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Article in *American Psychologist* · January 2016

DOI: 10.1037/a0039734

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# On Becoming Multicultural in a Monocultural Research World: A Conceptual Approach to Studying Ethnocultural Diversity

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Race, culture, and ethnicity are critical components of the human experience, yet they are often treated as nuisance variables or as post hoc explanations for poorly predicted results. Mandates to pay attention to ethnocultural diversity in research have largely been ignored. Here, we affirm some basic principles of multicultural psychology in conceptually grounded research. We first identify the importance of clear and conceptually guided ethnocultural research, and describe multiple perspectives in the field. The first perspective, a generalizability approach, seeks to find similarities and universalities across diverse groups. The second perspective, a group differences approach, attempts to determine the generalizability and limits to generalizability across different groups that are assumed to represent different cultures. The third perspective, multicultural psychology, involves specifying and measuring the mechanisms of cultural influences on behavior in ethnocultural groups underrepresented in research. In contrast to conventional approaches to culture that apply existing models to other groups, we propose an “inside-out” model that prizes the perspectives of those in ethnocultural communities that are underrepresented in research and places a secondary emphasis on generalizability. We follow with examples and new directions for multicultural psychology research. This approach has the potential to enhance researchers’ ability to answer conceptually derived research questions and in combination with the other approaches promises to enhance the advancement of psychological science generally.

*Keywords:* multicultural, race, ethnicity, culture, diversity, theory

There exist at least three broad research approaches to race, ethnicity, and culture. The first approach, generalizability research, attempts to demonstrate that a theory or model developed for one group can be generalized to another group. Generalizability approaches are etic, in that they apply constructs from one group to another. Group differences research represents a second approach in which the variability of a construct developed in one group is examined in another group. The third approach, multicultural psychology, examines the unique and nuanced characteristics of one or more groups and does not necessarily propose that characteristics in one group exist in others.

Such group-specific characteristics are known as emic. Unlike the other two approaches, multicultural psychology explicitly focuses on giving a voice to populations that are underrepresented in research (e.g., ethnic minority populations) and is rooted in social justice traditions (David, Okazaki, & Giroux, 2014). These approaches need not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, there is value in all three approaches and various hybrids can be quite valuable. Unfortunately, the current state of psychological science includes research programs, if not individual studies, that consider only one of these three approaches and at times, the particular approach is adopted without the appropriate conceptual model.

*Culture* has traditionally been defined as involving attitudes, beliefs, norms, roles, and self-definitions shared and practiced by particular ethnic groups (Betancourt & López, 1993). An *ethnic group* has a unique cultural and social heritage and practices (Hall, 2010). *Ethnocultural diversity* is defined as the cultural differences within and between cultures of ethnic groups. A *race* is a group of people with origins in a single geographic area who are more closely

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We thank Richard Lee for feedback on an earlier version of this article.

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related than are members of groups who live greater distances apart (Wang & Sue, 2005). Phenotypic characteristics (e.g., skin color, facial features) are often one basis of perceptions of race. Racial differences in psychological characteristics are often presumed to be biologically based, but racial differences attributions do not directly correspond with genetic variation (Wang & Sue, 2005). While *ethnicity* and *race* are academically distinguishable, they are often conflated in everyday contexts and in the psychological literature (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Revitalization Act of 1993, which required that members of ethnic minority groups be included in NIH-funded clinical trials in an effort to increase the external validity of treatment research, has generally failed to stimulate conceptual approaches to culture or even much consideration of group differences (Mak, Law, Alvidrez, & Perez-Stable, 2007). In a study of 379 National Institute of Mental Health-funded clinical trials over a 10-year period since the NIH diverse sample requirement, more than one quarter reported no ethnic information, less than half reported percentages of specific ethnic groups, and only about 5% analyzed ethnicity as a moderator variable (Mak et al., 2007). We argue that researchers funded by NIH would pay more attention to ethnocultural diversity if the NIH policy required analyses of possible group differences instead of simply requiring ethnic minority inclusion. A new NIH report concludes that culture informs all behavior (Kagawa-Singer, Dressler, George, & Ellwood, 2015). However, it is possible that many researchers do not understand ethnic diversity, either conceptually or analytically. Merely including ethnic minorities in research is insufficient if researchers who are

funded to conduct cutting-edge research are not equipped with the conceptual and analytical tools to effectively analyze diverse samples. The relative paucity of research on ethnically diverse populations may be a result of researchers' unfamiliarity with conceptual and analytic approaches to ethnocultural diversity.

Although many forms of diversity exist, the focus of this article is on diversity among racial/ethnic minority groups because ethnic diversification of research samples was one of the goals of the 1993 NIH Revitalization Act. Careful consideration of ethnocultural diversity is a matter of scientific rigor and responsibility. The *American Psychological Association (2003) Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* underscores the importance of studying persons from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and racial backgrounds to accurately portray a diverse and rapidly diversifying population. European Americans have distinct cultural values, and the concepts in this article are just as applicable to European American cultural groups. However, because ethnic minority groups have been underrepresented as indicated by the NIH Revitalization Act, we focus on historically underrepresented groups as case examples to illustrate the applicability of our approach. Although we emphasize underrepresented populations in the United States, groups other than those having European ancestry are underrepresented in psychological research worldwide.

Awareness of and respect for cultural differences is a component of the *American Psychological Association (2002) Ethical Principles*, yet much psychology research continues to treat race, ethnicity, and culture superficially. In research where race and ethnicity are not explicitly the focus, racial or ethnic variables are often analyzed as an afterthought in an effort to demonstrate that they do not matter. When racial or ethnic differences are found, the mechanisms of the differences are often unknown because of poor a priori conceptualization and measurement. Conceptual approaches to cultural research, broadly defined, have been advocated (e.g., Betancourt & López, 1993) but have not taken hold in the field. Moreover, those studies that include ethnocultural diversity as a primary aim are often marginalized and directed to specialized journals. From our perspectives as clinical, developmental, and social psychologists, and as journal editors, ethnocentric research approaches that do not make explicit attempts to include diverse samples have dominated the field. As such, the majority of research in psychology has de-emphasized race, ethnicity, and ethnocultural diversity or ignored these topics altogether. "Race," "ethnicity," and "diversity" are poorly represented in our fields constituting less than 4% of the articles published over the past 15 years in in each of the flagship journals *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *Developmental Psychology*, and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, according to PsycNet. That



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de-emphasis hurts the science of psychology as race, ethnicity, and ethnocultural diversity are important predictors of behavior. In this article, we advance a research perspective that prioritizes conceptually and culturally grounded approaches to the study and empirical advancement of psychological experiences.

It is ethnocultural egocentrism to think that any finding one gets with a United States college sample will automatically generalize to all populations, much less believe that those college samples are good indicators of universal psychological principles (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Different findings around the world may represent simple moderator effects or measurement error, or they may suggest important conceptual differences. Without the proper types of conceptual approaches to that research, it becomes impossible to know.

### **Multiple Approaches to Race, Ethnicity, and Culture**

The generalizability, group differences, and multicultural psychology research approaches will be outlined. We highlight strengths and limitations of each approach and conclude that they can be integrated.

### **Generalizability Research**

Generalizability research expects to find similarities and universalities across diverse groups. One classic example of a possible cultural universal is the five-factor trait model of personality, which has been demonstrated to have an invariant factor structure across ethnocultural groups (Ehrhart,

Roesch, Ehrhart, & Kilian, 2008). Parsimony and the breadth of identification of commonalities among humans are advantages of the generalizability approach.

Proponents of a psychological theory often explicitly assume that it is a theory of human behavior and should generalize across groups. The argument is that groups of humans have more similarities than differences. Because the approach favors universal “truths” over nuance, this approach privileges research that overlooks group differences. New contexts do not require new theories or models and at most require relatively minor revisions of existing theories or models (e.g., adding a sixth factor to the five-factor model).

Failure of a theory to generalize across contexts supposedly threatens the viability of that theory (Serlin, 1987). Race, ethnicity, and culture are viewed as relatively noninfluential and are often regarded as nuisance variables to be controlled or ignored altogether. In extreme instances, researchers may not even consider different cultures or ethnicities as contextual domains (cf. Cacioppo, Semin, & Berntson, 2004). In some research perspectives, ethnocultural diversity may be regarded as a surface trait that has little bearing on the generalizability of a theory (Sue, 1999). Therefore, ethnic or racial phenotypic differences should be no more influential than other phenotypic differences, such as height or eye color (cf. Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Ethnocultural variables are commonly ignored in psychology research, with up to 60% of studies failing to report sample ethnicity in reviews of the literatures in social psychology (Arnett, 2008).

A demographic approach to ethnocultural diversity (i.e., categorization as White, Black, etc.) is often considered a “good enough” (Serlin, 1987) representation of race, ethnicity, and culture. Researchers often use nationality as a categorical tool and compare respondents from two separate countries with the assumption that some known cultural difference between those two countries will account for any between-groups differences. A one-item categorization of a group is economical and is justified as similar to other demographic categories, such as gender. Racial, ethnicity, or nationality categories can be a significant social categorization and often serve as a proxy for culture. Such group categorizations are often entirely appropriate when testing certain research questions (e.g., are gender disparities in social power consistent worldwide?)—but we are questioning of categorization that is made in a sweeping manner that does not examine, when warranted, effects of salient ethnocultural constructs on behavior. It is one thing to know that two groups differ. It is more enlightening to know why two groups differ and to empirically demonstrate why those differences occur.

We contend that tests of the generalizability of theories using broad demographic categories do not make full use of the cultural variation inherent within ethnically diverse



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groups. Broad demographic categorizations mask variability within a group, and more importantly, limit our understanding of why particular behaviors occur. For example, two ethnic groups may be similar on one cultural variable that was measured (e.g., interdependence), but differ markedly on other unmeasured variables (e.g., ethnic identity, loss of face). Moreover, culture is not a global construct that has equal influence across individuals within an ethnic group or across contexts (e.g., minority or majority status). Without a clear understanding of how any particular psychological variable influences the outcomes, one is left with poorly specified models. Thus, any particular variable that may be a source of group differences will be empirically invisible if the variable is not conceptualized and assessed.

Broad demographic categories are inherently diverse, and multiple psychological factors might predict any one difference. Hofstede (1980) identified multiple broad ways that cultural groups differ. Groups differ in their collectivism/individualism, masculinity/femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, to name just a few of the important conceptual dimensions on which groups vary. In a landmark article, Markus and Kitayama (1991) extended the collectivism/individualism concept as interdependence and independence, and included a broad and well-articulated set of postulates regarding the self-concept and psychological functioning. One potential problem, however, is that other researchers have since seemed to assume that all cultural differences are due to independence and interdependence. For example, according to PsycNet, 225 articles on independence-interdependence or individualism-collectivism have been published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* since 1991 when the Markus and Kitayama article was published, which constitutes 18%

of all articles published in the journal. To provide context, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, the flagship multicultural psychology journal, has published only 28 articles on independence-interdependence or individualism-collectivism since the journal began in 1995, which is less than 3% of all the articles published in the journal.

Cross-national differences can be essentialized as being due to differences in levels of interdependence/independence, when, in fact, other variables more proximal to behavior might better explain those differences. For example, lower anxiety in Latin American nations relative to the United States could be attributed to interdependence and the freedom from worry it provides in these nations. However, anxiety is associated with urban living (Prina, Ferri, Guerra, Brayne, & Prince, 2011), and the relative effects of urbanization and interdependence on anxiety both in the United States and in Latin American countries would need to be determined before one could make an explanatory attribution. Moreover, without proper measurement of putative explanatory variables, the interpretations become speculative. Mediation analyses often suggest greater scientific rigor than is warranted by the actual data (see Fiedler, Schott, & Meiser, 2011). Moreover, mediation analyses are often conducted improperly without satisfying the necessary temporal sequencing with the independent variable preceding the mediator and outcomes in time (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Thus, interdependence may correlate with other more relevant factors, but because the other factors were not measured, mediation analyses (which are often merely testing correlations) may provide poor but convincing evidence that the wrong variable is predicting an outcome.

Related to issues of research design, sampling error may create the illusion that two groups are alike. For example, sampling only the most acculturated members of an ethnic group, which is common in psychological research, is not informative about less acculturated members and conclusions should not be generalized to the whole ethnic group. Although the five-factor trait model has been found to be structurally invariant across ethnocultural groups as indicated earlier, the fit of the model is poorer in less acculturated groups (Eap et al., 2008). Similarly, sampling techniques restricted by geographical region or racial/ethnic groups can also limit our understanding of groups. For example, research on racial/ethnic minorities in large urban areas in the United States Northeast or the West coast overlook the experiences of individuals living in rural or noncoastal areas. By the same token, it is important to be mindful of the representation of ethnic groups (e.g., Chinese Americans, Vietnamese Americans) in larger racial/panethnic categories (e.g., Asian American). Theoretical considerations should guide sampling procedures to advance hypothesis testing (Serlin, 1987).

Demographic categorization of groups is typically used in clinical psychology to demonstrate the generalizability of

psychological treatments developed for European Americans. For example, a recent review suggests that treatments for a myriad of psychological disorders (e.g., depression, conduct problems) that are evidence based for European American youths are effective with youths of color (Huey, Tilley, Jones, & Smith, 2014). Such findings are encouraging insofar as ethnically diverse groups seem to benefit from treatments that were developed primarily for European Americans. However, these approaches typically do not conceptualize or measure racial, ethnic, or cultural variables that might influence treatment outcome leading to the erroneous conclusion that these influences do not matter. Had the researchers fully considered cultural variables, perhaps the treatments would in fact be more effective with other samples rather than merely showing equivalent treatment effectiveness.

The impetus to minimize the effects of race, ethnicity, and culture in psychology may in part reflect the demographics of psychologists. A recent report on the demographics of psychology faculty members suggests that only 15% are non-White (Kohout, Pate, & Maton, 2014). If researchers often “study their own belly buttons” then multicultural perspectives are simply not their focus. As a result, researchers may assume that their own experiences generalize to other groups and may believe that influences of ethnocultural contexts are minimal in their own and others’ lives (cf. Cacioppo et al., 2004). Such researchers might take a “colorblind” approach to those who are ethnoculturally different than themselves (American Psychological Association, 2003; Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013). Scientific objectivity, reducing prejudice, discomfort with sensitive issues, or fear may be reasons for colorblindness (Neville et al., 2013). Although colorblindness might be an attempt to reduce racial or ethnic bias, it actually increases it (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).

It is also possible that researchers believe they are studying innate “processes” that reflect human nature rather than learned processes (Henrich et al., 2010). Because these processes reflect human nature, one need not worry about cultural differences. Differences across samples thus merely reflect poor translations of materials and do not reflect any real process difference. As Henrich et al. (2010) demonstrate nicely, however, many seemingly basic process-type effects (e.g., visual perception, spatial cognition) translate poorly across cultures. For example, American undergraduates are strongly influenced by the famous Muller-Lyer illusion involving the perceived length of two lines differentially embedded in arrows whereas San foragers of the Kalahari are unaffected by it. Recent evidence also indicates the interplay of culture with genes, neural functioning and structure, and physiological processes, often assumed to reflect universal human nature (Kim & Sasaki, 2014). Thus, group differences occur early in the perceptual system that can translate to large group differences later on.

In summary, the strengths of the generalizability approach are its breadth and parsimony. Group differences are set aside in favor of identifying universal processes that apply to all individuals. When group differences are identified inadvertently, they tend to be minimized as less important or less common than similarities. This approach stands in contrast to the group differences approach, which examines both similarities and differences among groups.

## Group Differences Research

The group differences approach examines how sociocultural contexts might influence generalizability (Markus & Hamedani, 2007). Given that within-group variability may attenuate between-groups variability, any between-groups variability is seen as robust. An example of a group difference that has been consistently replicated is independent-interdependent self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), as discussed earlier. An advantage of the group differences approach is breadth in examining what does and does not differ across groups and some depth in understanding the influence of culture.

The group differences approach begins by attempting to determine the generalizability and limits to generalizability across different groups that are assumed to represent different cultures (e.g., United States vs. Japan; Heine & Norenzayan, 2006). The reference group is commonly European Americans or other Western samples with European origins (Medin, Bennis, & Chandler, 2010). If group differences are revealed, the second stage of the group differences approach is to determine the potential cultural mechanisms of these differences (Heine & Norenzayan, 2006). The approach of applying a Western phenomenon to another cultural group has been referred to as “top-down” (Hwang, 2006). To avoid the hierarchical connotations of top-down, we refer to this approach as “outside-in,” in which a phenomenon from outside a group is imported to determine its utility.

Cultural psychology, the study of variations in interactions between persons and cultural contexts, is an example of the group differences approach (Shweder, 1990). Cultural psychology often is cross-national, involving comparisons between countries, such as the United States and Japan. However, recognizing diversity within countries, groups within the same nation (e.g., European Americans, Asian Americans) can also be compared in this approach.

Cultural neuroscience is a promising development in cultural psychology that considers a universal behavior, brain function, in cultural contexts (Kim & Sasaki, 2014). There is an emerging body of evidence that suggests neural differences between ethnocultural groups for behaviors such as self-construals, information processing, and emotion regulation. However, the processes through which cultural factors influence neural functions are not yet known (Kim & Sasaki, 2014).

One particular misuse of the group differences approach is the use of “acculturation” measures in psychological research (Abraído-Lanza, Armbrister, Flórez, & Aguirre, 2006). Wallace, Pomery, Latimer, Martinez and Salovey (2010) identified 26 measures of acculturation for Latinos alone. The many measures of the construct reveal the fact that there is little consensus on the variable. Most measures identify shallow variables like length of stay in the United States, language use, or media preferences. None of those factors are “psychological factors” with any grounding in theory. Researchers often use acculturation measures to predict particular health outcomes, yet we can think of no theory that outlines how watching particular TV shows should influence health outcomes. Instead, they are used to simply identify how similar one ethnic group is to European Americans without having to fully describe what European Americans are like. In this manner, group differences are reduced to one score of how much the researcher thinks the group is like European Americans.

An additional limitation of the group differences approach is that there may exist influential constructs in some groups that do not exist or are less influential in other groups. For example, Black identity is important to many African Americans and varies among African Americans on multiple dimensions, including its salience and how central it is to one’s self-concept (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). Black identity among non-Blacks is nonexistent or rare, and White racial identity has odd implications that make it difficult to extend Black identity to White identity.

A recently developed model that integrates group differences and generalizability research methods is the cultural lens approach (Hardin, Robitschek, Flores, Navarro, & Ashton, 2014). This approach involves the identification of constructs that are components of a theory and determining how applicable these constructs are to different cultural groups. However, the quest for group comparisons and generalizability may overlook within-group variability, as discussed earlier. There is an emphasis in the cultural lens approach on interdependence as characteristic of nonmainstream cultural groups, but this construct is very broad and meta-analytic evidence suggests that it does not effectively differentiate ethnic groups in the United States (Vargas & Kemmelmeier, 2013). Interdependence may be relatively distal to behavior and components of interdependence that are culture specific, such as loss of face among Asian Americans, may be more proximal to behavior and better predictors of it (cf. Sue, 1988). In addition, the primary utility of the cultural lens approach appears to be to evaluate the cultural applicability of mainstream theories (e.g., cognitive dissonance) rather than to identify and examine constructs and theories that are relevant outside the mainstream (e.g., racial identity).

In sum, research guided by a group differences approach has both breadth and depth. However, the focus on constructs that exist across groups limits its ability to study constructs that are unique to ethnocultural groups. The approach has tended to be ethnocentric with European Americans as the standard for group comparisons. The group differences approach is distinct from multicultural psychology, which intensively focuses on underrepresented populations for their own merits rather than on how they might compare to others.

## Multicultural Psychology Research

Multicultural psychology involves specifying and measuring the mechanisms of cultural influences on behavior in ethnocultural groups underrepresented in research (Hall, 2010). An advantage of this approach is its depth of understanding ethnocultural groups, free from the constraints of comparative approaches that require focus on phenomena that exist across groups. An example of the multicultural psychology approach is the research on ethnic and racial identity that has revealed the unique aspects of this construct in multiple underrepresented ethnocultural groups (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Although this approach is most often emic, it can also be etic by employing an existing theory and augmenting or challenging its assumptions. Multicultural psychology differs from traditional emic approaches in that it considers not only a group’s unique cultural context but also its sociocultural context that exists in relation to other groups. Sociocultural contextual variables of particular interest in multicultural psychology that may shape a cultural group’s identity and behavior include minority status, discrimination, and bicultural orientation (i.e., relative identification with two interacting cultural groups).

In contrast to the group differences approach, multicultural psychology begins by considering the unique cultural characteristics of the ethnocultural group of interest and the mechanisms of culture’s influence on behavior. Investigations of these mechanisms in other groups may subsequently occur but are not the primary purpose of the approach. The reference group is the ethnocultural group being studied rather than another group, such as European Americans. This approach has been characterized as “bottom-up” (Hwang, 2006) but we refer to it as “inside-out.” Unlike cultural psychology, which sometimes prizes the outside perspectives (e.g., the investigator’s) over that of the perspectives of those they study (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993), multicultural psychology gives voice to the perspectives of underrepresented ethnocultural groups.

We seek to advance a perspective whereby examination of ethnocultural constructs linked with culture or ethnicity might augment consideration of racial, ethnic, or national categories alone. The importance of racial, ethnic, or na-

tional categories exists in their cultural meaning to those who are members of the categories rather than in essentialized or stereotyped assumptions of what these categories mean. Cultural psychologists often contend that the focus of research should not be groups of people (e.g., Whites, Latinos) but should be patterns of culture that occur across groups (e.g., private vs. public choices; Markus & Hamedani, 2007). However, racial, ethnic, and national categories may have particular meaning and salience to a person and to others when the person's culture values group identification (Hall, 2010) or is distinctive, in the minority, or both (Sellers et al., 1997). Moreover, there is research on ethnic and racial identity that demonstrates that perceived group membership is important and has robust positive effects on psychological and physical health (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Cultural psychology's lack of attention to ethnic and racial identity is apparent in that only 5% of the articles published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* are on this topic whereas ethnic and racial identity is the topic of one third of the articles in *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, according to PsycNET. The meaning of group similarities and differences would be difficult to interpret without a conceptual model of ethnocultural diversity, as will be discussed. At this point, the question becomes "Why do we find these similarities or differences?" The "why?" is the important psychological variable. For researchers whose interests do not focus on ethnocultural diversity, requirements to study ethnoculturally diverse samples may be perceived as an unwanted or counterproductive obligation because they may not have thought about the "why?" In addition to not generating much ethnic diversity in clinical trials (Mak et al., 2007), mandating sample diversity does not require researchers to think in a conceptual manner about the motivations for recruiting a multiethnic sample. Forced compliance might also result in multiple underpowered small *N* studies that produce error. Poorly conceptualized and underpowered research may do more harm than good.

A conceptual approach to ethnocultural diversity may thereby offer an alternative perspective to advance existing theories and involves much more than simple inclusion of diverse research participants or examining differences based on broad racial classification. Multicultural psychology involves understanding the mechanisms of cultural influences on behavior. To understand such mechanisms, we reaffirm an approach whereby culture is more fully accounted for and measured in research. Post hoc inferences of cultural influences based on racial group differences should be replaced by ethnoculturally based conceptual models that guide the selection of participants, research questions, manipulations, measures, analyses, and data interpretation. Ethnocultural diversity in research is typically more a function of convenience than of intentionality. Recruitment of ethnoculturally diverse samples is not simply dictated by availability but also re-

quires culturally competent outreach, direct involvement with communities, and demonstration that research will benefit the communities (Castro, Rios, & Montoya, 2006).

Multicultural psychology allows researchers to more fully disentangle nature from nurture and it should dictate what kinds of samples one must purposefully recruit. Rather than simply assume that processes studied with convenience samples of college students in the Midwest translate well to all populations, the science can benefit from a clear understanding of how various psychological factors differ across cultures and groups to produce unique processes. Within this type of approach, manipulations and measures must be considered within a context. Leung and Cohen (2011), for instance, propose that cultures vary on face, honor, and dignity. The same manipulations might, for some cultures, highlight face, whereas for others, they might highlight dignity. Thus, the "same" manipulation might manipulate two distinct variables across two cultures. Those two processes might then produce similar reactions, but for different reasons. Moreover, the same manipulation might provoke different processes altogether. A clear understanding of what a manipulation is doing across groups leads to better understanding of the underlying psychological process.

Culture has traditionally been defined as the values, beliefs, and practices that pertain to a given ethnocultural group (Betancourt & López, 1993). While this definition has allowed researchers to identify whether phenomena of interest were related to a specific belief or value orientation, a potential limitation is that this definition portrays culture as primarily located within individuals, thereby subordinating the social world to each individual's psychological world (López & Guarnaccia, 2000). Similarly, cultural psychologists have posited that the individual and the social world are mutually constitutive (Markus & Hamedani, 2007; Shweder, 1990), although multicultural psychologists often study ethnocultural contexts in which group identification is prominent and the social world is more influential than the individual.

Identification of new ethnocultural constructs may lead to generation of novel hypotheses about different predictors or mechanisms. Several quantitative measures of group-specific ethnocultural constructs have been developed to assess behavioral and attitudinal domains including: language use, preference, and proficiency; social affiliation; daily living habits; cultural traditions, values, knowledge, beliefs, identification, pride, and acceptance; communication styles; perceived prejudice and discrimination; and family socialization (Zane & Mak, 2003). Hypothesis testing may also investigate how an ethnocultural conceptual model augments an existing theory or may investigate how an ethnocultural model challenges the assumptions of an existing theory (Henrich et al., 2010).

Developmental psychologists have employed focus groups as a method for conducting culturally sensitive re-

search (Hughes & DuMont, 2002). Focus groups conducted with predefined, relatively homogeneous groups, provide researchers access to the language and concepts that groups use to describe their unique experiences. This access forms the basis for conceptually grounded research that is at once anchored in the group's experiences, and allows for development of new theories and models. Another unique strength of focus group methods is the opportunity to observe group interactions and consensus. This insight may be especially beneficial for research related to issues of ethnocultural diversity because it highlights shared and common knowledge as well as points of divergence within a group (Hughes & DuMont, 2002). As an example, in focus groups among dual-career African American families, Hughes and Dumont uncovered an important within-group difference in the form of white- versus blue-collar professions for experiences of overt and covert race-related discrimination. Focus groups can also serve another important function in conducting culturally anchored research, refinement of quantitative instruments. An example from the same study relates to expanding the inventory of survey items to include workplace discrimination that did not have its source among coworkers. Namely, focus group participants raised experiences of workplace discrimination that stemmed from interactions with clients or the general public. This led to the creation and inclusion of additional survey items to assess workplace discrimination (Hughes & DuMont, 2002).

Advocates of a colorblind perspective may criticize the multicultural approach for promoting stereotypes of groups. Indeed, there is some evidence that multiculturalism is associated with perceptions of less within-group variability (Ryan, Casas, & Thompson, 2010). Nevertheless, the identification of group specific processes is a starting point in multicultural research approaches from which to further explore within-group variability rather than an endpoint as is often the case in comparative approaches.

Multicultural psychology's emphasis on giving a voice to underrepresented populations and researchers could be construed as politically motivated. Nevertheless, the dominance of European Americans in other fields of psychology (Kohout et al., 2014) could also be construed as a political movement that has largely silenced underrepresented voices. European Americans can have a role in multicultural psychology but they will be most effective in collaboration with underrepresented researchers and populations (Medin et al., 2010).

Critics of multicultural psychology may point to its apparently limited scope. However, the underrepresented populations that are the focus of multicultural psychology are rapidly growing in numbers and cultural influence. Moreover, the cultural roots of these underrepresented groups connect them to the majority of the world's population.

Multicultural conceptual models might simply extend the universality of theories to novel cultural groups. However,

the conceptual model might also be tested to determine its relative ability to explain and predict new aspects of behavior as determined by culturally mediated mechanisms (e.g., honor, face), as well as its incremental predictive utility beyond existing models. In the following section, we offer examples from our areas of developmental, clinical, and social psychology that illustrate how conceptual approaches to ethnocultural diversity have been implemented to evaluate and augment existing theories, as well as to develop new ones.

## Multicultural Approaches to Ethnocultural Diversity

Falsification of a theory depends on the emergence of better theories (Serlin, 1987). Theories and models of ethnocultural diversity must demonstrate that they can explain behavior better or more fully than theories and models that do not account for ethnocultural diversity.

Conducting multicultural psychology research is not without its unique challenges. One of the key distinguishing features of multicultural psychology research is that ethnocultural samples are not selected as a matter of convenience. In fact, the opposite tends to be true. Scholars who conduct research with the intent of uncovering and understanding how psychological processes may be unique to ethnocultural groups often have a more difficult time selecting samples that purposefully represent diverse perspectives and experiences. Because ethnocultural groups are typically numerically underrepresented, obtaining a sufficient sample requires additional time and resources compared to samples of convenience.

Once the population of interest is identified, another important component of multicultural psychology is the specification and measurement of constructs. Specifically, constructs are chosen and measured in ways that are culturally anchored and appropriate for the population of interest. Researchers face the additional onus of not only identifying a culturally appropriate construct, but providing evidence of its measurement equivalence and validity in the population of interest (e.g., Hughes & Dumont, 2002). Such considerations are generally not of concern for more "mainstream" research programs.

Drawing from exemplars in our own respective fields, we highlight three research programs that embody the strengths and contributions of multicultural psychology. These programs illustrate the inside-out approach while implementing the strengths of the generalizability and group differences approaches. There is a focus on variability within underrepresented ethnocultural groups (African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans). Within-group variability is found to interact with classroom ethnic diversity, concern about loss of face, and avoidance of cultural change. A byproduct of understanding these mechanisms of behavior in underrep-

resented ethnocultural groups is understanding the behavior of European Americans.

### Ethnocultural Contexts of Schools

In the area of developmental psychology, the work of Sandra Graham and her colleagues on the effects of school racial/ethnic composition on friendships, academic adjustment and feelings of safety among minority middle and late adolescents illustrates the aforementioned focus on purposeful sampling, construct selection, and measurement. Graham's (2011) research program focuses on "the benefits and challenges of ethnic diversity in urban schools" (p. 75). Starting with a sample of 2,000 sixth graders across 99 classrooms in 11 different schools, Graham and colleagues were interested in the effects of varying degrees of ethnic diversity on youth outcomes. As such, rather than sampling at convenience, it was critical for the research design to deliberately recruit youths from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds encountering a range of school compositions. The resulting sample included five schools that were more than 50% Latino, three predominantly African American schools, and three schools where no ethnic group represented more than half of the student body. The sample itself was similarly diverse with nearly half the sample reporting Latino backgrounds, a quarter African American, and the rest of the sample evenly split among Asian, White, and mixed-race youth.

Given the diversity of the sample, construct and measure selection needed to be general enough to capture similarities across groups (reflecting a generalizability approach), yet sufficiently nuanced to capture potential group differences (reflecting a within group, multicultural approach). For example, one construct of interest was how experiences with school diversity were related to youths' school-related worldviews in the transition from middle to high school. Using a multidimensional measure, Graham and colleagues focused on institutional mistrust, school interracial climate, school fairness, harshness of school discipline, and school discrimination. Coupled with the diverse sample, the data resulted in nuanced conclusions including how low-achieving African American boys who transitioned to schools in which there were few African Americans, reported the most negative worldviews. In contrast, high-achieving White girls who transitioned to predominately White schools reported the most positive worldviews (Graham, 2011).

In sum, the work of Sandra Graham and her colleagues exemplifies how ethnoculturally grounded and—informed research advances research on between- and within-group differences and the unique experiences of youths in different culturally bound school contexts. In her research, samples and measures are purposefully and carefully selected for their relevance to the populations of interest. Moreover,

acknowledging the importance of the multilevel cultural contexts in which youth develop, extreme care and attention are given to the sociocultural contexts (in this case schools) from which the samples are selected. The fruits of such efforts include a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the everyday experiences of minority youth in their respective contexts.

### Ethnocultural Contexts of Sexual Aggression

Hall and colleagues (Hall, DeGarmo, Eap, Teten, & Sue 2006; Hall, Teten, DeGarmo, Sue, & Stephens, 2005) implemented the three research approaches by testing the generalizability of a theory, examining group differences, and augmenting the theory with a culture-specific model. They posited that ethnocultural contextual influences in Asian American communities might moderate the effects of hostile masculinity and impersonal sex, which have been established as risk factors in empirical tests of a theoretical model of sexual aggression developed primarily with European Americans (Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991). A shared core value in Asian American communities is interpersonal harmony. Behavior that upsets interpersonal harmony causes a loss of face for the individual for not fulfilling their responsibility to the community and for the community for not fulfilling their responsibility to the individual. Thus, concern about loss of face is a characteristic of membership in Asian communities and preserves the shared core value of interpersonal harmony. Hall and colleagues (2005, 2006) in baseline and 1-year follow-up studies considered constructs that are fundamental to social life among many Asian American groups, including loss of face and perceived minority status, as potential moderators of sexually aggressive behavior.

No significant differences were found between European American and Asian American men in self-reported rates of sexual aggression. Moreover, the Malamuth et al. (1991) model of sexual aggression fit the data relatively well both for European Americans and Asian Americans. Researchers attempting to demonstrate generalizability might stop here, concluding that the lack of ethnic differences is evidence of generalizability and feeling absolved from the necessity to consider ethnic or cultural variables. Nevertheless, the addition of culturally relevant variables to the Malamuth et al. (1991) model more than doubled the increased amount of variance explained in sexual aggression for both Asian Americans and European Americans.

Both loss of face and perceived minority status were associated with sexual aggression among Asian American and European American men. Among Asian American men, concern about loss of face was a deterrent against anonymously self-reported sexual aggression and against laboratory sexual aggression (Hall et al., 2006). Laboratory sexual aggression involved the showing of a sexual film to a

female confederate who was portrayed as disliking sexual content in the media. Among European American men, concern about loss of face was not a deterrent against self-reported sexual aggression but was a deterrent against laboratory sexual aggression. Hall and colleagues (2006) interpreted loss of face as a general deterrent against Asian American men's sexual aggression but as a situation-specific deterrent among European American men, in which loss of face deterred public sexual aggression (i.e., laboratory sexual aggression which was observed by a confederate) but not privately reported sexual aggression. Perceived minority status was predictive of sexual aggression for both Asian American and European American men. The interpretation of this finding was that some men who perceive themselves as minorities may displace the negative effects of their minority status onto women in the form of sexual aggression.

It is also important to note that Hall et al. (2005) did not treat the ethnic groups in the study categorically, ignoring within-group variability. Although Asian Americans generally were more concerned about loss of face and were more likely to perceive themselves as minorities than European Americans were, there was variability within each group.

### Ethnocultural Differences in Group Interaction

Prior research shows strong ethnocultural differences within the United States regarding attitudes toward group assimilation. Berry (1984) outlined multiple ways in which groups can live together, though most common approaches fall under either the assimilation rubric, or the multicultural rubric. In assimilationist societies, minority groups and immigrant groups are supposed to abandon their cultural norms and adapt to the host country norms. In more multicultural societies, groups are encouraged to maintain their cultural norms. In general, most majority groups (e.g., European Americans in the United States) tend to favor assimilation strategies (Verkuyten, 2005), whereas many minority groups are said to favor multicultural approaches. Zárate, Shaw, Marquez, and Biagas (2012) introduced the concept of cultural inertia to account for such differences. Cultural inertia is defined as the desire to avoid cultural change, unless already changing. If already changing (e.g., the concept of immigrants moving freely to another country), then more change is desired. Thus, the concept of inertia is borrowed directly and utilized within a social construct.

Cultural inertia suggests that majority groups desire assimilation because the majority group can avoid having to change. Cultural inertia also suggests that minority groups espouse multicultural frameworks also as a way to avoid having to change. Zárate et al. (2012) provide evidence across three studies to support this general theory. In particular, biasing people to believe that they will have to change to accommodate to a new group leads to more

change. Importantly, this process holds true for majority and minority groups alike. Consistent with our argument, important psychological moderators were measured, including behavioral openness (which makes one more open to change) and group identity (which serves as a psychological anchor). Further, the context matters. When Latino participants were led to believe that other minority groups were going to change their culture, they responded just like the majority (European Americans) in resisting that change. This research, however, did not use European Americans as a comparison point. Rather, psychological constructs (fear of change) were measured and used to identify how multiple groups respond differently to the same situation. Zárate et al. identified nuanced conditions where the same groups (Latinos) show different responses based on a priori predictions. Samples were picked purposefully to identify predicted differences, and all of this was conceptualized through a few basic psychological constructs. Thus, through conceptual analysis, one can develop process models that can account for seemingly disparate findings across groups. Here, one concept (fear of change) predicted multiple previously disparate group differences.

### Conclusions

Taken together, the three examples here illustrate examples from developmental, clinical, and social psychology where researchers have employed multicultural research approaches to the conceptualization and integration of culture as a means of testing theory and identifying determinants of behaviors that might act locally and potentially contribute to understanding of universal processes. The implications of this article are the following actions:

1. *A renewed emphasis on underrepresented ethnocultural populations:* The 1993 NIH Revitalization Act was ineffective because it included underrepresented groups largely as an afterthought. To keep pace with the rapid growth of groups that have been underrepresented in research, research on these groups needs to be prioritized by creating funding for it in all areas of research.
2. *Valuing underrepresented ethnocultural populations for their own merits:* The unique aspects of underrepresented ethnocultural populations are important independent of their relationship to European Americans or other groups.
3. *Adopting an insider's perspective to fully understand underrepresented ethnocultural populations:* Understanding the meaning and behaviors associated with ethnocultural group membership can be achieved only in close collaboration with underrepresented ethnocultural communities.

4. *Recognizing that there may be multiple distinct paths to the same end point (equifinality)*: Differences or similarities on one primary outcome measure may mean there are no differences, or it may mean that the groups arrived at the same spot through different processes.
5. *Capitalizing on the mechanisms of within-group variability and how they interact with contextual variables to influence behavior*: Relevant ethnocultural constructs need to be carefully conceptualized and measured to adequately capture within-group variability.
6. *Applying the insights gained with underrepresented ethnocultural groups to offer new perspectives on other groups*: The impact in mainstream groups of constructs that are influential in underrepresented ethnocultural groups might otherwise be overlooked.

This approach has the potential to enhance researchers' ability to answer conceptually derived research questions and promises to enhance the advancement of psychological science generally. It is not at odds with generalizability and group differences approaches but may augment them for a more complete understanding of ethnocultural diversity.

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Received November 4, 2014

Revision received June 9, 2015

Accepted August 10, 2015 ■