

Culture Shock as a Foundation for Learning: A European Perspective on Internationalizing Undergraduate Psychology

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Dear Conference Participants, dear Conference organizers. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak at this conference and for organizing this event so beautifully. I am very grateful to be here engaging in a theme I find extremely interesting. In doing so I will purposefully try to not blend in too much – otherwise there would be less of a point of me being here. I do not intend to insult you at any point, but I might. One can learn a lot from students and my American students tell me that Danes can be quite rude and (culturally) ignorant. The good part about this is that at this particular conference being culturally ignorant will just emphasize the legitimacy of us meeting in the first place.

In the following I will be offering a European perspective on the conference theme and will intersect philosophical and pragmatic levels. In order to critically debate how to best internationalize the psychology curriculum the philosophical level is to reflect on how we define psychology and shape its curriculum, and to adapt the debate to a more pragmatic level this paper contains examples of what happens when your American undergraduate students enter our European Classroom to study psychology.

The two underlying questions in this paper are: “Why should we internationalize the psychology curriculum” and “how do we internationalize in the optimal way?” We, being educators, have a great responsibility for future generations and how they will one day deal with the world and the human beings in it. Because of this other questions arise as we progress through the debate such as: “What do we wish our students to obtain from their psychology studies and why?”, “What tendencies do we wish to emphasize in the field of psychology?” and finally “What are the challenges to be aware of when obtaining these outcomes and internationalizing the undergraduate psychology curriculum?”

In the following I will reflect on what culture shock can mean when the focus is on Psychology Undergraduate Education, but also address how culture shock can facilitate remarkable learning outcomes, when intentionally and sensitively grabbed with by us, the educators, and thus also by our students. The end section

contains suggestions on how to internationalize the psychology curriculum based on the everyday culture shocks that I am thankful for is a part of my job.

Why internationalize?

Psychology is one of the fastest growing majors worldwide as well as there is a tendency to relate many different sciences to psychological disciplines (Criminology, Economy, Health sciences, Biology, Neuroscience, Education, History, Anthropology etc.). The following paragraphs from APA' s "Undergraduate Education in Psychology: A Blueprint for the Future of the Discipline" offer reasonable perspectives on why Psychology seems to be a globally valued discipline:

"Changes in education, the workplace, health care, and everyday life point to an increase in psychology' s importance as a core academic discipline and as a service discipline for other majors in the 21st century. Most of the problems facing Americans and people in other countries are behavioral problems that require behavioral solutions. Heart disease, cancer and stroke are the principal causes of death in the western world (...) Drug addiction, racism and sexism, environmental pollution, violence and terrorism, child abuse and parental separation and divorce are among the many maladies plaguing our society; their causes can be found in behavior (...) Of paramount importance is a changing job market in which a college education is a requirement for 90% of the fastest growing jobs. Crucial to many of these jobs is skill in critical thinking, an ability that is solidly nested in the undergraduate psychology curriculum."

(Ed. D. F. Halpern: Undergraduate Education in Psychology: A Blueprint for the Future of the Discipline. APA 2010: p. 5).

In addition to these tendencies globalization and internationalization are buzz-words that go hand in hand and bring along the strong impact of social media that today not only report news, disasters, and revolutions around the world: The social media facilitates these. The role of images broadcasted and commented on 24-7 in social networks, especially by our students and the generations to follow, makes the world seem smaller and more connected. This underlines the absolute necessity of psychological literacy to among other things rest on global awareness. The internalization of the psychology curriculum is thus not only a goal, but a solution focused means - something that must become a routine, a given, and therefore it is crucial that we develop skills that enable us to internationalize successfully, continuously and rapidly.

Levels of defining psychology - and their interrelatedness:

One can say that there are three levels of defining and talking about the discipline of psychology and the internationalizing of the curriculum:

- 1) **Philosophical level:** Defining what psychology is: Philosophy of science: What is this science and what can and should it do?

- 2) **The theoretical/phenomenological level and its pragmatic concepts:** Defining the perspectives and key components of what psychology is made up of: Defining the perspectives with which one understands human beings, human functioning and human flourishing – and defining perspectives on diagnosing and treatment of human malfunctioning.
- 3) **The application/actuality level:** Carrying out the practices that are a result of the definitions and perspectives above: Practicing, researching or studying psychology.

An Internationalization of the Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum must take all three levels into consideration; and sharpen the focus on how their cultural embeddedness influence the definitions, theories, methodologies and practices of human beings and of the psychologies dealing with them and in which contexts.

In this paper I will invite you to follow your American students into my Copenhagen classroom to demonstrate what implications, challenges and epiphanies the cultural embeddedness facilitates in practice for both the students and their professors on all three levels starting with how science and psychology is defined in a European context and in Copenhagen university classrooms.

Variations in Definitions of Psychology

In order to provide a more thorough understanding of how psychology is defined in a European, here primarily Danish setting, a short characterization of Denmark is necessary.

Denmark – an odd acquaintanceship

At first glance one would not think that the two western nations US and Denmark are that different. But ask any American student who has been to Denmark: We indeed are. Geographically the US is 228 times bigger than Denmark, the Danish Population is 5.5 million people with 9.1 percent immigrants. Danes pay the highest tax (up to 63%) and display the highest amount of trust in the world and, as you probably know, we have a tendency to be ranked the happiest nation in the world too (Hofstede 2003, Inglehardt & Veenhoven 2006, Svendsen, G.T. and G.L.H. Svendsen 2006, Biswas-Diener, Vittersø & Diener 2009).

When in the US and watching the news, Denmark is referred to as “a socialist country”, but our government is right wing, our foreign policies are notorious and our third largest political party has managed to implement policies and practices, which caused NGOs to file a report to the Danish Authorities – against the Danish authorities for violating human rights (www.rct.dk).

This latter and darker site of Denmark does not always reveal itself to our students during their four months semester in Copenhagen; the cosy (hyggelige) little capital where beer float freely, baby carriages are left outside with babies in them and where bikes bust you over, if you do not watch out.

We do, however, put quite an effort into making your students draw attention to the pitfalls of the Danish society and end the honeymoon many students endeavor during their first weeks in Denmark. If the bubble does not burst because of studied or realized downsides to the happiest nation in the world, then reality comes stumbling unpleasantly upon students when trying to, and failing at, in the first attempt to break the code on how to get an “A” in a European classroom.

Not too few students periodically dismiss or ridicule the “Danish way”, and “European perspectives on Psychology” along the way. In frustration. In culture shock. But for the ones who experience the cultural differences as a sometimes bumpy ride, the lower grades often end with a higher learning outcome and with papers by the end of the semester that can actually make me genuinely happy to read - and grade. This is when culture shock becomes not only a foundation, but also a valuable premise and catalyst for learning.

Each cultural perspective can, will and probably should not align with the perspectives representative of the paradigm we use when debating psychology in the context we happen to be situated in. Being a participant at this conference most likely means that one is culturally aware, but does it mean never getting caught up in dismissing perspectives simply because “they are not valid”, “not scientific”, “lacking evidence”, are “false”, “poorly argued”, or, dare we admit it, “ignorant”? Even though perspectives will clash and can be viewed as simply not valid, they must still be taken into consideration, because they are *real*. What Europeans meet in US classrooms when they study psychology, or what US students meet in European, Indian or Japanese classrooms when studying psychology are different, but all present and influential perceptions of what psychology is. And therefore they will shape psychology research, psychological definitions of human functioning, flourishing as well as methodologies and practices of diagnosing and treatment.

We, when finding strategies for internationalizing the undergraduate psychology curriculum, have to be aware of how this should influence our teaching, when striving for the optimal learning outcome, when striving for pursuing APA guidelines, and when striving for educating students that one day will either do psychology research or have great responsibility for other peoples well-being in variations of clinical settings. Being aware of how cultural embeddedness, including our own, shapes perspectives, research, and practices, I argue, is one of the most important skills to strive for and one of the biggest obstacles for increasing the learning outcome when educating psychology students today.

Defining Psychology – defining the context

The differences in our two nations can be studied in so many disciplines and on so many levels and they facilitate a rewarding foundation for critical reflection on the psychological field, and a deepening and broadening of psychological literacy and skills for the US students coming our way – as for the Danish students coming to the US. What is different mirrors what we come from and consider being normal, tacit knowledge, habits and more or less conscious routines and cultural preferences.

The way we in the Danish society approach how to live a good life, define success, define job satisfaction, view patients, emphasize agency, diagnose and treat patients, children, medicate, give therapy etc is in so many ways radically different than perspectives on the same matters in a US context where the students take most of their psychology education.

When 379 American psychology students were asked to define what psychology is 98 % define psychology as the study of cognitive and/or neuro-biological/mental /brain processes, whereas the tradition in Danish and European Psychology is much more directed towards social interaction, systemic approaches, situational emphasis and even poststructuralist deconstructions of what is perceived as self, norms, and truths. Natural sciences and neuro-scientific approaches to psychology however are growing in Denmark too.

This difference in definitions of psychology manifests itself to all other levels of psychology, whether it is the view on man, how to diagnose and treat patients – and deciding whether to call them patients, clients or beneficiaries. Concepts carry consequences. Emphasizing the connections between the philosophical, the theoretical and the application/actuality level is essential for an in-depth understanding of psychology, which must also transcend into the post-graduation, or if you will, real world. It is thus an important part of a psychology curriculum and classroom to engage students in a meta level of critical thinking allowing them to see the connections between for instance the concept of a torture victim and a torture survivor and how each of these terms and concepts can result in radically different approaches to treatment and different possibilities for the client to perceive her – or himself.

To understand perspectives on how to define psychology in a European, and here Danish context, it is important to know that it was less than 5 years ago that psychology was categorized as part of “the social sciences” in Denmark. Traditionally psychology has been placed, physically and contextually, in the humanistic sciences and university departments, and as such emphasizing humanistic traditions and schools of psychology.

Science even, cannot distinct itself from fashion, and I know many American professors who with a failed attempt to hide their pride say that psychology is placed in the natural sciences at their university. This waters down to your students. The most used sentence and requirement from many of them is “hard science” and they dismiss validity of research, because the sample pool of informants was not large and representative enough. In Denmark too, the natural science is where the money is, and we also see a tendency to define psychology and outstanding science in ways that underline courtesy to the natural sciences. In Denmark the qualitative tradition is still quite prevalent, although many in Denmark too would argue that it is not proper science to do a PhD on successful leadership strategies, when you only follow 3 informants, however closely.

Differences between US and Denmark seen from the application level.

Case story: Exemplifying the application of psychology in a European setting.

Exercise for Reader:

What procedure would you typically engage in order to assess the client described in the case below?

Case:

Ahmed: 8 years old. Attends 2nd year at a Danish Public School. Physical health: Good. Bilingual: Born in Denmark. Parents from Syria. Speaks Danish fluently.

Symptoms: Attention Difficulties, throws pencils, tables even, shouts, anger fits, violent towards classmates, uncontrollable anger, poor academic performances. When asked in school to complete assignments, Ahmed before trying to solve the challenge, shouts agitated that he can not do it, throws his book, leaves his desk and often will hit his hands into walls or lash out on classmates. Teacher has on several occasions had to hold on to Ahmed in order for him to not severely injure his classmates or himself. These symptoms were revealed first day of school two years ago but have increased in frequency and level.

What would be a typical procedure in Denmark:

Teachers would talk to Ahmed. He would have “time-outs”, which Ahmed himself could initiate and which Ahmed himself would be responsible for. Teachers could suggest time-outs as well. TOOLS: Start with Ahmed’s own version of the situation before involving others. Have a contact person at the school whom Ahmed could get a hold of whenever getting upset or raging. After two months Ahmed was seen by the school psychologist. Ahmed showed symptoms of ADHD, but both contact person and teacher wanted to look into Ahmed family relations before filing a report with a diagnosis.

Staff then started assessing Ahmed’s social resources: Family relationship. Meetings. During conversations between contact person and Ahmed, as well as Ahmed and Ahmed’s teacher Ahmed after 6 months revealed being violently abused at home. Could provide details. Bruises were seen. Family meetings started where school staff emphasized what Ahmed did well, put emphasis on his resources. Through conversations between teacher, psychologist and parents it was revealed that parents were torture victims and that especially the mother still suffered from flashbacks, chronic pain and fatigue. Systemic meetings and approach. School psychologist and teachers talked to Ahmed’s parents – both sections where Ahmed was present and some where he was not, but all systematically focused on Ahmed’s resources and the family resources, activities and ways of communicating. Outcome: Symptoms decreased in both Ahmed and parents. Family relationship improved. Less stress in parents, less stress in Ahmed. Academic performances increased. Violent abuse seized. Family bonds strengthened and with initiatives from the

teacher for Ahmed' s classmates to notice his change in behavior towards friendly and non-violent, Ahmed started to thrive personally, socially and academically.

...

Not all cases have a happy ending like Ahmed' s, and the Danish tendency on how to deal with such cases will be beneficial to some and a disadvantage to others. What was the point of including the case and what reads between the lines here are the traditions, habits and perspectives in the Danish approach to psychology and treatment – and to show how it differs from tendencies on how to deal with similar cases in US settings, although these of course can vary greatly.

Two of the most prevalent concepts in the Danish Educational System and in Developmental Psychology in Denmark are: *The Competent child* (Wagner 2004, Jesper Juul 1996, Daniel Stern 1992) and “A good Childhood” (En god barndom) (Wagner 2004, Wagner & Broström 1996). Another tendency, which is really at the core of describing what defines psychology in a Danish context is the: *Externalization of problems*. Rewind now to the mentioning of Danish students' definition of what psychology is, where emphasis are on social interactions rather than mental processes. Alongside the tendency and intentional effort in a broad variety of Danish psychological treatment practices to externalize problems is a reluctance to diagnose. Tendencies, which indeed can cause harm to some patients and decrease their chances of rehabilitation, treatment and recovery. But a tendency to label all abnormalities with a disorder, the eternal expansion of the DSM, and the internalization of pathologies can in some cases cause harm too. Psychiatry in a Danish context does not practice the reluctance to diagnose, but psychiatry has a less powerful status and is less prevalent in Denmark compared to the US.

The agenda here is not to conclude which cultural tendency within the field of clinical psychology is most useful for the patient, or which system or way is best. The agenda is to draw attention to the always culturally embeddedness, with which these psychological practices, norms and givens take place, and which even natural sciences cannot liberate itself from, because science is interpreted and adapted into situated practices carried out by situated beings (Dreier 2003).

Every line written here gossips about my cultural embeddedness too, and in describing the tendencies in the US, I also place a testimony of my own “somewhere”. This is my European perspective, which right here, with this amount of time and pages available can only catch a glimpse of what the tendencies are when speaking about differences in psychology in Denmark and the US. Davies and Harré write in their “Positioning: The discursive production of Selves”: “*There is always a somewhere*”. This might sound as a cliché and is indeed very simple, but it is when students *really* understand this that they avoid the clichés and reach complex levels of critical thinking and analysis (see Student paper uploaded on conference website for a positive example on this). When students are capable of taking their analysis to a level where they actively reflect on how their own

somewhere, their own cultural embeddedness, shapes what they see, I feel proud of them – and less afraid of them being responsible for psychological practices and human well-being in the future.

Culture shock perceived as conflict - and a potential catalyst for learning.

When internationalizing a psychology curriculum the process entails to create a curriculum that to a large extent incorporates a cultural awareness, which is ready to question the cultural perspectives that permeates the context, psychology and models one is studying where one happens to be situated. In addition an internationalized curriculum should encourage to take into consideration other cultural lenses on topics studied – without such activities and reflections being isolated to cultural or cross-cultural psychology classes. What is equally important to stress is that theory should always be taught in conjunction with hands-on approaches in order for the Psychology education to reflect real-life practices.

An example from the application level/actuality level of practicing this in a European setting is when students learn about the broadly acknowledged and prevalent character strength approach developed by Peterson, Seligman and various colleagues (www.via.org, Peterson & Seligman 2004: Character Strengths and Virtues). Positive Psychology often speaks in universal terms and so does the classification of character strengths, which operates with 10 criteria for something being classified as a character strength. Due to my skepticism towards the validity of the universal applicability of these criteria and definitions of character strengths I researched the relevance and applicability of the classification among former child soldiers in Northern Uganda. A large number of the informants as well as the numerous reports from the area tell stories of having had to kill family members; a very effective method used by various rebel armies in developing countries marked by chronic crisis and armed conflicts (www.irinnews.org, Finnström 2003, Coulter 2006). It is hard to come upon critical reflections that take these contexts into consideration, when you have not been to such places. Sometimes students cry when they hear about this very different reality. But the lecture tends to stay with them – and what is more important; the students will have learned the valuable tool of always identifying the context in which models, definitions and classifications are made – because even when models are developed within a framework of universals, as for instance biological models of human functioning, the interpretations of these and the practices that follow might not support the model on all levels of its psychology (Harnisch 2010: Positive Psychology in Contexts of Chronic Crisis; European Conference on Positive Psychology).

When studying abroad other cultural perspectives make a surrounding constant. It manifests itself everyday when using public transportation, doors, when grocery shopping, when students go to their first Danish birthday party – and as mentioned earlier – in the classroom with different educational habits, different teaching styles, and different ways of defining and carrying out psychology and psychological practices. Only a student who lives in a permanent haze will not experience some

mild form of culture shock when leaving ones home culture. Each culture shock represents a conflict, as culture shocks per definition do. In the following I will use three models to elaborate on the relation between culture shock, conflict and learning. Model A illustrates how culture shock is viewed as a conflict – and what different outcomes can be as one progresses through the culture shock – or get caught up in it. Model B illustrates what skills one needs to acquire in order to constructively and sensitively grabble with culture shock and facilitate optimal learning outcomes while studying or working abroad – or simply meeting representatives of other cultures in your home-context. Finally model C illustrates some of the differences between the US and Denmark.

Model A: On Conflict and our possible reactions to it (Thomas 1976)

In Kotthoff, H. and Spencer-Oatey, H. (eds.) (2009) *Handbook of Intercultural Communication*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp.99–120.

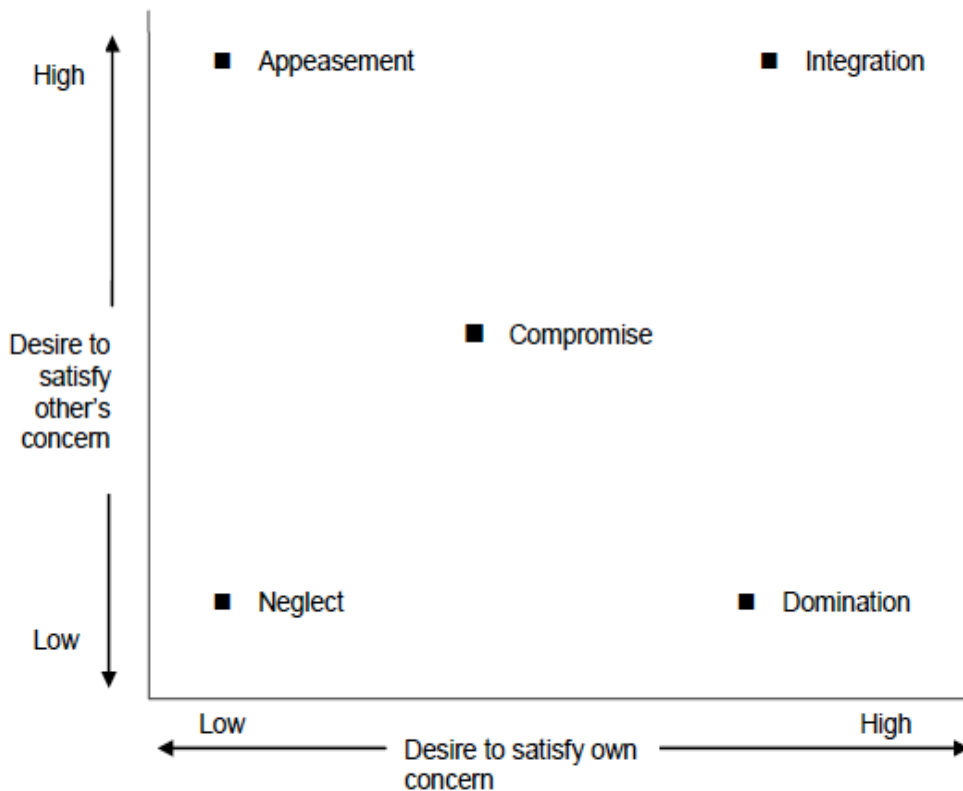


Figure 1. Thomas' 'grid' framework of conflict management orientations (Based on Thomas 1976: 900)

This model is included because Culture shock entails conflict and the various reactions to it are interdependent with the potential learning outcome or lack of the same. Inspired by Bateson's cybernetic learning theory of second order cybernetics (Bateson 1973) and Engeström's theory of Expansive Learning (Engeström 1987) I argue that Culture Shock can be an optimal catalyst for expansive learning (Engeström): The learning will not just relate to a certain topic, but transcend disciplines, contexts and cultures, because culture shock, when handled constructively and sensitively in an educational setting can provide critical thinking skills useful in any future situation. The reason for this simply is that when students are able to critically reflect on their reactions to the culture shock, they learn to go into second order cybernetic reflections i.e. meta-reflect on what they come across, in which context it is situated and how their own and others' "somewheres" shape what is seen, communicated and practiced.

Model B: Hofstede's model of mental programming. Cultures and organizations.

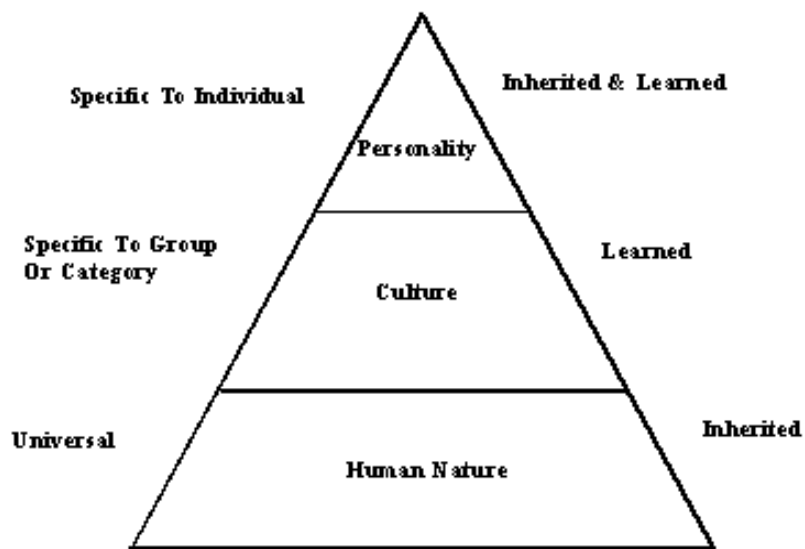


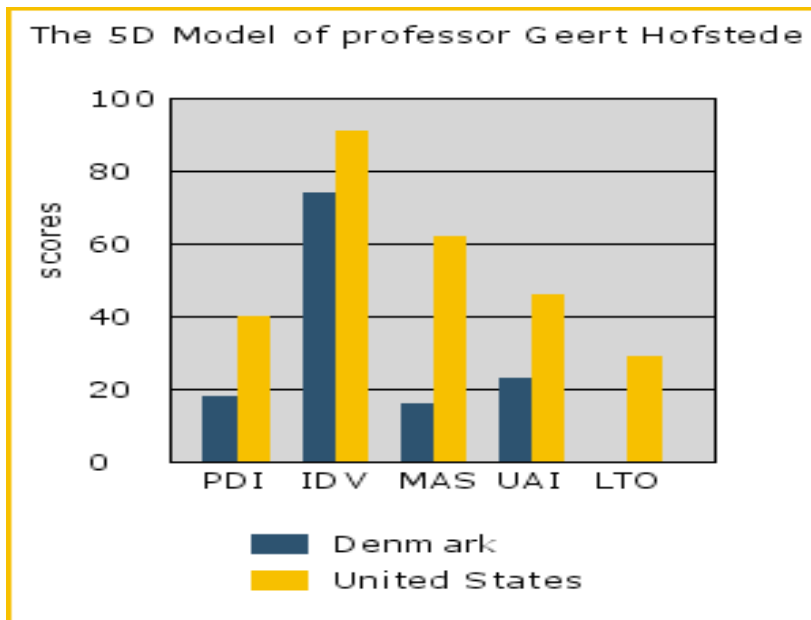
Figure 2.1 - Hofstede's [77] three levels of mental programming

Hofstede's model is useful when teaching psychology either to students whom are studying abroad – or when inviting different cultural perspectives into the classroom to critically reflect on the contextualization of psychological theories, models and practices. I experience that the American students I have taught are very knowledgeable on the level concerning Human Nature and the universals, and hard science that goes along with it. But when it comes to the cultural level as well as the personality level, the knowledge becomes more vague and lacking critical reflection, although political correctness and human rights discourses are

something US students seem extremely well trained in. When critical reflections concerning privilege and power for instance also includes reflecting on own abilities to include, or to have or be excluded from certain privileges, the students seem less trained and less aware of seeing the theories carried out around them in the real world, by themselves and others at the café, in group-work etc.

Danish students, on the other hand, are in general lacking far behind when it comes to political correctness compared to the US students I have taught. This definitely sometimes can seem utterly ignorant, in some cases Danish students deliberately protest against being politically correct, and in other cases one is reminded of that the first larger populations of immigrants came to Denmark in the 1970's. We have a long way to go and a short history behind us when it comes to learning how to deal constructively and culturally sensitively with diversity in Denmark. Finally Danish psychology students would be mostly trained in the skills of the top level of Hofstede's triangle because this mirrors the Psychological tradition in Europe and Denmark up till now despite this changing as we speak. The goal would be for the psychology curriculum and the students to be able to apply all three levels of the model.

Model C: Comparisons between US and Denmark.



Explanation to model:

Power Distance Index (PDI) is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any society and anybody with some international

experience will be aware that 'all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others'.

Individualism (IDV) on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents), which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The word 'collectivism' in this sense has no political meaning: it refers to the group, not to the state. Again, the issue addressed by this dimension is an extremely fundamental one, regarding all societies in the world.

Masculinity (MAS) versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'. People in uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible, and on the philosophical and religious level they are relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative, and not expected by their environment to express emotions

Long-Term Orientation (LTO) versus short-term orientation: this fifth dimension was found in a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars. It can be said to deal with Virtue regardless of Truth. Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. Both the positively and the negatively rated values of this dimension are found in the teachings of Confucius, 500 B.C.; however, the dimension also applies to countries without a Confucian heritage (Hofstede; Culture and Organisations 2004).

Newest tendencies in the field of Psychology.

Where should we be heading when internationalizing and developing the future psychology curriculum? At DIS we have been engaged in identifying the newest tendencies in the field of psychology and I have met with the APA's Educational board for Undergraduate Psychology Education. The board and its director Dr. Cynthia Belar put great emphasis on topics of Psychology that has to do with ethics, morality, belief-systems, judgment and decision-making and in addition the following fields of Psychology made the list for what should be included in future

psychology curriculums: Cognitive Neuro-science, Behavioral Economics, Psychology of Decision-making, Evolutionary Psych, Physiology of Perception, Spirituality and Psychology, Belief Systems, Human Factors Engineering, Self-assessment, Interpersonal functioning, Discrimination Bias, Social Behavior, Ethics, and Value Systems of Psychology

In the paragraph below APA stresses that both global/intercultural skills and ethical principles must be emphasized, challenged and applied in every Psychology curriculum:

“The goals of psychology should include teaching students to be sensitive decision makers because they have been trained to recognize, respect, and understand the complexity inherent in socio-cultural and international perspectives. As psychologically literate citizens, students should be able to identify and advocate for the role of psychology in improving daily life in multiple arenas. Students who develop a foundation of psychological literacy and values structured by ethical principles will be more likely to make decisions that are appropriate for their individual circumstances.” (Ibid p. 153)

Here I would like to add: And for the other individuals whom they help in their clinical work.

Comprising the global citizenry is at the forefront and the paragraphs of Ernest Boyer in *Scholarships reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* from 1990 still capture the essence of what educational boards, and APA want us to pursue with educating students:

“The aim of education is not only to prepare students for productive careers, but also to enable them to live lives of dignity and purpose; not only to generate new knowledge, but to channel that knowledge to humane ends; Thus, higher education’s vision must be widened if the nation is to be rescued from problems that threaten to diminish permanently the quality of life.” (Ibid p. 77-78)

When browsing for tendencies in US psychology curriculums:

When browsing several websites of prominent US colleges and universities as well as what new courses are offered and when looking into what bestsellers contain nowadays, a big tendency seems to be Disaster psychology: Threats, terror, collective post-traumatic stress after terror, natural disasters such as tornados, tsunamis, climate refuges, mass evacuation courses, environmental psychology, and aging. All the present major threats to human survival have been adapted into course curriculums when you browse the websites of leading psychological programs in the US and so they should.

I would however, like to offer a Danish perspective on this, which I know can seem invalid in your context, especially with the author coming from a tiny, secure and even seemingly very happy country, but my perspective is this:

What never fails to stand out as a cultural characteristic when teaching American students, looking at American psychology course curriculums, when traveling in the US and when talking to beloved American friends is the cultural preference for focusing on danger. When I go to a beautiful beach in the US signs WARN me against possible DANGERS and DEATH even. When I am on my way to the airport I see big signs warning me of EXTRA HIGH TERROR ALERT these days, and sadly: When I teach your American students and we talk about them being out of their comfort zone they never say: It scares me. It is frightening. They say: "I have anxiety" and sometimes add "disorder". In Denmark the same "symptoms" would in most cases simply be considered normal, and passing, behavior when being twenty years old and abroad; not an internalized disorder.

Frank Furedi writes about "The culture of Fear" (Furedi 2007/1007) and Martin Seligman calls it the "pessimism epidemic across the US" (Seligman 1996: The Optimistic Child). I would suggest naming it the discourse of fear – because discourses are easier to change than cultures.

In addition many American faculty express concern about the direction in which the US is heading when it comes to pessimism, lack of trust, laws and policymaking and control in educational, psychological, and childcare matters. An example is in child care; where teachers report either being banned or afraid of hugging a child or putting a bandage on – because they are then in danger of nasty accusations and potential lawsuits.

The policies and protection focus hopefully rest on pure good intentions, and yes, the US suffer from more terrorist attacks, higher crime rates and less security in general than many other places in the world, but the constant alert mode might not be the most constructive way to go about the very real dangers that threaten our human existence everyday.

And on a more individual level it breaks my heart to read papers written by your smart, brave students, describing how they wished they had had more focus on resources, were brought up with more emphasis on trust and had not had their anxiety disorder diagnosis and the medication to go along with it, when they were Fourteen.

Preparing students for what will come

I addressed the disaster management tendency that I see in the field of Psychology in America and touched upon the anxiety discourse, at my meeting with APA, Dr. Cynthia Belar, and she wisely emphasized that it is also about preparing students. Not just emphasizing threats and terror, but *preparing* students by teaching them skills to navigate through disasters and catastrophe. It is a protection message; a Self-care Prevention Focus. This, also from a European and Danish perspective makes sense, as long as we remember that preparing for self-care and protection is

not only about knowing what the dangers are but also knowing the resources and resilience useful for coping with them.

Psychology curriculums must reflect post graduation daily realities

The APA guidelines for what is important in Teaching Psychology to American Undergraduates stress:

“Psychology educators should work to incorporate aspects of career planning and development in each course as relevant and impart to their students a work ethic that poises students for success in the workplace while also teaching students what not to do.” (APA, Halpern 2010, p. 151)

At the APA meeting with the Educational board for Psychology Undergraduate Education Dr. Cynthia Belar said that the vast majority of the American workforce did not consider the American graduates qualified to succeed in the “real life” and lacked crucial skills for success in their first job. The following statistics reveal some numbers that are useful to keep in mind when internationalizing the psychology curriculum.

A recent survey (Spelling Commission and AAC&U, 2008) provided evidence that:

46 % of employers indicate that college graduates lack Global knowledge

42 % lack writing skills

31% lack critical thinking skills

30 % lack adaptability

26 % lack Self-knowledge.

What American Employers value as the 10 most important skills:

(Landrum and Harrods survey on employers of Psychology graduates)

- 1) Listening skills
- 2) Ability to work with others as part of a team
- 3) Getting along with others
- 4) Desire and willingness to learn
- 5) Willingness to learn new and important skills
- 6) Focus on customers/clients
- 7) Interpersonal relationship skills
- 8) Adaptability to changing situations
- 9) Ability to suggest solutions to problems
- 10) Problem solving skills – successfully implementing these

Reasons for employers to fire new hires (Gardner 2007)

- 1) Lack of work ethic or commitment
- 2) Unethical behavior
- 3) Failure to follow instructions
- 4) Missing assignments or deadlines
- 5) Inappropriate use of technology

6) Being late for work

What we want our students to learn: Your students in our classrooms.

There are of course different discourses and opinions on what are the most important values and what are the most important skills we should facilitate in our students. "Risk-taking" for instance is an aspect that has been mentioned in meetings at my workplace. Many faculties see our students as so ambitious and occupied with getting good grades, that they are determined to feeling a great sense of control and therefore the students express a need to know in great detail the direct path to having their good results ensured.

The values of autonomy and critical thinking that are at the core of the Danish (educational) culture seem to challenge and even clash with the rigorous guidance our American students often ask for. Some students express that they do not want extensive guidance during their semester here, but the majority appreciates it, and still have mindboggling experiences of "feeling lost". The students often express by the end of the semester though that it has been the most important learning experience to study abroad. If we become experts in extracting what made it so important, aspects of it must be adaptable to home context class-rooms.

When the whole world is available – how do you know where to start?

Educational boards, APA, and professionals working in the field of psychology stress that personal skills are crucial and that students "*need to understand that psychology has wide-ranging applications in their personal lives.*" (APA, Helper 2010 p. 152). Some of the personal skills that are highlighted as especially crucial to develop are: Coping, Self-regulation, Healthy relationship, Building Sensitivity and appreciation of socio-cultural and international diversity, and Values structured by Ethical principles.

Resting on the above, the skills and values that seem to continuously be at the core of a internationalized psychology curriculum is a curriculum that ensures to implement what is mentioned in the above paragraph and what in this paper is referred to as "Navigating skills".

An important point is that good judgment, decision-making, growth and success in future careers can no longer be separated from personal aspects of human functioning, because the students today have to sort in the eternal overload of information, of knowledge, of sources, of social narratives of what it is to succeed, of norms and expectations, of possible pathways. To many of our students the whole world is available today. When the whole world is available, one can feel small and as if loosing agency, and it is mandatory that our students strengthen their personal skills, because otherwise their academic rigor is not tailored to its optimal use "out there". When you can pick and choose from many shelves, your decision-making skills become increasingly related to your chances of success. Finally, when the whole world is available, the employee that does not possess intercultural skills, i.e. understandings of how to meet, interact and collaborate with representatives from

other (sub)cultures than their own, will be cut off from a broad variety of jobs in today's job market or simply from being successful in their job.

To provide the optimal level of security and frustration, which will encourage the students to take risks in order to obtain the optimal learning outcome, is a delicate balance of pointing out the challenges, providing some skills to dealing with them, but also leaving enough blanks for the students themselves to fill in in order to grow personally, academically and professionally and to navigate the ever-changing world of tomorrow. Skills that relate to the students academic/professional knowhow as well as personal skills transcend more into future-oriented areas of use than skills in a certain academic topic. Transcendental or Expansive learning (Engeström) is thus suggested as a crucial approach to learning that will benefit our students stateside and abroad.

The well-being of our students: How much should it matter?

In the meeting with APA it was addressed that not much emphasis is put on students well-being in guidelines and how the well-being of the students as future counselors and guides of chaotic situations matter. I draw attention to this here too because the well-being of the students I meet is concerning me. Many are so anxious, so afraid of doing something wrong and are often as afraid of failure as they are occupied with ensuring success. Despite the fact that they have gone abroad, and get by well in this new culture the vast majority of students put much greater emphasis on the weaknesses they display, and hardly notice their own courage and successes. Their level of confidence in their own skills as well as their self-image and explanatory styles are worrying to me. It has been stressed in numerous ways that personal skills are absolutely essential in order to succeed in today's society, but with the lack of trust in own skills, values and ability to make the right choices, the emphasis on personal skills can seem increasingly intimidating. The APA educational board seconded that this is actually one of their biggest challenges in psychology education:

How to get students there? How do we get good stewards, how do we teach them to navigate through ever-changing worlds?

In the curriculum student's own well-being is often not addressed before graduate levels – but one of the other huge challenges is that too few continue to graduate school. The question of how to ensure that students become good stewards; good navigators of ever-changing worlds still permeates our academic business and could very well seem to one of the biggest challenges in educating psychology students.

Other challenges to keep in mind when internationalizing the curriculum:

There is an interesting debate to have on how we learn today. It is a problem that the educational institutions by and large do not keep up with the changes of society and there is a challenge with the newest tendencies in the global world and how to implement these in time in order for the educational field to mirror lived realities. APA points to the interesting development of “E-learning versus seat learning”: In

the past generations the key academic skill was to find enough information on a topic. Now it is to filter all the information in the right way, which is a result of the democratization of knowledge combined with technological progress.

Psychological literacy is one of APA's buzzword and rests primarily on a sense of application and critical thinking. But may I gently address that even in the APA guidelines it is not exactly clear what is meant by critical thinking skills, and Danes are not doing too good a job either: We use the term in so many syllabi, but are not very good at breaking down exactly what it means, and what we expect students to do, when we ask them to think critically, reflect critically or ask critical questions in our courses and in the papers. Many great books are available on the topic and when phrasing future internationalized curriculums we should implement some of the best paragraphs in order to be precise when we ask our students to be critical thinkers that are able to challenge the knowledge and apply the knowledge they come across during their studies and in everyday life.

An internationalized psychology curriculum simply has to implement the optimal ways to concur the challenges in the educational process as well as the ones that occur *post* graduation. In the concluding suggestions *intercultural skills*, *critical thinking* and *the ambition of preparing students for their future careers* therefore make the foundation when reflecting on how to best internationalize Psychology Curriculums, because the lack of a strong relation to real life and relevant work-life skills seem to be the Achilles heel in the American educational system, and in the Danish system too. The large populations of youth worldwide along with the recession have only caused the competition over getting and keeping jobs to become fiercer.

A question could be whether we as educators coming from other generations than our students, have the right skills ourselves to provide the students with the skills to navigate what we keep on calling a somewhat chaotic world. Do the students find it chaotic as well? After all they were born into a rapid and rapidly broadcasted pace of change; we were not to the same extend. What do students themselves think are the crucial skills they need? The American students I know are very occupied with making the right choice for their future career, but what about developing the right skills to *keep being* successful once their careers are started?

In order to do so and taking into consideration the suggestions made by APA we must enhance a *hands-on approach*, keep on valuing *critical thinking skills*, and put even more emphasis on having challenging academic assignments *where students face real-life dilemmas*, with *ethical components* and are forced to *practice application*, but also the *personal and social responsibility* that permeates *decision-making* should be stressed as one of the *key strengths* for future graduates.

Finally it is absolutely necessary to emphasize that all of the skills above must be developed within a framework that is guided by cultural awareness, where critical thinking and cultural as well as cross-cultural knowhow must complement each

other in order for future students to both be more prepared and successful when they go abroad – and when they return home and stumble upon reality post graduation. Let me underline that I generally perceive my American students as very smart, professional, excellent presenters, curious and ambitious. I hope they too see their potential, but in order for it to be fully applied, it is our responsibility not to make the leap between education and work life too big and the culture shock too paralyzing.

In the following and concluding section the information above is combined to inform the suggestions on how to further develop and internationalize Undergraduate Psychology Curriculums:

Summarizing the biggest challenges with internationalizing the psychology curriculum:

As data revealed earlier the Achilles heel and thus the biggest challenges seem to be:

- That the Psychology graduates (and graduates in general) do not have skills that match what is needed in their future work life, because the gap between the education and the real-work-life is too big. The education simply does not sufficiently incorporate preparing students for becoming professionals, whether it is researchers or practitioners
- How to make students good stewards, good navigators and decision-makers to succeed in an ever-changing world.
- Building intercultural skills and cultural know-how demands a high reflection and maturity level of the undergraduate students. It takes practice and applications and not just theories to build these skills.

Final reflections on strategies to internationalizing the undergraduate psychology curriculum – and suggestions on how to implement them.

Based on the previous debate, APA guidelines, data from various relevant stakeholders and Copenhagen classrooms the following is encouraged to take center stage when internationalizing the undergraduate psychology curriculum:

1: Psychological literacy must build on global and cultural awareness.

Psychological literacy must build on international know how and the skills to be aware of and critically reflect on the perspectives, history, and differences that other cultures represent as well as the fact that our own cultural embeddedness shapes what and how we view the world, other human beings and science too.

2: Emphasized hands-on component in courses:

That students acquire experiences with not just theories but application of theories is key when developing a curriculum, but also key in the demands from the job-market and the student's future employers. Hands-on components do not necessarily mean a practicum attached to a theory course, but practicum

components *in* the course: Either more visits to sites where the theories are applied, meeting professionals, having an actual practicum, and an encouragement to never talk theory without talking and/or demonstrating application in for instance role play, workshops, intervention plans etc.

3: Direct link to future careers and job-markets in course curriculum

As suggested in the guidelines by APA every course must prepare students for the work-life. What can you be asked to do in your future job? What should you not do? Use cases from employers, students could find contacts and cases relevant to their potential future careers themselves and build this into the curriculum. An advice is to use numbers and reports on what skills are advertised for in today's job market, when designing new course syllabi in order to enhance the crucial direct link to future careers, real-life and work-life skills. The abovementioned components stress that a psychology curriculum must have a strong real-life component. This underlines the possibility of inviting real-life (personal life as well as work life) dilemmas, choices and challenges into the classroom in conjunction with theory and application. Case-dilemmas could be: What do you do, if one of your students in primary school reveals she is abused at home? Do you tell the parents? Do you bend the law? Do you alarm the police? What is the right thing to do, and why? How do you take care of your own health while treating others with pathologies? Many psychologists are exposed to secondary post-traumatic stress, what can we do to meet this challenge? A business firm has required you as consultants because the employers are not performing at a satisfying level, but it soon becomes clear that the management of the organizations turns out to be the problem and employers wants the leaders to step down. What do you do? How exactly do you communicate your findings, and why? Resting on which approaches, and with what arguments? Or you graduate, but cannot get a job within the field of Psychology? What do you do to improve your chances?

4: Navigation skills: Must be nurtured by daring to perceive the building of personal skills as serious academic content in a psychology curriculum

One of the biggest challenges in psychology education is to make the future guides of human beings good navigators themselves. It is hard to grasp what can characterize the world of today and the one right around the corner, but as all stakeholders relevant to the field of higher education and psychology emphasize – the whole world is available, there is a constant overload of information, and what we take for granted today might have changed tomorrow. This brings to mind allegories of future successful human beings as the ones who can navigate in chaotic and complex circumstances. This skill rests on many components, but decision-making, self-awareness, intercultural skills and ethical principles are the ones that are most widely mentioned when debating present practices, future ambitions and strategies. Assignments, debates and exercises that will increase and mature student's awareness of these must be incorporated into the classrooms.

5: To prepare for going against an anxiety discourse (am I too culturally embedded when writing this?)

As mentioned previously in this report a psychology curriculum cannot and should not neglect that human catastrophe matters and belongs in a psychology curriculum. The most positive feedback we get from students both about being in Denmark and about studying positive psychology is actually that student's value the focus on resources and potentials vs. on pathologies and anxiety. There will and should be plenty of opportunities to study mass evacuation, and disorders. It should be stressed here that we have a great responsibility and thus a great opportunity to insist on also offering alternatives to pathologies and anxiety, because resources and resilience, and knowledge about positive outcomes are as crucial and useful aspects of the human condition to study, as are pathologies.

Another argument for this is that the development of our students personal skills must seek a balance and not only provide the students with tools to address their weaknesses (they would get an A, if they were asked to do so in an assignment), but also knowhow on how to realize their great potential. They will have to convince employers about their skills and potential in a competitive job-market sooner or later and we should do what we can to help them with this. Preparing for post-graduation challenges and possible pathways to overcome them is part of internationalizing the curriculum of higher education.

6. To engage in Critical reflection on behalf of the discipline and oneself.

It is important to zoom out and be ready to critically reflect on Psychology on a meta level by carefully considering the pros and cons of the discipline. With the tendency for psychology to move closer towards the natural sciences on a science continuum, the discipline will become increasingly prescribing, which calls for even more culturally sensitive awareness. What is described as a disorder in the western context, might be a spiritual gift in another and one could argue that psychology, as a discipline is so occupied with findings answers, models and solutions that the ability to ask the good questions is not sufficiently trained. Psychology, I argue, is a self-sufficient discipline. Maybe because it has self-esteem issues, having to fight so hard for being acknowledged for being a science back in the day. Now that we are one of the fastest growing majors in the world, we should be confident enough to let us inspire by other disciplines. Kirsten Hastrup, a Danish anthropologist, stresses that one must listen to a field, long and carefully, before one can identify what the great questions to ask are. This is not Psychology's key competence. We travel with our answers, psychological models and treatments to other parts of the world and apply them. With good intentions. But in order to know what the optimal help is, one has to know the context in which this help is needed. This again relates to intercultural skills and emphasizes the crucial role these must play in internationalizing psychology curriculum.

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