

The cross cultural psychology psychology essay



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Currently, different debates about very interesting issues, including whether the development of countries, nations, cultures is a linear process, whether all countries in their development are at one and the same stage, whether the path to economic prosperity and psychological well-being are similar for all that all countries, do not cease in a wide interdisciplinary discourse. The range of opinions is very large: starting from the recognition of the universality of stages of social development and ending with its rejection in favor of cultural diversity paths to achieve economic well-being and happiness. It is a truth that nowadays the culture is more often treated by researchers as an important variable, while practicing psychologists, psychotherapists and even professionals involved in advising large organizations are well aware of its impact on human behavior. Thus, the necessity of cross-cultural psychology is hard to overestimate in the frames of our reality. The thesis of the project is the following: cross-cultural psychology is the scientific study of many variations of human behavior and mental processes because the science concerns both diversity and uniformity, dwelling on universal concepts in psychological development of all people.

In the past decade, we have witnessed an explosion of new researches, which include culture. Many of these studies continue to be cross-cultural comparison of a variety of psychological phenomena, noting similarities and differences in human behavior among different cultures. However, many recent studies go beyond simply documenting differences, starting the search of their causes. In general, the literature on these issues is critical to

the acquisition of new knowledge and ideas, to the creation of new schemes and the development of new ways of thinking.

Indeed, psychology in both its forms (profiling and cross-cultural) is in a state of evolution of techniques, thinking and approaches. Ideas and knowledge are becoming more flexible and pluralistic, aiming to reach the variability of psychological truths that vary in time, space and context. Methods and concepts are increasingly borrowed from other disciplines, and researches, involving culture, become more complicated, complex and accurate than in the past. In such a way, these changes promise the further evolution of knowledge in psychology. Moreover, the notion cross-cultural psychology reflects the breadth, scope, depth, and understanding of the impact of culture on human behavior, and the close relationships between culture and psychology.

In continuation, it is necessary to define the term of “ cross-cultural psychology” for the purpose to understand the topic better. Adler & Gielen (2001) said that “ cross-cultural psychology is the scientific study of human behavior and mental processes, including both their variability and invariance, under diverse cultural conditions. Its primary aims are to investigate (a) systematic relations between behavioral variables and ethnic-cultural variables, and (b) generalizations of psychological principles.” In other words, cross-cultural psychology is one of those disciplines that directly examine psychological phenomena in comparative cultural comparison. So, it is not surprising that cross-cultural psychology appeals to the study of social and psychological processes and phenomena in search of cultural universals and cultural specifics.

According to Shiraev & Levy (2010), the subject of cross-cultural psychology is the human behavior in the context of culture. This original definition accents our attention on two main aspects: the description of the diversity of human behavior in the world and attempt to link individual behavior to the cultural environment in which it is manifested. This definition is relatively simple and straightforward, while many other definitions reveal some new facets, and point to some difficulties: 1) cross-cultural research in psychology is an accurate, systematic comparison of psychological variables in different cultural settings, in order to determine the causes and circumstances of diverse behavior; 2) cross-cultural psychology focuses on the empirical study of representatives of various cultural groups with different experiences, which leads to predictable and significant differences in behavior. In most of these studies the groups speak different languages and belong to different political systems; 3) the aim of cross-cultural psychology, above all, is a comparative study of how culture and psyche are complementary; 4) cross-cultural psychology is the study of culture in the spiritual life of the people.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that in the previously mentioned set of definitions, a little attention is paid to some other aspects. For example, cross-cultural psychology concerns not only diversity, but also uniformity, answering the question about concepts which can be general or universal in psychological development for all people. In addition, there are other kinds of contextual changes (which are not necessarily included in the concept of culture), which are also considered a part of the cross-cultural approach. These changes include biological variables such as diet, genetic heredity and hormonal processes, which may differ from culture to culture, and also

environmental variables based on the assumption that the population of people are in the process of adaptation to the environment, including factors such as economic activities (hunting, gathering, agriculture, etc.) and population density.

Finally, we are able to offer a general definition of cross-cultural psychology, which is used in this work: Cross-cultural psychology is the science of the similarities and differences in individual psychological functioning in various cultural and ethnic, the science of cultural groups, the relationship between the psychological and socio-cultural, environmental and biological variables, as well as possible changes in these variables.

Being more detailed and exploring cross-cultural psychology from another perspective, we can note that the subject of cross-cultural psychology (in the frames of etic approach) is the study of the similarities and differences in psychological variables in different cultures and ethnic communities. Adler & Gielen (2001) said that “ the etic approach aims to make valid cross-cultural comparisons and is characterized by the discovery of true universals in different cultures”. Although in this case are used the “ objective” methods (psychological tests, standardized interviews, content analysis of the content of cultural products – myths, fairy tales, newspaper reports), which are considered to be free from the influence of culture; but even in this case, researchers are faced to great difficulties when they are trying to avoid gross human error. Of course, many cultural anthropologists have an extremely negative attitude to comparative cultural studies, arguing that it is impossible to find adequate data for comparison, as each culture is a closed

and unique world. But even psychologists themselves are often not satisfied with the already conducted comparative cultural studies.

Observing the frames of cross-cultural psychology, we see that cross-cultural researches are conducted within different branches of psychology. For instance, general psychology studies the characteristics of perception, memory, thinking; industrial psychology explores the problems of the organization of labor and management, developmental psychology is interested in child-rearing practices in different nations. Moreover, social psychology occupies a special place in the range of the above mentioned sciences because comparison is made not only on the base of human behavior, which defines people's inclusion in the ethnic communities, but also on the psychological characteristics of these very communities.

The most obvious of the challenges facing the cross-cultural psychology is a necessity to check the universality of existing psychological theories. This task was given the name of "transfer and validation," as researchers seek the ways to move their hypothesis on all new ethnic groups to ensure that they are supported in many (and preferably all) cultural contexts. It is assumed that only solving this problem, the science can come to the ultimate goal – to try to collect and integrate the results, and compile them into a truly universal psychology.

In addition, basing on the definition of the term of "cross-cultural psychology", it is possible to mention that increasingly, psychologists from different countries have set the task of cross-cultural study of socially significant events and processes, such as modernization, social change, the

dynamics of values, social capital, corruption, innovation, etc., to understand the universal laws of development of human societies and cultural characteristics of the development. Matsumoto & van de Vijver (2010) stated that in the formulation and solution of these problems, science is in positions of universalism when the speech is going about the study of the psychological processes and phenomena, assuming that the basic psychological processes are common to all Homo sapiens, but culture affects their development and expression. This approach can detect not only the similarities (universals), but also the differences (cultural identity) in human behavior. Psychological measurements are based on a universal psychological phenomenon, but the evaluation criteria take into account the cultural values and the meaning of this phenomenon (e. g., there is a single questionnaire to measure values, but the same values have different priorities in different cultures). In this case, comparisons are made with caution, as the interpretation of the similarities and differences take into account alternatives to culturally constructed meaning of a phenomenon.

Thinking about the contribution that cross-cultural psychology can put in discussions about social change and social development, it is good to state that cross-cultural researchers can actively participate in at least three areas. According to Ratner (2006), these areas are: a) investigation of socially relevant processes; b) the development and implementation of culturally-sensitive programs and changes; c) cultural sensitive evaluation of existing programs of changes in order to make them more responsive to the needs of communities.

Perception, cognition and consciousness are the basis of many psychological constructs and cultural differences in these processes show different levels of psychology, subject to cultural influences. According to Matsumoto & van de Vijver (2010), as well as the consciousness reflects our subjective experience of the world, we think that it is normal to believe that all people have the same mind, however, various researches in this area showed that there can be great cultural and individual differences in the mind of any person.

There are doubts that these differences have important implications for cross-cultural interactions and the human environment. If people from different cultures may perceive things differently, like an optical illusion, it is not surprising that they perceive differently the rest of the world. When this information is combined with information relating to other basic psychological processes such as attribution, emotion and personality, then the culture has an amazing impact on human psychology. Likewise, cultural differences and similarities in the definitions and processes of mental development are to a large extent related to the situation in which people live.

In conclusion, we have explored cross-cultural psychology from different perspectives and proved that some of the psychological processes are the basis of other psychological constructs as much as atoms and molecules are the building blocks of matter. Moreover, making a research of the main components of cross-cultural psychology, we have also demonstrated the ways how culture affects the basic psychological processes of perception, cognition, consciousness, and intelligence, as well as talked about the <https://assignbuster.com/the-cross-cultural-psychology-psychology-essay/>

possible impact of culture on the biological basis of behavior. And finally, cross-cultural understanding of the differences in definitions and processes of development of mental abilities should help to deepen appreciation and respect for cultures different from our own, and should help psychologists to find the similarities and differences among people.