The Oz Moment: Cultural Learning and the Intuitive Mind

Contact:
Joseph Shaules
jshaules@japanintercultural.org
www.japanintercultural.org
"The important part of culture exists safely hidden below the level of conscious awareness."

Edward T. Hall (Beyond Culture)
Cultural neuroscience . . . seeks to explain how neurobiological processes such as genetic expression and brain function, give rise to cultural values, practices, and beliefs as well as how culture shapes neurobiological processes across macro- and micro-time scales.

Joan Chiao

Social neuroscience is the product of the integration of neuroscience (particularly neuroimaging), cognitive science and social sciences (particularly social psychology), and it allows one to investigate the complex and dynamic representation of social interaction in the brain’s neural states. The field aims to uncover the neural underpinnings of social processes, such as mental attribution, empathy and moral judgment.

Han & Northoff
Cognitive neuroscience is providing us with a new view of the relationship between culture and mind . . .
The brain was shaped by millions of years of evolutionary biology. It has a triune (three-part) structure related to different stages of evolution. Enfolded in the human brain are the *reptilian*, *mammalian* and *primate* (neo-cortex) brains.

**Mind** refers to mental experience made possible by cognitive function. It includes wakefulness, attention, feeling, intuition, consciousness and conscious thought. Cultural patterns are configured into the cognitive processes that produce mind. i.e. Our mind is shaped by culture.

The mind was also shaped by evolutionary biology. It evolved an ability to carry out routine tasks (even complex ones) without conscious awareness (*intuitive mind*). Conscious thought evolved to cope with novel situations and solve problems through the manipulation of mental images (*attentive mind*).
Culture and our three brains

We are animals that think. We have basic instincts and drives, (we experience hunger – reptile brain), learn complex tasks to satisfy them (bake cookies – neo-cortex), are driven by emotion (get upset if they burn – limbic system), and think abstractly and morally about what we do (decide to eat salad the next day – neo-cortex).
Cultural patterns are integrated into all areas of brain function. That is why our heart races when we hear “I love you” or if we see our flag burned, why we can get excited by an idea, or angry if someone steals our money, even though “love” “flag” “idea” and “money” are primarily mental phenomena.
Two minds
Unconscious cognition

Mental processes that are inaccessible to consciousness but that influence judgments, feelings or behavior.

Timothy Wilson

The mind operates most efficiently by relegating a good deal of high-level, sophisticated thinking to the unconscious, just as a modern jumbo jetliner is able to fly on automatic pilot with little or no input from the human “conscious” pilot.

Timothy Wilson

The adaptive unconscious is part of the architecture of the mind that is inaccessible to conscious awareness. People can no more observe how they are unconsciously categorizing their environments, setting goals, and generating intuitions than they can observe how their kidneys work.

Timothy Wilson
Deep Culture Configuration

Shared meaning, scripts and schema needed to interact successfully within a community.

Behavior

- Reflective mind
  - Explicit mind
- Intuitive mind
  - Implicit knowledge

Unconscious support systems

Perceptual systems
Learning
Language processing

The “dual processing” model of mind

Adapted from Evans, 2010
Édouard Claparède

Claparède pricks amnesia patient when shaking hands

Patient later refuses handshake despite no conscious memory
Pattern recognition . . .

Which is the Sicilian defense Najdorf variation?
Intercultural experiences affect us at two levels of self – conscious and unconscious.
When I go to Canada, I'll practice English!

Kentaro goes to Canada . . .

WOW! English everywhere!

Japan

Canada
The Oz Moment

I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore, Toto!
Oz Moment

“I’ve a feeling I’m not in California anymore!”
Monitor your minds

**Attentive mind**
Wow! Lots of vending machines!
Why so many? People must be busy!
Not eco! Honest country!

**Intuitive mind**
Notice them!
Interpret them!
Judge them!
Our two minds

**Attentive mind**
- internal dialogue
- problem solving
- conscious planning
- abstract thinking
- focused attention

**Intuitive mind**
- pattern detector
- implicit learner
- information filter
- feeling evaluator
- goal setting
- habitual processes
Anatomy of an Oz moment . . .

- Enter foreign environment
  - Mismatch with internal models!

- Intuitive response
  - Pos/neg associations?
  - Detect new patterns?
  - Judge and resist?
  - Adapt and change?

- Attentive response
  - Analyze? Reflect?

- Detect Difference

- Make sense of situation
  - Intuitive interpretation
  - Attentive analysis

- Alert attentive mind
  - Activate interpretive schema

- Affective response

- Decision making
  - Suppress reaction?
  - Take action?

- Cognitive impacts
  - Long-term effects?
  - Oz moment memories?
  - New behaviors?
  - Dissonance?
  - Reinforced prejudice?
  - Changed perspective?
Intercultural experiences can be surface (attentive mind) or deep (intuitive mind)
Who is having an intercultural experience?

Through seamless connectivity, we see the world through their eyes.

Cinematographer, Documentary filmmaker, Boundary breaker, Peter Hutchens explores some of the most remote places on earth so we can discover the world.
Who is more international?

Ludovic
The hitchhiker

5 years hitchhiking around the world – 59 countries, 170,000 Km
Bilingual – Fr & Eng

Yuko
The third-culture kid

Born Japan – Intl school India, University US, Return Japan at 22
Trilingual – Hindi, Jp, Eng
Cultural Learning: Surface vs. Deep

**Surface learning: conscious knowing**

Tourist and traveler: explicit culture, explanations, outsider’s perspective

  e.g. *tourist spots, historical knowledge, etiquette*

**Deep learning: unconscious reconfiguration**

Sojourner: trial and error, cultural intuitions, frame shifting, insider’s perspective

  e.g. *changing perceptions, value shifts, identity shifts*
Configuration: Cultural difference

The intuitive mind is configured and shaped by cultural patterns.
Which of the images goes together with the cow?
Nisbett – The Geography of Thought
Nisbett – The Geography of Thought
Plato – subject-object thinking

Taoism – holistic thinking

Social structures and tendencies

Confucian education

Dialectic education

Western medicine

Chinese medicine

Individualism

Collectivism

Sleep together with children

Sleep separately from children

Social practices

Category / object

Context / relationship

Cognitive preferences

Cognition impacts social interaction

Social interaction affects cognition

Fractal culture: The feedback loop between cognition and social systems
What do you see?
Honor in the hallway . . .

Nisbett and Cohen, 1996

Asshole!
Who decides?

Iyengar: *The Art of Choosing*
By comparing cognitive functions in people from Western (European and American) and East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, et cetera) cultures, the 'culture-and-cognition' approach demonstrates that different sociocultural systems give rise to dissimilar thought styles.

- **Westerners generally think in an analytical way, whereas East Asians generally think in a more holistic manner.** For instance, during a perception task, Americans were better at detecting changes in salient objects than East Asians, and were less affected by contextual information.

- **Cultural differences are also evident in social cognition.** In a game that involved two individuals interacting, Chinese participants were more in tune with their partner's perspective than Americans.

- Furthermore, **Chinese people were more likely to describe memories of social and historical events** and focused more on social interactions, whereas **European Americans more frequently focused on memories of personal experiences** and emphasized their personal roles in events.

- **Westerners were better at remembering trait words that they associated with themselves** than they were at remembering words that they associated with people close to them, whereas Chinese people remembered both equally well.

- **Americans tended to explain behaviours in terms of peoples' dispositions** (for example, a person's gender and education), whereas **East Asians showed a preference for attributing behaviour to situational factors** (for example, environmental events), and were more likely to use situational information to predict other people's behaviour.

- **Chinese people endorsed contextual explanations of physical events** (for example, friction influencing the movement of an object) more often than Americans, who were more likely to attribute physical events to dispositional factors (for example, an object's weight or composition).

- **Culture also influences category-based classification of objects:** Chinese people organized objects in a more relational (for example, to group a monkey and a banana together because monkeys eat bananas) and less categorical (for example, to group a monkey and a panda together because both are animals) way than European Americans.

Han and Northoff (2008)
The effects of culture on cognition are powerful invisible to us. That’s why foreign experiences are so eye-opening.

Globalization has not eliminated cross-cultural challenges.

Cultural adaptation involves learning to read intuitive foreign cultural patterns. Culture shock is a form of cognitive overload.

Foreign experiences provide a chance to explore your unconscious mind. Oz moments are an indication of unconscious cultural learning.
Reading

Download an article about culture and cognition:

Download today’s PowerPoint slides
https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/9302764/FIGT-Seminar.ps

Books

• The Intercultural Mind, Shaules, Intercultural Press (in press –Fall 2014)

• Deep Culture: The Hidden Barriers to International Living, Shaules, Multilingual Matters (2007)


• Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious, Timothy D. Wilson, Belknap Harvard, 2002


• Thinking Fast and Slow, Daniel Kahneman, FSG, 2011

• Thinking Twice: Two minds in One Brain, Jonathan Evans, Oxford, 2010
The Oz Moment: Cultural Learning and the Intuitive Mind

Contact:
Joseph Shaules
jshaules@japanintercultural.org
www.japanintercultural.org