

**Berry, John W., Ype H. Poortinga, Seger M. Breugelmans, Athanasios Chasiotis, David L. Sam,
*Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Applications***

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Reviewed by Dr. George F. Simons at diversophy.com

Back to school. *Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Applications* is a new edition of a now classical textbook and reference manual aimed at senior level and graduate students in the field. As one trained in psychology at a point in time when culture was first making dent in the instructional preparation therapists, this encyclopedic tome is both a revelation and a frustration to this reviewer.

First, *the revelation*. This book is testimony to how much work has been done in the field over the past forty years, both from the perspective of theory and research as well as that of practical application in and beyond the realms of therapy and education. When I was doing my doctoral studies, focused on educational psychology in the context of the Human Potential Movement, it was common for psychotherapists to regularly diagnose and treat Latino mothers as co-dependant. It is therefore gratifying to arrive at a time when we are seriously engaged in looking at “Culturally Informed and appropriate psychology,” this being a chapter title, in effect “decolonizing” Western dominance of the field and interpretations of psychological realities and admitting indigeneous perspectives.



Being grandfathered into intercultural work at a time when this discipline was at best starting to be created, it is gratifying for me to see how both validation and questioning from surrounding and complementary fields of study can help us get a larger and more well thought out picture of what we do. This reviewer makes no pretensions to an ability to pass judgement on the many theoretical propositions about human psychological and psychosomatic functioning, which is in fact the work that the multiple authors of this volume are engaged to do for us. The key to their evaluation and positioning of the many theories and studies in the field, however, can be found in the authors’ deliberate choice of *moderate universalism* as their overall operational standpoint. We live in a world where nature and nurture are always simultaneously in play if in fact they can be distinguished from each other. We inevitably vacillate between identifiable functions of culture that display some firmness and stability though hardly absolutes, and, at the same time, see endless variations at play, ever more so as globalization brings us face to face with ourselves in each other. This review will be largely from my perspective as a member of the practicing interculturalist community, searching for and underlining what seems enlightening and useful for our profession and, I suspect that *moderate universalism* is in fact also the operational code for most though not all of us.

Cross-Cultural Psychology, both the book and the field are essentially interdisciplinary. Reading these pages we empathize with the senior student whose intercultural interests lead to wondering, “Whither shall I go?” Psychology, anthropology, sociology, political science, biology, healthcare, business, pedagogy, etc., all beckon and inevitably have fingers in the pie in whatever field of intercultural study one embarks upon—none stands alone. The definition of cross-cultural psychology found in the introduction recognizes this interdependence:

“Cross-Cultural Psychology is the study: of similarities and differences in individual psychological functioning in various cultural and ethnocultural groups; of ongoing changes in

variables reflecting such functioning; and of the relationships of psychological variables with sociocultural, ecological, and biological variables. “

All the more important, then, that we understand the structure of the field(s) of study involved and their interplay, as well as how they are organized, in this volume if we are to find our bearings on what we want to explore and learn.

The *introduction* goes on to define and position the field of cross-cultural psychology and provides guidelines for research and interpretation. We then move on to Part I, which examines *Similarities and differences in behavior across cultures*. This brings together *theories, research and interpretation, individual development at various stages of the life cycle*, as well as *social behavior* where culture is defined as a social psychological construct. Five areas of human functioning are examined in detail, a chapter each for *personality cognition, emotion, language and perception*. The question to be answered is: How and, if so, to what degree does cultural difference affect the development and behavior of human beings in each of these capacities? Copious research is reviewed often with helpful notice of its historical development.

Here is where perhaps the readers' *frustration*, mentioned above begins to appear. Especially if one is addicted to certainties, history shows that extrapolating our “scientific” conclusions about other peoples often morphs into erroneous if not prejudicial beliefs. It is the *journey* of research that enlightens and educates rather than the *destination*. While there may be hostels of tentative conclusion along the way, the pilgrimage of inquiry is an ongoing one and the landscape endlessly changes. Thus the authors kindly guide us, concluding each chapter with a look at the map, tracing the terrain we have covered, and offering us bearings on where we are most likely positioned in the inquiry to go next—a practical expression of the moderate universalism they have espoused.

Part 2, looks at *Relationships between behavior, culture and biology*, examining the contributions of the disciplines of cultural anthropology and evolutionary biology to our understanding of culture and hence of how cross-cultural psychology is conducted.

If, as practicing interculturalists, we sloughed off Part 1, and found our interest piqued somewhat by Part 2, it is likely to peak in Part 3 which looks to *Applying research findings across cultures*—it is after all about our real world. The chapters on *Acculturation and Intercultural relations* found here also shine, no doubt due to the active engagement of the majority of the book's authors with issues such as immigration, acculturation and intercultural relations. One finds considerably more clarity here about the nature and kinds of migration, as well as psychological and social acceptance processes both in the individual and social contexts from which migrants come and into which they move. As an aside, most of the literature I have seen on so called “blended culture” and “third culture kids” could benefit from this overview as well as from more intense study of these dynamics as found in other studies made by several of the authors.

Given this, the following chapter on *Intercultural education and training* is largely about dealing with “sojourners,” people temporarily in or in contact with other cultures, expatriates, students and the like. We intercultural practitioners are confronted with the issue that “empirical tests of the effectiveness of training have tended to trail behind the development of new training.” What exists frequently indicates very little empirical evidence of results, despite the “branding” of cultural competence tools. While the use of broad cultural dimensions seems to be the most widespread element of training interventions, it is problematic that “most differences that are found tend to be very situation specific or domain specific.” This seems to give greater credibility to processes where “assimilator” types of tools and critical incidents

are employed. Certainly those of us who design interventions could benefit by the small extra effort involved in encouraging researchers to explore what works, why it works, and under what conditions.

Equally challenging and fascinating for the practicing interculturalist is the chapter on *Work and organizations*. The authors have narrowed down the vast literature now available in this area to focus on how ambient culture affects the structure and particular culture of organizations and how these spell themselves out in the values, behavior and dispositions toward work in both management and employees. An organization's culture is developed not just from what it makes or the kind of service it provides, but by the legal and socio-political philosophy of where they are formed and where they operate. Ecology, size and economy may be factors. Organizational shape may be in conflict with function and individual motivation and collaborative behaviors may be key to understanding what is going on in the enterprise.

Neither the classical studies of Hofstede nor the more recent GLOBE research program provide a satisfying analysis of how values operate in the context of organizational behavior. If we are to develop clearer understandings of how values may either drive or be driven by organizational contexts, there will need to be much more research that isolates culture specific value sets that currently are all too easily lumped into the generic values terminology that we see in the dimensional literature. In short we must get to the stories that express and drive values locally, rather than rely on what seems to be our addiction in the social sciences to statistically driven survey results and their interpretation.

The penultimate chapter addresses *Health*: mental health, pathologies and therapeutic interventions across cultures, as well as the cultural context and ecology of bodily health around the world. Of course psychology and corporality are inseparable. Health is handily defined as the WHO does it, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not just the absence of disease or infirmity." Psychology has a task here, both in helping us define the cultural factors conducive to healthy living as well as addressing the creation of attitudes and the mentality of policies that seek to improve healthy living. While Western taxonomies of disease and prescribed means of diagnosis and care are widespread, they are interpreted by culturally diverse recipient mentalities and culturally diverse conceptions of pathology and cure.

This leaves the area of psychopathology and its role in overall sickness and health difficult to define. While mental disorders have been repeatedly classified, whether they turn out to be biased or not toward a specific culture or seen and evaluated differently across cultures remains an open question, begging considerably more study. The authors highlight this challenge and attempt to briefly explore it by looking at three psychopathological conditions with worldwide prevalence, namely: organic disorders, schizophrenia and depression, while admitting that a universal set of psychopathologies is likely not identifiable. Even in the three categories cited, the role of culture is extremely difficult to pinpoint in the origin, expression and cure of the condition. That culture plays a role is evident in the social expression of sickness, for example, where a person in one culture will complain of feeling sad where elsewhere a somatic symptom emerges, such as a headache or other localized pain.

Psychotherapy can be described as *indigenous*, if client, therapist and society share the same culture, or as *Multicultural*, where the intervention takes place without the concurrence of these variables, and must therefore be exercised with cultural savvy and sensitivity. While we can consider Western psychotherapy as indigenous, *Morita* and *Naikan* in Japan as well as Caribbean *Voodoo* are cited as other indigenous examples. Frankly speaking as a counselor for many years, the reviewer is of the opinion that virtually all systems are multicultural because clients will share in many cultural identities even within their native society. Not only must the caregiver be sensitive to these, but also be aware, as the authors suggest, that

the trust, belief and acceptance of the client are critical elements in the success or failure of the intervention and that cultural adaptation is very much implicated in creating these attitudes. The chapter ends with some psychological observations about improving quality of life in a world of economic disorder and poverty, infant mortality and transmissible disease.

Culturally Informed and appropriate psychology, mentioned earlier, is the final chapter topic. Here both the diffusion and dominance of Western psychology are examined along with expositions of several indigenous psychologies in the light of seeking what is needed to create a global praxis. This clearly requires mutual respect, openness to the beliefs of others, as well as discovery of pertinent knowledge and collaboration. It is tied to ethical concerns, not only rising from the practice of the psychological professions, but also from the political and economic factors that de facto create conditions for illness to flourish. The search is for what can be universal in a discipline that is culturally diverse.

The text concludes with an *Epilogue*. The authors ask themselves as well as their readers if their work has met expectations, and what might be needed next. Here the frustration surfaces again, simply because there is so much important work to do. Their hope is that this textbook will stimulate not just interdisciplinary but also intercultural *collaboration* on critical topics, that it would engage psychologists from *all* societies, in a context that says *culture matters*.

We must congratulate the editors on making this massive book readable in terms of layout, typesetting, color and illustrations, though it exceeds my kitchen scale's kilogram assessment.

Eleven pages of *Key Terms* are defined and explained to assist the user to refresh and focus perspective amidst the plethora of terminology used in the chapters. 124 pages of *Bibliography* plus *Author* and *Subject indices* make the volume appear more daunting than it is. In addition, the authors do not hesitate, where useful to provide linkage to more extensive resources accessible by Internet, often signaled in the margin of the page.