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Cultural Psychology and Qualitative Methodology: Scientific and Political Considerations¹

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Abstract

An important feature of cultural psychology is its embrace of qualitative methodology. This methodology distinguishes cultural psychology from cross-cultural psychology which embraces positivistic methodology. It is important to assess the use of qualitative methodology by cultural psychologists..

However, cultural psychology consists of diverse theoretical perspectives which utilize qualitative methods differently. This article articulates a typology of qualitative research methodologies that have been used in conjunction with cultural psychological approaches. The typology compares macro and micro theories of cultural psychology, and the ways in which they utilize formal and informal qualitative methodology. Examples of research illustrate each approach.

Social science approaches are grounded in political assumptions and have political implications. I shall elucidate the politics of cultural-psychological theories and methodologies in order to enrich their description and explanation.

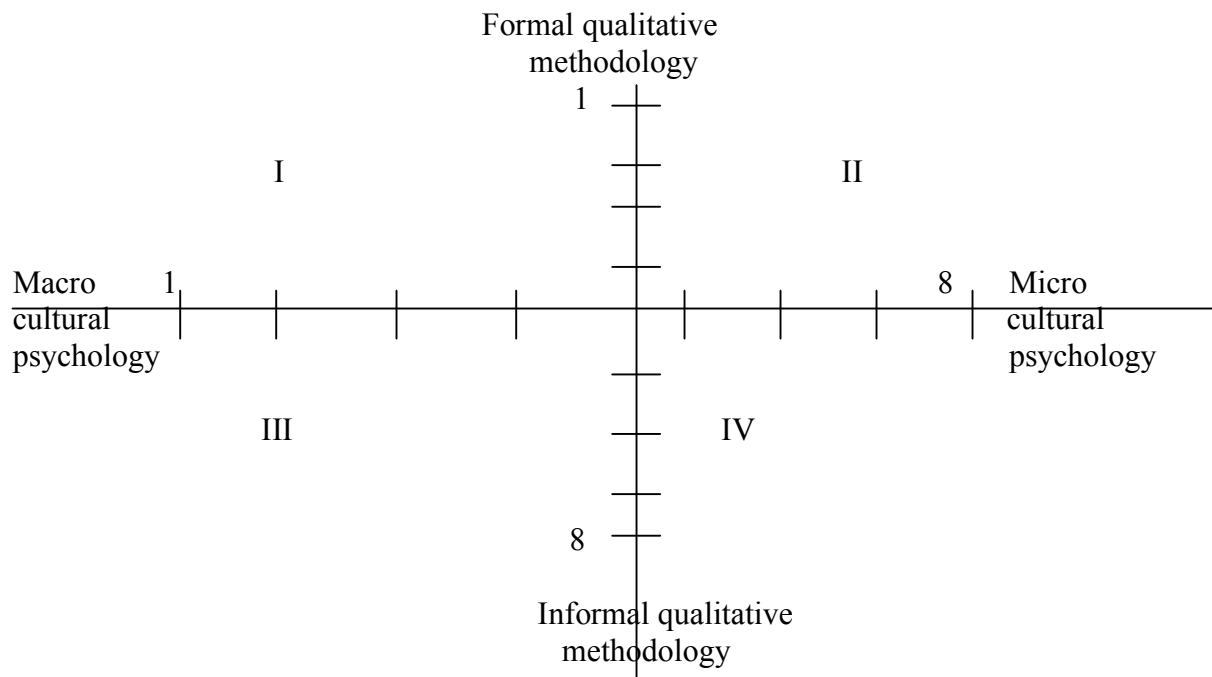
Cultural psychology is an emerging, pre-paradigmatic field that has not yet settled on coherent, agreed-upon principles, concepts, and even an object of study. While all cultural psychologists share a concern with the relationship between culture and psychology, there is no agreement about what culture, psychology, and their interrelation specifically consist of.

The use of qualitative methodology in cultural psychology is as diverse as the conceptual approaches. There is debate over whether qualitative methodology is systematic objective procedures for elucidating the real

psychology of people, or whether it is impressionistic construction of peoples' psychology that has no real existence independent of the observer. There is also debate over the value of positivistic methods and how they might be utilized in conjunction with qualitative methodology. Consequently, no simple statement can be made about how qualitative methods are employed in cultural psychology. We can only describe various theoretical approaches and their corresponding methodological approaches.

A meaningful description of theories and methodologies must categorize them according to important aspects. Two aspects that guide a great deal of research are the micro or macro level of culture that is emphasized, and the formality or informality of the qualitative methodology. These two dimensions touch on related important issues such as realism, subjectivism, relativism, constructionism, reductionism, emergence, atomism, holism and objectivity (cf. Bunge 1996; Ratner, 2006a, Ratner, 2007b, Ratner, 2008 a-d, Ratner, 1997; and vol. 6, #1, 2006 of Anthropological Theory). In addition, these aspects are not only important in cultural psychology, but throughout the social sciences (for history see The Journal of Social History, 2004, vol. 37, #4, & 2006, vol. 39, #3; for anthropology see Rodseth, 2005; for sociology see Brannen & Nilsen, 2005).] Consequently, I shall articulate a typology of cultural psychological theories and methodologies that is depicted in figure 1.

A Typology of Qualitative Methods in Cultural Psychology



Certain macro cultural psychologists employ formal qualitative methodology (quadrant I), while others employ informal methodology (quadrant III). Similarly, certain micro cultural psychologists employ formal qualitative methodology (quadrant II), while others employ informal qualitative methodology (quadrant IV). Individual research or theory can be located on the coordinates to represent its relative emphasis on the two dimensions. The numbers on the coordinates are merely heuristic indicators of this relative emphasis. They do not represent precise measures.

Since we are analyzing how qualitative methodology is used to investigate cultural psychology, it is logical to first explain the principles of micro and macro cultural psychological theory.

Macro cultural psychology construes psychological phenomena as primarily organized by macro cultural factors such as a) social institutions (government, educational systems, economic enterprises such as transnational corporations, religious organizations such as the Catholic church, family structures such as the nuclear family), b) artifacts (advertisements, clothing, shopping malls, cathedrals, schools physically separated from other social activities such as work, the architecture of houses), and c) cultural concepts (about time, privacy, children, wealth, abortion). These broadly shared, objectified, enduring macro cultural factors are political in the sense that they are produced through struggle amongst different interest groups (e.g., social classes, genders, ethnic groups) and are ultimately dominated by particular vested interests (cf. Moore, 2004 for approaches to macro culture). Macro cultural factors are affordances, constraints, and mediational means of psychological phenomena. The latter reciprocally form, maintain, and alter macro cultural factors. Through this dialectic, emotions, self, perception, motivation, mental illness, cognition, memory, and sexuality take on features of macro cultural factors.²

Grounded in and objectified in macro cultural factors, psychological phenomena are a shared cultural mentality, objektiver Geist, Volkerpsychologie, collective intentionality, and group agency. These become the norm and organ of people's further subjective activity (Brandist, 2006; Kalmar, 1987; Petit & Schweikard, 2006; Ratner, 2006a).

Developing this approach, Vygotsky, said, "Higher mental functions [are] the product of the historical development of humanity" (Vygotsky, 1998, p.

34). Shweder (1990, p. 1) similarly stated, "Cultural psychology is the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, transform, and permute the human psyche."

In his essay, "Religion As A Cultural System," Geertz explained that cultural concepts/symbols are simultaneously models of the world and also models for how to act/experience. Concepts induce a set of psychological tendencies, capacities, skills, motives, and moods (e.g., exultation, melancholy, self-confidence, self-pity, solemn).

The Azande learns from witchcraft, conceptions not just to understand apparent 'accidents' as not accidents at all, but to react to these spurious accidents with hatred for the agent who caused them and to proceed against him with appropriate resolution. Rasa, in addition to being a concept of truth, beauty, and goodness, is also a preferred mode of experiencing, a kind of affectless detachment, a variety of bland aloofness, an unshakable calm" (Geertz, 1973, p. 124).

Nash (2003, p. 174) explains how psychological phenomena recapitulate and reinforce cultural factors: "durable embodied cognitive schemes, acquired by children in class environments [which afford differential access to various forms of capital], are a principal cause of observed class variation in educational performance." Susman (1979) and Sennett, (2006) point out that as cultures change, they require, stimulate, and structure new modal types of persons who function in them and maintain them. As capitalism tore asunder the social bonds of feudalism and left people to fend for themselves and work for their own self interest, an increasingly individualized self was required to participate in these novel social relations. This individualization passed from character (which emphasized individual attributes such as diligence, morality, helpfulness, integrity, honor) to personality (personal needs and expressions), to the current modal self that accepts changing and losing jobs and social relationships, is oriented toward the short term, and is willing to improvise and develop multiple skills for changing situations (cf. Skeggs, 2004).

A further example of how psychology is organized by macro cultural factors is the distinct consumer consciousness that is cultivated by corporate marketers. It consists of infinite needs and emotions that are impulsively expressed and gratified; identifying self with commodities; irrational reasoning and decision-making on the basis of illogical associations (of famous people and products); desires that are stimulated by sensational, superficial images; memory for commercial details; short-lived satisfactions that quickly clamor for

new stimulation; fragmented attention punctuated by commercial breaks in entertainment programs; illusory perceptions of differences in quality among products of indistinguishable quality; illusory symbolic meanings of commodities as useful, well-made, and fulfilling, that misrepresent banal, stultifying qualities of commodities; salient sexuality; competitiveness; materialism (Cook. 2004; Dawson, 2005, chaps. 4, 5; Jacobson, 2004).³

Macro cultural psychology draws on disciplines such as the sociology of institutions, history of mentalities, and cultural hermeneutics to comprehend macro cultural factors, structures, conditions, and processes that organize psychology.

Micro cultural psychology construes psychology as primarily organized by small, informal, interpersonal relationships which are continually negotiated to express each individual's needs and interests. Lave & Wenger (1991) call this "communities of practice." Examples are study groups in school, or informal meetings of sales reps or technicians within a company (cf., Rogoff, 2003, p. 80-81 for a similar conception of culture). Government, ruling class, transnational corporations, armies, assembly lines are excluded from this conception of culture and psychology.

Micro cultural psychologists reject the idea that macro cultural factors organize psychology. This idea is denounced as a form of reification, domination, mechanism, depersonalization, and dehumanization. Representing this position, Treichler, et al. (1984, pp. 83-84) attempt to study power relationships (in a medical encounter) not as governed by differential positions of individuals within the social structure (because this treats power as a static property of things outside individuals which they cannot alter), but as

negotiated within the context of face-to-face interaction. Though we acknowledge that such `preconditions' as status, gender, and race influence participants' attitudes and expectations, we suggest that it is also important to examine the interactive behavior of the participant. Power as a dynamic concept emerges within patterns of communication over time and space...Power becomes the negotiated product of a mutually constituted and mutually administered interaction system.

The authors nominally acknowledge preconditions to power, however, these are displaced by the mutually negotiated interactions of individuals which constitute power. The authors never integrate macro preconditions into their theory of negotiated power. Indeed, stipulating that power originates in interpersonal negotiation denies its originating in structural politics.

Many discursive psychologists endorse the interpersonal basis of culture and psychology. It is important to analyze their approach in some detail because it is often confused with macro cultural psychology. It also generates a particular use of qualitative methodology that we shall analyze below.

Some discursive psychologists acknowledge broad cultural factors that organize agency, speech, and behavior (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, p. 86). This was supposed to overcome the divorce of narrative from culture that conversation analysis embraced (ten Have, 2005). Representative statements are: "Respondents' talk is a product of material conditions, power, vested interests, and intergroup relations..." "The important psychological variables are not personal attributes as such but the limitations on individuals' system for making sense of themselves and their environments: the limitations inherent in the ideologies to which people have access" (Wetherell, et al., 1987, p. 69). For example, Wetherell, et al. (1987, pp. 65-69) characterize certain speech acts as reflecting individualistic ideology.

Such passages suggest that discourse analysis is a form of macro cultural psychology. In many cases this is true. However, in many cases the acknowledgment of macro cultural factors is limited, subordinate to, and tangential to an emphasis on individualistic/interpersonal processes (Hennessy, 1995, pp. 148, 152; Hammersley, 2003, pp. 763-764). This occurs in the following ways:

a) Occasionally, macro cultural factors are construed as forms of discourse. "Conversation analysts study the way in which social organization is accomplished in talk" (Wetherell, 1998, p. 391). Addressing racist discourse that stigmatizes people as members of social categories, Wetherell & Potter state "we did not assume that social categorization such as race, culture, and nature, simply reflect real divisions among people; we assumed that social categorizations are signifying practices..." (1992, p. 150). In other words, social categories are not reflective of, institutionalized in, or objectified in, social positions, artifacts, and concepts. Rather, social categories are the ways that people designate each other, the words they choose to express their ideas/meanings about various people. Similarly, "ideology is not simply a set of propositions but is primarily a method of accounting or managing a [self] representation." An egalitarian belief system (ideology) "establishes implicitly or

by explicit contrast with non-believers, a certain kind of identity and within that clearly structures a positive self-presentation" (Wetherell, et al., 1987, pp. 63, 62 emphasis added).

Speech acts, not social facts, are the object of concern. "What is involved here is a change in view about the ontological status of social phenomena: they are now to be treated as discursive products" (Hammersley, 2003, p. 757). Conversation analysts and discourse analysts "are particularly impressed by the fact that language-use is a form of action, and on this basis they specifically reject the representational model of language, whereby statements are held to correspond to phenomena that exist independently of them. Constructionists place most emphasis on the generative power of discursive acts" (ibid., p. 756; cf. Burkitt, 1999 for examples of this emphasis in Harre, Shotter, & Gergen). Culture and psychology are created by people as they speak; they do not stand over people and influence them. Wetherell & Potter often neglect to specify the cultural origins, characteristics, and function of discourse. We shall analyze examples below.

b) Emphasizing discourse marginalizes and minimizes non-verbal macro cultural factors. These include advertisements, news reporting, getting fired from a job, having no job opportunity, not being selected to join in games or dating, being beaten by one's parents or peers, living in a slum, working on an assembly line, and being driven out of business by competitors' lower prices.

c) Wetherell & Potter claim that culture does not really influence behavior and speech; rather culture forms a set of resources that individuals adapt to their own purposes (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, pp. 159-164). For example, Wetherell & Potter state that the social psychological concept of irrational mass behavior may have inspired New Zealand whites to regard Maoris as irrational mob members. However, this is because the whites utilized the concept in this way. The authors do not investigate ways that the academic construct influenced the speech, psychology, and behavior of the whites. The authors reverse direction and state that cultural concepts do not have an intrinsic meaning that influences individuals. Liberal values, for example, do not structure the way individuals think; on the contrary, individuals can rework liberal values to achieve conservative and racist effects: "an argument becomes ideological through its use, construction, and form of mobilization" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, pp. 89-9., 171). Any overlap between discourse and cultural themes is due to the fact that individuals choose to adopt cultural meanings for their particular purposes. The overlap is not conditioned by any constraining power that cultural concepts or social conditions possess over behavior/speech: "We

cannot assume that any overlap between academic and lay discourse is due to common interests or shared social position" (p. 172).

Discourse follows no regular, generalizable, explainable, or predictable patterns.

The conversational turn (or reduction) often treats discourse as a quasi-autonomous form of agency that produces culture but is little affected by it. The conversational turn often converts discourse from a socially structured, shared cultural phenomenon that structures psychology, to an individual (or interpersonal), self-expression that differentiates people. Discourse becomes emptied of culture and politics. Ten Have (2006) is correct to state that discourse analysis has moved increasingly closer to the non-cultural, abstract descriptions of conversation analysis. It has moved away from critical discourse analysis which emphasizes the macro cultural influences on, characteristics of, and function of discourse (cf. Wodak, 2004; Skeggs, 2004; Fairclough, 1995; Gee, Hull, Lankshear, 1996 for examples).

The focus on individual and interpersonal aspects of culture leads micro cultural psychology to employ psychological constructs to explain culture. This reverses the direction of macro cultural psychology.

Micro and macro definitions of cultural psychology have generated formal and informal qualitative study. Formal methodology employs systematic, rigorous, procedures for eliciting information (interviews) and analyzing it. It is based on a realist ontology and epistemology that maintain cultural-psychological phenomena have real properties which are complex, confusing, difficult to discern, and often unknown to the very people who participate in them. Systematic, formal methods are necessary to divulge, analyze, and organize these arcane properties to reveal their (objective) character (Bunge, 1996; Niiniluoto, 1999).

Informal methodology employs impressionistic procedures for describing cultural-psychological phenomena. It is sometimes the result of researchers' limited resources (material or mental) to conduct more rigorous research; however, most often, informal methodology is based on ontological and epistemological assumptions. One is that cultural-psychological phenomena are transparent and can be readily identified through illustrative descriptions of overt behavior and statements. Another common assumption is that cultural participants "own" these phenomena and express them creatively and idiosyncratically. These phenomena can only be incompletely gleaned because they are "unruly," and because researchers' perceptions are colored by their own personal viewpoints and meanings. Formal methodology that searches for orderly behavioral patterns that follow specific principles generalization of

phenomena, explanation, and prediction is criticized for artificially regularizing behavior, and denying individuals' continuous creation, negotiation, and transforming of meanings.

Both macro and micro cultural psychology use formal and informal qualitative methodology.

Macro cultural psychology, formal qualitative methodology

Some macro cultural psychologists employ systematic qualitative methods to elicit psychological expressions that contain cultural content derived from macro cultural factors.

This approach does not deduce psychology from macro cultural factors. It does not presume that the character of any particular macro cultural factor will necessarily or automatically be reflected in people's actual psychology (e.g., that a man's greater financial wealth than his wife's necessarily makes him psychologically dominant in their relationship) -- a presumption known as "objectivism" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 1-4; 1989). Rather, it looks at actual psychology and then works back to understand which cultural elements have been most influential in shaping peoples' cultural psychology. As Sartre (1963, p. 152) said, "It is the work or the act of the individual which reveals to us the secret of his conditioning" (cf. Ratner, 1997, pp. 2-3).

This use of qualitative methodology is premised on the following theory of culture and agency: Numerous macro factors compete for people's acceptance, so it is not possible to know from the outside which cultural factors have greater or lesser influence on psychology. Researchers can (and should) hypothesize about this, but must empirically investigate the psychology of individuals to assess the particular cultural factors that organize it (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 26, 73; Bourdieu, 1989; cf. Ratner, 1997 for principles and examples).

People's mediating of culture is akin to shopping in a super market. Marketers seek to influence shoppers, however shoppers ultimately reveal which influence attempt is most powerful. Shoppers generally accept one or another influence to the extent that it is supported by other influences; they do not spontaneously choose products on the basis of personal wishes. Nor do they reconstruct products on the basis of personal desires. Most people use products as they are, in prescribed manners. (Of course, a few shoppers with certain expertise -- craftsmen, cooks -- use products in novel ways.) People similarly select among culturally produced, presented, and prescribed social institutions,

concepts, and psychological phenomena. In contemporary Western society, for example, there is great social pressure on young women to maintain a slim body figure. There is a contradictory social pressure for young women to indulge themselves, consume, and stimulate their sensations -- e.g., by eating junk food. Individual women do not construct these social pressures, rather they select between them and become either slender or overweight. Either choice reproduces an aspect of the social order. Choices are normally strategies of social reproduction (Bourdieu. 2005, p. 17).

Macro cultural psychologists study people's choices in order to ascertain which cultural influences are strongest, and what cultural content exists in psychology (Willig, 1999, pp. 39-40, 47-48).

A detailed and sophisticated application of this approach is Chao's (1995) research on Chinese and American mothers' child rearing beliefs. Chao analyzed the mothers' narratives to test whether their beliefs embody macro cultural concepts about self, such as individualism/collectivism (cf. Fung, 1999 for an additional study in this category though not as rigorous as Chao's).

After reading each entire protocol, Chao noted significant phrases, or meaning units that express the psychological topic. Chao then interpreted these meaning units to identify the psychological themes they expressed. Themes paraphrase the meaning units in ways that hermeneutically draw out issues which are implied as well as explicitly verbalized by the subject. These are noted in table 1.

Table One
Meaning Units and Themes in Chao

American Mothers		Chinese Mothers	
Meaning Units	Themes	Meaning Units	Themes
Fulfill child's needs, Make child happy	Consistent, secure love	Talk to kids, Listen to kids, Be a friend, Sacrifice, Devotion	Fostering good relationship with child; Love

Nurturing and patient, Separate behavior from person, Love	Build self-esteem	Do whatever it takes for child to attend good schools; Expect child to do well	Valuing education
Promote creativity, Value reading, Exposure to a variety of experiences	Create an environment for learning and exploring	Consider parents when forming own desires	Obedience and respect plus child making choices
Respect others Respect work Respect money	Instilling Values	Share toys Politeness Avoid envy	Teaching respect for others
Getting in touch with feelings, Labeling feelings, Expressing feelings	Processing feelings	Responsible, Adaptable, Make friends	Fostering good personality, ability to get along
Individuality, Freedom, Separation from parents	Stressing independence	Good person Good judgment Honesty	Instilling moral character
Respond to appropriate developmental stage	Providing a child centered environment, and a developmental appreciation of the child	Encourage learning new things, Encourage trying new things by self	Self-reliant
Give sense of community	Stressing importance of family and community	Speak Chinese to child; Involved in Chinese community	Maintaining Chinese culture
Low pressure, enjoyable life	Have fun with child		

Themes organize meaning units that are disparately mentioned by the subject. This produces a more coherent understanding -- which Dilthey called Besserverstehen -- than the subject has of his/her spontaneously produced thoughts.⁴

Themes are abbreviated terms. It is therefore important to expand their meaning. This is accomplished by hermeneutically relating them to related statements. Chao pointed out that independence in children was valued by American mothers for the purpose of encouraging children to separate from the family. Independence was valued by Chinese mothers for the opposite purpose of helping children become successful so they could contribute more to the family. Similarly, love was valued by American mothers as a means to foster self-esteem in their children. Love for Chinese mothers was a means to foster an enduring social relation with their children.

Chao's systematic qualitative methodology enabled her to perceive that Chinese mothers' child-rearing values (themes) recapitulate cultural concepts of the collectivist self, while American mothers' values recapitulate the cultural concept (and practice) of the individualistic self. In addition, many of the American views of childrearing reflect the influence of the North American psychology movement.

Empirical evidence for the connection between academic psychological constructs and the mothers' expressions is the fact that the "views about the child involved what the mothers themselves labeled a "developmental appreciation." These mothers also talked about their more "child-centered" approach having to do with providing an environment for the child that directly supports their developing needs" (ibid., pp. 346-347).

Mothers' comments also provided evidence for connecting their values to another cultural practice and concept, namely psychotherapy. Specifically, in the theme "involving processing feelings," American mothers often played the role of psychotherapist in dealing with their children's conflicts. That is, during the child's emotional outbursts or conflicts with others, including the mothers themselves, the mothers would attempt to intercede and help the child first to experience or "get in touch with" his or her feelings, identify or label these feelings, and then articulate these feelings or needs to others (ibid., pp. 346-347).

Linking psychological themes to the content of social institutions, cultural concepts, and artifacts involves detecting similarities or homologies that

subjects are usually unaware of, despite the fact that they employ overlapping terminology (cf. Ratner, 1997, pp. 213-221). Chao's mothers did not know that their child-rearing values recapitulate and support a cultural concept of the individualistic self, or academic psychological constructs. Elucidating cultural themes in psychological analysis is an objective analysis undertaken by the culturally informed researcher.

It is akin to discovering linguistic rules that people utilize fluently without being able to articulate. People generally cannot explain the rule they use to transform an active sentence into a passive one. However, the rule is discernible within the speech acts by an expert linguist through an objective analysis. Similarly, people do not realize that their current behavior and psychology reflect their family history. They require psychotherapists to objectively analyze their objective intentions (cf. Ratner, 1997, pp. 129-142, 154-157, 172-174; Ratner, 2002, pp. 127-129, 172-179 for further discussion).

Chao's analysis discovered cultural themes within her mothers' psychology. She did not presume the cultural content without investigation. She therefore avoided objectivism while maintaining an objective cultural analysis of psychology.

Chao's methodology is formal because interpretations/categorizations are systematically derived from empirical data in a step-wise process that is transparent. This ensures the analysis is faithful to (respects) the subject and neither adds extraneous material nor overlooks relevant material. In addition, Chao calculated frequencies of themes to indicate their representativeness. "Importance of community" was endorsed by 20% of American mothers. Some mothers also stressed community in the theme of "instilling values." Thus, Americans are not uniformly individualistic. This quantitative analysis is vital for presenting a complete picture of a group's complex psychology. It overcomes essentializing homogenizations about groups that ensue from selectively reporting a few comments as the complete psychology of all group members. Individualism may characterize certain psychological domains such as self-concept, but not other domains such as love for one's child.

The strengths of Chao's study warrant locating it at 1, 1 in quadrant one of figure one.

Macro cultural psychology, informal qualitative methodology

Macro cultural psychologists sometimes employ qualitative methods less rigorously than Chao did. They work with fragmentary behaviors instead of systematically eliciting (probing for) a full range of interrelated behaviors. This

informality leaves the psychological and cultural content ambiguous. The analysis of behavior also lacks systematic procedures. Impressionistic comments of scattered responses are offered instead of a rigorous analysis of the empirical data.

Ethnographies typically suffer from this problem. For instance, Lutz (1988) concluded that Ifaluk emotions are not distinguished from thought as they are in Western societies. The Ifaluk term "nunuwan" refers to thoughts and emotions. Lutz attempts to document this conclusion by illustrating the range of uses of the term by her subjects: "Some people are short tempered because their nunuwan is not good." "Llenai has lots of nunuwan because the health aide is leaving." "Children and the mentally ill have only one nunuwan" (pp. 92-93). These brief phrases do not unambiguously express an intermingling of emotions and thoughts. One could gloss "nunuwan" as "emotion" and render the phrases intelligible. It is not clear why "thought/emotion" would be a better gloss. To demonstrate why, we need to probe the subjects with questions that identify the thought/emotion coupling. We would ask the Ifaluk to describe their experience of nunuwan in various situations, and explain what it means. We need to ascertain whether Ifaluk emotions actually are more cognitive than Western emotions -- since nunuwan includes both emotions and cognition, where Western emotions are deemed less cognitive. We need to ask, "What does Llenai experience when she has lots of nunuwan?" "Do you experience nunuwan while planning and is it the same thing as the nunuwan you experience when you are very angry?" We need much richer verbal and behavioral expressions that provide a fuller hermeneutic circle for interpreting a particular word or act (cf. Ratner, 1997, pp. 123-163).

In addition, we need to learn the cultural basis and function of the purported emotion/thought unit. Why does it exist in Ifaluk; which macro cultural factors organize it? Lutz does not explain what it has to do with the culture. She describes psychology in the culture, but not the culture in (or cultural organization of) psychology. Accordingly, her example may be heuristically located at 3, 8 in quadrant three of the typology.

A related example is Skeggs' (1997) analysis of interviews about college women's sexuality. Skeggs concludes that female sexuality is repressed in contemporary society. One student said: "On the telly on Wednesday these women were playing out problems and the like and one says to the man 'you've come too soon.' I couldn't believe my ears. I was dead embarrassed, how could she, how dare she, I could never do that to anyone." Skeggs concludes that the student, along with other women, considers herself to be "relatively powerless in sexual encounters, resigned to manipulation" (p. 130-131). However, this impression is not based on any analytical methodology. And it contradicts the

student's statement. She simply said she'd be embarrassed to discuss one sexual issue with a boyfriend during intercourse. She never indicates she is manipulated or powerless. She could be quite assertive by leaving her boyfriend, despite her embarrassment to discuss that one issue. Another girl said, "I expect I've got [sexual] feelings but I wouldn't go around hunting for someone. It wouldn't bother me much if I never had sex again." Skeggs concludes that this girl, along with others, "lacks belief in her own sexual feelings and lacks control over her own body" (p. 131). The girl's statement does not mention or imply any of this. Skegg's informal methodology leads to arbitrary conclusions.

I would place Skeggs' study at 4, 8 in quadrant three.

Micro cultural psychology, formal qualitative methodology

In accordance with the theoretical premises outlined earlier, micro cultural psychologists employ qualitative methodology to elicit, elucidate, and valorize the subject's construction of meanings and self through their interpersonal actions (Hammersley, 2003, pp. 754-756).

Potter (2005, p. 740) says "Discursive psychology focuses on psychology from the position of participants..." "There is the speaker's construction of agency and accountability in the reported events (who or what should be blamed, complimented, and so on). Second, there is the speaker's construction of their (sic) own agency and accountability, including what they are doing through speaking."

Garfinkel's ethnomethodology is similarly person-centered. It abstains from judging peoples' statements as to their accuracy, adequacy, value, importance, necessity, practicality, success, or consequences (Berard, 2005, p. 211-215). It only refers to conditions outside individuals when they do. If subjects do not mention social conditions, they are not introduced by the researcher. Thus, even if a person objectively fits the category of lower class (because of her education, occupation, income, family background), she must be regarded as middle class if this is how she subjectively sees herself (Berard, 2005, pp. 212-213). (And if George Bush considers himself to be promoting democracy, ethnomethodologists must accept his self-categorization, regardless of the true character of his policies.)

Some micro cultural psychologists employ qualitative methodology rigorously to identify individuals' construction of meanings and their self-presentations. Wetherell does this in a discursive analysis of 17-year old boys' sexuality. One boy, Aaron, talked about a weekend during which he slept with

four girls. At one point, his friend Paul wondered whether Aaron had deliberately set out to have lots of sex ("out on the pull") that weekend. Wetherell analyses the conversation as follows:

What I wish to note is Paul's new description of Aaron's activities as "out on the pull". This account seems to be heard [by Aaron] as an uncalled for accusation in relation to the events of Friday night and Aaron and Phil issue denials and collaborate as a duet in attempting to reformulate and minimize the actions so described -- 'just out as a group of friends'. Interestingly, when Paul moves the conversation to the events of Saturday night, Aaron's denial at this point becomes weak ('not really') (Wetherell, 1998, p. 399).

This is a systematic, empirical analysis of the mechanics of conversation. It details ways that the boys engaged in dialogue to represent themselves to each other and to themselves -- how Paul describes Aaron, how Aaron hears the description, how he and Phil interact, what kind of response they make, how Paul moves the conversation to a new topic, the strength of Aaron's response, how boys explain sexual matters (directly, indirectly by innuendo, deflecting questions), how they portray themselves in talking about sexual matters (as macho, lucky, caring).

While this qualitative methodology for documenting the discursive ways of defining and presenting self is empirical and systematic, it is different from Chao's. It does not interpret statements, code them, organize them, make inferences or deductions from them, or relate them to anything (psychological or cultural) beyond themselves. This is in keeping with discourse theory that speech is an invention that expresses the individual, it is not a reflection of cultural or psychological processes that transcend, and delimit, individual agency and need to be discovered (cf. Ratner, 2002, pp. 70-71, 128; 2006a, pp. 209-219). Wetherell does not treat conversation as an expression of, and window into, culturally formed psychology that must be elucidated through interpretation and coding. She is not interested in the nature of Aaron's sexual desire -- i.e., whether it is impersonal, egocentric, loving, considerate, domineering, instrumental, etc. -- and how these sexual qualities might reflect macro cultural factors. She is concerned with how sex is discussed, the mechanics of the discourse, "discourse as an analytical topic in its own right" (Wetherell, et al. , 1987, p. 60) . This resembles positivism's focus on overt behavior.

I would heuristically locate the study at 7, 2 in quadrant two.

Micro cultural psychology, informal qualitative methodology

Much micro cultural psychological research is informal and impressionistic. One example is research that was conducted by Rowe, Wertsch, and Kosyaeva (2002). It was guided by the micro cultural theory that individuals construct personal meanings about things rather than reflect social meanings. Individuals are active and creative agents who, always transform social meanings into personal significations rather than recapitulating social meanings. The authors observed patrons in the Winter Palace museum, St. Petersburg, looking at a 19th century painting that depicts the Winter Palace and its locale. One conversation between two patrons went as follows:

K: See here? It's the Winter Palace, and in 1985 I lived in St. Petersburg for a summer with a friend in her apartment down this street here.

S: You lived right there?

K: Yes...

From this minimal interchange, the authors conclude that the two patrons have transformed social meanings into personal ones. They state:

Instead of bringing autobiographical narratives into contact with official culture as part of an attempt to enrich the latter, it seems to us that this [narrative] involves an escape from the public memory sphere...These visitors are refusing to engage in the museum's public memory space ... It is meaning-making on one's own terms (p.106, emphasis added).

This conclusion is not derived from any systematic methodological analysis. The conclusion is therefore dubious. To refuse and escape from something is to actively reject it. Patron K. simply made a casual remark that she lived on a street that appeared in the painting. This in no way implies that she is escaping from the public memory sphere, refusing to engage in public memory, or making an idiosyncratic meaning. Patron S. asked a single clarifying question of K. More evidence is necessary to justify an interpretation that an escape or refusal is signified (cf. Ratner, 2002, p. 132).

Another example of informal qualitative methodology at the hands of micro cultural psychologists appears in Wetherell & Potter's (1992) study of racist discourse. One white New Zealander said: "I think it's important [the Maoris] hang onto their culture because if I try to think about it, the [white] New Zealander hasn't got a culture...unless it's rugby and beer " (p. 129). Wetherell & Potter categorize this as racist discourse because "Maoris in this formulation become museum keepers" (ibid., p. 129).

This ascription is arbitrary and unsupported by any systematic methodological analysis. The authors never relate it to a hermeneutic circle of other statements and actions that would clarify its meaning (cf. Ratner, 1997, pp. 172-175; Ratner, 2002, pp. 70-71, 99, 128-129). The subject actually seems to be praising the Maoris for having a more coherent culture than his own. There does not appear to be anything racist about this.

These two studies may be located at 8, 8 in quadrant four.

Informal methodology eschews the criterion of validity (objectivity, and truth). This is dangerous because invalidating the notion of validity prevents invalidating invalid conceptions and conclusions. Invalidating validity validates invalidity.

Evaluation: The Politics of Psychological Theory and Methodology

Now that we have enumerated the ways that cultural-psychological theories use qualitative methodology, we can evaluate their adequacy for elucidating the cultural organization of psychological phenomena. An evaluation must begin with what the approaches emphasize. Micro and macro cultural psychology manifest real differences which have been debated throughout the social sciences. Formal and informal methodologies similarly manifest real differences in emphasis. These differences need to be assessed. They cannot be homogenized and wished away.

Informal methodology is inadequate for reasons explained in the sections above. Evaluation thus boils down to comparing formal methodology employed by macro cultural theory with formal methodology employed by micro cultural theory. Ideally micro level processes will be subsumed within macro processes, as nested concentric circles which Bronfenbrenner (1979) famously described. However, micro cultural psychologists have generally sought to distance themselves from macro influences, as I documented earlier. The self-imposed

alienation from, and opposition to, macro processes makes micro cultural psychology unacceptable.

Macro cultural psychology correctly emphasizes that culture and agency have a political character. Culture is dominated by interest groups who win their dominance through a struggle with competing groups. Dominant cultural groups for the past 10,000 years have been small elites that have governed class societies by dominating the majority of the population. Ruling classes impart a particular political content to the social organization of activities they dominate.

Language, for example, is political. In India, English was made the official language of governmental affairs -- which it continues to be -- by British colonists.

In India, Hindu codes of conduct for the population, codified in the Puranas, were written by the upper caste Brahmins in 4th century A.D., and imposed on the population.

Privacy, cleanliness, fastidiousness, romantic love, novels, diaries, autobiographies, self-portraits, and even individualized handwriting were organized by the European bourgeoisie during the 18th century into cultural genres (Skeggs, 2004, pp. 20-22).

While these cultural genres were constructed by the agency of particular groups of people -- constrained by historical conditions/opportunities/affordances -- they became institutionalized and formed obdurate conditions that shaped the experiences and expressions of people. Cultural genres were not democratically negotiated in an equitable discourse among all social groups.

Macro cultural psychology correctly maintains that agency is a function of one's position in macro cultural factors. Where social life is dominated by elite groups hidden from public view, people cannot fully understand its nature. People simply see the shadows of culture (as Plato said) -- including psychological phenomena -- and are unaware of their origins or full nature (cf. Frank, 2004 for cultural mystification of current-day Americans). Where macro cultural factors oppress and mystify people, the concrete cultural character of psychology frequently takes the form of ignorance, confusion, and acquiescence. As Bourdieu explained, "Because [each agent's] actions and works are the product of a modus operandi of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an 'objective intention' which always outruns his conscious intentions...It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 79, 19; Ratner, 1997, p. 128).

Social ignorance and mystification are additionally cultivated by misleading ideologies that obscure reality. The ideology of individualism, for example,

obscures the fact that people are influenced by social processes (cf. Bourdieu, 2005). The ideology of democracy obscures the ruling class domination of social life.

This concrete, macro cultural character of psychology is only elucidated by a macro cultural-psychological theory that employs systematic qualitative methodology. This methodology is necessary to a) to elucidate, by probing interviews, information that is confused, contradictory, incomplete, socially unacceptable, and obscured, and b) supplement people's limited awareness of themselves and their society with analysis by culturally informed researchers (Ratner, 2002, chaps. 4, 5).

Qualitative methodology must be honed to discern the specific problematic that is the object of research. This problematic is the concrete, cultural, political psychology of people. Qualitative methodology must recognize gaps in people's awareness, and silences in their speech. What people do not know and cannot say is often more influential on their psychology than what they do know and say. It is necessary to identify these hidden influences in order to understand and emancipate people. Lacunae in awareness are only ascertained and overcome by encouraging people to reflect more deeply on their own psychology and their social circumstances, and by comparing subjective expressions to an objective analysis of macro cultural factors, and identifying what is missing from subjectivity. The practice of qualitative methodology is thus partly shaped by the concrete political character of human psychology.

Micro cultural psychological theory denies all this. It assumes that agency and subjectivity construct and mediate culture in ways that express individuals' desires. Society is a function of individually and interpersonally constructed psychology (thinking, desires, fears, motivation, and self-concept). This makes individuals masters of their behavior, and society. This valorizing of individual subjectivity in theory and qualitative methodology is a political philosophy (cf. Amadae, 2003; Brannen & Nilsen, 2005).

The individualistic political philosophy of micro cultural psychology is erroneous. Its flawed individualistic ideal of political freedom leads to a distorted theory of culture, psychology, and their interrelationship, in order to make them compatible with personal liberation.⁵

Culture is not democratically negotiated from the bottom up by independent individuals who construct and control their own psychology. This individualistic, subjectivistic view of culture transposes into cultural psychology the myth of free market economics -- according to which laborers and capitalists independently enter the labor market from positions of equal power, and voluntarily ("freely") negotiate a "just" wage that is acceptable to both,

with either party having equal power to refuse the deal (cf. Bourdieu, 2005, p.p. 148-149, 196-197).

Social behavior is not reducible to individual or interpersonal behavioral and psychological acts. Quite the opposite, as macro cultural psychology maintains, individualized forms of discourse that discourse analysts attribute to the free expression of individuals creating a personal and social world, are actually class-based, politicized, cultural mediational means that prescribe the ways individuals express themselves in a capitalist economic system (Ratner, 2002, p. 85; Skeggs, 2004, pp. 56-57, 60-61). Consumer capitalism required that "Every [person] was to become a performing self" (Susman, 1979, p. 220).

The content of individualized performances/expressions is also shot through with shared cultural characteristics. The verbal performance of Wetherell's subject Aaron, expressed stereotypical male sexual themes of conquest. The personalizing of art by Rowe, Wertsch, and Kosyaeva's subjects is similarly a normative response. News and entertainment programs routinely single out personal themes from social and political events. Movies routinely collapse great historical novels into romantic melodramas.

Power differentials between doctors and patients also reflect differences in social position and social capital; they are not negotiated among equals. Paradoxically, Treichler, et al.'s own summary of medical interactions confirms this point: "The physician's emphasis on biomedical aspects of the case, together with his style of interviewing and method of recording data, hindered a full expression of the patient's [social-psychological] concerns [i.e., the fact that his disability insurance checks had been terminated and he was left destitute] and the possibility of a mutually agreed-upon agenda for the visit" (pp. 78, 76, my emphasis).⁶

Individuals are not free to construct their own psychological, interpersonal, and social lives. Poor adolescent girls fervently aspire to form stable families with their boyfriends, yet these hopes are dashed by the compelling social pressures of lower class life: "Surveys show that few of these couples stay together long enough to watch their children enter preschool. Twelve months after the birth, half will have split, and by the time the child turns three, fully two-thirds will have done so" (Edin & Kefala, 2005, p. 74).

Body image and self-esteem are also more a function of macro models than they are constructed by individuals. The plethora of slim female body images modeled in Western culture become models and mediational means for females for evaluating their own individual bodies. 99% of 3-10 year-old girls in the U.S. own Barbie dolls whose waist is 39% smaller than an anorexic waist. The result of women viewing their own bodies through the lenses of the cultural model is that girls as young as 6 years old prefer slim body forms and are dissatisfied

with their own body shapes. By 8 years of age, 40% of girls wish to be thinner than they are, and this percentage doubles in only three years, as 79% of 11 year old girls wish to be thinner than they are (Dittmar, Halliwell, Ive, 2006, p. 284). These results indicate that girls (increasingly) comply with cultural models far more than they negotiate them in an equal give and take between their “own, inner” desires and external models. What is happening is that girls are viewing their body from the generalized perspective of the cultural other (e.g., other models, other adults and peers who extol the thin cultural ideal and tease them about exceeding it). Girls’ own, inner desires are becoming socialized to embody cultural models – as Vygotsky and G. H. Mead emphasized. (This fact does not require that a great percentage of the population adopts one cultural practice or value. Even if only 5% of the population were Evangelicals, compulsive consumers, or anorexics, their psychology would still be shaped by macro cultural factors. The task is to investigate what its cultural origins, content, and function are.)

Willis (1977) and Jankowski (1991) observe how even deviant behavior in working class youth, who strive to reject mainstream society, actually reflects their disenfranchised social position as well as prevailing social values. Psychotic symptoms and dreams also embody definite cultural values and social demographics (Ratner, 1991, pp. 264-278; Ratner, 2006a, pp. 98-101; Sass, 1992, pp. 355-373; Lakoff, 1993).

Macro cultural psychology incorporates the study of micro level interpersonal interactions and individual psychology as refractions of macro cultural factors (as Bronfenbrenner depicted with his concentric circles). Macro cultural psychology also acknowledges that individuals employ an active subjectivity in dealing with culture and incorporating it into their personal life styles -- e.g., by shopping for culture and utilizing cultural mediational means. Macro cultural psychology also recognizes the importance of subjectivity for constructing new social worlds. However, macro cultural psychology emphasizes that agency is constrained and permeated by undemocratic, exploitive, alienating, stultifying macro cultural factors; moreover, agency can only create a new social world by sensing contradictions within the social system, critiquing macro cultural factors, and reforming them. Such a movement may originate at the micro level in small group discussions about personal difficulties, however it must eventually challenge the macro level.

Miller, Cho, Bracey (2005) illustrate how a macro cultural-psychological analysis encompasses the useful elements of micro cultural psychology. The authors used a rigorous analysis of speech as performance to compare the discourse styles of working class and middle class narratives -- one working class narrator "uses words, gestures, bodily positioning, rhythm, repetition, and

stress to choreograph a dramatic reenactment. He relies especially heavily on verbs (looks, goes, pinches, turns around, takes, spills, walks out, goes storming out) to move the action forward" (ibid., p. 126). The authors compiled a typical working class genre of story telling that is more animated and expressive than middle class narrative style. It emphasizes the teller's activity in the event, and it heightens the significance of the story and enables listeners to vicariously share in the experience.

The authors show that discourse is not merely a form of self-presentation, negotiated by all interlocutors on an equal basis. Rather, discourse has a class basis, character, distribution, and function. It socializes social and psychological competencies that prepare children for different social roles/position, and reproduce the social system (cf. Ratner, 2002, pp. 19-20; Ratner, 2006a, p. 119; and the work of Gee, Heath, and Michaels).

Working class mothers tended to contradict their children in a direct and matter-of-fact manner and that narrative conflict continued until the child produced or agreed to the expected answer or the mother got the last word. Mothers did not soften their oppositions or give in quickly, requiring children to present and defend their claims in the face of quite resolute opposition. By contrast, although conflicts occurred at similar rates in Longwood, the middle-class mothers were more likely to mitigate their oppositions to child narrators, so that the conflictual nature of the interaction became quite muted. Correct responses were either not required, or the mothers discreetly provided correct answers. When the children contributed obviously incorrect information, mothers either provided gentle, indirect cues as to the correct response or allowed the topic to end after wryly marking the situation as odd or humorous. (ibid., pp. 130-131).

Miller, et al. acknowledge that discourse style pervades, expresses, and varies with social class, however they do not explore the social conditions that foster the two genres of discourse, or the ways in which the genres reflect and reproduce these conditions. They study psychology in culture, but not culture in psychology. Furthermore, their methodology is weakened by the exclusion of quantitative data. Conclusions about class differences in the expression of discursive genres need to be substantiated by quantitative frequencies. Otherwise, we have no idea whether the differences are large and significant or

not. These weaknesses lead to heuristically locating the study at 2, 2 in quadrant one of the typology.

The cultural analysis of narrative style also generates important insights for social change/improvement. The cultural analysis sensitizes middle class teachers to the class character of their working class students' narratives, and to the class character of middle class teachers' concepts (criteria) of acceptable dialogue, descriptions, and explanations in students' oral and written work. Middle class teachers can appreciate that their working class students are not stupid, lazy, or inattentive to teachers' criteria; they have difficulty grasping a different genre of communication. Teachers can work on bridging this gap instead of punishing students for failing to measure up (ibid., pp. 132-133).

A cultural-functional analysis of psychology also leads to reforming macro cultural factors to enhance psychological functioning. This means improving the physical infrastructure of neighborhoods and schools, changing government budgets, reforming the media and advertising, and creating skillful jobs that will comprise affordances, or amplifiers, of enriched cognitive, emotional, and motivational functions. (Ratner, 2006a, 2009).

Micro cultural psychologists do not integrate micro and macro levels. They do not admit or explain how individual psychology originates in, embodies, and affects macro cultural factors. Micro cultural psychologists erroneously counterpose subjectivity/psychology/agency/activity, and cultural influence. They believe that each diminishes the other. If people are active agents, they must be outside social influence, and construct society through their individual behaviors. Social influence would diminish active agency. However, this is a false dichotomy. Active agency is socially influenced. This is the entire point of cultural psychology. The form and content of our thinking, choosing, deciding, selecting, and feeling have cultural origins, features, and functions. The fact that an adolescent rejects her parents' desire for her to become a philosopher, and instead chooses to become an investment banker, does not mean she is free of social influence and creating her own social reality, any more than a shopper who rejects one brand of toothpaste and chooses another is making a personal choice. Bourdieu's notion of habitus aptly captures the fact of socially constrained, active choices.

Active agency does not disprove or negate social influence; nor does social influence negate active agency. Subjectivity is real and socially organized. Slaves and prisoners think, plan, dream, decide, choose, and feel, although their lives are completely controlled. Their subjectivity does not liberate them from social influence and make them masters of their social worlds.

The way to enhance subjectivity/agency/creativity is not to circumvent social influence, but to humanize social life so that choices and decisions reflect humane considerations and are able to influence the macro cultural factors which shape our lives.

Glorifying agency as inherently creative, knowledgeable, and in control of social relations is empirically (scientifically) wrong. It is also politically irresponsible. For it implies that culture, agency and subjectivity do not need to be made fulfilling; they naturally are so (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 21, 81; Nash, 2003; cf. Ratner, 2002, pp. 70, 75-101, Ratner, 2006a, Epilogue; Ratner, 2006b; Skeggs, 2004, pp. 45-61). Conformity, alienation, disenfranchisement, and powerless vanish if people are active creators of behavior and culture. Social life is not impersonal and banal; personal meanings are ubiquitous. People are not confused or ignorant; their every word is valuable. Culture is not banal and stupefying; people creatively construct culture in every action. Citizenship is not displaced by consumerism; consumers enact citizenship through choosing what to buy. People are not educationally, cognitively, or linguistically deprived or deficient; they just express themselves differently from the arbitrary social norm. Globalization problems are remedied in local communities of practice. These intimations by micro cultural psychologists resemble the boosterism of capitalist ideologues.

Micro cultural psychologists are more concerned with what people think and say about cultural and psychological issues -- e.g., sexuality, race, memory -- than with objectively analyzing their cultural basis, character, and function. Adopting this subjectivistic ideology precludes identifying, critiquing, and transforming macro cultural factors that organize psychological phenomena beyond peoples' awareness (Hennessy, 1995; Willig, 1999, p. 38; Fairclough, 1995, p. 11). Micro cultural psychology thus plays a conservative political function.

Divorcing social and personal issues from macro cultural factors, and championing the agency of the individual characterize conservative political thinking. Free market, neo-liberal ideology champions the free choice and personal desires of consumers, capitalists, and employees as the basis of society (Amadae, 2003; Frank, 2004, pp. 128-137, 157-158, 160, 162). However radical it superficially appears, micro cultural psychology recapitulates and reinforces this bourgeois individualistic ideology, and the capitalist socioeconomic system -- just as postmodernism and social constructionism do (cf. Bourdieu, 1977, p. 21; Ratner 2006a, Epilogue; Ratner 2006b).⁷

The fact that the thoughtful efforts of micro cultural psychologists, post modernists, and social constructionists to transcend the status quo are coopted by it and are complicit in it, demonstrates (once again) the hegemonic power

the cultural system possesses to shape consciousness. The system not only shapes the psychology of the subjects whom these scholars study, it shapes the consciousness of these scholars as well.

The way to challenge capitalism is to eschew its individualistic ideology and to analyze the basic principles of the socioeconomic system. This critique will enable us to conceptualize a new social organization of macro cultural factors, including democratic ownership and control of social institutions, artifacts, concepts, and resources. These macro changes will be the mediational means for constructing a new habitus to guide a theory of culture and psychology, and to guide new forms of psychology and behavior. Focusing on personal and interpersonal aspects of psychology and culture, micro cultural psychology overlooks, obfuscates, and overrides this vital task. As Vygotsky (1997, p. 350) said, "Life becomes creation only when it is finally freed of all the social forms that distort and disfigure it...Not in the narrow confines of his personal life and his own personal affairs will one become a true creator in the future."

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Notes

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² We adjust our psychology to macro cultural factors as we use them as "mediational means" for interacting with the world (cf. Lantolf & Thorne, 2006,

pp. 59-81). Just as we skillfully adjust our balance in order to ride a bicycle -- which is the mediational means for reaching our destination -- or adjust our gait, balance, and posture in order to walk in high heeled shoes, so we define our stress in psychiatric terms such as "depressed," "hyperactive," "schizophrenic." We utilize cultural ideals of beauty as the framework (mediational means) through which we perceive ourselves as attractive or not -- as social reference theory emphasizes. We utilize child advice books and articles as the means for understanding and interacting with our children (cf. Clark, 2006).

Jobs are mediational means for earning a living. A bank teller adjusts her speech, posture, and gestures to work rules in order to succeed. A student who seeks admission to a university must employ admissions criteria as her mediational means for gaining acceptance. She adjusts her concentration, memory, vocabulary, reasoning, motivation, emotions, choice of reading, extra-curricular activities, appearance, and demeanor to conform to these mediational means.

While adopting macro mediational means is an active process, it is not a free choice since one must use them in order to live and succeed. Failure to adopt appropriate mediational means and corresponding behavior is punished by being denied resources (money, health, security, acceptance) necessary to succeed.

Macro mediational means are usually not constructed by the people who use them. Work rules, school rules, religious rules, airport rules, and medical rules, are set by managers.

³ Marketing can produce a 40% increase in sales, or more. Marketers qualify as the most sophisticated cultural psychologists. They are keenly aware of "psychographics," or the variation in psychological phenomena in different social groups. Marketers carefully hone their psychological manipulation of people to these psychographics.

Whether consumer psychology generalizes beyond the marketplace to schools, work, scientific research, and religion is an empirical question.

⁴ Vincent van Gough regarded great art in similar terms. It makes "adjustments of reality that may be 'untrue' but are at the same time more true than literal truth" (New York Times, Oct. 14, 2005, p. B34; cf. Ratner, 1997, p. 71).

⁵ The politics of a theory or methodology are not grounds for accepting or rejecting it. The only valid grounds are scientific ones. (Racist theories or

research may only be rejected on the basis of scientific criteria, not whether they conform to a political ideal of equality.) If we use politics to evaluate social science then we are in a free-for-all in which the loudest political voice dictates social science. However, politics affects the content of theories and methodologies, which is then scientifically evaluated. Certain political ideologies (e.g., racism) lead to scientifically questionable theories and methodologies, while other ideologies lead to scientifically substantiated theories and methodologies.

⁶ Even informal "communities of practice" are not necessarily open to negotiation. Cliques of high school students and college students have rigid rules of participation that outsiders must accept or else remain excluded.

⁷ Informal qualitative methodology is politically conservative and irresponsible for similar reasons. It eschews rigorous social analysis on the grounds that all conclusions are mere subjective constructions and opinions. This means that social critiques are no more valid than rationalizations for the status quo.