

Culture and social psychology

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Conceptions of culture, collective memory, ethnic identity and cultural explanations are reviewed and criticized. Subjective culture is conceived off as shared denotative, connotative and pragmatic knowledge. Culture is conceptualized as fluid tension systems in which there is a coexistence of heterogeneous and contradictory aspects. Cultural values designate what is desirable in societies and are related to five basic themes of social coordination, like the relation with authority; the relationship between the person and society; the concept of masculinity and femininity, conflicts and their resolution and the conception of time. Cultural explanations posit that a social behavior in accord with a widely shared moral attitude occurs in spite the situation may offer different opportunities. A cultural explanation should be tested against situational and socio-structural explanations. Direct assessment of the norm and values are necessary to avoid tautological reasoning in cultural explanations. Culture is also a set of regular situational contingencies or collective and practices and subjects learn to define situations and practices in cultural perspective. A cultural explanation should pit «desirable institutional arrangements» against non-volitional situational contingencies or socio-structural characteristics that are the effects of non desired historical changes. Culturalist explanation assume that culture arise in an dependent manner of situational forces, like peasantry life style and the representations of limited good, social life in slums and culture of poverty, or herding economies, state weakness and dominance of cavalry as social career and honour culture. Notwithstanding values and norms have a life apart from the situations and endure beyond the demise of original situations, as shows the culture of honour case. However, most of data on culture and socioeconomic development shows that individualism and protestant work ethic's (PWE) beliefs are a result and not a cause of economical growth. Contrary to Weber's ideas the PWE were more strongly endorsed in poorer, collectivistic and high power distance societies. Finally, some data suggest that culture can act as independent variable, like is the case of social capital and economic development.

Psicología Social y Cultura. Los conceptos de cultura, memoria colectiva, identidad étnica y de explicaciones culturalistas se exponen de manera crítica. La cultura subjetiva es definida como el conocimiento compartido denotativo, connotativo y pragmático. La cultura se conceptualiza como un sistema de tensiones en flujo en el que coexisten aspectos heterogéneos y contradictorios. Los valores culturales designan lo que es deseable en cada sociedad y están asociados a cinco temas básicos de coordinación social: la relación con la autoridad, la relación entre la persona y la sociedad, el concepto de masculinidad y femineidad, la resolución de conflictos y el concepto del tiempo. Una explicación culturalista es aquella que afirma que una conducta social ocurre con una actitud moral ampliamente compartida, pese a que la situación permite que otras conductas puedan llevarse a cabo. Una explicación culturalista debe siempre contrastarse con explicaciones alternativas socioestructurales e institucionales. Mediciones directas de las normas y valores, independientes de las conductas que supuestamente las reflejan, son necesarias para evitar los razonamientos tautológicos que amenazan a las explicaciones culturalistas. La cultura consiste también en un conjunto de contingencias situacionales que ocurren con regularidad o prácticas colectivas y las personas aprenden a definir las prácticas y situaciones desde una perspectiva cultural. Una explicación culturalista debe oponer los arreglos institucionales deseables a las contingencias situacionales involuntarias o las características socio-estructurales que son los efectos de cambios históricos no deseables. Las explicaciones culturalistas asumen que la cultura se desarrolla determinada por fuerzas situacionales, como las condiciones de vida del campesinado determinan la representación del «bien limitado», o la vida social en los barrios pobres determina la «cultura de la pobreza», o el pastoreo, la debilidad del Estado y la caballería como carrera social dominante, determinan la cultura del honor. Pese a estar determinadas por las situaciones sociales, los valores y las normas tienen una existencia más allá de las situaciones que las engendraron y perduran más allá de la desaparición de las situaciones en las que surgieron, como muestra el caso de la cultura del honor. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los estudios sobre cultura y desarrollo socio-económico muestran que el individualismo y la Ética Protestante del Trabajo (EPT) son el resultado y no la causa del crecimiento económico. Al contrario de las ideas de Weber, la EPT era compartida más fuertemente en las sociedades pobres, colectivistas y de alta distancia al poder. Finalmente, algunos estudios muestran que la cultura puede actuar como una variable independiente, como es el caso del «capital social» y el desarrollo económico.

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The respective influence of social structure and culture in the determinants of social behavior is a classical debate. Social structure is conceived of as a set of social relations, such as economy, power and status. Social structure is a persisting and bounded pattern of in-

teraction or social relations among the persons or roles in a society. Culture is the set of cognitive (what is) and evaluative (what ought to be) beliefs or conceptions of the desirable, as detailed in values, attitudes and norms (Kemper, 1993). It is a denotative (what is or beliefs), connotative (what should be or attitudes, norms and values) and pragmatic (how things are done or procedural rules) knowledge, shared by a group of individuals who have a common history and participate in a social structure (Triandis, 1995).

Cultural representations have referential meaning, they are models of social behavior. Social representations are also models for behavior, they have constitutive meaning and help conduct social behaviours. Cultural representations as a model for behavior, also transmit emotional (i.e. rules of feelings and display), motivational and evaluative (e.g. moral ideological) meanings (Fiske, 1995).

A critical issue to study is how shared beliefs should be?. One alternative is to conceive culture as a set of modal beliefs typical of dominant groups. For instance Japanese culture reflects modal generalized beliefs and social scripts typical of the ruling class and of the most important ruled class (Japanese stable male workers — this figure is of course a demographical minority of the population (Kelly, 1991).

But as we know, there are different forms of understanding the concept of culture. Before we continue addressing this topic let us recall some of these perspectives hoping that this will help us in future discussions. The first important confrontation we witness is that between a mechanistic and a cultural form of interpreting social sciences. The former will search for visible and real objects, stressing predictability, whilst the latter will contend that culture must be interpreted in a subjective fashion, having certain autonomy. These last authors will try to discover internal and subjective structures and not the mere objective features visible to all. These different positions clash on the idea of culture's autonomy from social structure

A cultural explanation sees persisting patterns of behavior as emanating from shared belief and values — a cultural explanation is a normative one more or less independent of a contemporary situation. A structural explanation sees patterns of behavior as the result of contemporary situational contingencies and constraints — a structural explanation is a situational explanation more or less independent of volitional normative processes that can be accounted for by basic learning processes, expectancy-value and exchange theories (Miller-Loesi, 1995).

Although this distinction between mechanistic and anti-mechanistic perspectives is foremost in the study of culture, we should not believe that tensions do not occur in each of these ranks. Although assuming some common ground there are important differences between a functionalist, semiotic, dramaturgical, poststructuralist or marxist approach to culture. As Alexander (1990) has stated culture can not be understood without reference to both subjective meaning and social structural constraints, without reflecting on both the codes it creates and those which it does not invent.

Culture is conceptualized as fluid tension systems in which there is a coexistence of heterogeneous and contradictory aspects.

Culture as processes

The idea of culture as a social process rests on a series of assumptions which stress its dynamic nature and the processes of construction and reconstruction which take place within them. These basic ideas may be summarized as follows:

a) Cultures are «the distillates of historical situations, as well as powerful contemporary determinants of individual behavior» (Ross & Nisbett, 1991).

b) Cultures are social attributes that tend to be transmitted to, and acquired by, social descendants and are important in defining collective identity.

c) Cultures are not isolated, usually they are nested units within other cultures and every culture today participates to some degree in the World culture.

d) Boundaries of cultures are fuzzy and overlapping, subjects tend to use different cultural markers in a contextual dependent way.

e) Culture is not a static entity but is reproduced and created through interaction between subjects and their contexts (Segall, Lonner & Berry, 1998; Halbwachs, 1968).

Culture as a tension system

On the other hand, a socio-cultural approach assumes that cultures are tension systems, because changes in circumstances can transform cultural practices and question existing norms. There are differences between attitudes, norms and practices, and strains between roles and norms in the same given situation. Usually cultural values are in part contradictory, because they are themes that try to give meaning to conflictual realities. Individualism is related to high self-monitoring and social adaptation in the USA culture. As Hsu posits, in order to live up to their core value of individualism (self-reliance and independence), USA citizens are forced to be other directed because successful competition in America requires the individualist to be an extroverted and high self-monitoring person, able to establish relationships and to conform to the norms of many different groups (Hsu quoted in Bock, 1994, p.93). Similarly, persons belonging to collectivistic cultures show at the same time a strong affiliation to the extended family and a rugged individualism in daily life - including strong competition, nepotism and the misuse of collective goods.

Culture as modular systems

The cultural coexistence of contradictions means that different values and behavioral styles are usually tolerated, lived side by side one with others, and not assimilated or integrated (e.g. racial discrimination and democracy in the USA for many decades). More important is the fact that subjects could be individualistic and logic rational in one social area (e.g. market exchanges) and animistic in another (e.g. religion). For instance, a majority of USA citizens believe in God and Paradise, and at the same time they act rationally in economical matters. In Brazil people believe in *Candomblé* (magical rituals) and at the same time they are logical economic actors. Bastide posits that in Brazil cognition is westernized but not so emotions (Bastide, 1965). In India a belief in detachment was found to coexist with a materialistic orientation, collectivism with individualism, humanism with power orientation (Sinha & Tripathi, 1994).

Core themes in cultural values

Shared values play key roles in the individuals' psychological functioning — in emotional experience. Core cultural values are reflected in key collective texts and in collective behavior — cul-

tural plots or scripts. Values could be inferred from «desirable collective behavior» and patterns of responses to attitude statements (Inkeless and Levinson, 1969; Schooler, 1996; Triandis, 1995; Markus, Kitayama & Heiman, 1996).

Core themes of cultural values are general normative beliefs regarding persons and their relations with each other and with the World (Kluckhohn, 1951; Braithwaite & Scott, 1991).

Inkeless and Levinson (1969) concluded that there are four basic problems that all cultures have to deal with:

- a) the relation with authority;
- b) conception of the self or person, which includes,
 - b.i) the relationship between the person and society;
 - b.ii) the person's concept of masculinity and femininity, and
- c) conflicts and their resolution (expression versus inhibition of emotions, including the control of aggression).

Hofstede (1991) conducted a seminal survey on work values and empirically identified, by means of collective factor analysis using nations as units and means as scores, a four dimension solution which fits with Inkeless and Levinson's four basic social problems. Using survey data from IBM employees in 53 nations and regions collected in the nineteen seventies he derived four dimensions along which dominant values in the different nations could be ordered. Hofstede labelled these dimensions Power Distance, Individualism-Collectivism, Masculinity-Femininity and Uncertainty Avoidance.

a) Power distance refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of groups accept power inequalities. Low power distance countries were Denmark and New Zealand. High Power Distance were Malaysia and Guatemala.

b) The Individualism-Collectivism dimension refers to the priority given to the person or to the group or collective (often the extended family). Collectivistic countries were Guatemala, Indonesia and Taiwan. Individualistic countries were the USA and Western Europe.

c) The Masculinity-Femininity dimension refers to the extent in which cultures strive for maximal distinction between men and women. Masculine cultures stress stereotypical gender behavior, and dominant values are success, money, competition and assertiveness. Feminine cultures do not emphasize gender role differences, are not competitive and value cooperation and concern for the weak. Masculine countries were Japan, Austria and Mexico. Feminine countries were the Scandinavian countries, The Netherlands, Chile and Costa Rica.

d) Uncertainty avoidance defines the extent to which people feel threatened by an ambiguous situation, which they try to avoid by means of strict codes and beliefs. High uncertainty avoidance nations, like Greece and Portugal, are emotional, security seeking and intolerant. Nations with low uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as Jamaica and Denmark, are more relaxed, accept more risks and are more tolerant.

Two other core themes of values are

e) The relation to nature (which may interpreted as a sign of submission, subjugation or harmonious adaptation) and

f) A time perspective that may be focused in the present, the past or the future.

Mastery of nature could be related to cultural masculinity, focusing on the past and the tradition to collectivism and focusing in the present and future to individualism. A group of researchers investigated the dimension of values based on Chinese culture and found a pattern of values related to time perspective. They found a

dimension that clustered together Confucian values and that opposes the virtue of taking a long term perspective versus focusing more on the present and the past. Reviewing research on values, scholars conclude that individualism-collectivism, power-distance and masculinity-femininity describes relatively culture-robust dimensions of value. However, Hofstede and other authors suggest that it is necessary to add the «Confucian dimension», related to the time perspective, in order to have a valid set of values dimensions (Hofstede, 1991; Smith & Bond, 1993).

Values, attitudes and norms

Cultural explanations are usually explanations that refers to values, norms and attitudes. Societal values could be defined as a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of, or characteristic of, a group, of that which is desirable and has an influence in the selection made from available modes, means and ends of action (Kluckhohn, 1951). Values are desirable means and goals that serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, 1995). They refer to what is desirable and what one «ought» to do (Braithwaite & Scott, 1991). Norms are expectations and rules about how group members behave (descriptive norms) and how they should behave. They are accepted rules of social behaviour. Attributes of a group that are considered to be both descriptive and prescriptive for the members of a culture (e.g. personal independence and autonomy in Western cultures and interdependence and harmony in Eastern cultures - Miller and Prentice, 1996).

Values stand above norms and norms are the mechanisms through which values are implemented. Values are supposed to be general, widely shared «generalized ends or generalized attitudes» (Braithwaite & Scott, 1991).

Attitudes are internalized forms of values and some attitudes are norms. For instance attitudes which favour a behavior as being morally compulsory for the person or others. When in a society there is not only one shared attitude towards an important social object or theme (e.g. work) but a set of shared attitudes, then sub-culture exists.

A normative explanation implies that a social behavior in accord with a widely shared moral attitude occurs in spite the situation may offer different opportunities. On the other hand, a differential opportunity structure may explain why one group engages in a social behaviour while another does not. For example, a need norm is used more by collectivistic (Indian) than individualistic subjects (Americans). To conclude from this finding that collectivism is higher in Indian subjects and this explains why they distribute rewards on the basis of what people need rather than merit is unwarranted. Situational explanations such as the higher salience of scarce resources for Indian subjects is another alternative explanation (Kagitcibasi, 1994).

Normative explanations were abandoned in the past due to their tautological nature: if the expected behavior was observed, it was thought that subjects shared some values and norms, but if it not was observed, then scholars assumed that subjects did not share the values or that the norm was not activated. A cultural explanation should be tested against other explanations and intervening variables should be studied. Direct assessment of the norm and values would allow a reduction in the problem of the non falsifiability of cultural and normative explanations (Dillard, 1991; Smith & Bond, 1993).

Culture as «collective routes» or values embodied in social scripts

It is important to notice that culture is not only an ideational shared meaning, but is enacted in typical «collective routes» or some specific and valued spatial-temporal institutional arrangements. An argument that pits cultural values against institutional and situational constraint creates a false dichotomy and reduces culture to residual tradition (Kelly, 1991). Cultural ideations are in part embodied in objects, scripts and relationships. In other words, culture is in part a set of regular situational contingencies or collective routines and practices. For instance, collectivistic cultures emphasize interdependence and modesty, not only in verbal statements about values, but in social customs: commemorations and social events celebrate the accomplishments of the whole group. Empirical research confirms that collectivistic (i.e. Japanese) success situations are less conducive to self-enhancement than individualistic (i.e. USA) success situations. Collective negative situations are more conducive to self-criticism than individualistic situations. As a consequence of these situational contingencies, collectivistic subjects show lower self-esteem than individualistic persons (Kitayama, Markus & Lieberman, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). What is needed is to pit «desirable institutional arrangements» against non-volitional situational contingencies or socio-structural characteristics that are the effects of non desired historical changes. For instance, if parents sleep with their children, even though houses are large enough to have separate rooms, and sleeping with one's children is considered normative, then we have a satisfactory cultural explanation.

On the other hand, not all the typical situations found in a society are related to a core of themes and values. Culture refers to the learned and socially acquired and valued traditions of behavior (Harris, 1997). In more cognitivist and subjective approaches culture is conceived of as a mental programme (Hofstede, 1991). Many of the most pressing and regular situations in a given society are not programmed at all and are «unwanted effects» or unintentional results of volitional and valued behaviors. A classical example is the traffic jam, a highly patterned and regular phenomenon that occurs despite the socialization or learning that drivers receive and contrary to their intention to keep on moving (Harris, 1997).

Culture, collective memory and generational enculturation

Culture can be conceived as a distill of past customs, manners and tradition. In other terms, culture is related to residues of the past in learning, attitudes, communications and interaction styles. Enculturation and socialization are related to the transmission of procedural, communicative and symbolic knowledge from the past. Enculturation or socialization posits that a psychological mechanism emerges through the individual's exposure to cultural typical scripts. Subjects socialized in individualistic social situations that are conducive to self-enhancement will be more attuned and prone to reinforce self-esteem following a rewarding social situation. Markus & Kitayama's (1991) studies showed that persons socialized in an individualistic culture are relatively more likely to engage in self-enhancement and collectivistic persons are more likely to engage in self-criticism. In sum, collectivistic situations were less reinforcing and collectivistic subjects were more attuned towards self-criticism. Socio-cultural situation and psychological

dispositional explanations were both simultaneously operative. In fact, a socio-cultural approach posits that the two explanations are not mutually exclusive.

What differentiates collective memory from culture as learned traditions and customs, is the fact that collective memory is the explicit, even if informal, transmission of meaning and identities from the historical past of the group. Aspects of the past constitute elements of cultures and these endure as long as the culture is not superseded, assimilating new historical facts and traditions (Olick & Robbins, 1998). If we focus on processes, collective memory will be the cross-generational oral transmission of events which are important for the group (Vansina in Ross, 1991). The core of collective memory are group dynamics of remembering and forgetting — oral stories, rumours, gestures or cultural styles, in addition to written stories and institutionalized cultural activities (Halbwachs, 1950/1968). Collective memories are widely shared images and knowledge of a past social event which has not been personally experienced, is collectively created and shared, and has social functions (Schuman & Scott, 1989).

The contents of collective memory are the shared memories of societal-level events, especially extreme, intense events that have led to important institutional changes. Collective memory rests on events which have had an impact on collectivities and have driven them to modify their institutions, beliefs and values. Research conducted on vivid memories has confirmed that unexpected and emotionally loaded events attract more attention and are better remembered than other more neutral events (Pennebaker, Paez & Rimé, 1997). Connerton (1989) analyzes how even though the killing of French kings was not that strange in French history, the execution of Louis XVI during the French bourgeois revolution of 1793 had a very strong impact and is still very much remembered today. This is due to the fact that the other deaths did not alter the main aspects of French social life.

Collective memory is also generation-related or cohort-dependent. This means that social events are remembered particularly if they happen during one's adolescence and early adulthood, a time which seems to be a formative period in one's social identity and of cultural enculturation (Schuman & Scott, 1989). Some authors, such as Mannheim, claim that different cohorts or generations in a nation share a specific version of the culture (Conway, 1997). Inglehart (1994) also posits that cultural values are learned during these formative years. Studies confirm that persons remember historical and collective events experienced during adolescence or early adulthood (Schuman, Belli & Bischooping, 1998). Moreover, evidence from the study of autobiographical memory support Mannheim's assumption that the process of learning of cultural knowledge was completed and more or less fixed when one reaches 25 years of age — in Western societies at least (Conway, 1997). A cohort effect is due to children training practices, secondary socialization and social events that influence identity formation during young adulthood. Adolescents and young adults who are not committed to a way of life are thought to be particularly prone to social events and influence. For instance, Newcomb's research shows that young women from conservative families shift to progressive attitudes attending a liberal college. Those women who had become more progressive or leftist during their years as young students at the liberal college remained so decades after leaving college (Lippa, 1994). A longitudinal study confirms that the cultural level of individualism in the nineteen sixties affected the attitudes and shaped their personality and adulthood adjust-

ment (eg. women who were adolescents in the 1950s were less individualistic than women who were adolescents in the 1960s and 80s). However, some evidence also suggests that current cultural climate, beyond cohort effect, has an influence on people. Roberts & Helson (1997) found evidence that cultural climate affected different cohorts in similar ways: change over time in repeated measures of an individualistic index was similar to the change in cross-sectional samples: individualism developed in the 1960s, peaked in the late 1970s, and the leveled off or declined in the 1980s.

Culture and ethnic social identity

Ethnic identity in particular is related to the cultural characteristics of a group, that is norms, values, beliefs and patterns of behavior. Ethnic identity refers to different facets: a) Self-categorization (e. g. I am a Maya); b) attitudes and feelings towards the in-group, such as group belonging or identification, ethnic pride or collective self-esteem; (I belong to the Maya collectivity, I am proud of being a Maya) c) knowledge of group values, traditions, (I know maya traditional religion and medicine), d) attitude and use of ethnic language, (I speak kekchí or kakchikel), d) involvement with group members and practices and evaluation of these practices (I cook ethnic food, or read novels related to the traditional culture, or have many friends who belong to my ethnic group, and the importance I attach to reading traditional novels, etc.). Empirical research shows the limitations of a simplistic approach to cultural identity, that equals an ethnic label with a set of cultural values and norms. First, most of the studies concerning USA minorities found no relationship between ethnic self-categorization and personal identity self-concept (no relationship between collective esteem or attitude towards reference group and personal self-esteem. However, positive attitudes towards the ethnic group correlated positively with self-esteem (Phinney, 1996; Frable, 1997). Second, some studies on USA migrants show that ethnic self-categorization and positive attitudes towards the ethnic group remains high across generations, whereas ethnic knowledge and cultural practices decrease. Identification with a cultural or ethnic group could remain strong even when there is little cultural involvement. Third, minorities perceive cultural or ethnic identity as more important than white anglo-saxons. Also some data suggests that «marginal groups» on the boundaries between ethnic categories or groups in contact with other ethnic groups became more aware of cultural differences and promoting renovation of tradition and a strong endorsement of ethnicity (Wilson, 1995). Finally, studies focused on norms, attitudes and values suggest that the ethnic label does not legitimize the assumption that cultural differences exist. For instance, a research that compares foreign-born and American born Chinese adolescents with Hong Kong Chinese and Euro-American adolescents, found that second generation Chinese migrants showed more similarities than differences in individualism with Euro-Americans adolescents. In the same vein, ethnic identified latinos, bicultural or assimilated did not differ in the importance awarded to respect for authority and attitudes toward traditional sex roles. This means that, on one hand, acculturation leveled second generation Chinese with respect to individualism, but that Hispanic migrants showing differences in self-categorization did not differ in cultural values (Phinney, 1996). This evidence is coherent with the social identity approach that posits that contextual salience and threat activates social identity. At the same time, evidence suggests that cultural identity is fluid and multidimensional and that differences in self-categorization could not be projected in differences on cultural values.

mensional and that differences in self-categorization could not be projected in differences on cultural values.

Socio-structural explanations of culture

As we have already mentioned, one approach in explaining differences in social behaviour between groups and nations is materialist-relationalist. Culture is conceived of as a consequence of an objective situation (e.g. ecological, technological and economic constraints). A materialist-relationalist approach sees nations as patterns of behavior, cognition and emotion as responses to situation and social relationships. Cultures or ideologies are a coagulated social psychology, and explanations are found in the socio-economic structure in which a group, class or nation finds itself (Bujarin, 1921/1977; Bock, 1994; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). For instance, with reference to ethnic groups, a lower level of perceived deviant behavior and contentment in Chinese subjects living in American chinatown slums is explained by economic self-interest and social position, not by cultural characteristics. American chinatowns are largely dependent on tourist business - restaurants. The business leadership of the Chinese community is supported particularly by those with low skills and poor English who are especially dependent upon the restaurant trade for employment. If chinatown had a reputation as a slum, the tourist trade would be driven away. Light and Wong (1975) argue that social position and economic interest, not cultural characteristics of emotional self-constraint and collectivistic in-group harmony, are the causes for the image of Chinese Americans as calm, nonviolent and contented persons.

Peasantry and social representation of limited good

Another example related to class psychology, is the material conditions of the peasantry. Due to its difficult work conditions, scarce resources and attachment to private land property, there is a cultural pattern characterized by individualism, exclusivity, suspicion towards foreigners, envy and opposition to change (Bujarin, 1921/1977). In a similar vein, the anthropologist Foster postulates that all peasants display a social representation of Limited Good. Peasants perceive their local environment as one in which land, wealth and almost all desired thing in life exist in absolute quantities insufficient to fill the needs of villagers with no way of increasing the available supplies. This shared cognitive orientation is associated with strong feelings of suspicion towards out-group members and envy to others that are getting ahead at one's expenses, generated by the rational anxiety induced by zero-sum life conditions. For instance, good health is viewed as available in a fixed quantity, so that a neighbor's healthy baby is a threat to one's own offspring, and belief about witchcraft practices can be explained with reference to this limited good cognitive framework. This image also explains common attitudes and social behaviour in peasant societies, similar to those postulated by Bujarin (e.g. individualism and traditionalism), as adherence to traditional methods of subsistence and reluctance to cooperate in innovations that might benefit the community as a whole. The social representation of limited good is associated to emotions of fear, jealousy and envy (Bock, 1994; Harris, 1997).

The image of limited good is a reproduction or realistic representation of the life in a social situation, those of poor peasants, where economic success or failure is capricious. Because of the limitations of land, technology and initial capital, hard work does

not necessarily produces a significant increase in income. It is pointless to talk of thrift in a subsistence economy because there is no surplus with which to be thrifty. Careful planning for the future and innovations are also of dubious value in a world in which plans must rest on forces wholly beyond peasant's control and understanding (Foster, 1967 in Kottak, 1994).

Culture of poverty

Finally, lumpenproletarians, or an urban poverty culture, is another example of the strong sharpening of social representations by the material situation.

With regard to the structural position:

a) Urban poor have low and instable incomes, they work in marginal economic domains. Poor people are less willing to save money for thrift.

b) They mistrust social institutions and are reluctant to participate in social institutions (political parties, trade-unions).

Lewis posits that subjects living in these marginal conditions have a distinct set of attitudes, values and practices.

c) The poor are aware of dominant values of work, nuclear family and child care (Protestant work ethics, etc.) that they share verbally, but do not practice.

d) They are fearful, suspicious and apathetic toward the government and major institutions of society.

e) Social cohesion in poor communities is lower and limited to the extended family.

f) Strong familism, authoritarianism, matrifocality or monoparental families, absent fathers and lower intimacy characterizes family relationships. Children begin to work when still very young, and sexual activity also begins very young.

Finally, poor people have a set of psychological dispositions:

g) Orality, a weak disposition to defer gratification and strong present-time orientation, apathy and helplessness, beliefs in male superiority, tolerance when confronted with deviant behavior and psychopathology are psychological aspects of the culture of poverty (Lewis, 1966; Gissi, 1991).

A culture of poverty appears partly as a logical or rational response to the objective conditions of powerlessness and poverty and share some attributes (individualism, reluctance to innovation) with the image of limited good. Empirical research confirms partially some of the attributes of the culture of poverty. However, some aspects as the discrepancy between values, norms and behavior, the tendency to spend above one's means, and the mistrust in social institutions are actually shared by the middle-class (Harris, 1997). In Latin America even stable jobs are related to lower incomes unable to cover even minimal needs. Similarly to the poor peasants' situation, additional hard work, thrift and future-oriented planning are pointless because they do not produce a real increase in income or surplus protection against future problems. Social movements and new political opportunities shake apathy and helplessness in the urban poor - as Lewis described in the 1950s in Cuba (Lewis, 1966). Differences in social behaviour are viewed as arising from the socio-economic situation of groups, classes and nations.

Culturalist explanations of social behaviour

A culturalist approach to social behaviour is based on values and norms, internalized as role expectations and attitudes. This ap-

proach posits that cultural values and beliefs determine how people will interpret their situation. Usually, the materialist-relational approach treats culture as patterns of responses to sociopolitical conditions and dismiss the importance of the content of culture. For instance, indigenous maya's cultural identity in Guatemala is not based on tradition, is renewed in each generation and is created in opposition to the Spaniards *mestizo* dominant culture. Even if cultural beliefs emphasize the continuity of a group's culture, all tradition could disappear and indigenous cultural identity would remain. Moreover, culture could be invented and tradition actually responds to the current situational groups needs. However this «presentist» view of culture and social identity is limited and one-sided. Culture is partially evoked by external constraints and intergroup relations, but it is not possible to «invoke» or create freely social identities and collective memories. Cultural traditions historically frame identities and provides the representations for, and limitations to, the way in which a society is portrayed (Wilson, 1995; Pennebaker, Paez & Rimé, 1997).

For instance, Lewis stated that once the culture of poverty comes to existence, it tends to perpetuate itself. Slum children are socialized and internalize basic attitudes and values of the culture of poverty. They are psychologically attuned to present-orientation, helplessness, and other forms of psychological processes. Because of this psychological dispositions subjects socialized in the culture of poverty have limited abilities to take advantage of improving conditions to change their life-style. Following Lewis, although many people live in poverty, only 20% percent of the urban poor actually have this culture (Lewis, 1966 - for methodological and theoretical criticism see Valentine, 1972; Harris, 1997, Gissi, 1991).

A critique of cultural explanations

Explanations based on historical traditions, values and beliefs have been criticized in different aspects.

First, cultural explanations are particularistic — they refer to a particular history and are not abstract explanations, only descriptions.

Second, cultural explanations are tautological: cultures are learned styles of thought, feeling and acting, and in order to explain social behaviour, cultural explanations refer to...styles of behavior. However, many authors (Ross & Nisbett, 1991; Smith & Bond, 1993) convincingly argue that culture could be delineated as a theoretical variable and that some key elements could be abstracted (e.g. cultural values of individualism versus collectivism) and propose that it can explain other aspects of social behaviour (e.g. emotional culture). External causal mechanisms (socialization and situational contingencies) and psychological processes through which cultural values exert their influence should be specified and pitted up against sociostructural explanations.

Third, culturalist explanations are criticized because they assume a functional holistic conception of society — that members of a nation share functional common values. Historical and sociological research shows that lower class do not share all or some important aspects of the ruling class ideology. For instance, medieval age was not an era of faith for peasants and poor urban people. With respect to morality and religion, working and ruling classes in Victorian England had two different cultures (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978). Even in the case of simple societies, social consensus on values and belief is problematic. This means that we cannot assume social homogeneity in values and that this is an empirical matter.

Fourth, cultural explanations dismiss situational explanations and confound psychological effects of a contingent situation for its cause and attribute insufficient attention to societal aspects (e.g. economic and power relations) which keep subjects in a certain psychological state (Bock, 1994; Harris, 1997). However, a contextual culturalist explanation does not assume that culture arise in an independent manner of situational forces. The main idea is that the values and beliefs characteristic of a culture or subculture, have a life apart from the situations and can endure well beyond the demise of original situations (Ross & Nisbett, 1991).

Fifth, approaches that emphasize core attributes of cultural identities are criticized because of a «romantic essentialism». Current climate in anthropology (the so called postmodern approach) is very unfriendly to conceptions of culture as a set of stable attributes. A social constructionist approach conceptualizes culture as a hybrid and fragmentary flux, continually recreated in intergroup relations. However, this approach is limited. Culture is continually re-adjusted to circumstances but tradition usually never just disappears, with the exception of catastrophic circumstances (eg. the Holocaust and the disappearance of the Eastern European working class Jew culture — see Wilson, 1995 for a description on how the Maya's tradition survived the 1980s genocide in Guatemala for instance).

Our opinion is that societal and subjective cultural explanations could, and should, be submitted to empirical contrast. Societal explanations emphasize situational contingencies and a change in behaviour would follow fairly closely any change in societal situations or roles. Cultural explanations emphasize internal dispositions that have been built up over a period of time through learning and could only be changed gradually (Archer, 1996).

Honour cultures and culturalist explanations

Mediterranean and South American countries have been described as «honor cultures». In these cultures the focal value of honor is anchored in a concern with one's extended identity public behavior. This extended family identity includes particularly women's sexual behavior and harm towards properties. The avoidance of humiliation is related to a norm to retaliate by using violence when there are threats directed to the extended family and personal reputation (Pitt-Rivers & Peristiany, 1993).

Both in the case of the Mediterranean Europe and southern America, scholars propose three sociohistorical causes for the culture of honor:

a) *Shepherding and herding economy*: A past herding economy was proposed as a historical origin and explanation for the culture of honor. Herding, carried out in the Balkans, Greece or in the isolated areas of the Far West, predispose people to violence, because shepherds are extremely vulnerable to the theft of their herds. They are functionally socialized in an attitude of extreme vigilance towards any potential threat and learn to respond with force to frighten off the potential offenders and show others that they ferociously defend their reputation and properties.

b) *Spaniard institutional army organization and gentry roles*: A second historical explanation in the case of Spain is related to aristocratic medieval careers in the army — cavaliers of gentry status focused on honor and public reputation as a functional adaptation to this nobiliary army career. Honor was also important because of limitations of economic resources and because economic achievement by means of commercial and industrial activities was not valued or available (Nisbett, 1993; Caro Baroja, 1993).

c) *Institutional weakness*: A third historical explanation, partially valid for Mediterranean Europe and America, is the state weakness. Frontier conditions in America, weak or inexistent national states or the fall of the Imperial states (eg. the Ottoman Empire) produced ineffective law enforcement and forced subjects to rely on themselves for protection (Cohen, 1998; Pitt-Rivers & Peristiany, 1993).

Shepherding, noble status and medieval style army roles, and the state's weakness gave rise to a culture of honor. Values respecting masculine pride, public concerns and violence in response to provocations (injures to the extended family reputation or ingroup properties) were functional (eg. Allowed a man to adapt and protect himself and his family).

The culture of honor was a consequence of socio-economic pressures, but, cultural values and beliefs crystallized in a «way of life» that endured well beyond the demise of the original situations and in spite of social evolution.

Notwithstanding strong criticism directed towards the honor and shame syndrome (see the discussion between Llobera, 1987; Pina-Cabral, 1989; Gilmore, 1990) recent studies support the idea that honor-related values persist in Spain. Honour related values are more important in southern Europe (Spain) than in other European countries (Netherlands). Spaniards also provide more prototypical attributes (of the emotion of pride) and refer more to public recognition and other related appraisals as antecedents of this emotion. These results suggest that emotional culture or knowledge (eg. prototypical attributes of the emotion of pride) reflect the difference in importance attached to honor-related values in the Netherlands and Spain (low versus High - Fischer, Manstead & Rodríguez, 1999).

Nisbett et al. (Ross & Nisbett, 1991) collected data confirming that the culture of honor persists in current South and Western USA. Frontier conditions and herding economy, probably in combination with slavery, poverty and importation of European aristocratic gently noble style, gave rise to a culture of honor in the XVI-XIXth centuries. A culture of honor became the established «way of life», the desired social form. Enculturation and socialization in families and formal institutions perpetuated the honor, pride and violence values.

In the XXth century, the material and socio-economic conditions of the frontier changed and more effective law enforcement and social stability appeared. However, culture persists in spite of material changes and as long as the socializing agencies (eg. family, religion, social institutions) remain stable, traditional notions about honor and violence are still present.

Evidence points out to the existence of contemporary culture of honor norms in the current West and South USA: a) With respect to collective behavior, Southern and Western regions of the USA have higher homicide rates committed in the context of an argument than the North. b) Regarding attitudes and norms, Southerners and Westerners are more likely to endorse violence for protection and in response to insults, both in survey and experimental studies. c) Institutional norms (eg. more lenient self defense laws, looser gun control regulation) and cultural products (higher violent television viewership, higher violent magazine subscription), that are public representations of what a society values, are more favorable towards violence in the South than in West USA (Cohen, 1998; Nisbett, 1993).

Finally, current social evolution disrupts the culture of honor value's syndrome. In fact, higher level of disorganization in the South and Western USA are related to lower levels of violence

(decreased argument related homicide and more stricter gun control laws) suggesting that in these cases new values and cultural patterns are emerging (Cohen, 1998).

Work ethic and economic development: culture as an independent variable

Finally, cultural values and beliefs can determine how people will interpret their context and influence social behaviour as an independent variable. The proposition that shared cultural beliefs are sometimes the most determinant factor is related to Weber. This author posits that Protestant Reform had led to different values and to a «way of life» which placed a high value on worldly success. This classical author proposes that the Protestant doctrine of predestination, in particular the Calvinist interpretation, paradoxically encouraged hard work, thrift and a concern for worldly success. Following the predestination doctrine, people could do nothing to merit salvation, however, economic success was the sign of divine favour for those predestined to heaven. Thus, protestants worked harder, invested more and as a consequence of how protestants represent economic activities, industrial development and capitalism developed faster in Calvinist Northern Europe (England, Netherlands) than in Catholic Southern Europe (Spain, France, Italy- Ross & Nisbett, 1991; McCauley, Ottati & Lee, 1999).

Individual level research confirms that persons that score higher on scales related to the Protestant Work Ethic are more likely to have an internal locus of control, to be concerned with self-control, to be conservative and to hold values concerned with achievement and against pleasure (Furnham, 1984).

Anthropological research also confirms that Mayan catechists, exposed to modern Catholic and Protestant religions courses, became the principal advocates of a religion that promoted individualistic, market-oriented agriculture over a subsistence based economy. Religious change reinforced economic development in different Guatemalan ethnic groups. It is important to notice however that both orthodox Catholic and Protestant conversions show similar associations with increases in market exchanges (eg. forsake seasonal labor migration) and became petty capitalist instead of subsistence based peasants (Wilson, 1995).

Peabody (1985; 1999) confirms that Weber's ideas persist, at least in hetero-stereotypes. Northern Europeans are perceived as higher in impulse control (thrifty, self-controlled, persistent) and more assertive (independent, self-confident) than Southern European. Moreover, similar differences in perception were found comparing Northerners and Southerners within European countries: northerners are perceived as more self-controlled and less emotional expressive than southerners (Pennebaker et al., 1997; McCauley, Ottati & Lee, 1999).

Heterojudgements on personality traits: scores on two dimensions

Table 1

	Swedes	English	Dutch	Germans	Swiss	French	Italians	Spanish
<i>Loose-Tight+</i>	-12	+76	+26	+52	+80	-62	-65	-52
<i>Unassert. - Assertive +</i>	+75	+18	-14	+69	+02	+47	+49	+52

There is some data testing at the collective level Weber's hypothesis. Confucian dynamism, a dimension found using Chinese values, clustered together long term temporal orientation, lack of respect for tradition, persistence and thrift. This profile is very similar to Weber's formulation of the Protestant ethic. For 10 nations, a correlation of +.72 was found between confucian dynamism scores and economic growth during the period 1960-1980, supporting partially Weber's assumption. Lynn found a positive relationship between measures of the Protestant Work Ethic and per capita growth in developing countries (Lynn 1991, quoted in Furnham et al., 1993). Inglehart (1991; 1998) also conclude that cultural values facilitate economic growth. An achievement score was constructed for 25 nations based on the percentages saying that Thrift and Determination were important for children, minus the percentage saying that Obedience and Religious Faith were important. This achievement index correlated +.66 with economic growth. However, this was a retrospective correlation (achievement scores came from 1990 and the data for economic growth from 1960-1989). Moreover, economic growth and education (percentage of children in secondary schools in 1960) were strong predictors of the achievement index. In the same vein, confirming that cultural values are more consequences than antecedents of economic growth, Hofstede found that nations high in cultural individualism tended to have higher economic development, but his analyses of changes over time suggest that it is wealth that leads to individualism. Hofstede indicated that prosperity makes it possible for people to have more freedom of choice, more individual resources and to behave more selfishly (Hofstede, 1991). For instance, economic prosperity during last decades provokes in Japan an erosion of collectivism and more emphasis in individualism — current Japanese cohorts are more hedonistic, materialistic, lacking in commitment and stress individual needs over community (Kelly, 1991).

Another author trying to test Weber's ideas was McLelland. This scholar used content analysis of stories from child readers in 1920 to construct achievement scores for 22 nations. These scores correlated +.53 with economic growth between 1920 and 1950. However, 1950 achievement scores and economic growth for 1960-1989 was negative -.16 (McCauley, Ottati & Lee, 1999). Similarly, Furnham et al. (1993) show that Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) was associated to lower economic development and collectivism. Contrary to Weber's idea, protestant work ethic's beliefs were more strongly endorsed in poorer, collectivistic and high power distance societies (Furnham et al., 1993).

Data clearly support the assumption that cultural values are a consequence of economic growth and educational level or standard, and only partially support the idea that cultural beliefs facilitate economic growth. However, it is also possible to think that the cultural values that facilitate economic growth may differ in different historical periods or social conditions. PWE could be related to economic growth in the past. Currently PWE is related to economic growth in developing countries, but not in developed countries, where relatively widespread material security and economic development leads to a shift from protestant work ethic values to values emphasizing expressive individualism and a concern with quality of life - the so called postmaterialist values (Sullivan & Transue, 1999).

Finally, it is possible to think that values and internalized work and achievement beliefs are not important predictors of individual and collective behavior. The relationship between global values

and behavior is usually weak. More important than personal beliefs and internal values are the interpersonal styles of interaction, related to norms, forms of organization and public culture. Putnam shows that current economic development (eg. percentage working in industry) in Italy was related to «civic culture», «social capital» or public associationism existing a century ago, even controlling the degree of industrialization existing a century ago. Putnam defines social capital as features of a social organization, such as norms and networks that facilitate coordinated actions. Putnam found that regions in Italy that have more voluntary asso-

ciations, higher levels of interpersonal trust, and citizens who read newspapers, are interested in public affairs and believe that other citizens will obey the law (Sullivan & Transue, 1999). A measure of social capital in the early 1900s is a better predictor of economic development 70 years later than a 1901 index of economic development. As McCauley et al. conclude differences in social behavior (eg. economic growth) seems more related to differences in social relationships than to differences in personal values, individual endorsement of cultural beliefs or personality traits.

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Acceptado el 20 de diciembre de 1999