General Orientation to Psychological Anthropology

Psychological Anthropology is a specialized branch of cultural anthropology that deals with some of the major issues in the field as a whole and, in significant ways, reflects its history. Today it is an active and dynamic area of research with a focus on the reciprocal relationship between the individual and his culture, placing the individual self in the larger context of cultural possibilities and constraints and on the ways in which the individual self and its culture are mutually constitutive. As anthropologists, researchers in this area are aware of the biological, evolutionary dimensions of human life as well as the cultural and psychological ones. They find no opposition between “nature” and “nurture” (culture), but rather an interrelationship between nature and culture. Nor do we see a separation between “body” and “mind,” but rather a single, interacting system. Psychological anthropology as an area of research overlaps at certain points with Cognitive Anthropology and Medical Anthropology, but also with an expanded biological anthropology that includes aspects of not only genetics but also psychoneuroimmunology (Reyna 2002; Wilce, ed. 2003).

Psychological anthropology has its own professional organization affiliated with the American Anthropological Association, The Society for Psychological Anthropology and its journal, Ethos. The articles in the journal and the books reviewed in its electronic version (www.uiuc.edu/ethos) reflect the current range and diversity of the field. Courses in various areas of psychological anthropology are significant components in many undergraduate
anthropology programs. Major reviews of the field are also available (e.g., G. Spindler, ed. 1979; Casey and Edgerton eds. 2005.)

Today psychological anthropology holds promise for the anthropological understanding contemporary global issues, including those involving wars and displaced populations, as well major new health issues. Psychological anthropology reflects characteristically American concerns in anthropology: a focus on the interaction of biological and cultural factors, on a cross-cultural perspective, on the intensive study of particular cultures (holism), based on ethnographic fieldwork. There is a strong emphasis on language with a special emphasis on the symbolic dimensions of human social life. This four-field approach grew out of the field’s 19th century concerns with American Indians, whose societies and cultures were seen as doomed to vanish rapidly. By contrast, British social anthropology showed an early interest in exploring the inner mental states and motivations of “primitive peoples,” as they were called, but has, on the whole, been averse to systematic psychocultural research. Like many other subdisciplines of cultural anthropology, psychological anthropology can be thought of as originally part of a salvage operation, motivated by the need to collect data and artifacts from rapidly vanishing cultures, originally primarily in North America, and throughout the colonized world. It has matured into an interdisciplinary field that reaches to all corners of the world and is practiced by scholars from many societies outside of the United States. It comprises a wide range of research interests, ethnographic illustrations, and theoretical perspectives. Emphasis on socialization and individual development includes specialized research, such as child development, child training, child behavior and child personality. It also includes the study of personality, identity, states of consciousness as well as the relationship of these studies to modernity and culture change. Psychological anthropology explores the relationship between culture and aspects of human psychological life, such as dreams, memory, sensation and
perception. Cognitive anthropology (Yang, this volume) has taken on increasing importance both in linguistic and psychological anthropology. An important specialty concerns the relationship between culture and psychiatry, including research on mental illness, culturally-defined ideas of the psychologically normal and abnormal, and local, culture-specific systems of diagnosis and treatment of categories of psychological distress. Psychological anthropology also finds historical and contemporary connections with the anthropological study of religion, especially in the psychological basis of belief and behavior around concepts of the supernatural. In addition, psychological anthropology sheds a specific light on various other fields of cultural anthropology, for example medical anthropology (Liu, this volume). As Colby (2006) has noted, given the importance of cross-cultural studies of child development, “…psychological anthropology will likely come to be seen as an integral part of any serious well-defined development of culture theory.”

Psychological anthropology represents a particular point of view, an approach to the understanding of human behavior and therefore must be seen as complementary to other approaches. Goldschmidt (2006) has shown how psychological anthropology provides indispensable elements to our understanding of human evolution. He specifically focuses on what he calls “affect hunger,” the human need to receive affectional responses from others. It is, he notes, “rooted in biology and emerges with culture” (Goldschmidt 2006:141). It is the major motivational force for learning, from birth on. Since both culture and language are learned on the basis of innate capacities, this factor is a “bridging concept” connecting biological and cultural development.

Psychological anthropology does not present a single unified point of view. As will be seen below, researchers in the field use a variety of methodologies and theoretical perspectives.
Historically, psychological anthropology had its beginnings with what has come to be called the “culture and personality school” of thought and has moved to contemporary approaches that focus on ideas of “the self” and “identity.” This change has come about both as a result of changes in the world and of changes in ways of thinking about the world, with influences from many other disciplines.

**Historical Origins of Psychological Anthropology**

From the early encounters of Westerners with the “cultural other,” Western observers—explorers, missionaries, colonial officials and others—were curious about the mental life of the individuals and the cultures they encountered, ranging from interest stimulated by language and symbolic activities such as art and music, beliefs and rituals, to attempts at understanding the relationship between social structure and personality. Interest in psychological questions is to be found in the writings of the founders of the discipline. Edward Tylor (1871), for example, argued that the origin of religion (belief in spirits, life after death, etc.) grew out of dreams and hallucinations, both of which are psychological phenomena. However, such arguments did no lead to systematic research. Furthermore, although some British anthropologists, such as Bronislaw Malinowski (1927), raised psychological questions, specifically questions that grew out of the writings of Sigmund Freud (1950), there was a strong rejection of psychology among British anthropologists, who argued that such research should be left to psychologists. In fact, academic psychology had little influence on culture and personality studies. Psychiatry, and specifically psychoanalysis, has had a great deal more.

During the second half of the 19th century, a period of important growth in Western scientific and intellectual history, evolutionary biology and psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious influenced the emerging discipline of psychological anthropology. New assumptions concerning human nature, culture, and of their interrelations began to take shape.
Charles Darwin (2003), in his exploration of evolutionary biology, focused on the centrality of the environment in the adaptation of any species. Sigmund Freud (Freud and Breuer 1957; Freud 1956), a neurologist and psychiatrist, was especially interested in the relationship between anatomy, physiology, and the cultural context of human behavior. In addition, Freud, like many educated people of his generation, read widely in the literature describing the life of “primitives,” such as the Australian Aborigines who were often considered to represent the earliest forms of human cultural life. Stimulated by his reading as well as by the observation of his patients, he made an explicit effort to understand the mind and intrapsychic process of “primitives,” whom he took to represent pre-historical human cultures (Freud 1950). Freud considered culture to be a necessary, but also a restraining and restricting force in the development of the individual, and as a result often responsible for the psychiatric illnesses he was called upon to treat (1961). However, although his patients came from diverse cultures and backgrounds, he showed little interest in cultural differences as they might have accounted for their problems.

Psychological concerns among American anthropologists crystallized around particular interest in the cultural constitution of the individual personality. Significant influence early on came from the work and teaching of Franz Boas, whose long career spanned the first half of the 20th century. In both his own scholarly orientation and his influence as a teacher of several generations of American anthropologists, Boas infused into all anthropological inquiry the perspectives and insights of a psychological approach. He was deeply committed to the synergistic nature of the four-fields approach of anthropology, requiring the competent the study of linguistics, archaeology, biology, and ethnography. Boas believed that empirical ethnographic data could be and should be enlisted to repudiate race-based claims about cultural differences. Working from the presumption that human biology provides the template and foundation for
human cognition, emotion, and behavior, his students, among them Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and subsequent generations of American anthropologists, sought to understand the specific configurations of culture shaped cultural distinctiveness and the typical personalities that populated different societies.

In a different way, A. I. Hallowell (1976) forged an important framework for psychological anthropology with his contributions to theory, methodological innovations, and ethnography. Theoretically, Hallowell’s work expressed the continuing centrality of the biology-culture relationship. With his idea of the “culturally constituted behavioral environment” Hallowell continued and elaborated some of the original psychological themes in anthropology. Biologists have noted that the “behavioral environment” varies among animal species in relationship to their anatomy and physiology (Uexküll 1907). While humans share a common biological base, Hallowell suggested that they do not simply perceive and react to an environment that is “out there” in existence independent of human cognizance. Rather, Hallowell argued, humans as individual members of cultural groups, learn to perceive and think about their environments in patterned and culturally meaningful ways. For example, for the Indians of the Eastern Woodlands of North America, coal deposits were an insignificant part of their environment, whereas the bark of birch trees was a valuable resource: huts (wigwams), canoes, boxes and other utilitarian objects were made of birch bark. They interpreted illness to be the automatic result of moral violations, including the mistreatment of the animals they hunted. At the same time Hallowell (1955:80) noted not only that self-awareness and self-orientation exist in all human societies, i.e. they are among the universal features of a human adjustment, but that “concepts of the self are in part culturally derived.” He thereby created a first approach to what has increasingly become a focal concern of psychological anthropology (e.g., Csordas 1990; Spiro 1993).
The Development of the “Culture and Personality” Approach

Psychological anthropology may be seen as having a specific starting point, in Margaret Mead’s study of adolescence in Samoa (Mead 1928). This work grew out of a comparative question. Adolescence in the United States was considered by psychologists of the time to be a period of storm and stress. Mead asked: since puberty is biologically given, a developmental period through which all human beings pass, is it always associated with conflict and stress? Her study led her to say no, adolescence is not stressful to young girls in Samoa. This finding reinforced the key Boasian concepts of culture and cultural relativity. That is to say, Mead’s work showed that the experience of adolescence is linked to biological changes and cultural characteristics. Both biology and culture are at work: biology is constant but culture is variable. In her book, Mead describes the world of the American adolescent girl of the 1920s as rigid and full of conflict over the many choices available to her. For Samoan girls, she tells us, it was a period of enjoyment and pleasant experimentation with flirtation. They had no choices to make about education or a possible career, nor did they form intense attachments to people.

What aspects of psychological functioning are constant (human universals) and what are culturally variable has been the center of argument ever since. In particular, there is the question of how much is biology (hard wired) and how much is learned/ culturally acquired. Indeed, the question goes back to the 1870s, when Francis Galton contrasted Nature (biology) and Nurture (culture).

Mead’s work is important historically because it was the first systematic attempt at a comparative psychological study based on the investigation of a specific hypothesis, one that grew out of American conditions. This was the origin of a research specialty that came to be called Culture and Personality, indeed some times referred to as the American School of Culture and Personality. In the years since Word War II it has grown into the much broader field of Psychological Anthropology, as described above.
For more than twenty years, the culture and personality approach grew and diversified. In the first generation, research directed by Boas, Ruth Benedict’s work looked at configurations of culture: Notable among the resulting publications was Ruth Benedict’s book *Patterns of Culture*, first published in 1934 and reprinted many times since. On the basis of her own work and that of others, she describes three cultures: the Zuni of the American Southwest, the Kwakiutl of the Northwest Coast of North America, and the people of Dobu in Melanesia. Benedict relied on her own field work with the Zuni and on Boas’ work with the Kwakiutl that extended over forty years. For the Dobuans she used the work of Reo Fortune (1931). Benedict described the Kwakiutl as warlike, aggressive, and “megalomanic.” Kwakiutl social structure was characterized by a political hierarchy, with wealthy chiefs who engaged in social and economic rivalries. Because Kwakiutl economy was based on sedentary aquatic gathering and fishing, in an environment rich in resources, a stratified society of large settled communities, with economic and political distinctions could arise, providing the basis for struggles over power and prestige.

Benedict offers a detailed depiction of the overall cultures under consideration, and, for each of her three groups she describes “personality” in abstract terms, but her analysis does not address the issue of individual personality; actions of individuals serve only as illustrations of cultural forms. Individual differences, however, are recognized. Most individuals, because of their “temperaments,” are said to be at ease in their culture, while others, a minority, are not. Benedict suggests that such “misfits”—the meek Dobuan, the aggressive Zuni, and the peaceful Kwakiutl—may have temperaments that would be well suited to the pattern of another culture. Like many other questions that Benedict raised in her work, this had led to significant later research. For example, in a recent article in which they compare the adjustment of Turks in the
United States and Americans in Turkey, Caldwell-Harris and Ayçiçeği (2006) ask what happens “when personality and culture clash.

**The Emergence of Methodological Issues and Strategies**

While early definitions of culture tended to be all encompassing and stressed behavior and material culture, current definitions stress meaning and cognition. The emphasis on behavior has been maintained among primatologists: we can see the behavior of apes, but we cannot discover what the meaning of their behavior might be, we cannot discuss it with them. For humans, the meaning of the environment is learned as a result of living in group, and as such it is shared. The environment also includes other people, and patterns of interaction with them must be learned also. How the child or the newcomer learns these things is of interest to the psychological anthropologist.

There are a number of assumptions involved in these early culture and personality studies, of which the anthropologists of the time were perhaps not quite aware in their investigation of small scale societies: were these societies as bounded and isolated from other groups as the descriptions seemed to imply and as unchanging over time? Engaged in a salvage operation, attempting to reconstruct what they took to be vanishing cultures, anthropologists paid little attention to history. For example, reading ethnographies of the Zuni and other peoples of the American Southwest, one learned little of the fact that these people had been conquered by the Spanish explorers and had largely been converted to Catholicism by them. In spite of this, they had maintained many aspects of their earlier culture, including religious beliefs and rituals.

The essential question the various early studies in culture and personality addressed was whether the people of a given society, sharing a common culture, also share a common personality. What methods of research are useful in this regard? Two strategies were
developed to deal with these questions: 1. It is assumed that personality and culture are aspects of the same phenomenon—that they are “isomorphic.” 2. No such assumption is made and specialized methods must be developed to assess personality characteristics, independent of cultural analysis, to a) discover whether and what shared characteristics exist in a given population and b) whether a “fit” exists between the personality discovered by these means and the culture investigated on its own terms.

The first strategy was used by Benedict. In an early paper (Benedict 1932:24), she wrote that one may consider cultures to be “individual psychology thrown large upon the screen, given gigantic proportions and a long time span.” Later she wrote of culture as “personality writ large” (Benedict 1961:236). This view is justified by the fact that culture molds personality. Furthermore, she argued that each culture is characterized by a single dominant pattern or configuration. “The cultural pattern of any civilization,” Benedict (1961:237) claims, “makes use of a certain segment of the great arc of potential human purposes and motivations.” This statement makes it appear that the choice is quite arbitrary.

In contrast to Benedict’s approach to the study of differences in culture and personality, other scholars have sought direct methods of assessing adult personality, such as the collection of life histories, dreams, and the use of personality tests. These approaches produced large quantities of data and variable results. Langness and Frank (1981) accumulated an impressive list of life histories but relatively little analytic use has been made of them. However, new life history studies continue to be published, often from previously unstudied populations and from different segments of society.

The study of dreams from many different populations across the world has been particularly fruitful. In a volume on dreams from various cultures Mageo (2003a) offers a brief history of the anthropological study of dreams. Dreams are considered important, remembered
and told in many parts of the world. In the United States, some people keep dream diaries and even have dream study groups. Many others consider dreaming meaningless and quickly forget their dreams. Only a few studies can be mentioned here. Dorothy Eggen (1966) collected several hundred dreams among the Hopi over many years. Her writings show how material from myths and rituals are used by the dreamers. When Schneider and Sharp (1969) analyzed the content of 149 dreams of the Yir Yoront people of Australia, they found a number of interesting themes: in dreams of aggression, the dreamer is more frequently the victim rather than the attacker and contrary to their expectation, there were more dreams of aggression than of coitus. Yir Yoront culture has strict rules about sexual relations, and this is reflected in the dreams: when men dreamed of sexual relations, their women partners were more often of a social category permitting such relations. When they were not, the obstacles encountered in the dream corresponded in severity to the severity of the taboo involved.

Some people who give equal importance to dreams and to daytime experiences. Followers of the Afro-American religion of voudu, in Haiti, believe that in dreams they may have conversations with divinities, who appear to them in human form. Such conversations give them important information and direct their actions (Bourguignon 2003). Discussing several dreams of Samoans among whom Mageo has long worked, she shows how much culture change and contact with American culture have affected the dreamers and have created conflicts for them. Although Samoa was not isolated for the outside world when Margaret Mead was there, this contact has greatly increased since then. It has left its impact not only on the daily life of Samoans but also on their unconscious, as revealed in their dream life. Effects of contacts with the outside world is shown in the earlier study of Yir Yoront dreams and can be seen in studies of many people who were previously much more isolated. Mageo’s is only
one of numerous recent contributions to the anthropological study of dreams and is cited here only as an example.

A variety of psychological tests have also been used by anthropologists. Most popular among these were so-called “projective” tests. Most widely used was the Rorschach test which consists of a series of ink blots which the subject is asked to interpret. Even people with no experience with images have been able to make interpretations of these unstructured shapes.

In the United States, the Rorschach test, invented by a Swiss psychiatrist, was first used cross-culturally in 1938 by A.I. Hallowell (1941). The Japanese anthropologists S. Fujisawa (1953, for a summary see Huzioka 1968.) used it even earlier in a study of Taiwanese native people. In a review of the large cross-cultural literature on the use of projective tests, Lindzey (1961) concluded that the results of the tests were on the whole consistent with the results of ethnographic data, and also that in all groups, even those appearing to be homogeneous and relatively isolated, there were great variations in personality among individuals.

Benedict suggested, as noted above, that personality is molded by cultural institutions. Lindzey’s work tells us that there are not only differences between cultural groups but also intragroup differences. The question of how culture “molds” personality has led to detailed studies of child rearing in numerous societies, and to considerations of how the methods and results differ. Abram Kardiner, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, working with several anthropologists, developed a theoretical scheme for the analysis of the data they provided to him. On the basis of these materials he formulated the concept of a “basic personality structure” for each particular society (Kardiner 1939). This consists of the shared aspects of personality that result from contact with the same institutions. There are primary institutions, such as the structure of the family and the early disciplines relating to food, elimination and sex. The attitudes that result from these experiences are learned in the early months and years
of the child’s life. They are projected by adults to create the society’s secondary institutions, such as religion and mythology.

Among the anthropologists who provided Kardiner with the ethnographic information on which he built his model, several published studies of their own, sometimes differing with Kardiner’s interpretations. One such volume is *Under the Ancestors’ Shadow*, by F. L. K. Hsu (1971), discussing Chinese culture and personality, and emphasizing the organization and structure of the Chinese family, which endures over time, the past and the future in an unbroken chain of fathers and sons.

In 1939 Cora Dubois (1944) conducted research on the Indonesian island of Alor to gather data to test Kardiner’s formulation. In addition to ethnographic data and life histories, she also collected Rorschach tests and children’s drawings. The life histories were analyzed by Kardiner and the tests by specialized experts. The study was widely hailed as a landmark in the study of the relationship between culture and personality. Reflecting on her work twenty years later, Du Bois (1961) was highly critical of the culture and personality approach. She noted that in the 1930s anthropologists considered “each society and culture as a uniquely integrated constellation of social, psychological and symbolic traits” (Du Bois 1961: xvii). As a result systematic comparative studies were neglected. Little attention was put on the common, underlying biological heritage.

Anthropologists, such as Benedict and others, considered adult personality to be the end result of the cultural practices to which infants and children are exposed. The child learns how to relate to people and how to understand its behavioral environment. And these differ from cultural to culture.

Kardiner, on the other hand, basing his approach on psychoanalytic theory, tended to see culture mostly as a projection by adults, of universal unconscious forces, rather than on the
specific experiences of the child. In other words, the anthropologists emphasized cultural relativity, and tended to neglect the common aspects of humanity. Kardiner tended to emphasize the common features, as he saw them, and neglected the variable aspects of culture. Both theoretical positions however assumed direct causal relationships between child rearing and adult personality. No feedback was considered and culture change was not allowed for.

As a pioneering effort, *The People of Alor* provided data to test Kardiner’s theory. Contrary to expectations however, Du Bois’ data did not show a high degree of consistency between the psychological and cultural features of the society. Du Bois preferred the term “modal personality” to Kardiner’s “basic personality structure,” to indicate that she was dealing with a central tendency in regard to the variety of personality types that her research had revealed.

It is important to recall that the studies discussed so far were carried out by American anthropologist between 1924 and 1939, in the inter-war era. The research centered on small scale societies, with traditional life styles that were more or less isolated from the wider world. Words like “primitive” were often used, although anthropologists tended to use them as synonymous with “non-literate,” rather than “early” or “simple.”

By the 1960s, some fifty studies of the culture and personality type had been carried out in small non-Western communities around the world. The approaches and methods of these studies, however, different considerably, so that few systematic comparisons were possible.

**World War II and Studies of National Character**

With the coming of World War II, interest shifted to modern nation states. How could German Nazism be explained? Was there something in the German personality, in the authoritarianism of the German family, that would help us understand it? What about the Japanese? But also, what did Americans need to know about the Allies, the French and the Russians? And what about
Americans themselves? Research into these questions, it was thought, could help the war effort, both by “knowing the enemy,” for purposes of psychological warfare, and also to mobilize Americans, in areas as diverse as morale, working with Allies or to develop a willingness to change their food habits under wartime conditions. Now interest was no longer centered on culture and personality in small-scale societies but on the National Characters of large and diversified nation states. Support for this work, by a small but vocal group of anthropologists, came from various governmental agencies. Margaret Mead (1942) wrote book about American personality. The U.S. Navy funded the Culture at a Distance project (Mead and Metraux, eds. 1953) that resulted in a series of publications, most famously Ruth Benedict’s (1946) study of Japan, The Chrysanthemum and the Sword. Although this book was generally well received, when it was translated into Japanese, critics pointed out that the information was dated. Because of the wartime conditions, Benedict had carried out her study “at a distance,” by interviewing older Japanese people who had immigrated to the United States many years earlier.

The national character studies clearly showed that research methods appropriate to small scale, apparently static and bounded societies were not appropriate to the study of large, highly diverse societies. Some of the broad generalizations produced by this research led to skepticism not only about national character studies but also about culture and personality studies in general. The war and the transformations it brought about affected the people anthropologists wanted to study and the way anthropologists thought about their work. There were now few, if any isolated peoples left in the world. Change was to be seen everywhere. Hallowell (1951) compared personality profiles derived from the Rorschach test among Ojibwa Indians in Canada and the United States at three levels of acculturation, from a semi-migratory life of hunting and fishing and relative isolation to settled life on a reservation. At that third level he found a great deal more maladjustment, and what remains of the old personality type, adapted
to a highly independent and self reliant life style, was no longer appropriate to the new conditions. Many men on the specific Indian Reservation of this study had been in the Armed Forces or had worked in war industries. When they returned to their families, there was a high degree of unemployment do that they depended on Government Unemployment Compensation funds. There were few tourists in the area and virtually no industries.

By contrast with these findings, when Margaret Mead returned to the Manus, in New Guinea in 1953, twenty-five years after her initial study and found drastic transformations, these were on the whole positive. In her book *New Lives for Old* (Mead 1956) she reported on the changes. Many of the traditional practices had been abandoned. Where children’s lives had been discontinuous before, with a radical reorientation require at adolescence and marriage, they were now continuous, so that they were more pleasant and happier people than their people of their parents’ generation. She concluded that a single type of childrearing may produce different types of adult personalities, depending on what happens at a later stage of development. Manus society had been transformed in part by a massive contact with American troops during the war and by conscious effort of the people under the influence of a prophet who presented his message in visionary trance states. These studies suggest that, depending on circumstances, cultural and social change can either be positive or negative for the development of psychological adaptation of a particular group.

The culture and personality movement had developed in the United States largely in the 1930s in a period of economic depression, of the rise of dictatorships abroad and of preparation for war. To Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* was a plea for tolerance and understanding of other cultures and for the “deviants” in one’s own society.

**New Approaches: Psychological Anthropology**
In the post-war period, with what was learned, for example, about the value system that underpinned the Nazi regime, it was felt by many that relativism and tolerance had to be reassessed. Anthropologists looked to formalist approaches and value neutral topics for their research: Lévi-Strauss, then in New York, began to explore structural approaches to kinship and mythology. New conditions of research had been created and a new generation of scholars had come into the field. In 1961, F. L. K. Hsu, reviewing what had become a more complex and diversified field, proposed a new more descriptive name for it: he called it Psychological Anthropology.

The Human Relations Area Files, Inc. (HRAF), established at Yale University, began its Collection of Ethnography in 1949, drawing on the published ethnographic literatures on all parts of the world. It created an archive that in 2006 covers some 400 societies. The data are indexed according to 700 subject categories. HRAF publishes a journal: Cross-Cultural Research (formerly Behavior Science Research). These resources have made it possible to test cross-cultural hypotheses statistically. Such research was greatly facilitated as more and more sophisticated computers came increasingly into use. In a parallel move, G. P. Murdock catalogue data for 1000 societies along a series of dimensions (Murdock 19667). This work represented a scientific advance in that they moved away from what were often arbitrary selections of cases and the personal interpretive approaches of earlier studies.

Murdock’s Ethnographic Atlas and HRAF’s Ethnographic Collection have made possible a large number of cross-cultural studies, investigating relationships among a range of various coded variables. Such systematic cross-cultural statistical research has been termed holocultural or hologeistic, encompassing societies from all parts of the world. A thoughtful selection of samples could be developed, that could then be used to explore a great variety of topics and to test numerous hypotheses. Some exemplars of the use both of these sources and
of the use of computers to analyze large masses of data relevant to psychological anthropology follow.

The earliest attempt at a holocultural study in psychological anthropology was Whiting and Child’s (1953) book *Child Training and Personality*. This ambitious exploration was based on a modified form of the Kardiner model. Child training disciplines were hypothesized to give rise to personality which in turn led both to explanations of illness and to therapeutic methods. Personality, which mediated between childhood and adult beliefs and behavior, was itself not investigated. This innovative study raised many questions about both theory and research method. It convinced the authors John Whiting and Irving Child (a psychologist), that better data were needed. This became the primary rationale for the large scale, multi-year, entirely fieldwork based, six culture study. The realization of this work depended heavily on the computerized analysis of massive amounts of data.

**The Six Culture Studies**

Research takes place in a social, historical and intellectual context. New research builds on earlier work, both by utilizing what has been achieved, by testing findings by new means as well as by questioning assumptions and reformulating hypotheses. An excellent example is to be found in the Six Culture Studies by John and Beatrice Whiting and their associates, which builds on the work of Kardiner (B. B. Whiting, ed., 1963; B. B. Whiting and J.W. M Whiting, 1975).

- Insert Fig. 1 here

In their scheme, Kardiner’s “primary institution”—the child care system, is preceded by the interaction of Environment (climate, flora, fauna, terrain) with History (migrations, borrowings, inventions) which give rise to Maintenance Systems (subsistence patterns, means of production, settlement patterns, social structure, system of defense, law and social control,
division of labor) and this in turn then leads to the Child’s Learning Environment (settings occupied, caretakers and teachers, tasks assigned, mothers workload. These in turn affect the Innate characteristics of the infant (needs, drives, capacities) and interact with what the child has learned by the time it reaches adulthood: Behavioral styles, skills and abilities, value priorities, intrapersonal conflicts and defenses. Finally, Adult personality is reflected in the Projective system (Kardiner’s secondary institutions) in Religion, magical beliefs, ritual and ceremony, art and recreation, games and play, but also crime rates and suicide rates. This scheme is a good deal more complex than Kardiner’s, but like his, it presents a causal chain. Antecedents are considered independent variables and subsequent elements in the chain are the dependent variables. Changes in the first affect the others.

As it is stated, the model is static and contains no feedback loops. On the other hand, if anything where to change along the way, specifically in the in the first item of the sequence, that is with regard to one or more of the elements that make up Environment and/or history, these would have effects on aspects of the other categories. For example, in her study of the !Kung people of Southern Africa, Patricia Draper (1976) shows how the move from a life as nomadic hunters and gatherers to a settled life has affected women’s domestic role. This in turn has meant that in their new way of life they require help with household work and child care on the part of their young daughters. In terms of the classifications of behaviors, she found, among the sedentary groups, pressures toward compliance (obedience, responsibility and nurturance), which were absent among the nomadic groups. A shift in child training rapidly follows changes in mother’s work load, irrespective of the way in which the mother herself had been brought up.

In their field studies of six specially selected communities, however, the Whitings were more interested in correlations rather than in causation and in change. In contrast to Kardiner
and other earlier researchers, however, the Whitings chose not to study adult personality and its roots in earlier experience. Rather, they focused on children, and specifically on features of child behavior. Behavior is directly observable, personality is not but inferred from indices including patterns of behavior. The concept of personality was imported into anthropology from psychiatry and clinical psychology where it is used for purposes of diagnosis. It has always carried with it questions of pathology. In any society we would expect only a small proportion of a population to have pathological characteristics. Moreover, this concern raises the question of how pathology is to be defined and identified. This is a point to which we shall return further on.

Research in the Whiting tradition (e.g., Super and Harkness 1999; Harkness and Super 2006), that incorporates lessons from the previous studies, continue to be conducted.

A different problem has been pursued by Rohner (1971) who reviewed data from 101 societies for a study of the effects of parental acceptance and rejection. Rohner refers to his approach as “universalist,” since it seeks generalizations applicable to humanity at large. Moreover, in addition to his cross-cultural statistical study, he also considers ethnographic data on two contrasting societies: the Papago of the American Southwest and the Alorese, of Indonesia. The ethnographic data support the statistical findings of the larger study. Both parental acceptance and parental rejection have radical implications for the development of the child, as well as for the society. For instance, with regard to the belief system, where parents are rejecting and repressive, so are gods and other supernaturals. A multimethod approach amplifies the findings of any one method. Rohner’s work has been supported by the research of many investigators in numerous countries (Veneziano and Muller, eds., 2005). It is interesting to see how this research relates to Goldschmidt’s (2006) emphasis on “affect hunger,” referred to earlier.
While the studies mentioned so far have focused on childhood, personality, and behavior in several different ways, a third cross-cultural statistical study, also using a multimethod approach, addressed the frequent observation, throughout history and in all parts of the world, that under some conditions, individuals enter into states of altered or modified consciousness (for summaries of this research see Bourguignon, ed. 1973; Goodman, Henney, Pressel 1974). These states have often been reported in connection with shamanism and spirit possession. A large sample of societies was drawn from the Ethnographic Atlas, which provided the coding on societal variables. Data specific to psychological states, their physical manifestations and their cultural interpretations, were drawn from the ethnographic literature. In addition, four field studies were conducted as well as intense analyses of the literature on two regions. The data led to a distinction of an altered state of consciousness referred to as “trance” (T), and various culture-specific explanatory systems. Of the sample societies, 90% had institutionalized forms of trance, primarily in a ritual context. There were two principal forms of explanations for this state: 1) the trancer’s personality and identity was temporarily displaced by another entity (“possession”) and 2) the individual has encounters with spirits, as in the Vision Quest of many North American Indian groups, or when the trancer’s own spirit visits the world of the spirits, as in many accounts of shamanism. Trance (or Altered States of Consciousness) is shown to be a universal human psychobiological capacity that is expressed in both normal and pathological situations. Its presentation involves cultural interpretation learning, shaping and utilization. The statistics showed a clear association between greater societal complexity and possession trance. Also, possession trance is more frequent among women, whereas trance (without a belief in possession) is more frequent among men.

While trance is a universal human capacity, the concept of possession is a cultural invention, one that takes different forms; it appears to have arisen several times over and is
also subject to diffusion. It is based on the image of the body as a container or a vehicle for a spirit, one soul or several, a self, a mind, a name, that is of an entity that can be separated from the body, whether in dreams or in death, or in its own adventures. This entity can be replaced by another, another spirit or being that acts through it. In possession trance such a replacement is seen, where the other entity takes over the body. In the contemporary world of rapid culture change and transfer of populations, identity, personal and collective, has become a major issue. Identity not only involves a sense of self, but also an evaluation of self in contrast to others; the contrast affects not only an evaluation of behavior and belief, but also of relative power. Being “possessed” means that the person in trance embodies and enacts the identity of a spirit. There is often discontinuity in memory, with state-specific learning, as well as alteration in sensory modalities, anesthesia and other changes. Identities of powerful beings may be enacted; in situations of culture contact, they may be foreigners (for a discussion of spirit possession and identity, see Bourguignon 2005).

The findings of the cross-cultural study provided the basis for a terminology that allowed for the ordering of the data. They also show that the physical changes and explanatory beliefs described here are not simply the result of present-day situations, but have considerable time depth. The changes are part of our common human biological heritage, though the specifics of their presentation may vary widely. The biological study of possession trance is limited by the difficulty of obtaining measurements while subjects are physically active and engaged in a sacred ritual. For example, an interdisciplinary group of researchers (Ervin at al. 1988) attempted to study the psychobiology of trance in Thaipusam, a complex Indian ritual in Malaysia. They were hampered however by the fact that they could not obtain blood samples to study the variation in the production of endorphins. They were however able to obtain important information on other physiological changes and on the psychological preparation of
the participants. A group of Japanese investigators was able to obtain EEG recording from a possessed trancer during a ritual in Bali, which allowed them to rule out various kinds of pathology (Oohashi et al. 2002).

Trance states, whether they are linked to possession beliefs or not, are connected to religious rituals, to decision making, to healing and more generally, to specific cultural and personal stress. As the rapidity of culture change and cultural dislocation has increased in the past half century, possession trance religions have increased in numbers. Prophets and visionaries have lent impetus to cultural change. Individual and collective problems have been expressed through the voices of possessing entities as well as those of visionaries. These stresses in peoples’ lives may concern issues of power and of identity and may be expressed through new forms of illness and demands on the part of the spirits. They may also be expressed through mass political and military activities. Boddy (1989) has reported on a possession trance religion among Moslem women in a Sudanese village. Among the spirits that possess them during rituals are those various types of powerful foreigners who engage in behavior that is taboo in the community. The women seem to try out, in their possession trance state, what it might be like to be such a person. A very different example comes from Uganda, where Alice, an Acholi woman, began as a medium for a new Christian spirit, then as a diviner and healer and finally became the leader of a significant military movement, who spoke in the name of her spirit (Behrend 1999). The two examples show women gaining new powers through spirit possession—temporarily for the Sudanese women, long term for the Ugandan woman leader.

Ong (1987) described a trance epidemic among young women in Malaysia, both factory workers and women students. The women and their families saw these disruptive states as due to possession, requiring rituals of exorcism to expel the spirits causing the disruptions.
This local explanation was based on the idea that spirits were angered by the destruction of their homes due to the siting of the factories and schools. The local media described these events as “mass hysteria.” Ong interpreted the mass trances as resistance by the women to capitalist work discipline, quite alien to their traditional village life style. Exorcism removed the disturbing spirits, the women went back to work and nothing changed in the work discipline.

**Psychological Anthropology, Culture Change, and Globalization**

Psychological Anthropology has much to offer in a 21st century globalized world. The ways in which traditional cultures exist in mosaic with the sometimes imported, sometimes imposed cultures of economic domination come with considerable psychological implication and ramification. Many excellent ethnographic examples illustrate the various possibilities and systematic reactions in the face of intense acculturation, such as relocations to reservation life or migration to new environments in people’s home countries or to totally alien environments in other parts of the world. Major disruptions of all kinds have taken place as a result of the great population moments in all parts of the world. Migrations may result from a search for opportunities, but often it is the response to persecutions, wars or natural disasters. They have created new problems both for the migrants and for the host countries. The issues that have arisen range from the relations between parents and children to problems and definitions of mental health and the treatment of psychological disturbances, to basic questions of identity and self perception. Some of examples of such psychological pressures and people’s responses to them are cited above with reference to spirit possession.

The psychological and as well as physical traumas caused by wars and persecutions have profound long term effects not only on their victims but also on children of survivors and even their children after them. The Parental Acceptance and Rejection Research, discussed
earlier, is directly relevant here (Rohner 1975, Veneziano and Muller, eds. 2005). Trauma affects individuals’ views of their own identities, of who they are and what they pass on to their children. Some people cannot remember disastrous events, while others cannot forget them. In either case, they may be largely shaped by their experiences (Antze and Lambeck, eds. 1999).

The presence of migrants has confronted health care providers in their new countries with complaints and responses that were often unfamiliar to them and that they were ill equipped to deal with. This has been particularly the case in regard to mental health. Transcultural Psychiatry has developed as an international specialty in medicine, dealing with culturally aware diagnosis, the work of traditional healers, and the training of psychiatrists. Both psychiatrists and psychological anthropologists have contributed as researchers and teachers in this area (e.g., Lebra, ed.1976). Working in Hong Kong, Yap (1951) noted that certain mental diseases were “peculiar to certain cultures.” More recently, the psychiatrist W. S. Tseng (2006) has preferred to speak of “culture-related specific syndromes.” He concludes his discussion by urging that “[i]t is time move from merely studying the cultural aspects of psychopathology…to the provision of culturally competent care for all people of diverse cultures…” (Tseng 26:571). The focus here is on variations in symptomatology. Koss-Chioino (2006), on the other hand, offers a model of the core components of the ritual healing process, based on her own work among spiritual healers in Puerto Rico as well as the work of many other scholars. In this model, she suggests that specific “cultural content may be secondary in explaining the commonalities in ritual healing processes across cultures” (Koss-Chioino 2006:644). Luhrmann (2001) has studied psychiatric practice in the United States from an anthropological perspective.

**Continuity, Transformation and Diversification**
Psychological Anthropology has been maintained as a continuing stream of research, with theoretical growth and increasing methodological sophistication. Evidence of these developments has been cited in these pages by considering the studies of the Whiting group, building on the previous work along the Kardiner model, by the use of computers and the sampling of world societies, by studies of newly developing situations, such as the great increase in possession trance religions and so forth.

Contemporary issues and questions and reconsideration of the large body of work that has been accumulated have given rise to new approaches. One of the most challenging of these is known as “cultural psychology” (Shweder and Bourne 1984, Shweder 1991). In many respects this is a radical rethinking of psychological anthropology. Attempting to define it Shweder (1991:20) refers to it as “a hybrid form of semiotic science and natural science.” He calls it a new discipline and notes explicitly: “Ultimately, it is a story of cyclical return… and also…a search to recover an important interdisciplinary identity” (Shweder 1991:73). Much impressed by his ethnographic experience in India, he entitles the Introduction to his book (1991)”The Astonishment of Anthropology,” an emotion that he takes to be central to cultural anthropology, in view of the existence of the very great variety of cultural responses to common human problems. As we have seen in considering the foundational work of Boas and his students, cultural relativism was a central tenant of their enterprise. Yet there was little explanation of this diversity, and when there was such an attempt it often tended to explain away the “astonishment” at human creativity. Shweder takes seriously Sapir’s famous observation that for speakers of different languages, “the world in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached” (Sapir 1929:29). This indeed is a fact of life to which bilinguals can easily testify (e.g., Hofman 1989). Indeed, there is evidence that bilinguals may present different personality profiles on personality
instruments when tested in different languages (Ervin-Trip 1973). Taking cultural differences seriously, Shweder (1991:20) goes so far as to suggest “that there may be different psychological generalizations appropriate to different semiotic regions of the world.” Sapir, however, was much influenced by psychoanalysis, a theoretical position that accepts basic universals of human psychology, and it is unlikely that he would have pushed relativism as far as Shweder does. Indeed in this discussion Shweder shows a willingness so accept a philosophically and experiential relativism quite distinct from that of the American anthropology of the 1930s. He thereby has revived “astonishment,” but at the cost of seemingly rejecting a universal human nature.

**Some Concluding Remarks**

Since its inception more than eighty years ago, psychological anthropology has changed radically, as has the cultural world it addresses. Its practitioners are a diverse lot, straying into neighboring fields, ever open to change in the observations to be made, the questions to be asked and the analytic methods used. The field is broadly inclusive and has no clear limits. In spite of this, there are some common concerns, as we have attempted to show.
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