

Toward a Cultural Constructionist Psychology

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The cultural adventure in psychology is scarcely a new one. It was indeed present in the earliest deliberations on the character of psychological science. With the publication of Wilhelm Wundt's, *Volkerpsychologie* there was already a concern with alterity - the psychology of those "not quite like us." Yet, as the discipline's romance with natural science (Naturwissenschaft) intensified in the early decades of the present century, and the possibility of psychology as an exploration of human meaning (Geisteswissenschaft) subsided, so did interest in cultural context and variation grow pale. Most particularly, with the hegemony of logical empiricist metatheory and behaviorist theory the discipline became increasingly enamored with the possibility of general laws or principles - transcultural and transhistorical. This optimism was expressed by psychologist John W. Williams (1993, pg. 102) : "I am confident that [if] modern psychology had developed in, let us say, India, the psychologists there would have discovered most of the principles discovered by the Westerners." These were years when cultural conditions were virtually ignored.

Yet, the universalizing orientation of empiricist psychology did ultimately give way to a particular form of culturally based inquiry, namely *cross-cultural psychology*. The cultural adventure in this case primarily served as a handmaiden to the prevailing enterprise of establishing general principles of behavior. The vast share of such research has attempted either 1) to demonstrate the cross-cultural universality of various psychological processes, or 2) to demonstrate cultural variations in some basic or universal psychological process. Well-known research by Ekman and his colleagues (Ekman, 1973; Ekman, & Friesen 1986) on universals in emotional expressions is illustrative of the first attempt. Exemplary of the second is the work of Barry, et al (1997); Kitayama & Markus, (1997) , Triandis (1994; Triandis, et al. 1993); and many others , in which variations among cultural groups in universal dimensions (e.g. individuality vs. collectivity) are charted. This cross-cultural enterprise continues robustly into the present, as "a universalistic psychology... that is as valid and meaningful in Omaha and Osaka as it is in Rome and Botswana" (Lonner, 1989, pg. 22).

Owing possibly to processes of enhanced global consciousness and multi-cultural appreciation, a more dramatic adventure into the cultural arena has emerged within recent years. This movement toward a *cultural psychology* has not yet acquired paradigmatic coherence, but its principle drama derives from elevating the status of cultural influences over that of psychological process. That is, where cross-cultural psychology has generally presumed universal psychological process - viewing culture simply as a site of variation - cultural psychology tends to hold

culture as the birthing site for psychological processes. The universal in psychology is replaced with the indigenous. Thus, for example, Bruner argues that,

"Scientific psychology...will achieve a more effective stance toward the culture at large when it comes to recognize that the folk psychology of ordinary people is not just a set of self-assuaging illusions, but the culture's beliefs and working hypotheses about what makes it possible and fulfilling for people to live together...It is where psychology starts and wherein it is inseparable from anthropology..." (p.32)

In this view Bruner is joined by a host of cultural anthropologists, who like Richard Shweder (1990) , propose that the mind "cannot be extricated from the historically variable and culturally diverse intentional worlds in which it plays a coconstitutive part" (p.13). It is in this vein that many cultural psychologists take the work of Lev Vygotsky as a preeminent starting point. As Vygotsky (1978) proposed, every process in the development of higher mental functioning occurs twice, "first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*) and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*" (p. 57). Inquiry into the cultural contextualization of psychological process has now expanded substantially and has reached a high degree of sophistication (see, for example, Cole, 1996; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Saxe, 1991)

The Constructionist Turn

While the move away from cross-cultural to a culturally embedded psychology is both intellectually stimulating, and represents a significant step toward de-colonializing psychological science, there remain certain problems. First, while providing an important alternative to a universal psychology, the cultural psychology movement has been reticent to question universal metatheory, or more particularly, basic elements in the empiricist tradition of inquiry. Thus, for the most part the legacy of Western empiricism remains in place. The cultural psychologist tends to presume the independent existence of a range of particulars (e.g. culture, mind, socialization), the adequacy of empirical or interpretive methodology in assessing and reflecting the character of these particulars, and the possibility of cumulative (or falsifiable) knowledge about the socialization processes in question. While universal psychological mechanisms or processes are eschewed, universal metatheory is not, and in this way cultural psychology remains a child of Western modernism.

Closely related, the methodologies employed within the cultural psychology movement are those derived from empiricist metatheory. Such methods insinuate themselves between the researcher and the culture under study, constraining, translating, and transforming the cultural realities in their terms (e.g. into categories, variables, standardized languages, numbers, etc.). The cultural research projects seems to give voice to the respondents, but then replaces it with method

determined realities. The professional researcher (often from another culture) then claims authoritative knowledge of the culture in question - a knowledge superior to that of the indigenous population. As Rogler (in press) has shown, these methodological commonplaces often obliterate the shared meanings of the home culture. As a final problem of current cultural psychology, questions of moral/political/ideological significance are largely absent from cultural psychology to date. Little attention is paid to the ways in which concepts, methods, and modes of representation enter into culture. As symbolic resources they come to shape the future of cultural life - for good and/or ill. This resistance to reflexivity is largely owing to the empiricist metatheory that sustains the presumption of value-free inquiry. However, the result is a prevailing insularity from issues of societal significance.

These various problems set the stage for the emergence of what may be termed *cultural constructionist psychology*. The contours of such an orientation derive from a range of catalytic dialogues of the past 20 years in the social sciences and humanities, and an appreciation of this work is essential preliminary to understanding the significance of cultural constructionism. At the outset, it is important to realize that social constructionist dialogues are chiefly metatheoretical in purpose. The attempt has been to explore the possibilities of conceptualizing knowledge as the creation of communities (as opposed to individual minds). Thus, contemporary dialogues on social construction meld together ideas emerging from many different corners of intellectual and cultural life. Early entries into the melange include writings in the social studies of science, literary and rhetorical theory, postmodern theory, and various forms of ideological critique. As these endeavors have combined and contrasted in various forms, so have they brought about important developments, for example, in discourse studies, feminist studies, media studies, cultural studies and more. These intellectual developments have also merged with various movements in therapeutic practice, organizational development, education, public policy, and more. Many of these developments are explored in Gergen's 1994 volume, Realities and Relationships, Soundings in Social Construction.

There is no one "theory of social construction," nor a set of prescribed "constructionist practices." However, while undergoing continuous debate, we can isolate a family of suppositions that has been uniquely generative in implication, and generally accepted by those calling themselves constructionists. These generative suppositions would include the following:

There are no transcendentally privileged accounts of what we take to exist. There is no particular configuration of words or phrases that is uniquely matched to what it is we call either the world "out there" or "in here." We may wish to agree that "something exists," but whatever "is" makes no demands on the configuration of phonemes or phrases used by humans in communicating about it. Thus, we remove the privilege of any person or group to claim superior knowledge of what there is. With respect to truth (a match of word and world) or reason (the

arrangement of words themselves), no science, religion, philosophy, political party or other group can claim ultimate superiority. More positively, the world does not control what we make of it, and any understanding that is problematic could be otherwise. In terms of culturally oriented research, we must be willing to admit that calling groups of people "tribes," or "clans" or "extended families," for example, is not a naming of the truth of how people cohabit together, but a constructed reality of a particular research community.

Whatever account we give of world or self finds its origins within relationships. Language gains its capacity for meaning from relationships - from the way in which it is used as people coordinate themselves with each other and the world about them. If we play with a child and pronounce what the common adult population calls a "cup" to indeed be "a hat," this object becomes a hat and we gleefully place it on our head. In the same way a community of physicists may pronounce the object to be a "configuration of atoms," advertisers describe it as "light and durable," and art historians as "modernist." Each discourse grows from a community of language users, and each constructs what we take to be a singular object in a different way. In this sense it is through relationships that our worlds are created, through which all that we take to be beautiful, valuable, and worthy of commitment are constituted. And it is through relationships that we may, at any time, begin the process of reconstructing the world.

Language primarily functions as social action, constitutive of one or more traditions. Because "what there is" makes no intrinsic demands on our language, words gain their meaning through use within human relationships. In this sense utterances are akin to smiles, handshakes, and embraces; they are forms of action that gain meaning through human coordination. Such coordination must be understood in its broadest context. Thus, what we commonly term the "material world" also enters into patterns of human coordination. The game of tennis requires words like "love" and "deuce" in the same way that it requires racquets, balls, and a net. Similarly, the business organization may rely on words such as "managers," "sales," and "research and development" as they are coordinated with various activities and movement of materials. To participate in a language is thus to participate in a way of life or a tradition.

Discursively constituted traditions are both essential and perilous. As we enter into coordination so does the world become "meaningful" to us. We acquire identities as particular people, along with interests, goals, ideals, and passion. It is within the process of relationship that a landscape of values emerges. Yet, at the same time that we generate and participate within a way of life, so do we close off options and separate ourselves from others. We fail to understand or appreciate that which is not within the tradition of meaning of which we are a part. Flexibility diminishes, and those outside the tradition often become devalued. They are "other," with different ways of making meaning, and possibly they are dangerous to one's own traditions and values.

Through communicative relations we can generate new orders of meaning from which new forms of action can emerge. Because meaning is a human construction, precariously situated within ongoing patterns of coordinated action, it is always open to transformation. Transformation may begin with play, poetry, experimentation, or any other form of action that falls outside the reiterative patterns of daily life. It may also begin with new arrangements of communication, new modes of dialogue, which invite exploration of the forgotten, the suppressed, or the other. In multiple ways we open routes toward the generation of new orders of meaning. And, as our constructed worlds are transformed, so are we invited into new domains of action.

While there is much more that can be said in amplification and qualification of these suppositions, it is important in the end to point out what most constructionists would take to be the foundationless quality of these suppositions. That is, few would wish to maintain that these suppositions are transcendentally true, rationally justified, morally essential, or in any other way superior to all other accounts of word or world. Constructionism, in our view, does not attempt to establish the last word, a position beyond which dialogue is impossible. Rather, for us constructionism functions as an invitation to possibilities, to exploration, to creation, and possibly to material conditions in which there is greater tolerance, and the coordination of peoples toward what they may see as a more humane and life sustaining world.

Dimensions of a Cultural Constructionist Psychology

With the rudiments of constructionist metatheory thus in place, we are positioned to explore the implications for cultural constructionist psychology. What is invited by a constructionist orientation to culturally sensitive psychological inquiry and what directions are problematic? At the outset it is important to realize that nothing is ruled out in principle by social constructionism. There is nothing in constructionism that would require to the termination of the existing tradition of cross-cultural psychology, for example; indeed there would be much to recommend a revival of the kind of historical account of cultural development found in Wundt's early comparative work. This liberal attitude follows first from constructionist anti-foundationalism. There are no fundamental rationalities or evidential grounds for ruling out any form of intelligibility from social science inquiry. Multiple theories, methods, and practices are possible, and each reflects some tradition or form of life. Thus, to abandon a mode of inquiry is to similar to eradicating a cultural tradition. Or in a more relevant vein, cultural constructionism does not attempt to undermine cultural intelligibilities or forms of life in the name of a transcendent rationality or universal truth. It is also important to realize, however, that this form of liberalism does not translate as "everything is equal," that is, any research project is as good as any other. Although constructionism offers a context in which to appreciate the contribution of any tradition of inquiry, it does not promote value-neutrality. We shall return to this

point shortly.

What, then, does a constructionist orientation specifically invite in the way of culturally sensitive inquiry; what is added to the existing resources of research and scholarship? In our view, three major lines of inquiry are particularly favored:

Reflexive Deliberation: Fact and Value in Question

At the outset, constructionist dialogues foster a vital reflexive posture. First, they call attention to the ways in which scholarly inquiry constructs its subject matter. In setting out to study cognition, the self, motivation and the like the researcher creates a range of taken for granted realities. Such realities are not demanded by the configuration of the world, but are derived (typically) from traditions of dialogue - both within the profession and the culture. Second, the constructionist dialogues sensitize us to the ways in which these intelligibilities enter into cultural life and are used by people to sustain, question, or abandon certain patterns of cultural life. Thus, close attention is invited to the forms of reality generated within the expert domain of professional psychology. What is privileged and what is suppressed or destroyed by the particular ways in which we discursively configure the world; who gains and who loses; what policies or institutions are sanctioned and which are undermined? All become matters of focal importance within a cultural constructionist psychology.

Stimulated in part by growing sensitivity to the communal construction of knowledge, critically reflexive scholarship has now become a prominent form of inquiry across the social sciences and humanities. Among the most vocal critics are anthropologists concerned with the ways in which Western anthropology has constructed those cultures under study - often derogating, alienating, distancing, patronizing, silencing, or colonizing (see, for example, Clough, 1992; Fabian, 1983, 1991; Marcus and Fischer, 1986;). While slower in its development, Western psychologists have become increasingly concerned with the ways in which their research positions those under study, and the effects of their characterizations on child rearing, educational practices, mental health policies, jurisprudence, and public policy making (see, for example, Ibanez and Iniguez, 1997; Parker and Shotter, 1990; Prilleltensky, 1998; Sampson, 1993). Slowly this critical attention is expanding to the effects of Western research in non-Western or Anglo cultural settings (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, and Misra, 1996; Lykes, 1996; Weis and Fine, 1996) These latter explorations are also being complemented by a growing body of criticism from non-Western cultures on the effects of Western theories and concepts imported into their cultural settings (Mohanty, Russo & Torres, , 1991; Prakash, 1995; Said, 1979 , Spivak , 1985). And of profound implication, a growing body of scholarship in psychology and related disciplines has begun to throw the very concept of culture into question (Featherstone, 1995; Hermans and Kempen, 1998; Kahn, 1995).

While the entry of these critical undertakings into scientific study are much to be

encouraged, there is one major vista of inquiry that remains virtually unexplored. As yet, there is very little in the way of what might be termed *appreciative reflection*. Most reflexive scholarship to date has adopted a critical posture, exploring the oppression, loss, and suffering that can result from particular constructions of the psychological world. To be sure, this is the most appropriate site on which to begin the reflexive process. However, there are also dangers entailed by an unrelenting posture of critique. It is not simply that critique typically functions as a divisive process, both creating and galvanizing an opposition, but if it serves as our only means of reflection it conduces to a war of all against all. Or in terms of current conditions in the United States, we enter into "culture wars." Thus, critical scholarship must ultimately be conjoined with appreciative reflection. Scholars may be encouraged to take interest in the positive functions of various forms of psychological intelligibility, methodologies, and practices.

Multiculturing Methodology

While constructionist assumptions do not invite an abandonment of the research methods of Western empiricism, the preceding discussion of reflexive deliberation should obviously be extended to the methodological domain. Issues concerning the ways in which methods circumscribe the possible constructions of research subjects, the power relations inherent in the positioning of subjects, and the distribution of benefits from the research outcomes should be of focal concern. Of particular consequence to the cultural constructionist, traditional research methods tend to favor an ideology of individualism, claims to universal validity, and truth in method. They tend to establish the researcher as the authority in determining the subject of study; hypothesis formation; data gathering procedures; analysis and interpretation the results of the study; and dissemination of findings. The selected respondents (traditionally termed *subjects*) are carefully probed for relevant information, but seldom given the opportunity to frame the research questions, to protect the meaning of their behavior or speech, or to control the way their actions are represented and shared. In effect, the dominant Western methodologies remain insulated from the cultures which they explore. Favored by cultural constructionism is an openness to interchange and a more equalitarian participation in the achievement of research outcomes.

Informed by constructionist dialogues and the broader context of postmodern deliberation, there has been an explosion in methodological innovation (see for example, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Much of this innovation has taken place within the domain of qualitative methods. For present purposes we can harvest from these developments a new range of methodological resources, resources that are specifically congenial to bringing diverse peoples into a condition of mutual understanding. Three of these departures illustrate the possibilities:

Narrative Methodology. One of the most widely employed means of sharing authority is by enabling research subjects to speak for themselves - to tell their

own story. Narrative methodologies are now many and varied (see, for example, Josselson & Lieblich, 1993; 1994; Lieblich & Josselson, 1995; Sarbin & Scheibe, 1983; Sarbin, 1986). Some researchers will feature the single autobiography; others will interweave the voices of several participants, and still others may draw selective fragments of discourse to generate a more variegated theoretical tapestry. In her work on gender and popular autobiography, Mary Gergen (1992) not only draws extensively from autobiographies of men and women, but interweaves these accounts with the voices of relevant scholars. In these ways researchers can diminish their authority over what is the case, but simultaneously enable a more sophisticated, multi-textured, and sensitive rendering to be produced. In contrast to cross-cultural research on individualism-collectivism, for example, narrative methods would replace statistical comparisons of central tendencies with richly nuanced accounts of what various relationships mean to those in the culture, and how these may be differentially understood in differing times and places. Most likely, such research would also reveal complex variations within what might otherwise appear to be a homogeneous culture.

Multivoiced Research. The typical empirical study in psychology strives toward a singular truth. The researcher presumes that his/her contribution contributes to a progressive winnowing of the false from the true, leaving us in the end with the best approximations to what is the case. From a constructionist standpoint, however, all research issues from a particular cultural tradition, and singularity of truth is tantamount to totalitarianism. Thus, for the cultural constructionist there is a particular investment in methods that generate multiplicity as opposed to singularity. One of the most innovative and far-reaching examples of multivoiced methodology is contained in Patti Lather and Chris Smithies' volume, Troubling with Angels (1997). Here the investigators worked with a support group composed of women with the AIDS virus. The research report included the women's first hand accounts of their lives and what they wanted to share with the world about their conditions. Not wishing to obscure their own positions, the investigators devoted special sections of the book to their own experiences and understandings as members of the group. To compensate for the ways in which these various accounts were cut away from the discourses of medicine, economics, and the media, the authors supplemented the text with more formal academic and scientific materials. Finally, the entire volume was submitted to the participants for their comments before it went to press.

Narrative and multivocal approaches may also be integrated. In her research on child abuse, for example, Karen Fox (1996) combined her own views, with the stories of a survivor of child sexual abuse, and the views of the abuser himself. This latter voice almost totally absent from most accounts of child sexual abuse. The research employed extensive open-ended interviews, and participant-observation in which Fox attended a therapy session with the convicted sex offender. The published text is arranged in three columns representing the three voices. The flow of the text encourages the reader to consider the three different perspectives - separately and in relationship. All of the words were transcribed

from the speakers. Although the selection and arrangement was Fox's, each of the participants had the opportunity to read and comment on all of the materials. Ultimately the arrangement facilitated not only the exchange of memories, interpretations and insights, but also the expression of ambivalence, sorrow, rage, and affection.

Collaborative Research. Sensitivity to the influences of diverse cultural traditions includes an openness to alternative interpretations of the patterns under study. To assist in this effort new methodologies have emerged attempting to dismantle research hierarchies, and replace the traditional autonomy of the researcher (an invitation to cultural blindness) with more collaborative forms of inquiry. Perhaps the most visible form of collaborative research is that of *participatory action research* (Brydon-Miller, 1997; Reason, 1994). Here researchers typically respond to a community in need, and help them use various research tools to accomplish their goals. Political or social change is often a chief outcome. Yet, many variations in collaborative are possible. One culturally sensitive project was developed by Jim Scheurich, along with two students, Gerardo Lopez and Miguel Lopez. The focus was on the lives of Mexican American migrants. Together they created a collage of artifacts, images, music and sound, and text. In addition they created a script requiring the participation of a cast along with members of the audience. In this manner they essentially extended the collaborative process to the audience. Efforts were made to keep the door open to the easy flow of perceptions and conversations about the materials. The effort to organize them into a coherent, rhetorically forceful and singular "message" was absent. As Scheurich notes, "The originators make no assumptions about the nature of these experiences or their relationship to Mexican American migrant life" (quoted in Gergen & Gergen, in press). In effect, the research provided the audience with possibilities for a rich engagement with the issues, but left them free to interpret in different ways. Let us now move from considerations of methodology to theory and research from a cultural constructionist standpoint.

Theory and Research as Cultural Capital

If we view the outcomes of theory and research not as truth posits, but as discursive insinuations into cultural life, then we begin to ask new questions about the potentials of inquiry. Our concern shifts from issues of validity - whether the map fits the territory - to the challenge of useful intelligibility. How can the story I am telling with this particular theory or piece of research be used, by whom, and for what purposes? Let us suggest, in this case, that cultural enrichment might serve as the overarching criterion of inquiry. For example, it is said about cultural anthropology, there are only two possible stories: ethnographic research can tell us either that we differ from other people, or that that underneath the apparent differences we are all the same. There are both enriching and impoverishing outcomes attendant on both stories. The story of differences can act as a deterrent against dangerous tendencies to universalize the presumptions of one's home culture; yet, simultaneously it functions as an alienating device (exoticizing the

other). The story of sameness functions in just the reverse: it overcomes tendencies toward alienation ("after all we are one"), but simultaneously arrogates the parochial to the level of the universal. A cultural constructionist psychology would abandon neither of these stories, but it would seek for alternatives of potentially greater promise.

The range of possibilities in this case cannot be specified in advance. However, let us consider three vistas that are particularly congenial to constructionist dialogues:

Infusion of Intelligibilities. Traditional research in both cross-cultural and cultural psychology tends to appropriate "the other" - making him or her intelligible in terms of the home culture. The other is described and analyzed in such a way that "we now understand." This goal of rendering intelligibility may be contrasted with one in which inquiry seeks to alter or expand the home intelligibility by virtue of incorporating or insinuating into it an anterior mode of understanding. The aim is not to place "the other" in a comfortable conceptual box, but to transform the very conceptual structure through which understanding occurs. Examples of such impregnation are plentiful in other domains, such as music, cooking and religious expression. For the cultural constructionist, the challenge is that of generating such infusions in terms of understandings of human functioning. Illustrative of the kind of scholarship championed here is the work of Anand Paranjpe (1988, 1998) and his colleagues, who have sought to integrate Asian and Indian theoretical ideas into Western psychology. Not only are similarities and differences explored, but demonstrated as well are means of expanding Western psychology through the addition of non-Western concepts.

Yet, there is more to the process of infusing intelligibilities. Psychologists, too, form a loosely knit culture - sharing ontologies, values, and certain forms of practice. And the constructionist emphasis on infusing intelligibilities applies no less to ourselves than to our writings on human functioning. In this respect, the second challenge is on the level of professional life itself: breaking through the borders of our own circumscribed domains of intelligibility. The slowly emerging dialogue between cultural psychology and cultural anthropology is a salutary beginning (see, for example, Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990). To carry out culturally sensitive inquiry in psychology without a grasp of symbolic anthropology, in particular, is essentially a form of academic solipsism. Yet, these are only first steps. Ultimately issues of culture cannot be separated from matters of institutional power, history, economics, political ideology, technology, the media, mass transportation, and more. Explorations of individual functioning can be expanded in every direction; everywhere infusion can be sought.

Research Realization of Constructionist Premises. As indicated above, cultural constructionism makes no necessary demands on either theory or research. The aim is not to suppress cultural traditions but to develop, share, and interpenetrate. However, the constructionist orientation to knowledge is itself fragile and potentially endangered as an intelligibility. One inviting mode of inquiry is thus to

employ constructionist metatheoretical premises as the theoretical basis of research. In the same way that a Piagetian researcher will "locate stages of cognitive development" within children, and a Vygotskian will "demonstrate learning within the ZPD," so it is possible for the cultural constructionist to make more palpable the "reality of social construction" through research into cultural life. A superlative instance of such realization is contained in Catherine Lutz's (1988) volume, Unnatural Emotions. Here Lutz demonstrates the culturally constructed character of the emotional vocabulary of the Ifaluk, thus undermining the universalist presumptions of the Western researcher. More importantly, Lutz shows how culturally constituted performances of emotion are linked to the broader societal understandings and institutions within Ifaluk culture. In effect, the work goes much further than universalist critique, by "demonstrating" in great detail the local creation of taken for granted categories and practices of emotion.

Concept Construction: The Relational Self. Traditional orientations to culture and psychology - guided by empiricist assumptions - have typically presumed the goal of illuminating the world as it is. Proper theory and research should reveal the nature of relations between culture and mental process. From a constructionist standpoint such "illuminations" will inevitably reflect a standpoint - a tradition of interpretation and action; further, they become themselves entries into cultural life. In this case a significant option for the cultural constructionist is that of generating new intelligibilities that may enrich the potentials of cultural life. For example, in this context there is little utility in expanding on theories of cognition, and locating their instantiations in multiple cultural settings. This is not because cognitive theory is untrue, but rather because such theories have prevailed in Western psychology for almost 30 years. For good or ill their value as cultural resources have already been largely realized. For the cultural constructionist there is much to be gained by generating new conceptual resources, views of human conduct that may offer new alternatives for cultural action.

While there is no principled end to such possibilities, a good illustration is furnished by dialogue now spreading across Western culture on replacing individualizing theories of mental process. Bearing strong echoes of Enlightenment thinking, contemporary psychology in the West is almost exclusively concerned with intra-psychological process; in effect, the discipline supports both a conception and ideology of what Sampson(1993) terms *the self-contained individual*. Given the problematic implications of this view for multi-cultural relations, there is a strong impetus to develop an alternative, and particularly one which places the strong emphasis on relationship as opposed to individual minds. Vygotsky's work offers an excellent beginning to conceptions of relational being. However, theory and research now moves in more radical directions, locating such processes as thought, memory and emotion within processes of social interchange themselves (see K. Gergen's 1998 review).

Conclusion

The cultural constructionist practices outlined here are not intended as replacements for either cross-cultural or cultural psychology endeavors. Rather, such practices function to augment and enrich the scope of inquiry and action. At the same time, the present account is not itself an authoritative pronouncement of possibilities. Rather, our attempt has been to generate the grounds for further dialogue. As we extend such dialogue outward, across the cultural divides, we shall increasingly learn about the potentials of cultural constructionist psychology. The future reality of the enterprise is lodged within relationship.

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