

Culture in the History of Psychology in Canada

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Culture as a theoretical construct and an empirical variable evolved steadily in the history of psychology in Canada. This historical account is offered to record important contributions made by Canadian psychologists to the understanding of culture, both within the Canadian context, and internationally. The distinctive demographic, historical, political, and social contexts of Canada are examined, which provided the direction and the focus for the psychological examination of culture. Research and theory on culture are mapped across time and topic in three principal domains: intercultural, culture comparative, and indigenous approaches. Additionally, the evolution of professional associations, academic activities, and pedagogy pertaining to culture are examined. It is concluded that Canadian psychologists have made a distinct and substantial contribution to the understanding of relationships between culture and behaviour, in Canada as well as in the global context.

Keywords: cross-cultural psychology, culture, history, intercultural psychology, multiculturalism

Historically, Canada has always been a culturally diverse region. At present, there are 6.2 million foreign-born people (about 21% of the population) from 234 countries speaking 94 different languages (Statistics Canada, 2006a, 2006b). The 2010 World Migration Report has ranked Canada fifth in the world for the largest foreign-born population (World Migration Report, 2010). As this incoming migration pattern has unfolded, Canada's public policies on how best to settle the annual flow of about 225,000 immigrants and its mandate to accept refugees from troubled countries have profoundly affected the psychological experiences and daily lives of all Canadians. The original inhabitants of Canada (Aboriginal Peoples) have been most deeply and often negatively impacted by the massive migrations of Europeans who began arriving in significant numbers in the mid-18th century. Ongoing contact between Aboriginal and immigrant peoples has contributed greatly to Canada's political, cultural, and social development. With multiple cultural, ethnic, and religious groups calling Canada their home, it was inevitable that the diverse demographic features of Canada's cultural make-up, including the presence of Aboriginal Peoples, would become infused into our psychological repertoire. Beginning in the middle of the 20th century, Canadian psychologists came to examine the role of culture in psychology, responding to this continually evolving multicultural context.

The rise of culture within the larger frame of the history of psychology has been examined previously (Berry & Triandis, 2006; Kashima & Gelfand, 2012); however, this present examination of culture in the study and practice of psychology is focused specifically on the Canadian context. This historical account is derived from the conceptual view that the evolution of scholarly ideas and research pursuits reflect and parallel the historical, social, and political happenings of a certain time and region (Danziger, 1990; Leahey, 1987). We explore how Canada's history, demographic trends, and related political decisions are reflected in the direction and content of Canadian research in psychology involving culture, both as an empirical variable and as a theoretical construct. Following a brief description of the Canadian context, we aim to map three broad domains of psychological research: intercultural, culture comparative, and indigenous psychology. Additionally, we examine the formalization of the CPA Section on International and Cross-Cultural Psychology and provide a brief account of culture in the curriculum of psychology departments across Canadian universities. The scope of this account covers a period from the 1930s to the start of the millennium, recognising that further growth continues into contemporary times.

The Canadian Context

Aboriginal Peoples provide the original source of cultural diversity in Canada. In the early years, Aboriginal issues captured the attention of anthropologists (e.g., Hallowell, 1938). Soon, psychologists began to examine these issues in both their research and practice (e.g., Voget, 1951). A second important source of Canadian diversity resulted from a series of migrations from elsewhere in the world. The initial migration of peoples from France was followed by those with roots in other parts of Europe. In the late 19th century, thousands of immigrants came from Great Britain as well as Northern and Eastern Europe. In the decade

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following the Second World War, over half a million people arrived in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1851–2001). In the late 1960s, Canadian immigration policy shifted toward a “point system” that opened Canada to immigrants from all over the world, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of heritage cultures represented in the Canadian population.

These major changes in the demographic profile quickly captured the attention of Canadian psychologists, and the need to examine culture through a psychological lens was formally recognised in a National Research Council report in 1949. A committee led by former McGill University psychologist Robert B. MacLeod identified issues of national importance that needed to be examined by psychologists (Conway, 2012). Among those reported, three notable cultural issues were identified: (a) national and international attitudes, (b) Canadian intercultural [subculture] relations, and (c) adjustment of new Canadians. This was a major historical marker for psychological research in Canada, which provided a direction for Canadian psychologists and policymakers alike. In the years to follow, psychological research was directed at understanding these and other related issues, and it would also come to inform governmental policy enabling evidence-based decision making.

We additionally identify several public policies that are relevant for examining the research trends that also highlight the role of culture in the history of Canadian psychology. These are the Indian Acts of Canada (1867–1960), the Immigration Acts (1967 & 1978), the Official Languages Act (1969), and the Multiculturalism Act (1971 & 1988). Each of these Acts had precursors and had some later revisions which were a response to the changing and expanding cultural and economic needs of Canada. These policies had a parallel impact on the discipline of psychology in Canada wherein culture would become integral to research and practice.

The Indian Acts (1867–1960)

Aboriginal Peoples have inhabited Canada for thousands of years and are a distinct demographic and historical feature of the Canadian context. Today, there are over a million Aboriginal Peoples comprising 3.75% of the total population of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Internationally, this proportion places Canada as second in the world (New Zealand ranks first) and ahead of Australia and the United States. The official place of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada was first recognised by the treaty process and later in 1867 with the establishment of the Indian Act. There have been several revisions of the Act since then. The main provisions of the Act made Aboriginal Peoples wards of the state. These policies continued until the 1960s, when the right to vote was granted. However, the Act continues to constrain Aboriginal Peoples to this day. Assimilationist and segregationist policies (e.g., the residential schools) were adopted, which robbed them of many of their cultural traditions and languages.

This historical and political setting brought the issues of the culture-specific psychological functions and the well-being of the Aboriginal Peoples to the forefront. It created a context and a need to understanding the indigenous psychological functions leading to a series of research studies. Canadian psychologists began to examine cognitive orientation, perception, school success, and achievement among Aboriginal Peoples (e.g., Berry, 1966; Das, Manos & Kanungo, 1975; Rattan & MacArthur, 1968; Safran,

1963). Additionally, paralleling the demographic context, Canadian research acquired a fine reputation internationally for comparing Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples not only with other cultural groups within Canada (e.g., Gaddes, McKenzie, & Barnsley, 1968; MacKinnon, 1972) but also around the world (e.g., Berry, 1976; Dasen, 1975; MacArthur, 1973; Vernon, 1969).

The Immigration Acts (1967 & 1978)

The political and demographic landscape of Canada in the late 19th and early 20th century was marked by the early waves of immigrants who arrived mainly from the European continent. Notable in these groups were the British and the French, who began to shape the political history of Canada. Although the immigration flow continued from these countries, the source of immigrants began to expand due to a variety of global events and economic trends. In 1967, the Federal government introduced a point system to determine the eligibility for immigration. Accordingly, preference was granted to those who knew English or French, who had education and training to find employment in Canada, and who had a relative or a family member in Canada. There was no quota or restriction on the countries from where the immigrants may come. This system opened up immigration from countries which had not previously been a significant source of immigrants to Canada. New arrivals from the African and Asian continents, as well as the Caribbean region, soon started to change the demographic profile of Canada. In 1978, the Act included a new “business class” category to allow entrepreneurial immigrants, leading to an additional flow of immigrants from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.

These new immigrants, who were mostly from non-Western cultures, created an additional need to examine the adaptation challenges of immigrants to Canada as well as their impact on the existing communities. Canadian researchers directed their attention to the psychological dynamics of groups of people moving from very different cultural and political contexts of their home countries to Canada’s multicultural and democratic context. This Canadian context, shaped by historical events and political decisions, provided a powerful direction for psychological research. The historical tension between English-Canada and French-Canada precluded a *melting pot* approach, which requires a clearly defined singular national identity. The political vision for Canada of harmonizing the needs of the Aboriginal Peoples and the early settlers from Europe with those of the new and the diverse spread of immigrants provided a context for creating an acculturation model that would be uniquely Canadian. Such a theoretical framework for psychological research was proposed by John Berry (1974, 1984), which had a profound impact on acculturation research. It placed Canada on the international stage by inspiring hundreds of empirical studies both in Canada and around the globe.

The Official Languages Act (1969)

The historic tension between French-Canadians and English-Canadians dating back to the 17th century also provided a context for the issue of national languages, which remained contentious. A resolution was sought by the Federal government when it established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

(1967). The result was a policy of official bilingualism, which adopted both English and French as national languages. The psychological implications were enormous, including education strategies for acquiring not only English or French but also for understanding the psychological dynamics underlying language acquisition. It is important to note that the Act had a major impact on intergroup relations and interethnic attitudes based on linguistic ingroups and outgroups.

It was at McGill University where psychologists pioneered research on language-related issues that would speak to the Canadian context of bilingualism. Wallace Lambert (1970, 1972) led this research track, which inspired other Canadian researchers to examine psychological variables related to language immersion programs (e.g., Genesee, 1984), bilingualism, and identity (e.g., Clement & Noels, 1992), as well as language acquisition and acculturation (e.g., Young & Gardner, 1990). More recently, research has continued to pay more attention to other language groups such as Japanese (Bloom & Masataka, 1996) and Hindi (Tees & Werker, 1984).

The Multiculturalism Act (1971 & 1988)

Given that language and culture are intertwined, the basic principles of the Official Languages Act also implied the recognition of the two cultural traditions within Canada, the French and the English. With an aim to find a Canadian solution to managing intercultural relations among Canada's diverse populations, while respecting the provisions of the Official Languages Act, in 1971 Prime Minister Trudeau established a government policy of "Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework." The policy was designed to recognise, accept, and promote the distinct cultural features of all cultural groups while striving to integrate them within the larger Canadian society. This Act clearly reflected Canada's demographic, which included Aboriginal Peoples as well as people from all continents of the world, not just those from the French and English origins.

This was the world's first such policy. It branded Canadian multiculturalism as a social experiment. For psychological research, it created a fertile ground for examining issues relevant to life in Canada such as national and ethnic identity (e.g., Kalin & Berry, 1982); intergroup relations including prejudice, discrimination, interethnic attitudes (Aboud & Taylor, 1971; Dion, 2002; Esses & Zanna, 1995); and acculturation of a wide variety of cultural groups in Canada, including Chinese (Dion, Dion, & Pak, 1990), Greeks (Georgas, Berry, Shaw, & Christakopoulo, 1996), Hispanics (Wong-Rieger & Quintana, 1987), Iranians (Safdar, Lay, & Struthers, 2003), Koreans (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989), Turks (Ataca & Berry, 2002), South Asians (Naidoo & Davis, 1988), and others.

As can be seen from these policies, the official Canadian views about how to deal with the issues of cultural diversity and equity have evolved over the years from highly assimilationist to very pluralist policies (Adams, 2007). In historical hindsight, Canada never really had the option to become a uniform society: with one language, one identity, and one way of life. The recognition of this inherent and continuing diversity seems to have been first announced at the UNESCO conference in 1956 in Havana, on "The Cultural Integration of Immigrants" (Borrie, 1959). The presentation by the Canadian Government argued that its policy toward

immigrants should reflect the political and cultural patterns of Canadian society. This pattern includes "... a society built on the ideas of individual worth and cultural differences. ... The pressure of one dominant group to assimilate, that is to absorb others, is therefore impracticable as a general theory." (quoted in Borrie, 1959, p. 51). With this shift from assimilation to integration, official policy no longer considered that cultural heritages needed to be relinquished in order for one to become a full part of Canadian society. Most recently the incorporation of everyone into a Canadian civic society has come to the fore with an emphasis on a common citizenship for all. Fleras (2009) has referred to this shift as going from *ethnicity* multiculturalism (with a focus on cultural diversity), to *equity* multiculturalism (focus on equitable participation), to *civic* multiculturalism (focus on society building and inclusiveness), and to *integrative* multiculturalism (with a joint focus on identification with Canada, and full incorporation of diverse peoples into the larger Canadian society).

The government policies implemented through Canada's official Acts have shaped the growth and direction of a rich tradition of research on culture for Canadian psychologists. Within this historic Canadian context, the psychological research trends fall into three domains: (a) intercultural psychology, (b) culture-comparative psychology, and (c) indigenous psychology. These three domains examined here may be considered the core components of psychology pertaining to culture in Canada. Keeping with the scope of this article, select studies are cited as examples within each domain rather than providing an exhaustive review of research.

Intercultural Psychology

Early studies on intercultural issues within the Canadian context began in the 1940s, focusing on intercultural relations and personality (Northway & Quarrington, 1946), prejudice (Gerstein, 1947), and the effect of the Second World War on Japanese-Canadians (Laviolette, 1948). In the 1950s, research began on acculturation in Aboriginal populations (Voget, 1951) and immigrants (Kaye, 1958). During the 1970s, this domain of research grew rapidly, reflecting the political, historical, and demographic changes highlighted in the previous section. Since then, theoretical and empirical research in Canada has primarily focused on four key areas: acculturation, language acquisition, ethnic and national identity, and intergroup relations.

Acculturation

Acculturation is one of the most prolific areas of intercultural research in Canada. Voget (1951) conducted an early acculturation study with Aboriginal populations. Later, with the introduction of the Multiculturalism Act, and the continuing growth in the immigrant population from around the world, Berry (1984) developed a theoretical framework on acculturation. Drawing directly from the policy, it was based on two issues: (a) support for the maintenance of cultural traditions and (b) the promotion of positive intergroup contact. The resulting four acculturation orientations are integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. The goal of Canadian policy of multiculturalism was clearly evident in the integration orientation, whereby individuals would retain features of their heritage cultures, while participating fully in the culture of the larger society.

Berry's (1984) acculturation framework opened up a whole new field of research not only in Canada but also around the globe. The popularity of acculturation as a topic of study remained strong throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, other related areas have also seen a tremendous growth such as acculturation of youth from around the globe (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Tonks & Paranjpe, 1999), acculturative stress (e.g., Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987), mental health (e.g., Lasry, 1977), and others. Development in theory also has occurred, where conceptual frameworks for acculturation research have been expanded since the mid-1990s (e.g., Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000; Safdar et al., 2003). Additionally, Rudmin (2003) has identified a wide range of models of acculturation that have been found in academic history.

The issue of whether Canadian Multiculturalism promoting integration would have a positive psychological impact on Canada's immigrants arriving from around the world has continued to draw research attention. John Berry's (1991) policy article concluded that there are substantial net benefits by continuing with the policy. The value of multiculturalism however, has been hotly debated over the past 20 years (e.g., Bissoondath, 1994).

Language Acquisition

Another intercultural area of research pertains to the psychological implications of Canada's official bilingualism. The historical tension between Francophone Quebec and English-speaking Canada had a positive outcome for research targeting language acquisition process as well as for issues related to linguistic identity. This distinctively Canadian issue is one that researchers have examined well and has even come to influence governmental policy. Wallace Lambert at McGill University was the lead influence for proposing the idea and the practice of French immersion schools, as well as for the Federal Government employment and reports requiring bilingual fluency. In addition to developing French immersion research, Lambert and his colleagues' extensive contributions highlighted the core issues surrounding Canada's bilingualism including education, child development, and children's attitudes to "foreign people" (Lambert, 1970, 1972, 1981; Lambert & Tucker, 1971; Lambert & Klineberg, 1967). Since then, many Canadian psychologists have contributed to the growth of research in this area such as language acquisition, second language learning, communication, and linguistic competence (e.g., Greenglass, 1972; Young & Gardner, 1990).

Additionally, the reality of Canada's multiculturalism is reflected in multilingualism. As noted earlier, currently there are as many as 94 languages spoken at home by Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2006c). Researchers have, therefore, extended their investigation of Canada's multilingualism by examining issues such as the role of linguistic competence in acculturation (e.g., Noels & Clement, 1996) and intercultural communication (e.g., Dion, Dion, & Pak, 1990). Many of the studies in this area have highlighted language groups in the Canadian context, other than French and English, such as Mandarin (Li, 1999) and Punjabi (Werker, 1986).

Ethnic and National Identity

Following the Federal policy of Multiculturalism, Canadian psychologists took a great interest in the psychological implica-

tions for Canada's evolving ethnic and national identities. The 1971 Multiculturalism Act of Canada also created a context for a range of studies assessing the attitudes of Canadians to various ethnic groups and their own identities. Lambert's (1970) article, which was aptly titled, "What are they like, these Canadians? A social-psychological analysis" marked the direction for subsequent studies. The 1974 national survey undertaken by Berry, Kalin, and Taylor (1977) and a follow-up survey in 1991 (Kalin & Berry, 1995) examined the psychological dynamics of ethnic and national identity of Canadians. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s research on identity and self continued (e.g., Burnet, 1981; Christian, Garfield, Giles, & Taylor, 1976; Doyle, Beaudet, & Aboud, 1988; Lambert, 1984; Taylor, Bassili, & Aboud, 1973). The 1990s recorded a precipitous research growth tripling the number of publications from the previous decade.

Intergroup Relations

Dominant in research on intergroup relations are the topics of ethnic stereotypes, ethnic attitudes, prejudice, discrimination, ethnocentrism, and authoritarianism. Intercultural relations and prejudice first came to the attention of psychologists in the post-war period (Gerstein, 1947; Lavolette, 1948; Northway & Quarrington, 1946). Later, into the 1970s, studies on ethnic attitudes, stereotypes, and discrimination flourished (Aboud & Taylor, 1971; Berry et al., 1977; Berry & Wilde, 1972; Gardner, 1973). Research in the field of stereotypes and discrimination has continued steadily through the decades that followed with significant contributions from several prominent scholars (Al-Issa, 1997; Dion, 2002; Esses & Zanna, 1995; Gardner & Kalin, 1980; Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990; Ruggiero, Taylor, & Lambert, 1996).

Studies of intergroup relations in Canada have focused on a wide range of cultural groups that define Canadian society (e.g., French, English, Chinese, Punjabi, Korean, Iranian, and others). Additionally, the international reputation of Canada as a nation strongly committed to the protection of human rights has kept research on prejudice and discrimination based on cultural characteristics in focus.

Culture-Comparative Psychology

The political vision of multiple cultural groups retaining parts of their heritage identity has created an enormous opportunity for culture-comparative research in Canada. Not being limited to two or three cultural groups, Canadian researchers have been able to explore a wider range of cultural diversity. The steady and continual growth of research within this domain reflects Canada's multicultural context shaped by the Multiculturalism Act.

Culture-comparative research in Canada began with a focus on Aboriginal Peoples. These include comparing aspects of cognition and perception of the Inuit, Cree, Tsimshian, Dene with aboriginal groups in other parts of the world (Berry, 1966, 1976; Berry & Bennett, 1989). Within this domain, there has been a phenomenal growth of research comparing numerous cultural groups within Canada and across different countries on a variety of psychological processes such as emotions (e.g., Russell, 1983), motivation (e.g., Alcock, 1975), social influence (e.g., Boldt & Roberts, 1979), child-rearing styles (Greenglass, 1972). During the 1980s, gender

also came into prominence as having sociocultural implications for cultural groups such as South Asians (Naidoo, 1985). Studies on cultural comparisons of self have become more abundant in recent years (e.g., Heine, 2001; Higgins & Bhatt, 2001). By far, however, the practical social phenomena of ethnic identity, prejudice, discrimination, and acculturation have been most dominant in culture-comparative psychological research in Canada.

Indigenous Psychology

Related to the intercultural and culture comparative domains were attempts to create an indigenous Canadian psychology, one that did not automatically use United States American psychology as a reference group or as a source of research concepts and teaching materials. During the 1970s a series of presentations were made at Canadian Psychological Association conferences addressing these and broader issues and were later published (Berry, 1974). In the 1980s some researchers and practitioners turned toward indigenous approaches of self and identity (Paranjpe, 1984), as well as healing and therapy (Brant, 1983). In the early 1990s greater attention was paid to indigenous perspectives in psychology (Kim & Berry, 1993) and the indigenizing process (Adair, Puhon, & Vohra, 1993). The growth of interest in specific indigenous approaches (Naidoo, Olowu, Gilbert, & Akotia, 1999; Paranjpe, 2002) has continued along with the process of indigenization in psychology.

Organisational and Professional Growth of Research on Culture

One of the markers of the emergence of an important area of research in a discipline is the formal recognition by the scholarly community. The founding of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) in 1938 was a landmark in the history of psychology in Canada affirming the significance of psychology as an academic and professional discipline (Conway, 2012). Reflecting the rapid growth of research and practice of psychology in Canada, various subfields of psychology began to grow, receiving formal recognition within the CPA as sections with designated names and numbers. It is relevant here to examine the context of the historical marker for culture as a CPA section.

International and Cross-Cultural Psychology Section of the CPA

The formal recognition of culture as a subfield of psychology in Canada was affirmed in 1980 with the creation of the CPA Section 10; "International and Cross-Cultural Psychology." This event occurred four decades after the founding of the CPA. It is interesting that it paralleled the growth of culture in psychology within the broad discipline. When examining the number of *PsycInfo* articles containing the keyword "culture," Kashima and Gelfand (2012) observed that culture in psychological research began to grow steadily from 1970s to 1980s, and then more rapidly during the 1990s through the 2000s. This is likely due to the globalization and the increasing levels of migrating populations across the world, creating a need and a context for examining culture in psychological adaptation and functions. This historical research

trend is reflected in the year 1980 as the year of the founding of the CPA Section 10.

The creation of Section 10 involved the efforts and commitments of many Canadian psychologists. Acknowledging the increasing value and growth of academic research on culture, John Berry, Francis Aboud, Don Taylor, Russ MacArthur, Josianne Hamers, and Ian Brooks formed an interest group in the 1970s, bringing together Canadian psychologists interested and involved in research pertaining to culture. The members of this interest group are credited for leading the establishment of the CPA Section 10. Soon the membership of the section grew with researchers and practitioners from across Canada. In addition to those noted above, the section included Giles Aussant, Bruce Bain, Francois Desrosiers, Ada Dhillon, John Fentness, Geraldine Schwartz, Tim Hogan, Hank Janzen, Don McEachern, Michel Pierre Janisse, Mark Sandilands, Jack Sikand, and George Small.

CPA Section 10 membership has steadily grown since its inception in 1980 from an initial 15 members to 220 including 170 student members today. At the 1982 CPA convention in Montreal, the Section goals were formalized to (a) foster links with international psychology organisations and share hospitality with psychologists from other countries who travel in Canada; (b) participate in or help to arrange cross-cultural research; (c) organise and foster programs on international and cross-cultural topics at local, provincial and national psychology meetings; (d) organise symposia and present papers on international and cross-cultural topics at national and provincial meetings; and (e) represent CPA and this committee when attending conferences in other countries and report on their activities through CPA and provincial newsletters.

International Recognition of Canadian Psychologists for Culture Research

Many Canadian psychologists have received international recognition for their research on culture and for their contributions to international psychology. One of the most celebrated Canadian psychologists for his contributions to research on culture both nationally and internationally is John Berry. He has published numerous books, chapters, and journal articles. He served as the Secretary General of International Association for Cross Cultural Psychology (IACCP) from 1976 to 1980 and was elected the President of the IACCP from 1982–1984. He also received the Interamerican Prize for Contributions to Psychology in the Americas in 1999, the Lifetime Contributions Award from the International Academy for Intercultural Research in 2005, and the Distinguished Contribution to the Advancement of International Psychology from CPA in 2012.

Several other Canadian psychologists researching culture have also made their mark on the international scene. Josephine Naidoo served as the president of the IACCP from 1994–1996, and Marta Young served as Deputy Secretary General from 1996 to 2000. Regional representatives for Canada to IACCP have included Renuka Sethi, Marta Young, Kim Noels, and Steve Heine. In the 1980s, Don Taylor, Francis Aboud, and Jean-Claude Lasry all served as editors of the IACCP Bulletin. The International Academy for Intercultural Research, a major professional association in the field of intercultural psychology, has a number of Canadian Fellows, including John Berry, Richard Bourhis, Serge Guimond, Richard Lalonde, Saba Safdar, and Rosalie Tung.

It is to be noted that Canada has remained very visible on the international psychological scene with research involving cultural groups from around the world and prominent involvement in international associations (such as IUPsyS, IAAP as well as IACCP). This involvement may be attributed to the historical and political context of Canada; notably the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism and the associated language abilities and cultural competencies.

Culture and Psychology in Canadian Universities

The growing acknowledgment of the importance of culture in psychology has been reflected in the development of undergraduate and graduate level courses across Canadian universities as well. The first such course (“Cultural psychology”) was offered by John Berry at Queen’s University from 1969 to 1999, both on campus and by correspondence to students all over the world.

A recent survey of online calendar listings of courses within psychology departments of 50 Canadian universities indicated that 27 (54%) of them offer at least one course that has “Culture” in the course title and in the course description. Of the total 53 psychology courses pertaining to culture, 33 (62.3%) are offered at the undergraduate level and 20 (37.7%) at the graduate level. Responding to the course offerings in psychology and culture, several textbooks and handbooks have been developed. In 1992 John Berry and colleagues published a comprehensive text which is now in its third edition (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011). Steve Heine’s (2012) textbook, now in its second edition, is also widely used. Other notable contributions to the field are the three volumes, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Berry et al., 1997), *Handbook of Clinical Cultural Psychology*, and *Handbook of Cultural Health Psychology* (Kazarian & Evans, 1998, 2001).

Although textbooks for several undergraduate psychology courses now include culture and the Canadian context in their contents, these remain limited to introductory psychology and social psychology courses. While significant progress has been made in bringing culture to the forefront of research, theory, and pedagogy, further development is required by all psychology departments in Canada to recognise culture as an integral part of undergraduate and graduate curriculum. For now, it appears that this progress is moving at a slower pace compared with the relatively rapid growth of research in these areas. This lag may be due to the traditional structures of Canadian psychology departments, which remain predominantly oriented to the central role of biological variables in explaining human behaviour.

Conclusion

Culture in Canada has had an impact on the development of psychology and has also become an important feature of psychological research, theory, and practice. As seen in this account, the examination of culture as an empirical variable and as a theoretical construct has enriched psychology, not only in Canada but also around the world. The unique demographic features and political history of Canadian society have shaped the development of domestic psychological research and has served as a basis for Canadian contributions to psychology internationally. The three domains of research—intercultural, cultural comparative, and

indigenous psychology—continue to add to psychological knowledge with Canadian content. At the same time, the development of theory and practice regarding culture in psychology has also become an essential part of professional and applied psychology in Canada. With the prediction of greater globalization of our world, and with increased human migration and intermingling of diverse cultural groups, the psychology of culture in Canada can only grow and expand in the years to come.

Résumé

La culture à titre de construit théorique et de variable empirique a évolué de façon constante au fil de l’histoire de la psychologie au Canada. Le présent compte-rendu historique veut consigner les importantes contributions de psychologues canadiens à la compréhension de la culture, tant dans un contexte national qu’international. Les contextes particuliers du Canada sur les plans de la démographie, de l’histoire, de la politique et de la société sont étudiés, permettant ainsi de préciser l’examen de la culture d’un point de vue psychologique. Les recherches et les théories sur la culture sont réparties selon les époques et les sujets pour trois grands domaines : les approches interculturelles, comparatives et indigènes. Sont aussi examinées d’un point de vue culturel l’évolution des associations professionnelles, les activités universitaires et la pédagogie. La conclusion stipule que les psychologues au Canada ont apporté une contribution à la fois distincte et importante à la compréhension des relations entre la culture et le comportement, tant au pays qu’à l’échelle mondiale.

Mots-clés : acculturation, Canada, psychologie interculturelle, culture, psychologie culturelle, histoire, psychologie indigène, multiculturalisme.

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