

Human Motives and Cultural Models. Roy D'Andrade and Claudia Strauss (Editors). New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 238 pages.

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This book is the latest in the Cambridge University Press series on psychological anthropology. Like the others (including *Culture Theory* and *Cultural Psychology*) it is a bell-wether of the state of the discipline. Consequently it is essential reading for anyone interested in the field. While the book is commendable as state of the art, the trends it reflects are disturbing. For psychological anthropologists seem to be retreating from the cultural psychological perspective they have championed.

Psychological anthropology has been the most exciting discipline within social science for the past two decades. This discipline has produced penetrating observations of the cultural character of psychological phenomena. The theoretical and empirical research generated by this discipline has led to the conclusion that culture does not simply shape behavioral expressions of psychological processes; culture shapes the processes themselves. In this regard, experiments and ethnographies illuminated cultural variations in memory, logical deduction, emotions, personality, perception, psychopathology, and socialization.

If *Human Motives and Cultural Models* portends the future direction of psychological anthropology, this cultural perspective on psychology may be in jeopardy. For the luminaries in the field who wrote the chapters (Roy D'Andrade, Richard Shweder, Catherine Lutz, Dorothy Holland, Naomi Quinn, Harkness and Super, and others) evidence some ambivalence on the importance of culture for psychology. Many of the chapters withdraw from a cultural analysis of psychology in favor of exploring more abstract determinants. This may not be the conclusion the authors themselves draw, but their words sustain it.

The argument of the book is that individuals do not passively receive social inputs. Rather, society motivates behavior as individuals actively select and internalize social influences. This claim is verified by the fact that cultural propositions vary in the degree to which they are internalized. Some norms are simply acknowledged without being heeded, other norms are accepted as guides for speaking—impression management—but not for action (“I am a moral person”), some guide action but not belief (going to work though hating it and expending minimal effort), and some are thoroughly integrated into one’s belief system. These facts lead to the conclusion that individuals exercise choice over the extent to which they internalize cultural prescriptions. Individuals also vary as to which elements of

the culture they internalize. Rather than taking culture for granted as the source of psychological functions, the authors regard enculturation as problematic. They are concerned about the manner and extent to which enculturation occurs, the manner in which cultural meanings are contested and negotiated. The key question posed on page 1 is, "how do cultural messages get under people's skin?"

Now, these concerns are not intrinsically subversive to a cultural perspective on psychology. Indeed, handled properly they should enrich such a perspective. Insight could be gained into sophisticated processes which individuals employ to internalize cultural values; complications in cultural norms could be discovered; novel effects of social influence could be revealed; and resistance to, and incipient transformations of, cultural norms could be identified. These advances would be achieved by carefully comparing psychological activity with social norms. This means identifying how, if, and to what extent specific features of psychological phenomena reflect cultural norms. Additionally, individual variations would be related to different social positions (including class, ethnicity, and gender) in order to ascertain the impact of social position on psychological activity. In this way, culture would remain the touchstone for an analysis of psychological phenomena.

The authors of this book may intend their work as engaging in this kind of analysis. Unfortunately, it takes a different direction. The authors appear so wary of social reductionism that they often de-emphasize social influences on psychology. One author even remarks that psychological anthropology is person centered (p. 9). Not all of the chapters express this attitude, and some cultural analyses are undertaken. However, few of these scratch the surface to achieve any depth of insight.

For example, a chapter by Dorothy Holland is entitled "How Cultural Systems Become Desire: A Case Study of American Romance." From such a title, one might expect the essay to explore the manner in which romantic desires (or ideals) are induced by and reflect values and practices of the broader society. However, Holland discusses entirely different issues. Her essay describes various attitudes which female students have toward romance, without relating any of these to cultural system. Some girls expended great energy thinking about and pursuing love, while other girls were less interested. Some girls rejected portions of the romantic stereotype—such as the notion that girls should be economically dependent upon men. Some girls engaged in romantic relationships out of pressure to conform rather than because they genuinely wanted to be in the relationship.

The essay is largely devoted to such mundane accounts of individual experiences. The experiences are not analyzed in relation to the broader culture or society. Holland's main concern is to demonstrate the variation in individual experience despite great exposure to stereotyped images of romance. This indicates the activity, creativity, and independence which individuals can exert in the face of social input. Holland seeks to demonstrate that culture is only influential to the extent that individuals internalize it. Culture does not automatically direct personal behavior to the same extent in all individuals. Holland's key finding is that culturally-derived romantic motives are salient to the extent that individuals identify with them and develop expertise using them. Identification, salience, and expertise go together (p. 79).

Rather than focus on this conclusion—which smacks more of common sense than scientific insight, and in certain ways is surely incorrect (since romantic love is painfully salient to many individuals who lack romantic expertise)—it is instructive to examine why it is of interest to psychological anthropologists. The answer appears to be that they are preoccupied with individual activity and abstract pro-

cesses rather than with the manifestations of culture in psychology. They are concerned to emphasize individual autonomy in the face of cultural pressures, rather than the impact of the pressures on activity.

Holland, for instance, utterly fails to relate the individual variations in romantic ideals to societal factors. Instead, she relates salience to expertise. The abstract relationship between salience, identification, and expertise supercedes any relation between romance and culture. Psychological anthropology has given way to mainstream social psychology.

Holland's preoccupation with abstract processes and individual agency lead her to overlook the manner in which cultural systems actually form romantic desires (motives). She fails, for example, to explore how the major principles of romantic love reflect prevalent values of individualism and self-expression, and how they reflect the structural dichotomy between personal and public that characterizes our social system. Holland also fails to explore the manner in which variations in romantic love embody values, practices, and structures characteristic of our socio-economic system. This oversight leads her to misconstrue them as independent creations which oppose societal norms. For example, a few of the coeds valued economic independence and rejected the dependence that typified women's traditional position in romantic love. Now this desire for economic independence—which Holland only traces to a personal experience of witnessing the plight of a sister whose husband lost his job (p. 71)—is compelled by a deteriorating wage system which makes it difficult for a husband to support a wife. The desire for economic independence is not a creative personal act that resists social pressures. It is entirely an accommodation to the economic system. This desire may contradict traditional gender roles, but it is hardly symptomatic of resistance to or liberation from social norms in general. Holland misconstrues *societal* contradiction as personal independence. She, like other authors, misconstrues society as monolithic and looks to the individual for diversity. However, since much individual diversity reflects social diversity, it is not an individual phenomenon at all, and is certainly not a sign of independence.

Harkness, Super, and Keefer come a step closer to producing a cultural analysis of motives. However, it is too weak and ambivalent to be satisfactory. The authors analyze interpretive categories which parents use to understand children's actions. Parents frequently construe such actions as expressing a desire for independence. Their interpretation is a social construct which reflects the prevalent ideology of independence and achievement in our society. This social construct is glossed onto children's behavior; it does not emanate from the behavior itself. While relating parents' interpretive schemata to prevalent social values is a good start, the authors do not pursue this analysis. They never address the question of why independence is increasingly valued in our society, the enormous institutional pressures which perpetuate this ideology and suppress alternatives, or the numerous subtle forms which this value takes.

In fact, when the authors turn to analyze the origins of the parents' value system they almost entirely ignore broader societal issues. The authors identify three sources: parents reflecting on their own childhood and redefining a set of parental values; informal social networks with other parents, where new ideas can be acquired and implemented; and books on child rearing. The first two sources of parents' values are entirely personal. No societal reason is given for redefining the parent role and it appears that such redefinition is a purely personal matter. No mention is made of socioeconomic pressures and job requirements which would

motivate parents to redefine themselves and the personal, cognitive, emotional, and physical skills which their children will need in growing up. The question of why parents would accept the values of certain interpersonal networks rather than others is similarly overlooked. Only the third source of values—child-rearing manuals—approaches a societal factor. However, even this source appears nebulous because we are never told why certain kinds of books suddenly appear and make an impact. This is a grievous oversight in view of the extensive literature which does address the societal incubation of advice manuals. The absence of any social analysis of parenting marks a retrogression from Super and Harkness's earlier work which emphasized how developmental processes reflect a social niche. The current chapter never introduces this concept.

Naomi Quinn's chapter on ideals of marriage is perhaps the only chapter which achieves a coherent cultural analysis of motives. After describing some of the contradictory marital ideals that some of her subjects express, Quinn relates each of the elements to broader social values (pp. 118-124). The central contradiction is between traditional ideals of duty and self-sacrifice and modern aspirations for equality and self-fulfillment. Quinn observes the socioeconomic basis of each of these. The traditional ideal of self-sacrifice was rooted in the Victorian socioeconomic system which situated the wife in the domestic family where she engaged in reproductive duties but not productive labor. Modern aspirations for equality and self-fulfillment reflect the values of the free market economic system which has invaded the sanctity of the family and pulled women into the workforce. These modern ideals are expressed in the women's "tit-for-tat" thinking, their calculation of costs and benefits in marriage, and their resentment of their husbands' greater occupational success. The contradiction between the traditional and the modern marriage ideals varies geographically and generationally. Older women, and especially those who grew up in rural areas, will have been more exposed to traditional values than would younger, urban women. Personal differences in the intensity of contradiction are thus rooted in broader social events. Within these social constraints, individuals exercise some selectivity in adopting cultural elements into their psychological activity. However, the choice is far from free.

The future of psychological anthropology hangs in the balance between the approaches represented in the book. Unfortunately, the balance seems to be tilting toward de-emphasizing the cultural formation of mind rather than emphasizing it. I say this for several reasons. First of all, most of the chapters in *Human Motives and Cultural Models* indicate a fascination with individual and abstract processes rather than with a deeper cultural analysis. Secondly, the cultural analyses which do appear deal with extremely familiar themes and break no ground in analyzing less obvious psychological issues. Quinn's essay brings to bear well-known observations about gender roles and society. Harkness, Super, and Keefer's cultural analysis of parents' interpretation of children's actions is confined to observing that the concept of independence is prevalent in our culture. Without development beyond commonplace observations, cultural analysis is doomed to become static, trite, and passé. Thirdly, even in its glory days, psychological anthropology never produced a coherent concept of culture which could be used as an analytical category. Culture was vaguely identified as an ethnic group engaging in certain customs, or as equivalent to cognitive schemas themselves. Little attempt was made to articulate the origins of culture (in practical acts of material production, for example), the institutional powers which enforce it, or the revolutionary struggles to transform it. Nor was there any recognition of the different weight that sectors of culture have

influencing other sectors and psychological processes. Without a solid conceptual foundation, cultural analysis could never have a secure future. Finally, cultural analysis will probably decline because it contradicts the prevalent social ideology of individualism. The cultural organization of psychology is difficult to acknowledge when psychology is conceived in intra-organismic or natural terms.

If psychological anthropology does lose its culture and become more absorbed in personal, abstract, or mechanical analyses, it will have succumbed to social ideology. This will confirm the errors I have identified in the book under review—namely the fallacy of underestimating the power of social pressures, and the fallacy of overestimating the power of individual agency to challenge these pressures. Only a different kind of agency can do that—namely, a social agency which comprehends the coercive power of social institutions and which engages in collective action to transform them.