more than Five Personality Traits?
- Cross-cultural research on other aspects of personality
- Indigenous approaches to personality

Definitions

- Set of enduring behavioral and cognitive characteristics, traits, or predispositions that contribute to differences among individual

- Quality or collection of qualities which makes a person a distinctive individual

- Relatively stable across time and consistent across context, situations, and interactions

DEFINING PERSONALITY

Perspectives

- Psychological Anthropology
  - National character: perception that each culture has a modal personality type, and that most persons in that culture share aspects of it
  - Personality is culture specific

Perspectives

- Cross-cultural psychological approach
  - Trait: consistent pattern of behavior that a person would usually display in relevant circumstances
  - Personality is universal; equivalently relevant and meaningful in the cultures compared
  - Indigenous personalities: constellations of personality traits found only in a specific culture
Perspectives

- Cultural psychology
  - Personality and culture are mutually constituted system in which each creates and maintains the other

Perspectives

- Cultural trait psychology
  - Incorporation of both cross-cultural psychology and cultural psychology in studies of personality

MEASURING PERSONALITY ACROSS CULTURES

- To conduct cross-cultural studies on personality, need to use measures that have been psychometrically validated in all cultures to be tested
- Researchers have established some degree of psychometric equivalence across cultures in their measures of personality
- Various evidence supports the notion that cross-cultural comparisons of personality are meaningful

CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES OF PERSONALITY TRAITS: THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL OF PERSONALITY

Evidence for the Five-Factor Model

- Five-Factor Model (FFM)
  - Conceptual model built around five distinct and basic personality dimensions that appear to be universal for all humans
  - Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism
  - Cross-cultural research on validity of FFM support claims of universality
Evidence for the Five-Factor Model

- Robert McCrae and Paul Costa's 51 cultures study
- Americans, New Zealanders, and Australians are high on Extraversion and in the middle for Neuroticism
- Same five-factor model emerged when asked to rate someone they know well (thus eliminating social desirable responding)

Do Perceptions of National Character Correspond to Aggregate Personality Traits?

- Terraciano et al. (2005)
  - Perceptions of national character not correlated with actual, aggregate personality levels
  - National characters may be unfounded stereotypes of personalities, but exist to maintain national identity

WHERE DO THESE TRAITS COME FROM?

The Five-Factor Theory of Personality

- FFT: Theory about source of five factor traits
- Core components of FFT: basic tendencies, characteristic adaptations, and the self-concept

The Five-Factor Theory of Personality

- Personality traits that underlie basic tendencies are biologically based
- Cross-cultural studies, twin studies, longitudinal studies, nonhuman primate studies
- Universal personality traits are expressed in characteristic ways, which can be influenced by culture

The Five-Factor Theory of Personality

- Culture affects values about personality traits and behavioral manifestations of personality
- Debate continues concerning origins of traits
An Evolutionary Approach

- This approach posits a universality in both of human interests and of the neurophysiological mechanisms underlying trait variation
- Personality viewed as universal psychological mechanism
- Traits in FFM are stable variations in systems that serve critical adaptive functions

ARE THERE MORE THAN FIVE MAJOR PERSONALITY TRAITS?

- Harmony, relationship orientation, modernization, thrift v. extravagance, Ah-Q mentality, Face
- Initial Support for this dimension in mainland and Hong Kong Chinese
- Additional support for existence of this dimension in Singapore, Hawaii, Midwestern US, Chinese and European Americans

Filipino Personality Structure

- Considerable overlap in personality dimensions from Filipino scales and NEO-PI-R
- Indigenous factors: Social Curiosity, Risk taking, Religiosity
- Predict smoking, drinking, gambling, praying, tolerance of homosexuality, and tolerance of premarital and extramarital relations

Dominance

- Dependence on authority and hierarchical, status differences among interactants
- "Authoritarianism"
- Inherited trait among animals
CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH ON OTHER ASPECTS OF PERSONALITY

Internal versus external locus of control

- **Internal locus of control**: believe their behavior and relationships with others as dependent on their own behavior
- **External locus of control**: believe their behavior and relationships with others as contingent on forces outside themselves and beyond their control
- In general, Americans have higher internal locus of control; non-Americans have higher external locus of control

Direct, Indirect, Proxy, and Collective Control

- Direct, personal control strategy more prevalent in cultures that value autonomy and independence
- Indirect, proxy, and collective control strategy more prevalent in cultures that value maintenance of interpersonal harmony

Autonomy

- **Self-determination theory**: people from all cultures share basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness but the specific ways in which these needs are met and expressed differ according to context and culture
- **Autonomy**: behavior experienced as willingly enacted and fully endorsed
- Autonomy and independence are separate constructs

Indigenous Approaches to Personality

- Evidence
  - African model of personality
  - Japanese amae
  - Indigenous conceptions of personality may coexist with FFM
Indigenous Concepts of Personality and the Cultural Psychology Perspective

• Some aspects of personality may be universal and other aspects are culturally unique

• Relationship between indigenous and universal aspects of personality are two sides of the same coin, not mutually exclusive

Summary

• Future studies should look at the influence of context