Redefining Social Problems

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Reappraisal of Ethnic Minority Issues
RESEARCH ALTERNATIVES

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Ethnic minorities often have been highly critical of research on problems concerning race relations. Controversy has occurred in areas such as intelligence (Jorgensen, 1973; Williams, 1974), personality and ethnic identity (Banks, 1976; Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974; Nobles, 1973), mental health (Gynther, 1972; Sue, Sue, & Sue, 1975), and family structure (Gordon, 1973; Trimble, 1976). Invariably, criticisms focus on the use of culturally biased measures, inattention to ethnic response sets, invalid interpretations of minority behavior from an Anglo-Saxon perspective, lack of norms for evaluating ethnic responses, and effects of the experimenter's race on subjects' behavior.

It is proposed here that these problems create a serious dilemma for ethnic research. Critics of previous research have maintained that business cannot be conducted as usual from a Western perspective. As a result they are often forced into the defensive position of having to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxon model does not constitute a universal and that cultural differences do make a difference. This, itself, becomes a problem because ethnic minority issues are, by their very nature, paradoxical. Such issues involve two equally valid but contradictory viewpoints, one emphasizing the importance of differences between cultures and the other stressing the significance of their commonalities. Consequently, it is important not to become too one-sided; otherwise, one perspective dominates to the detriment of the other. The

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dilemma occurs because one must reaffirm the validity of different cultural perspectives to expose the false universal based on a Western emic. However, in doing so ethnic research becomes skewed in the one-sided direction of focusing on cultural group differences that precludes the search for true commonalities and the appreciation of individual differences within a culture. It is our contention that the lack of appreciation for ethnic perspectives results in an incomplete and one-sided appraisal of ethnic minority issues. Moreover, this one-sided emphasis will continue until the process of reifying an Anglo-Saxon emic is directly challenged. The crucial task requires the development of parallel research to adequately address both sides of the cultural paradox.

PARADOX AND PROBLEMS

Rappaport (1981; Chapter 1 and Chapter 9 this volume) and McGrath (1980) believe that many issues facing behavioral scientists and practitioners consist of paradoxes in which two or more positive or cherished values are pitted against one another. Rappaport notes that some paradoxes consist of antinomies in which two or more laws, principles, or ideals are valid but contradictory. For example, freedom of expression and speech is a strong principle advocated by many Americans. Yet, a large segment of the population also values protection from exposure to unwanted or allegedly harmful materials. Should one, for instance, have the right under the principle of freedom of speech to expose others to pornographic materials or to express racial slurs? It is not uncommon to find individuals endorsing both principles in the abstract. The contradiction or paradox is most apparent when these two equally valid or morally justifiable positions are applied in a concrete situation.

In the case of true paradoxes or antinomies, Rappaport argues the futility of using convergent reasoning in an attempt to find *the* solution, namely a single and permanent resolution of the paradox. Efforts to find the true solution obscure the inherent and fundamental nature of the contradiction and lead to the strengthening of one principle at the expense of the other. The meaningful task is to engage in divergent reasoning whereby true paradoxes are identified and a number of diverse, limited solutions are utilized. These solutions may require change over time because single, overall solutions cannot be found. Otherwise, today's solutions may well become tomorrow's problems, as is illustrated later.

Our belief is that many ethnic minority issues are conflicts in which the clash of values and the fruitlessness of single solutions have not been clearly recognized. Moreover, in trying to resolve issues, one side has been dominant, often to the detriment of ethnic minority groups. Perhaps we can best illustrate this point by noting some value conflicts and the concomitant problems that arise in psychological theory, research, and practice.

Conflict 1: Etic versus Emic

Nearly all social scientists would agree that human beings are alike in some respects and are different in other respects. The etic approach in research and practice views human phenomena across cultures and emphasizes "universals" or core similarities in all human beings. In contrast, the emic approach utilizes a culture-specific orientation whereby the influence of sociocultural variables is stressed. In trying to find the "better" or more meaningful way of conceptualizing human beings, psychology has traditionally opted for an etic perspective, based upon an Anglo model (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973). Consequently, the etic is strengthened at the cost of the emic, and cultural relativity and diversity go largely unappreciated. Available research studies have typically assumed that ethnic minority behaviors should be judged according to established norms (APA Ad Hoc Committee on Minority Affairs, 1979). In a recent survey of APA accredited clinical programs, Bernal and Padilla (1982) found that program directors acknowledged the large variability of faculty opinion on the importance of ethnic minority training and indicated that little was actually being done to prepare their students to work with ethnic minority groups. The etic view is still dominant.

The issue is not over the validity of the etic or emic perspective. In fact, precisely because of the validity of each, we have a controversy. The problem resides in the strong dominance of one over the other.

Conflict 2: Mainstreaming versus Pluralism

Related to the etic–emic struggle is one concerning assimilation or mainstreaming versus pluralism. It involves the extent to which ethnic minorities should be mainstreamed (assimilated) or be permitted to maintain ethnic cultural and behavioral patterns in a multiethnic society (pluralism). This dilemma has been articulated for many years. In the past, the assimilation or Anglo conformity of ethnic groups was expected because, among other things, Anglo-Saxon culture was deemed superior (Gordon, 1978). Even though many persons have now rejected the notion that Anglo-Saxon culture is intrinsically superior, the goal of assimilation is resurfacing with a more complex face. Mainstreaming advocates now use practical or functional arguments rather than references to intrinsic superiority. For instance, bilingual education is attacked with the argument that a foreign tongue is not very functional in our society and may, in fact, be a handicap in classroom learning. It is asserted that education programs for immigrants should stress English rather than bilingual development.

As another example, we can look at the controversy over intelligence testing. Although many investigators no longer adopt a view that such tests are totally free from cultural biases, they may still advocate their use because

these tests can moderately predict academic performance in schools. Because academic achievements are valued, such predictions is considered useful. Those who favor pluralism feel that under the guise of functionalism, ethnic cultural patterns may be eliminated and the superiority of Anglo-Saxon tradition reasserted. Again, there is a clash of fundamental values. How can one argue against acquisition of functional skills, development of good predictors, and some degree of "Americanization"? Similarly, how can one doubt that maintenance of pluralism, diversity, and respect for different cultures is also a valid principle? The one-sidedness of the mainstreaming effort is the problem.

Mainstream advocates often overlook the fact that consensus may be lacking on what constitutes functional skills. For instance, the ability to speak Spanish, Chinese, and so on may be an important asset and should be encouraged. Olmedo (1981) suggests that bilingualism does not interfere with the basic ability to learn. Moreover, in a society where racial discrimination and prejudice exist, ethnic minorities often have the experiences of being invited or coerced into the mainstream in some areas, only to be denied entry into other aspects of society (Gordon, 1978). Developing one's own cultural identity may be a useful and necessary step before one can engage the majority on an equal basis. The task ahead of us is to balance mainstreaming and pluralistic interests, to continually define what is meant by "functional," and to explore ways in which individuals can be free to pursue both assimilation and pluralism.

Conflict 3: Equal Opportunity versus Equality of Outcome

In attempts to foster equality, we have tried to discover instances of discrimination or differential treatment on the basis of race or ethnicity. Findings (Yamamoto, James, & Palley, 1968) that ethnic minority group clients actually did receive inferior forms of treatment compared to whites stimulated a movement to increase equity in service delivery. However, by equalizing opportunities for treatment, we did not necessarily equalize outcomes. In one study, Sue (1977) found that even when ethnic minorities received the same kinds of treatments as whites at 17 community mental health centers in the Seattle area, they tended to fare worse. Similarly, in the fields of educational admissions and employment, it may be that affirmative action is necessary if we are to obtain equality of outcomes. The dilemma here is quite apparent. Advocates of equal treatment opportunities run the risk of perpetuating unequal outcomes; those who argue for equal outcomes (e.g., seeing that minority groups are as likely as whites to benefit from educational, employment, or mental health services) may have to discriminate by treating some groups differently because of sociocultural differences. By emphasizing on principle, the other conflicting one may have to be sacrificed.

Conflict 4: Modal Personality versus Individual Differences

Even with awareness that cultural factors are important in personality development, problems arise in the conceptualization of the factors and their influences. These problems are similar to those that occur in the nomothetic-idiographic controversy: In discussing ethnic minority groups, should one stress between-group differences or within-group differences? The between-group approach largely ignores individual differences, whereas the within-group orientation often fails to deal adequately with actual cultural variations between groups. Investigators have typically employed the notion of modal personality in describing cultural patterns (Inkeles & Levinson, 1969). According to this formulation, cultures may vary in the extent to which their members exhibit certain average or modal scores on any particular personality attribute. The greater the difference, the more meaningful the attribute in differentiating cultures. In ethnic minority research, we have made white-nonwhite comparisons. If major differences are found between the groups, investigators frequently feel content that they have identified emics and have given due consideration to cultural relativity. At another level of analysis, however, such comparisons often ignore within-group variations. Campbell (1967) has warned that finding actual differences between groups often leads to exaggerated stereotyped images of these differences. The fact that blacks are more likely than whites to endorse items on a personality test indicative of suspiciousness and distrust (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1969) does not mean that all blacks are distrustful and that all whites have trust. This point may seem overly obvious and unworthy of mentioning. Nevertheless, although one may intellectually acknowledge within-group variations, in practice we often apply research findings between groups in an almost literal manner. Olmedo (1979) has stressed that within-group differences be more fully examined, and only recently has a trend in this direction emerged.

Conflict 5: Racism versus Self-Determinism

The final perplexing and complicated issue addressed concerns the current impact of racism. As indicated by Denton and Sussman (1981), national surveys reveal that both blacks and whites feel that race relations have greatly improved and the whites believe discrimination has all but disappeared (and now it is up to blacks to demonstrate their drive and motivation to take advantage of their opportunities). Blacks see persistent forms of discrimination while admitting to racial improvements. Do discrimination and prejudice exist or are they phenomena of the past? If ethnic minority groups fail to achieve equality, should we "blame the victims" in view of our belief that opportunities are now present to all? A self-determinism perspective praises society for changes and holds ethnic minorities solely responsible for their respective

difficulties. A racism viewpoint claims that, despite changes, society is still largely implicated in racial problems. As in the preceding four conflicts, two positions can be taken. One can legitimately praise or condemn contemporary society.

The disturbing fact is that despite the popular belief, the notion that racism has all but disappeared has not received much empirical support. In a review of research studies on prejudice and discrimination, Crosby, Bromley, and Saxe (1980) tried to analyze whether the expression of attitudes of equality actually corresponds to a lack of prejudice and discrimination. They examined three types of unobtrusive studies. The first involved research on whether blacks or whites in need of assistance received the same amount of help from whites; the second examined whether race of victim was a factor in the extent of punishment received from whites in learning tasks; and the third noted whether whites' nonverbal behaviors varied as a function of the race of the person with whom they interacted. The investigators concluded that antiblack prejudice and discrimination still exist. Blacks tended to receive less aid, to receive more indirect punishment, and to be treated differently than whites in nonverbal interactions. The attitude change, although important, may reflect more of a change in what one ought to say in response to surveys rather than in what one really feels, or how one behaves.

McConahay and Hough (1976) also believe that the nature of prejudice and discrimination has changed. According to their theory of symbolic racism, the old-fashioned "redneck" variety with overt discriminatory acts and negative racial sterotypes has decreased. Now there is a more complicated form of racism in which the feeling is that deprived minority groups are too demanding and pushy and are getting more than they deserve. Much of this feeling is expressed in symbolic issues such as opposition to welfare, so-called black militance, and affirmative action programs. The theory suggests that direct antiblack or antiethnic sentiments are suppressed; what is expressed is opposition to factors of ideological symbols associated with blacks and other ethnics.

That racial prejudice may underlie opposition to ideological symbols was tested by Sears, Speer, and Hensler (1977). The researchers note that opposition to busing to achieve racial desegregation is substantial. Two major explanantions have been advanced for this antibusing sentiment—self-interest and symbolic racism. The former assumes that opposition is caused by fears that taxes will rise in order to support busing, that children may be sent to low-quality and distant schools, that social relationships among children will be disrupted, that children may be sent to high-crime areas, and so on. The symbolic racism explanation is that antibusing attitudes are frequently caused by racial prejudice directed toward a symbolic issue—in this case, busing. To test the two hypotheses, Sears *et al.* gathered data from a national survey sample on busing attitudes. They reasoned that self-interest in the busing

issue would be reflected in respondents who had school-aged children, who had children in public rather than in private or parochial schools, who lived in all white neighborhoods, and who anticipated that busing might occur in their schools. According to the self-interest notion, antibusing sentiments would be strong among those who had the greatest threat. On the other hand, the symbolic racism hypothesis would be supported if antibusing attitudes were related to questionnaire items concerning racial intolerance and lower levels of education, factors traditionally associated with racial prejudice. Analysis indicated that opposition to busing was not related to the measures of self-interest, but was related to factors such as intolerance and education.

By describing the work of Crosby *et al.* and Sears *et al.*, we are not suggesting that society has failed to make significant changes or that all antibusing sentiments reflect racism. The main point is that there are opposing views over race relations and that many racial issues involve value clashes. Ideally, it should be possible for one to agree that although progress has been made in improving race relations such that ethnic minorities can determine their own fates to a greater degree, racial equality has not been achieved. However, this is not the case, as is illustrated in the prevailing public belief that responsibility for the progress of ethnic minority groups is now up to the groups themselves.

Implications

What are the possible solutions in the etic–emic, mainstreaming–pluralism, opportunity–outcome, modal personality–individual differences, and racism–self-determinism issues? To repeat, there are not single, timeless solutions. What may apparently seem to be the solution today may become a problem tomorow. Diverse solutions should be sought. More often than not, the direction of our efforts has been one-sided, lacking the involvement and perspectives of ethnic minority groups. Consequently, many ethnic minority group individuals do not feel research and practice represent their viewpoints, interest, and their gestalts of society. Minority group status and the history of racism have made it difficult for minorities to have a strong voice in influencing directions.

Although each problem is posed as a separate issue, two general themes can be identified. Most ethnic minority problems involve either the etic–emic or the group–individual differences controversy or both. For example, the mainstreaming–pluralism issue is related to whether socialization practices should follow an emic (pluralism) or etic (assimilation) perspective. In the racism–self-determinism issue, racist conditions become evident when examined at the macrolevel of cultural groups but self-determined factors assume prominence when viewed at the individual level. The primary task is to achieve a balance between both sets of opposing perspectives. However, this becomes

problematic when ethnic relations are conceptualized in terms of the Western emic that is then applied as an etic. Consequently, ethnic research becomes focused on demonstrating that the Anglo-Saxon model does not constitute a universal and that cultural differences are important. In this manner the appraisal of ethnic minority issues regresses to an emphasis on group differences between cultures that masks cultural commonalities and individual variation within a culture.

It should be noted that we are not suggesting that research emphasizing cultural differences is unimportant. On the contrary, there is no type of research that is more valuable in studying the influence of ethnicity. The main problem resides in the perpetuation of the Anglo-Saxon model as the standard to which all cultures are compared. It is this bias that steers research toward examining only one side of the cultural antinomy. Often the initial appraisal of a problem sets up several premises that subsequent reevaluations inadvertently follow in the process of questioning other premises. For example, in football during the 1970s extreme disagreement existed among coaches about the proportion of passing to running plays that a team should use in its offense. Many coaches assumed that to pass would incur a greater risk for error. Thus, although some coaches questioned the very conservative use of the pass, they continued to accept the premise that a pass-dominant attack would fail. Most of their time was spent debating what offensive formations would best enhance the running game. Not until the 1980s with the advent of the short-passing game was this assumption about the value of a passing game proved invalid. Along similar lines, in the process of directly challenging the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon emic, researchers have inadvertently stressed several one-sided perspectives in conceptualizing ethnic minority issues. Rather than to assert that things are not what they should be, let us be more specific in showing how one-sidedness has hampered ethnic research and the tasks that remain in diversifying solutions.

A Dilemma in Research

A brief overview of ethnic research illustrates the dilemma involved in attempts to balance research with minority group perspectives. Early research on blacks and other ethnic groups perpetuated the theme that they were socially and intellectually inferior to whites, largely because of hereditary or biological factors (Thomas & Sillen, 1972). Society was held unaccountable for the plight of ethnics because blame was attributed to the victims. As noted by Clark (1972), researchers and practitioners were not immune to racism by virtue of their values and training, and much of their work reflected this theme. Implicit in this failure to recognize the adverse impact of racism was the notion that minority and white psychosocial experiences were essentially similar. Consequently, given this false universal, the problems of ethnic minority groups were attributed to their inherent inferiority.

In an effort to correct these errors of overgeneralization, investigators studied institutional racism and its effects on ethnic minorities. The culprit was not the victims but the society at large. Allport (1954), in his classic book *The Nature of Prejudice*, laid the groundwork for the view that prejudice and discrimination could not be solely attributed to abnormal personalities or to evil persons. Rather, historical, economic, political, and sociopsychological processes were responsible, a theme reiterated and elaborated by Jones (1972) and Pettigrew (1973).

Research based on the deficit model proliferated. The deficit model assumption was that prejudice and discrimination created stress and decreased opportunities for minority groups. As a result, many minority group persons were considered deficient, underpriviledged, deprived, pathological, or deviant. Baldwin (1957) stated that "I can conceive of no Negro native to this country who has not, by the age of puberty, been irreparably scarred by the conditions of his life. The wonder is not that so many are ruined but that so many survive" (p. 71). Kramer, Rosen, and Willis (1973) took the position that "racist practices undoubtedly are key factors—perhaps the most important ones—in producing mental disorders in blacks and other underpriviledged groups"(p. 335). Studies documented the social and economic conditions and the mental health status of minority groups. Blacks were believed to have high rates of drug addictions and personality disorders; American Indians were prone to alcoholism and suicide; Hispanics were seeen as exhibiting tendencies toward drunkenness, criminal behavior, and undependability (see Fischer, 1969; Kitano, 1980; Padilla & Ruiz, 1973, for a discussion of these problems).

In many respects, the deficit model was helpful in furthering the cause of ethnic minority groups. It served to focus attention on society rather than on the victims in explaining the status of ethnic minority groups. What is more important, it documented how the socialization experiences of minorities were culture specific and, thus, different from those of whites. Research was directed to social factors, effects of racism on personality and mental health, the adequacy of psychological services to these groups, and the influence of institutional practices and policies. However, because of its one-sided emphasis on cultural group differences, use of the deficit model also produced negative effects. Even though "inferiority" was no longer viewed as a product of heredity, ethnic minority groups now were considered inferior, deficient, or permanently damaged because of societal practices. Most ethnic minorities were assumed to have potential problems involving self-identity and self-esteem because of culture conflicts and negative social sterotypes.

That current solutions can become tomorrow's problems is well illustrated by the use of the deficit model in the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*. In that decision, which relied in part on social science research and argued that blacks were harmed by institutional policies, the court declared that the separate-but-equal practice in schools

was detrimental to black children. Otto Klineberg (1981), who was highly involved in that court case, noted that the joy felt over the Supreme Court decision was later tempered by the unexpected controversy over the replacement of nature by nurture in explaining the inferiority of blacks. By implicating educational-segregation policies as the cause for black deficiencies, desegregation was deemed necessary—a desirable outcome. Yet, in so doing, the image of inferiority was perpetuated. Neglected were the strengths, competencies, and skills found in ethnic families, communities, and cultures.

This neglect was not intentional. Nor did it result from poor research. Rather, positive qualities were ignored because cultural commonalities and individual differences were forgotten. People across cultures vary in their reaction to stressful and adverse conditions. Not only do they vary, but most individuals within a culture do not succumb to such conditions; otherwise, pathology would be the norm. With respect to the effects of an oppressive society on the self-esteem of blacks, Thomas and Sillen (1972) have observed that

> the threat to self-esteem does not have uniform consequences. Some individuals may be overwhelmed. Others become aware of the source of threat, develop appropriate anger at the injustices they suffer, and focus their energies on the struggle against oppression. Still, others may show a mixture of healthy and unhealthy responses. (p. 52)

It is important to consider the adverse effects of racism without overgeneralizing this impact by stereotyping ethnic individuals' responses to these conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Examination of Trends

Studies on ethnic minorities can be categorized according to the degree to which they have developed and tested explanatory constructs reflecting different cultural perspectives. We have identified three trends that we call (1) *point research*, (2) *linear research*, and (3) *parallel research*. Point research refers to isolated group comparisons on one construct or set of constructs derived from one culture. The empirical focus is from one reference point that logically can only be derived from one culture. Almost always this research is based on a Western perspective. Ethnic minorities have been compared to whites in areas such as self-concept and ethnic identity (Connor, 1974; Powell, 1973), psychopathology (Brown, Stein, Huang, & Harris, 1973; Pasamanick, Roberts, Lemkau, & Kreuger, 1959), and personality (Costello, Fine, & Blau, 1973; D. Sue & Kirk, 1973). When found, cultural differences can be considered to indicate that ethnic individuals actually differ from whites on the given dimension.

Researchers have exercised caution in accepting this Western emic interpretation. For example, Gynther (1972) found that blacks consistently score higher than whites on several pathological scales of the MMPI. However, he notes that these results do not necessarily reflect a greater degree of maladjustment on the part of blacks because conceptual equivalence of many MMPI items across cultures does not exist. Although valuable in generating a large array of rival hypotheses, the information yield of such research is limited. This is because, given the monocultural approach using monocultural measures, alternative explanations based on cultural differences in values and behaviors are always post hoc.

In response to these problems, a linear research model has developed. Linear research involves a sequence of studies aimed at systematically testing the set of hypotheses predicted by the theory underlying the single construct of interest. Like point research, this construct is usually developed from a Western emic. However, rather than one isolated study, there are two or more empirical points of reference on which to compare cultural groups. If the pattern of cultural differences (or similarities) manifests according to the construct's theory, the construct is considered to be a universal that allows for meaningful cultural comparisons.

As an illustration, let us examine studies conducted by Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend (1969), who were interested in determining if certain ethnic groups differed in psychopathology. After administering the Midtown 22-item sympton questionnaire, they did find ethnic differences: Puerto Ricans scored higher in psychological disturbance than did Jewish, Irish, or black respondents in New York City. To test whether the higher score among Puerto Ricans indicated higher actual rates of disorders, patients matched in types of psychiatric disorders from each ethnic group were administered the same questionnaires. Because patients were matched on type and presumable severity of disorders, one would expect no differences in symptom scores. However, Puerto Ricans again scored higher. Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend concluded that the higher scores for Puerto Ricans probably reflects a response set or a cultural means of expressing distress rather than actual rates of disturbance.

Although an improvement on point research, linear approaches have a major drawback. Even if multiple comparisons demonstrate that a construct developed from one cultural perspective is applicable in another culture, the question still remains as to whether a construct developed from an alternative perspective can better explain the phenomena under study. In other words, linear studies do not actually balance ethnic perspectives in research. They simply test the adequacy of one perspective in the absence of the other. Almost all linear research has focused on the cross-cultural applicability of constructs derived from an Anglo-Saxon viewpoint. Aside from perpetuating the dominance of the Western emic, such cultural contrasts often mask important individual differences within a cultural group.

A New Emphasis: Parallel Research

To truly represent ethnic minority perspectives, research must develop separate but interrelated ways of conceptualizing the behavioral phenomena of interest, one based on a Western conceptualization, the other reflecting an ethnic minority interpretation. Essentially, parallel designs consist of two linear approaches, each based on an alternative cultural viewpoint. In parallel research, it is incumbent upon the researcher to develop *a priori* two sets of descriptive and explanatory variables. Too often misinterpretations of ethnic minority behavior occur due to the lack of a proper conceptual framework. We simply have failed to develop innovative conceptual "tools" that one can more appropriately apply to ethnic minority groups. By requiring the concurrent examination of different cultural explanations, the parallel approach fosters divergent thinking—the type of reasoning needed to develop solutions to adequately address the paradoxes involved in ethnic minority problems.

We have adopted a parallel strategy for studying the function of assertive behavior in Asian interpersonal relations. Asians frequently have been stereotyped as being nonassertive and passive. Nonassertion is seen as resulting from inhibitory anxiety (Wolpe, 1958) and/or the lack of certain verbal and nonverbal skills associated with an assertive behavioral topography (Rich & Schroeder, 1976). However, what is typically considered to reflect nonassertive behavior as a consequence of anxiety or skill deficits on the part of Asians actually may be the function of *amae. Amae* is an interpersonal phenomenon at the core of many Asian relationships. It has no direct counterpart in Western cultures. Kumagai (1981) defines amae as a distinct pattern of social interaction

> comprised of two complementary postures that prescribe, respectively, an individual to indulge himself in love...or to defer in love....Hence, the amae interaction can be seen as comprised of two acts: the taking posture, to indulge oneself in amae (or permissive love) [and] the giving posture, to defer to the other (or to allow the other's self-indulgence) in amae. From this pattern we might also deduce that the "taking" posture allows the actor simultaneously *to be assertive* in ego-affirmation; and the "giving" posture, *to be non-assertive* in ego-suspension. (pp. 249,252)

Rather than in response to inhibitory anxiety or lack of skills, and Asian-American individual may act nonassertive out of deference of "altruistic self-withdrawal," as Kumagai suggests.

Examining Asian relationships in terms of amae radically alters the functional implications for nonassertive behavior among Asians. First, nonassertive behavior may not always be maladaptive. On the contrary, it may involve acts that help develop and maintain a relationship. Second, at times nonassertion is associated with positive affects such as love and caring. Third, in certain contexts nonassertion is an approach behavior rather than an avoidance response. An individual is nonassertive because the person desires

to express affection in a nonverbal way. In this case nonassertiveness is not the result of anxiety reduction. By considering the ramifications of an alternative construct, amae, the conceptualization of assertive behavior diverges from an ethnocentric perspective.

The development of competing constructs based on differing cultural vantage points allows one to determine the overlapping and nonoverlapping effects of different cultures. In previous research, when cultural differences did appear, it frequently was not clear if such differences actually existed or if the construct of interest was differentially applied to the two cultural groups. In the parallel approach, the salience of a construct is empirically tested by comparing it with another equally plausible explanatory concept developed from the ethnic group's host culture. In this manner, both sides of the antinomy—cultural differences and commonalities—can be directly evaluated. Commonalities and differences between cultures can occur at both a cognitive and a behavioral level. Parallel designs should address both types of comparisons. For example, in the assertion study it is hypothesized that certain Asian and Caucasion-American individuals will not act assertive with friends but for different reasons; the latter more from social apprehension anxiety whereas the former more from the wish to defer and enhance the friendship. That is, given similar behaviors, cultural differences may exist in the causes for the behaviors. Moreover, given the same situations, culturally dissimilar individuals may exhibit different goals and behaviors. An Asian student who wants a reevaluation of a grade given in a course may define as goals change in the grade as well as maintenance of a respectful and harmonious relationship with the professor. A non-Asian student in the same situation may simply want the grade changed and be more confronting with the professor. By studying different cultural groups, responses across various situations involving assertiveness, and goals for one's response, we hope to test competing positions (e.g., the inhibitory anxiety/lack of skills perspective with the amae perspective). Thus, the research is intended to go beyond a simple contrast of the level of assertiveness between culturally dissimilar groups. Such a contrast is often used to note cultural differences and masks within group variability. Parallel research allows inferences to be drawn not only between groups (using competing cultural theories) but also within groups (individual differences within a culture).

In summary, many ethnic minority investigators have been dissatified with current research on their groups. We propose that much of the dissatisfaction occurs because of the fact that (1) research on ethnic minority groups frequently involves two or more conflicting values, (2) each value is valid or justifiable, (3) one side of the conflict is dominant at the expense of the other, (4) the dominant side is perceived by many as etic when it is actually an emic phenomenon, and (5) the dominant perspective is one that fails to recognize the legitimacy of cultural minority views.

The legitimacy of the less dominant value or perspective can never be fully appreciated through what we call *point* or *linear research*. It is recommended that research on ethnic minority issues follow our notion of a parallel model. This approach develops two or more separate but interrelated construct systems as a means for conceptualizing ethnic minority behaviors from different cultural perspectives. Because at least two valid conceptual systems are concurrently examined, cultural commonalities as well as differences become evident. In addition, the focus on cultures as interacting explanatory constructs enables the study of an ethnic minority group on its own terms, which in turn, highlights important individual differences within the ethnic group. In these ways, use of a parallel strategy helps one attend to both sides of the paradoxes that characterize ethnic minority issues.

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