Child Development, September/October 2000, Volume 71, Number 5, Pages 1159–1161

Trade-Offs in the Study of Culture and Development: Theories, Methods, and Values

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The commentators are unanimous in their support for our general orientation to culture and development, and for the pathways we have identified, and they suggest ways to enrich our approach to theory, methods, and values. We view their main suggestions as relating to trade-offs: between theories that highlight generalizations or exceptions; between methods that rely on one-, two-, or multiculture studies; and between values involving individuation or accommodation. Here, we describe ways to find an optimal balance in each instance.

Commentaries on our prior article in this issue (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000) reflect a desire for the kind of synthesis of cultural research on development that we suggest. We are encouraged by the interest in synthesis among this extraordinary group of cultural psychologists, and we are inspired by their important elaborations of our ideas: Fogel's (Fogel, 2000) call for longitudinal developmental pathway research, Kitayama's (Kitayama, 2000) notion that the U.S. and Japanese experience of self are nurtured by different relationships, Lebra's (Lebra, 2000) suggestion that our pathways differ in how they prepare children for stress and intimacy in adulthood, Lewis's (Lewis, 2000) distinction between the means and content of socialization, and Tobin's (Tobin, 2000) speculations about how our pathways vary across generations and how they differ in old age.

While they support our approach, the commentators point to three possible limitations: exceptions to our proposed pathways, our emphasis on two-culture comparisons, and our suggestion that each developmental pathway necessarily entails problems in adaptation. We believe the issue of trade-offs is central to all three concerns. Below we consider each set of trade-offs and provide suggestions about how to find an optimal balance in each instance.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE PROPOSED PATHWAYS

The commentators are concerned that we may be over-generalizing, and they point to exceptions and complexities beyond those we discussed. For example, Fogel cites evidence of symbiotic harmony in the United States and Tobin cites evidence of generative tension in Japan, counter to our claim that these qualities are far more characteristic of Japanese and U.S. pathways, respectively. Lebra notes that conflict, which we also associate with the United States more than Japan, is alive and well in Japan, but takes different forms (i.e., it is more internalized, occurs at later ages, and involves third parties).

We believe that this search for exceptions is a healthy process, essential for the continued enrichment of theory. Qualifications are the best antidote to over-generalization. Indeed, our own ideas about pathways came about by first examining prevailing generalizations about Japanese–U.S. differences in development, then gathering relevant evidence, and finally articulating revised or new generalizations that better fit the facts. The dialectic between thesis (generalization) and antithesis (exceptions), will ultimately lead to the most sophisticated models of developmental pathways.

EMPHASIS ON TWO-CULTURE COMPARISON

In addition to calling for closer scrutiny of exceptions, the commentators question whether two-culture comparisons are optimal. They call for more in-depth, one-culture studies *and* they call for multi-culture comparisons. We briefly note some pros and cons of each approach.

One-culture studies are typically qualitative, ethnographic inquiries that provide rich, in- depth *descriptions* of development and its individual and situational *variation.* Because these studies adopt an emic approach, relying on indigenous reports, they inspire valuable new insights that challenge prevailing theories of development. A one-culture study would be optimal for studying Tobin's notion that there are dif-

Response to commentaries on Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, "The Development of Close Relationships in Japan and the United States: Paths of Symbiotic Harmony and Generative Tension."

ferences in the way Japanese males and females manifest symbiotic harmony. This approach is also optimal for studying development in context—it is difficult to study contexts and behavior–context relations when formally comparing cultural groups because of the need to control for situation. Comparative studies tend to ignore unusual situations and differences in the frequency of situations, as well as the ways in which development is shaped by, obtains meaning from, and influences situations.

Two-culture studies more often rely on quantitative methods than do one-culture studies. They are typically associated with traditional psychological research and possess all the attendant strengths (careful controls, reliability and validity of measures) and weaknesses (neglect of context and indigenous theories and experts) of this tradition (Lebra, Lewis). The feature of two-culture studies we most value is that they make explicit widely shared, but infrequently examined, cultural assumptions (Tobin). This is in contrast to one-culture studies, which make implicit comparisons between the culture examined and the investigators' culture of origin (or their intended audience). Two-culture studies help ensure that assumptions about cultural differences are empirically tested. The simplicity of the comparison makes it possible to focus on complex developmental themes like generative tension and symbiotic harmony in a straightforward manner.

Multiple-culture studies are more difficult to characterize than single- or two-culture studies. Many of them resemble two-culture studies in that they adopt traditional psychological methods; others resemble single culture studies in that they adopt qualitative ethnographic methods. In both cases, multiculture studies help us realize that the ways in which developmental pathways differ depend upon the cultures compared; multiculture studies present a much more realistic and multidimensional portrait of the differences in developmental pathways than do two-culture comparisons. Yet they, too, have their limitations. They add complexity to the already daunting task of understanding differences in development.

EACH PATHWAY NECESSARILY ENTAILS PROBLEMS IN ADAPTATION

The commentators question our assumption that developmental pathways that promote certain values necessarily undermine others. Lewis suggests that this view denies the possibility of optimal development. Are there certain developmental pathways that maximize positive/adaptive outcomes and minimize negative/maladaptive ones? We suspect that this formulation of the question is unanswerable. Adaptation depends upon the demands of the context (economic, social, political, etc.), changes in demands and the context over time (at different stages of development, over generations), criteria used to assess adaptation (survival, well-being of most members), and conceptions of well-being (altruism, peacefulness, honesty, material success, and so on).

While we are unable to determine whether there are pathways that optimize adaptive outcomes in general (or, conversely, whether all pathways lead to trade-offs), we believe we can determine whether there are pathways that optimize the two kinds of valued outcomes described in our review—individuation and related values (freedom, autonomy, and self expression) on one hand, and accommodation and related values (harmony, adherence to norms, and self denial) on the other. We agree with Lewis that we should strive for the best of both worlds, but we suspect that this has more to do with flexibly alternating between different values than with simultaneously adhering to different values. That is, each outcome may only be valued and adaptive in certain contexts and the optimal pathway is the one in which children learn when and how to adopt each.

CONCLUSION

There are several ways in which we can benefit from the commentators' constructive criticisms of our formulation of developmental pathways. Our theories are enriched by a balance of generalizations and exceptions; our methods are more sophisticated when we balance one-, two-, and multiple-culture comparisons; and relational values are most adaptive when they entail a balance of individuation and accommodation. Rather than a middle ground, we need well formulated guidelines that indicate which type of theory, methods, and values is called for under different sets of circumstances.

1. We suspect that generalizations are called for when exceptions are dominant, and vice versa. Our own generalizations, which were in response to extensive ethnographic research during the past decade (Lewis), will hopefully fuel more ethnographic work focused on exceptions—and the commentators have proposed several valuable directions this work might take.

2. Two-culture comparisons may be optimal when the goal is to test developmental hypotheses rather than to break new ground. It would have been difficult to test our developmental pathways without the straightforward comparison provided by two-culture studies. Both one-culture and multi-culture studies

are optimal for generating new ideas, but one-culture studies may be better suited for describing individual variation and person–environment interactions over development (Lebra), and multiple-culture studies may be optimal for generating more complex hypotheses about developmental difference (Tobin).

3. In addition to determining which values are most adaptive in which contexts, we must also understand why people seek out different contexts and why they interpret contexts very differently (Kitayama). A particular challenge for future research is to examine how children learn the rules (contexts) governing when each set of values is most adaptive and how to flexibly shift between them (e.g., cooperation, self-denial and other forms of accommodation when group cohesion is high, as contrasted with self-assertion and other forms of individuation when group cohesion is low). We suspect that optimal development involves both this flexibility, or *kejime*, which is emphasized in Japan (kejime is defined by Tobin as "how to adjust one's expectations, behavior, and speech . . . to contextual demands"), and a sense of psychic unity or coherence emphasized in the United States (Kitayama).

We believe that the *evolution* of theories, methods, and values pertaining to developmental pathways requires an understanding of when each is adaptive, and that we are only beginning to appreciate the need for this understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors wish to thank Robert LeVine, the action editor for the articles on developmental pathways, for his sustaining support, and for expert guidance throughout the review process.

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