2. Theoretical part

2.1 The Concept of Human Nature

2.1.1 Social representations

To understand the concept of human nature, it is helpful to introduce the construct of social representations. The answers to basic questions of mankind, like 'who am I?', 'where do I belong to?' or 'what am I here for?', can be summarized as social representations or social constructions (Mosovici, 1984; Oyserman & Markus, 1995; Flick, 1995). I will use these terms as synonyms. Social representations not only explain how we acquire a concept of human nature, but also provide the basic scripts for understanding the self, others, and the environment, which then enables the individual to act appropriately in society. They are the cornerstones for our internal structures of the world.

2.1.1.1 A brief history of social representations

The psychological theory of social representations was introduced by Serge Moscovici in 1961, based on Emile Durkheim's concept of 'la répresentation sociale' (Durkheim, 1898). Durkheim was interested in three main areas: a) the *individual* versus *society*, b) *individual representations* as a research object of psychology versus *collective representations* as a research object of sociology, and c) *instability* versus *stability* of social constructions. In his research about suicide (Durkheim, 1897), he regards the loss of perceived stability in one's life as a main reason for ending it, which goes hand in hand with the disintegration of collective representations. Typical collective representations are shared by almost all members of a society and are highly stable over generations. As an example of the ideal collective representation, Durkheim mentions the catholic belief before the reformation (Mosovici, 1984, p. 950).

In contrast to collective representations, social representations are less general, i.e. different types and shapes of representations can be found. Staying with Durkheim's example, different religions exist in parallel. This results in a loss of the stabilizing influence of one single religion on society (see Flick, 1995). Another central difference is that social representations are highly dynamic, and their origins are multiple. Collective representations lead to homogeneous societies, while social representations lead to heterogeneous societies. Mosovici (1988) distinguishes between hegemonic, emancipated, and polemic representations as sub-forms of social representations. Hegemonic representations are shared by all members of a structured social group without disputing them, and come closest to Durkheim's

collective representations. Emancipated representations were built through an exchange process between different points of view, whereby knowledge that was initially 'owned' by a particular group (e.g. experts) becomes part of the 'common sense knowledge' of society (see Flick, 1995). Polemic representations can be seen as open conflicts between different social and political interest groups. The main difference between collective and social representations is that the latter are formed through a transformational process while the former have the character of a law. Mosovici (1995) explains how Durkheim uses the theory of collective representations to explain the effect mechanism of individuals and societies. In contrast to Hocart (1987), who claims that people of all nations and generations have always believed that they obtain their knowledge from reality, Durkheim argues that people obtain their thinking categories from society. He is able to show how 'social truth' is perceived as 'more true' than a real, scientifically proven fact, and how people pass these collective constructs from generation to generation to create a social reality, which can be based on superstition, myths and dubious traditions, but still have the strongest influence on peoples' worldviews (see Mosovici, 1995).

Social constructions are made implicit- or explicitly, and fulfill various functions, whether people are aware of them or not. First, they enable the individual to get a general orientation of him/herself and the world, while providing grounds for personal judgments, attitudes and behavior (Raguz, 1995). Second, they determine the beliefs, values and actions of societies, science, religion, and art. They can be modified, adapted to certain circumstances, and changed completely, depending on new experiences and needs, new zeitgeist currents, or new individual goals (see Oerter, 1999). Vygotskij (1978) explains how children are born into a world of social representations which become internalized through communication, forming the basis for individual mental representations. Mosovici defines social representations as *cognitive matrixes* which coordinate related ideas, words, pictures and perceptions. They provide theories of 'common sense' about aspects of the world (Mosovici & Hewstone, 1983). Societies could not work efficiently without a common theoretical and ideological basis. Quinn and Holland (1987) call these communal duties, perceptions and understanding of the world *cultural schemes*. They provide models for the world, are assumed to be real, are shared by the vast majority of group members, and influence significantly their understanding of the world as well as behavior. Social representations are not the reproduction of an objective reality, but reality is socially constructed through the process of mental representation (Mosovici, 1991). The anthropologist Tyler (1969) states that

> *"cultures then are not material phenomena; they are cognitive organizations of material phenomena (…) The object of study is not the material phenomena themselves, but the way they are organized in the minds of men." (Tyler, 1969, p. 3).*

2.2 Individualism and Collectivism

The basic questions about human nature mentioned above have been answered by individuals in two main categories. Some of these answers were elaborated in an idiosyncratic manner, as the result of personal experience and according to personal goals. Others were highly influenced by a socio-cultural, political, and historical background, and reflect a consensus of the society. *Individualism* and *collectivism* can be understood as two different ways of thinking, conceptualizing and understanding individuals, groups and society. Individualism focuses on personal achievement and success (Georgas, 1989; Kagitcibasi, 1987; Triandis, 1987). The development of a unique personality, self-fulfillment, and personal happiness are the main goals of individualism (Hui & Villareal, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 1991b). Collectivism, on the other hand, focuses on the fulfillment of social norms and individual's duties to society (Sinha & Verma, 1987; Triandis, 1990a, 1990b). The main goals of collectivism are the development and maintenance of communal consensus, attitudes, and habits of the group (Georgas, 1989; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Markus & Kitayama, 1991a). The group determines which values are desirable, and which are to be rejected by all members. A distinction between personal and communal is regarded as inappropriate and suspect (Triandis, 1990a, 1990b). Happiness of the individual can only be achieved through happiness of the whole group (Cousins, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 1991b).

The influence of social representations on the self has only recently become the object of empirical psychological research. It was first explored by Farr and Moscovici (1984), Shweder and LeVine (1984), and Jodelet (1991a, b). Earlier studies had not paid much attention to the socio-cultural frame of the self. In western Social Psychology, the self is defined as non-social entity. Western concepts of the self are rooted in questions such as 'what have I achieved?' or 'how happy am I?'. They are not rooted in questions such as 'is everything alright in my group?' or 'do I meet the demands of my group?', which are typical for eastern, or more precisely, non-highly industrialized western societies, such as Asia, Africa, or Latin-America (Holland & Quinn, 1987). This discrepancy, and its related consequences for cognition, emotion, and behavior, have emerged as a main field for cross-cultural research in the last decade (see below).

The origins of social representations are unknown. It is not clear why eastern countries are traditionally collectivistic societies whereas western countries are traditionally individualistic (see Oyserman & Markus, 1995). The development of collectivism is clearly linked with a monistic philosophical tradition, in which the person is believed to be of the same substance as the rest of nature (Bond, 1986; Roland, 1988; Sass, 1988), which can lead to a closer relationship between the individual and the rest of the world. This holistic weltanschauung is in opposition to the Cartesian, dualistic tradition that is characteristic of western, individualistic thinking, in which the self is separated from the object and the natural world. Ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates already stress the importance of self-awareness and self-recognition (Oerter, 1999). However, these philosophical traditions do not provide an explanation as to why cultures developed differently, i.e. why a certain kind of socialization occurs in a particular socioeconomic context and not in another (Kagitcibasi & Poortinga, 2000). The Japanese anthropologist Lebra (1992) reports impressive ontological differences between eastern and western cultures. She describes the ontological space through two axes: the horizontal axis with the opposite poles '*nature'* and '*culture'*, and the vertical axis with the opposite poles '*existence'* and '*nothing'*. The western self is located in the quadrant which is defined by 'culture' and 'existence'. The meaning of existence is experiencing one's uniqueness through being different to the rest of the world. Knowing and recognizing one's own self are the main purposes for western individuals. The eastern self is located in the quadrant which is defined by 'nature' and 'nothing'. The meaning of existence is experiencing the loss of the individual self by reducing the differences between the individual and the rest of the world. These opposite views determine western and eastern cognitions, emotions, and behavior. Further, these conceptions of the self can influence the nature of interpersonal phenomena such as conformity, obedience, and social comparison, and intrapersonal phenomena such as self-affirmation, self-verification, self-monitoring, and self-esteem (Markus & Kitayama, 1991b).

Keller and Greenfield (2000) propose two different parenting styles as a main source for the different development of individualistic or collectivistic individuals. The usual *western style* (Keller & Eckensberger, 1998) or *pedagogical style* (LeVine, 1994) consists in a face-to-face system. The *non-western style* (Keller & Eckensberger, 1998) or *pediatric style* (LeVine, 1994), on the other hand, consists in a body contact system, and is prevalent in farming or pastoral communities. Keller and Greenfield claim that early experiences related to these different styles lay the basis for cultural ideals, and initiate the socialization scripts which lead to individualism or collectivism. In western industrial, urban, or commercial societies the

most frequent pattern between caregiver (mostly mother) and infant is an exclusive dyadic relationship, with special emphasis on face-to-face exchange. Apart from that, the mother orients the child towards the material world, often using toys for that purpose, and encourages the infant's experiences of causing any kind of effect over its environment. The baby develops expectancies, predictability and thus control, which are the prime variables for perceiving the self as a causal agent. Early independence is reinforced as a value, and further supported by context variables like independent sleeping arrangements (Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim & Goldsmith, 1992). Explorative behavior, asking questions, gaining control over one's environment, and understanding formal instructions are major developmental aims of earliest socialization in the western world. In non-western countries like Africa, Latin America, and Asia the body contact system with multiple caregivers prevails. Child care is a co-occurring activity. Warmth and interrelatedness is transferred through bodily proximity (Liedloff, 1999). Thus, the baby develops a sense of being a co-agent. Behaviors like playing with others (not with toys) and any kind of social and helpful interactions are reinforced in collectivistic societies. Although the pedagogical and the pediatric parenting style may be useful to explain the development of individualistic and collectivistic personalities, it remains unclear how generations came to choose their culturally specific parenting style. Therefore the initial question of the origins of social representations cannot be answered satisfactorily by Keller and Greenfield's theory.

2.2.1 Different Research Approaches on the Concept of Human Nature

People's understanding of human nature has been explored by philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists. In the frame of this thesis I will neglect philosophical approaches, only briefly mention one sociological classification, and mainly focus on a selection of psychological and psychological-anthropological models. The study of human nature is deeply interwoven with the study of the self and personality. Therefore, a recent classification of theories of personality will be included. A sub-section of this classification will give room for developmental theories of human nature, mainly focussing on the ideas of Jean Piaget, since his stage model served as a basis for Oerter's stage model of conceptualizing human nature. Oerter's model will be used to analyze the data of this thesis. The chapter concludes with the presentation of Oerter's model, following the distinction of the *independent* vs. the *interdependent* self in cross-cultural psychology. Since this chapter focuses on different research approaches of human nature, this last cross-cultural section was

included here and not in the general chapter about cross-cultural psychology and its main topics and problems.

2.2.1.1 Sociological concepts

Human Sciences have identified several origins and functions of the concept of human nature. Endruweit (1999) makes a distinction between three sociological models, whose scientific-theoretical function varies accordingly (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Three different sociological concepts of human nature (Endruweit, 1999).

Model	**Form**	**Origin**	**Way of changing**
1. Empirical	Knowledge	Society	Social change or better research instruments
2. Methodological	Hypotheses	Research techniques	Falsification
3. Axiomatic	Assumption which cannot be verified	Theory	Decrease of axiom level or change of paradigm

Empirical: The term 'empirical' in sociology is used when the unit of investigation is the result of either systematic or unsystematic data collection and analysis. The concept of human nature can be *the result* of research. It stands for 'knowledge about human beings'. Its origin would be the society, and it could be changed through better research instruments or social change. Research literature would provide whole galleries of concepts, which would vary according to culture and époque.

Methodological: The sociological term 'methodological' matches the psychological term 'empirical'. The concept of human nature could be *the beginning* of the research project, meant to be tested as a hypothesis which can be falsified. Should the study prove the hypothesis to be accurate, it would become an empirical model. Should not enough empirical evidence be found, then the concept would be rejected.

Axiomatic: The concept of human nature could be the beginning of a theory. In this case the concept would be an axiom, which is a statement accepted as true without proof or argument. The only way of falsifying an axiom is by lowering the level to make it empirically accessible again, or by a change of paradigm.

2.2.1.2 Psychological concepts

Schneewind (1999), based on Montada (1995), classifies four main theories of personality in modern psychology (see below). A theory of personality, whether scientific or a

layman's theory, is an integral part of the concept of human nature. Hjelle and Ziegler (1992, p.9) claim that all thinking persons have certain assumptions about the human being. Psychologists who investigate personality scientifically are no exception from this rule. These basic assumptions influence to a remarkable degree the way that persons perceive and treat each other, and in the case of psychologists, how they construct their theories.

There is no dissent in contemporary psychology about the environment having an influence on an individual's personality. But there are controversies regarding whether individuals are active creators of their environment or not. There are also controversies about whether the environment has an active and creating influence on a person's development or not. These controversies are rooted in historical currents and psychological traditions (see Schneewind, 1994).

2.2.1.1.1 Montada's typology of theories of personality

Montada (1995) links the central aspects *activity* vs. *passivity* with the variables *person* and *environment* in a typology of four prototypical developmental theories of a person-environment-relationship (see Table 2.2). He calls the four theories of personality *exogenistic*, *endogenistic*, *self-creative*, and *interacionistic*.

Table 2.2: Typology of theories of personality (Montada, 1995).

		Environment	
		active	***passive***
Person	***active***	interactionistic theories	self-creative theories
	passive	exogenistic theories	endogenistic theories

1) Exogenistic theories of personality: these theories claim that a person's development is the exclusive product of external stimuli. According to this belief, human development can be manipulated and predicted through the arrangement of conditions the individual is confronted with. The behaviorist John B. Watson views personality as the final result of our system of habits, since individual differences in personality and behavior can be explained by different habits learned through conditioning processes. This radically deterministic position is best reflected in Watson's famous quotation about his Promethean belief of creating personalities:

> *"Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specialized world to bring them up in, and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant chief and yes, even beggar man, and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race" (Watson, 1924, p. 104).*

Four decades later, B. E. Skinner (1974) argues in a similar way that environment alone is responsible for human's personality:

> *"The self or personality is, at most, a repertoire of behaviors produced by a pattern of contingent events in the environment." (Skinner, 1974, p. 149).*

The behavioristic understanding of an individual as the helpless victim of conditioning processes has been subject to numerous criticisms for decades. One of the more recent and convincing ones is put forward by Boesch (1998). He claims that a child, from the very beginning of its socialization process, is confronted with both reinforcing and behavior-inhibiting stimuli. These stimuli are sometimes presented in a coherent way, sometimes they contradict each other. The child makes an active choice which stimuli it accepts as reinforcement, and which ones it rejects. The anger of one person can leave it indifferent, the anger of another person can weigh heavily on its mind. The smile of one person may or may not mean something to him/her. Additionally, the individual can choose not to be pleasant, and can regard his/her own criteria for acting as being more important than the approval or disapproval of the environment. The child's behavior will have an effect on his/her partners of social interaction, which can change the original situation completely.

2) *Endogenistic theories of personality*: these theories take the opposite position to the exogenistic theories just described. They argue that a person's development is mainly determined by a genetic program, and external influences are effective, if at all, in the form of 'sensitive phases', but are unable to change the genetic predispositions. This idea of personal development is mostly reflected in older psychological phase theories (see Bergius, 1959), but also in recent ethological approaches of behavior (see Keller, 1996), or in concepts of a personality theory based on evolution, which understand basic dimensions of human personality as consequence of phylogenetic adaptation processes (see Buss, 1991). Another endogenistic approach of personality is provided by Sigmund Freud's classic psychoanalysis. Freud's theory of development is based on the transfer of libido's dominance onto different

erogenous zones during the life course. This transfer is biologically determined and influences the development of personality. The 'anal character', for instance, is orderly, parsimonious, and stubborn (Freud, 1908/1977, p. 209). Freud assumes earliest childhood to determine the rest of people's functioning.

3) S*elf-creative theories of personality*: these theories also assume a relatively passive role of environment on the development of human personality, but understand the individual as an organism who actively assimilates and accommodates to its environment. Development is viewed as an internal construction process which leads to a constantly improving fit between 'subjective' and 'objective' reality over the life span (Schneewind, 1999). A lack of fit between subjective and objective reality structures demands a reorganization of subjective structures. The environment can provoke specific 'fit conflicts' to stimulate a rearrangement of internal reality structures, but these conflicts have to meet the appropriate developmental level of the individual in order to be effective (see Piaget, 1992). These developmental levels have a biological basis, occur as a result of genetic maturation, and can hardly be altered by external factors. To assure the restructuring of internal schemes which are incompatible with existing ones, the individual has to have a critical look at new experiences which the environment provides. This process is the active momentum of self-creative theories in an environment which, in spite of its ascribed stimulating character, is regarded as passive. The initiator of this position is the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. His phase theory of the development of intelligence describes how children's thinking starts at a *sensory-motor stage* (birth to 2 years), enters the *pre-operational phase* (2 to 7 years), goes through the *phase of concrete operations* (7 to 11 years) and ends in the *phase of formal operations* (11 to 15 years), gaining more and more flexibility in its progression (Piaget, 1936). In the first phase, the child has to learn to organize and interpret sensory information and to co-ordinate motor activity. In the pre-operational phase, the child's egocentricity is gradually reducing, but its operations on the environment are limited. It can only take account of one feature at a time in conservation problems, and is unable to decenter. In the third phase, the child is able to undertake adult-style cognitive operations, but these are mainly limited to targets which exist in a material form in the world. In the formal operational stage, the child is fully decentered, and can undertake abstract reasoning and perform logical operations, which Piaget regarded as the highest point of cognitive development (see Hayes, 1998).

In 1932, Piaget put forward a stage model of moral development, which he describes as a gradual one, in which the individual departs from a *heteronomous morality*, dependent on

external rules, and reaches an *autonomous morality*, decided by the person applying their own, internalized principles of right or wrong (see Hayes, 1998). As in the stages of cognitive development, Piaget regarded the gradual reduction of egocentricity in the child's thought as the key variable for progression. His model contains three stages. The first one is the *moral realism* (until the age of 7 or 8), during which the child's judgment of morality reflects what is allowed and forbidden by adults. The child does not take into account the intentions which underlie the behavior. In the second phase, called *egalitarianism* (from about 8 to 11 years), the child bases his judgment of an act being morally correct or incorrect on the fairest and most equal treatment of all participants. With decreasing egocentricity, the child recognizes other people's needs and tries to take them into account when making moral judgments. In the last phase, called *equity* (from about 11 onwards), the child's social understanding has become more sophisticated, and it understands that not everyone has the same needs. The principle of equity is the comprehension of the fact that unequal treatment can, under certain circumstances, be fairer than equal treatment. Some people might need a larger share in order to compensate for the fact that they did not start off the same. The child is now using its own criteria for determining what is good or bad (Hayes, 1998).

Piaget's basic concept of development (see Table 2.3), which unfolds according to an internal, universal logic, has been tremendously influential, and was transferred to other areas of developmental psychology.

Table 2.3: General characteristics of Piaget's developmental phase model.

1. The progression of phases is invariable, i.e. law-governed and irreversible. The age limits for each phase, however, are flexible and can vary from individual to individual and culture to culture. Not every individual will reach the highest level of development.

2. Preceding phases do not disappear when new structures are built, but are integrated into them. The preceding phase is a necessary precondition for the formation of later phases.

3. Different structures of a developmental phase build an integral unit. The interdependence of different structures defines the state of equilibrium.

4. In each phase a preparation phase (building and organization of the new level) and a stable end phase can be distinguished.

Two of the most famous developmental models which are based on Piaget's principles are Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Kohlberg, 1964, 1996), and Loevinger's phase theory of ego development (Loevinger, 1976).

Like Piaget, Kohlberg assumes underlying, biologically determined cognitive stages, which present the frame for children's moral development. His model is more sophisticated than Piaget's, but also consists of three main stages and several sub-stages (see Table 2.4). Kohlberg argues that the child progresses from a state in which moral judgments are solely based on the need to avoid punishment to a state in which the individual applies universal ethical concepts according to its own autonomous judgment, which Kohlberg regards as the highest form of moral reasoning.

Table 2.4: Kohlberg's stages of moral development, adapted from Hayes, 1998.

	Stage 1: The pre-moral stage The child identifies obedience to rules as the most important part of moral correctness	**Stage 2: Conventional morality** Moral judgments are made in terms of social consensus, i.e. what ought to be done	**Stage 3: Autonomous morality** The understanding of the complexities of social convention and individual responsibility lead the person to an autonomous form of moral reasoning
Sub-stage 1	The first focus is on the need to avoid punishment. Behavior which causes negative consequences is wrong.	The emphasis is on intentionality: an act will be judged as good or bad depending mainly on the intentions of the performer. The child seeks acceptance and appreciation. This stage is therefore also called "Good boy/good girl-phase"	There is an increased awareness that social rules may differ, and that there are different concepts of what is right and wrong. The adolescent begins to realize that there may be more general underlying principles of good and bad, and that rules and laws can be changed.
Sub-stage 2	The second focus is on positive consequences as a result of obedience. It is also called naïve instrumental hedonism.	The focus is on the general perception of good and bad as declared by authorities in society. An act is judged as good or bad in terms of the wider needs of society in general.	Abstract, universal principles of justice are identified, which may be applied generally, but which take into account differing conventions and pluralistic societies. One's own conscience is the highest criterion for moral judgments.

Both Piaget and Kohlberg have been criticized for not taking into account the social context within which the child's experience is located, such as cultural differences (Ji, 1997) and gender differences (Gilligan, 1982). A completely different approach to understanding development while considering the individual's environment is found in the work of the Russian psychologist Vygotsky, whose main theories about human development as determined by culture shall be explained below.

Another famous stage model is Loevinger's phase theory of ego development (Loevinger, 1976). She describes the similarities of the approaches which she calls '*cognitive developmentalism'* as follows: as opposed to other personality psychologists, cognitive developmentalists argue that the way children construct their world is done in sequences,

which are distinguished not only by quantity but also by quality. The succession of phases is neither determined by environmental contingencies, as the behaviorists would claim, nor through innate physiological drives, as psychoanalysts assume, but by the internal logic of the developmental sequences themselves, which are structured hierarchically (see Loevinger, 1987).

It should be remarked that there are numerous critics of structural models such as those described above. The main problem lies in the difficulty of proving that underlying structures for cognitions and behavior are actually in existence waiting to be discovered, rather than being created by the structuralist. Constructivists insist that a structure has nothing to do with empirical reality but with models built after it. Davidson (1976) claims that "in relation to social and psychological systems 'structures' are nearly always 'creations', including those put forward by Piaget" (Davidson, 1976, p. 58).

4) *Interactionistic theories of personality*: these models define the development of personality as an interlinked system of reciprocal influences between individuals and their environment. According to this category of models, individuals not only assimilate their environment actively, but also change it. The environment, for its part, has an effect on the individual, as an element that has already been changed by the person becomes a new basis for further development. This process is equally valid for the individual's examination of his/her social and material environment. The idea may be best reflected in the interaction between two partners trying to solve a conflict. Both find themselves in a situation where they have to consider the partner's point of view during the course of the argument, reconsidering their own position on this basis until reaching a compromise solution.

Theories which regard development as the result of reciprocal interactions between person and environment are called 'dynamic *interactionalism'* or '*transactionalism'* (see Sameroff, 1975; Magnusson, 1995). In his '*holistic, integrated model'* Magnusson (1995) makes three basic assumptions for personality's development:

1. The individual functions and develops as a holistic, integrated organism. Development takes part as a whole, not only on specific aspects.
2. The individual functions and develops in a continuously progressing interactive process with its environment.
3. The individual functions and develops in a process of continuously reciprocal interactions between psychological, biological, and environmental factors.

Bronfenbrenner (1981), one of the most prominent representatives of the transactional model of development, points out in his approach of 'ecology of human development' that development not only takes place in the context of kinship relations ('microsystem'), but is codetermined by other contexts such as his so-called 'meso-, exo-, and macrosystems'.

The *microsystem* comprises all activities and interpersonal relationships in a face-to-face setting of the developing individual. This setting includes both physical/material elements, and other people with their different personalities and worldviews. Important microsystems are family members, school/job, and peer groups/friends.

The *mesosystem* links different microsystems of the developing person. A teenager's peer group could contradict the parents' value system. The integration of these contradicting microsystems occurs on a broader context level.

The *exosystem* encompasses various settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but influences the processes in his/her micro- or mesosystem. The effects of major institutions of society, such as governmental, economical, transportation, or media play an important part here. The transfer of the father's working place to a distant city and his elevated stress level, which leads to different behavior in the family microsystem, would be an example of this context level.

The *macrosystem* consists of all three sub-systems given in the culture or sub-culture of the developing person. The conglomerate of belief systems, attitudes, behavior patterns, life styles, life course options, and social interchange which confront the individual will influence his/her development. This conglomerate operates as a cultural superstructure, which affects social structures and behavior at lower, more concrete structures. The superstructure leads members of the same cultural background to consciously or unconsciously define similar goals and set similar standards, which are passed on to the next generation. We usually find consistency within important settings of a specific culture (e.g. primary school curricula and teaching methods, or the perception of which behaviors are appropriate or unacceptable).

One of the most influential models of cognitive development opposing Piaget's theories was put forward by the contextualist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky. In his view, humans are embedded in a social matrix (their context), and their behavior cannot be understood without this matrix. Organic maturation, regarded by Piaget as a main motive for development, is seen by Vygotsky as a necessary biological condition, but the main motive for development is the child's culture, expressed through social interaction and language. Intellectual and socio-cognitive development cannot take place without social stimuli, demands and interactions.

One of Vygotsky's central concepts is the *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1962). This concept describes the difference between what the child can manage on its own, and what it can achieve with help and guidance from other people. Social interactions provide the child with a 'scaffold', which is necessary for cognitive development. What the child achieves on its own, without social interactions, can be seen as a basic, primitive form of knowledge, which would hardly be sufficient to survive in the material world, and would never be sufficient to understand general principles or abstract concepts. All the input which the individual receives from others helps him/her to understand the world, and to develop cognitive skills (Hayes, 1998). The unit of Vygotsky's study was the '*child-in-activity-in-context'* rather than the child alone. The individual is not a constant, universal organism operating in a vacuum. He states that "the path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 30). All three elements - the child, the object and the other person - are interlinked through an activity (see Miller, 1999). As opposed to Piaget's assumption, the outcome of the child's behavior does not depend on the developmental stage alone, but on the socio-cultural-historical context which provides the experiences for the child, and is at the same time influenced by it. This interrelatedness of the learning individual and its context is Vygotsky's main topic of research. He does not conceive the child and the environment as two separate entities that interact with each other. Rather, he assumes a single unit defined as the process in which social practice relates the child, its needs and its aims to the environment, and by doing so determines what the context means to the child.

2.2.1.2.2 Anthropological basis of transactional personality theories

Model of person-environment-relation. Transactional/interactionistic models have received more and more attention during the last two decades. Psychological models, such as the *model of person-environment-relation* by Schneewind and Pekrun (1994), include anthropological assumptions about human nature to get a broader picture of human functioning. The model shall now be described in more detail.

Schneewind and Pekrun (1994) summarize some basic anthropological elements, common to these approaches, in their *integral model of person-environment-relation* (see Figure 2.1).

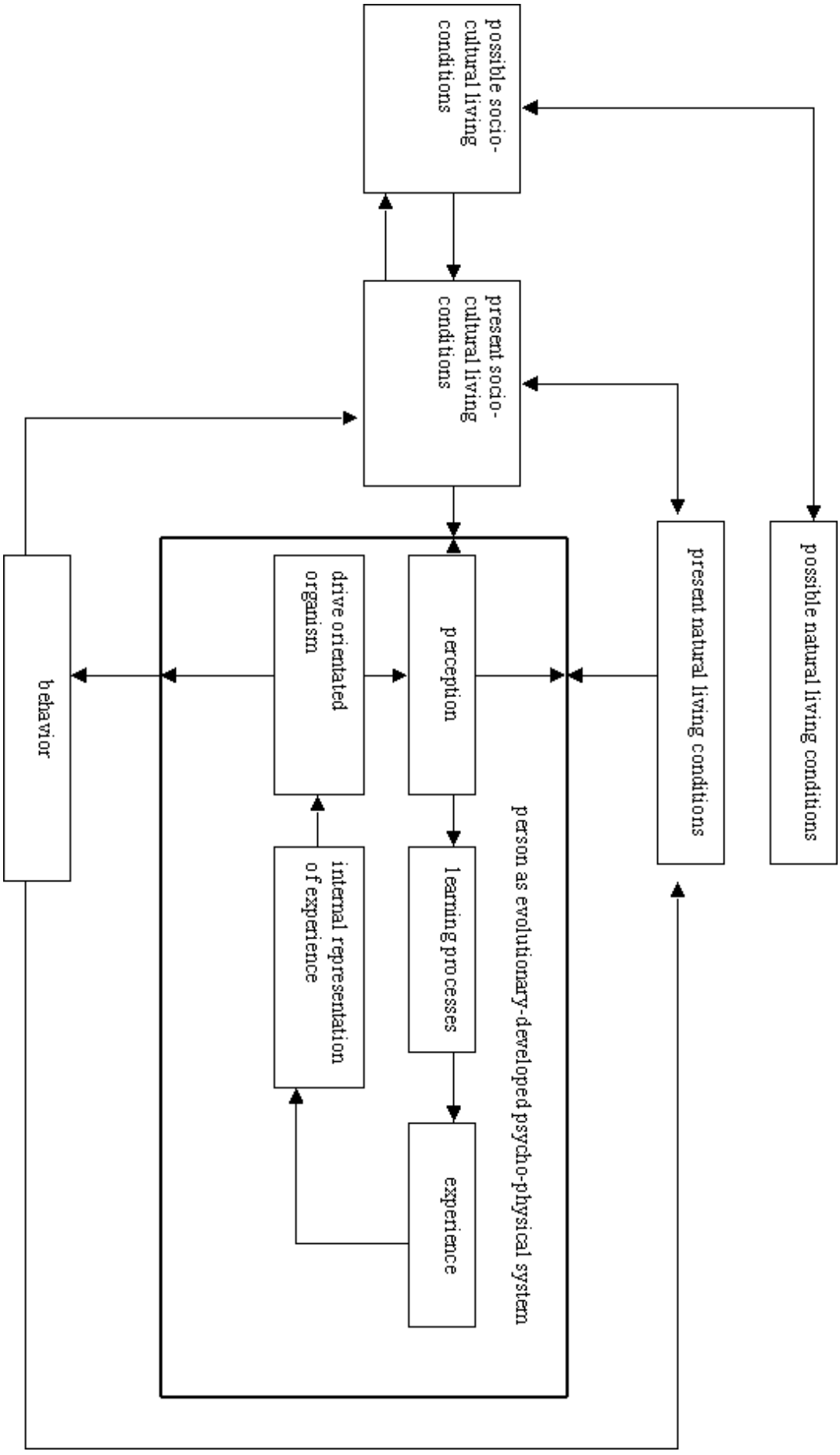

Figure 2.1: Model of person-environment-relation (Schneewind & Pekrun, 1994).

There are five basic elements of this concept, which shall be explained further:

1) *Learning skills*: a basic anthropological fact is that human beings, much more than other beings, are capable of and dependent on learning. Human beings are evolutionary equipped with a psychophysical system which enables them to act relatively independently from instincts, and increases the plasticity of behavior development. This leads to a significant freedom from endogenous behavior programs. We are capable of creating our own environment, which again influences the creation of our self. According to Schneewind and Pekrun, the variety of living conditions created by mankind in the course of its history can be called 'culture', as opposed to natural living conditions. Cultural living conditions comprise the historically grown social living forms of a group of persons, as well as the material and mental goods they create. They have an internal correspondence and present themselves as patterns of a socio-cultural structure.
2) *Social dependency*: another anthropological fact is the incompleteness of newly-born children. They depend entirely on the care and support of older, more experienced persons to fulfill their basic needs for a remarkably long time. A newborn child grows into a group of persons who live together, following certain conditions of the natural environment as well as self-established socio-cultural living conditions. This is the frame within which the child develops.
3) *Experience:* during the process of learning, individuals make experiences. Learning is regarded as an active assimilation process (see Bandura, 1995). The assimilation process consists in a goal-oriented organism, which creates a relation with the natural and socio-cultural living conditions through perception on one hand and behavior on the other. The way this assimilations process proceeds and its psychological implications will depend on three conditions: a) the individual's biological-cognitive maturation level, b) the accumulated experience up to this point, and c) the sample of socio-cultural living conditions the individual is actually confronted with.
4) *Internal representation of experience:* Another central assumption is that experiences which were acquired through social learning processes are kept as internal representations. An autobiographical memory develops, which enables the self to interact appropriately with others and the environment (see Bruhn, 1990). In this process three levels can be distinguished: a) the level of the unconscious, b) the level of the immediate experiences of outer events and inner states, and c) the level of reflexive consciousness, mostly grounded on the symbolic system of language. The

capability of using a complex language enables human beings not only to establish an inner communication about themselves and the world, independently of the context, but also to achieve understanding and agreement with others through communication, which makes human interactions unique.

5) *Behavior:* Apart from communication, language also enables us to mentally anticipate future events, and to develop procedures for achieving or avoiding them. Language can therefore be seen as a basic condition for intended, goal-oriented behavior. Personal behavior skills, which according to Holzkamp (1983, p. 243) are the 'first, human need of life' also imply being able to choose between different means and ways of behavior. This aspect of behavior provides the grounds for human autonomy. Individual and communal behavior skills enable us to reach and set new goals in the given frame of socio-cultural living conditions, and even to modify this frame by introducing innovative changes.

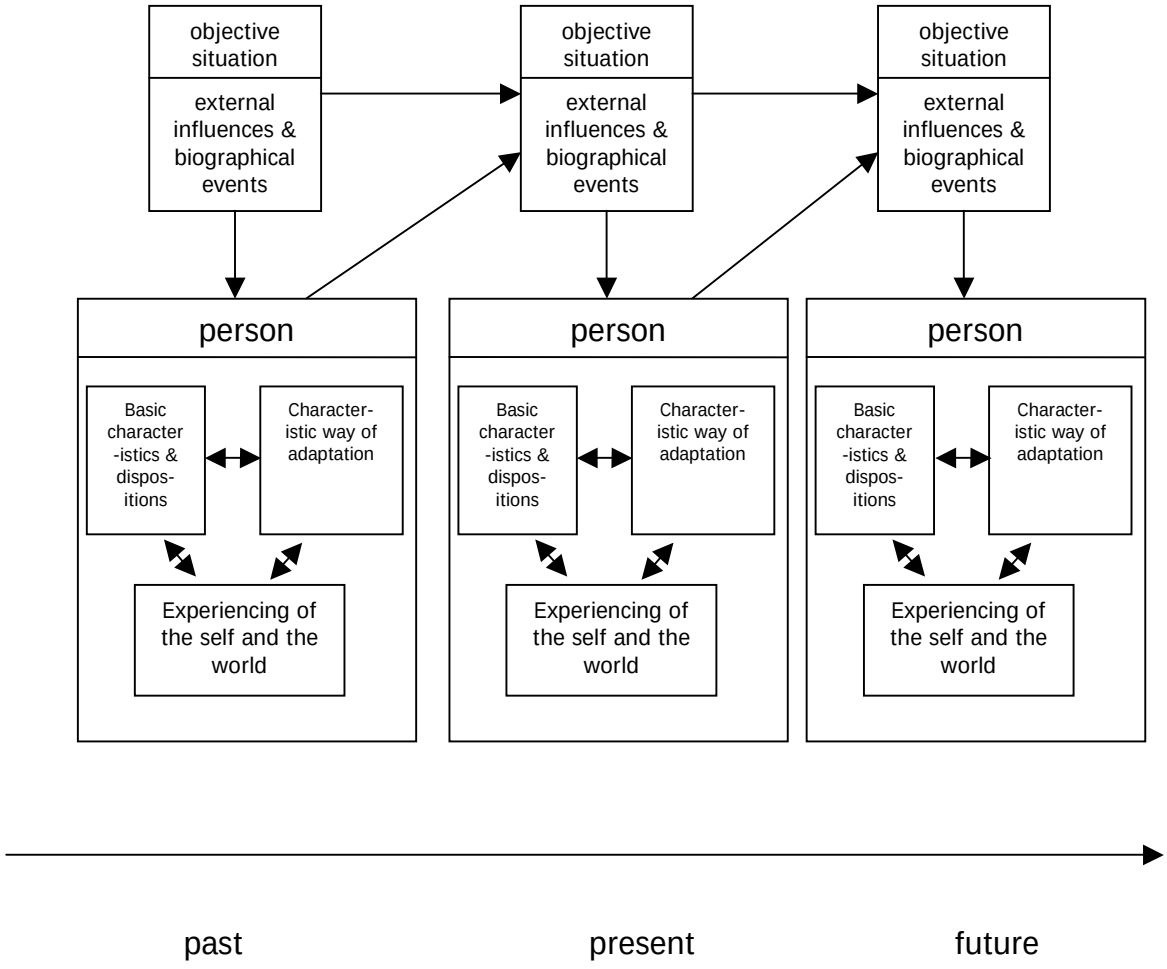

Figure 2.2: Schneewind's transactional model of development of personality

Schneewind's transactional model of development of personality. In an attempt to make the transactional and anthropological approaches operational, Schneewind (1999) proposes a transactional model of development of personality. According to Schneewind, the structure of individual personality is the unique overall system of a) its basic physical and psychological characteristics, b) its specific analysis and handling of internal and external events, and c) its experiencing of the self and the world. Personality is understood as a process which is active and develops across the life span. The graphical representation of Schneewind's definition is shown in Figure 2.2.

2.3 The concept of human nature in cross-cultural research

2.3.1 The independent and the interdependent self

In their famous article '*Culture and the self: implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation*' Markus and Kitayama (1991a) introduce the distinction between *independent* and *interdependent* self into cross-cultural psychology to illuminate this central unit of individualistic and collectivistic societies. They argue that Japanese and Americans hold different constructs of the self, others, and the interdependence of the two. In America, people appreciate individuals to be different from others, and to be assertive in a group of people. In Japan, on the other hand, people expect individuals to attend to and fit in harmoniously with others. These divergent conceptions of the self and others reflect the implicit theory of the two cultures as to what people should be doing in their lives (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987; Veroff, 1983). Anthropologists and psychologists agree that these constructs influence the nature of individual experience (White & Kirkpatrick, 1985; Triandis, 1989; Lykes, 1985; Gilligan, 1982; Weisz, Rothbaum & Blackburn, 1984). The authors state that most of what researchers know about human nature is based on the so-called western view of the individual "as an independent, self-contained, autonomous entity who a) comprises a unique configuration of internal attributes (e.g. traits, abilities, motives, and values) and b) behaves primarily as a consequence of these internal attributes" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991a, p. 224). This mono-cultural view of the self (see Kennedy, Scheier & Rogers, 1984) restricts the understanding of all phenomena which are linked directly or indirectly to the self. With the distinction of independent vs. interdependent self, the authors hope to increase the understanding of non-western cultures and individuals. The interdependent view is not only predominant in Asian countries, but also in African cultures (Eaton & Louw, 2000; Gire, 1997), Arabian cultures (Buda & Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1998; Rugh, 1985), Latin-American cultures (Gregory & Munch, 1997; Stephan, Stephan & Cabezas de Vargas, 1996; Díaz-Loving et al., 1995), and many

southern European cultures, such as Spain, Italy and Greece (Carrera & Sánchez, 1998; Pérez et al., 1996).

Markus and Kitayama first review the *universal aspects* of the self. Hallowell (1955) states that people everywhere are likely to develop an understanding of themselves as physically distinct and separable from others. Head (1920) assumes the existence of a universal schema of the body that provides us with an anchor in time and space. Allport (1937) argues that there must exist an aspect in personality that allows us, when awakening each morning, to be sure that we are the same person who went to sleep the night before. Neisser (1988) introduced the term of the *ecological self*, which he defines as "the self as perceived with respect to the physical environment: 'I' am the person here in this place, engaged in this particular activity" (Neisser, 1988, p.3). Apart from these aspects Markus and Kitayama believe that each person has some awareness of internal activities, such as thoughts, feelings or dreams, which are private and cannot be directly known by others. The awareness of this unshared experience will evoke the sense of an inner, private self. In contrast to these universal characteristics, the authors then list *divergent aspects* of the self. Since the self is primarily the product of social factors, we can expect significant differences in the self-concept according to culture and specific environment. In some cultures or certain occasions the individual, regarded as a set of inner attributes, can cease to be the primary unit of consciousness (see Allen, 1985). The sense of being part of a social relation can become so strong that it is reasonable to think of the relationship as the primary unit of conscious reflection. Triandis (1989) used Baumeister's distinction between aspects of the self as *private*, *public* and *collective* (Baumeister, 1986a, 1986b) to show that people from different cultures sample these three kinds of selves with different probabilities, which has specific consequences for their cognitions and social behavior. The private self is formed by cognitions that refer to traits, states or behaviors of the individual (e.g. "I am pretty", "I will travel to France next year"); the public self is composed of cognitions concerning the generalized other's view of the self (e.g. "People think I am pretty", "People will wonder if I can afford to go to France"), and the collective self consists of cognitions concerning a view of the self that is found in some collectives such as the family, colleagues, or peer groups (e.g. "My family believes I am prettier than my sister", "My friends think I travel too much").

2.3.1.1 The independent view of the self

The faith in the inherent separateness of distinct persons reflects the western independent view of the self. It is a common goal to become independent from others and to discover and express one's unique characteristics (Johnson, 1985; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Marsella et al., 1985). This goal implies that the individual focuses primarily on his or her own thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than on the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others. Geertz (1975) describes the western individual as " a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against a social and natural background" (Geertz, 1975, p. 48). Concepts like 'self-actualization', 'self-realization', 'self-fulfillment' and 'development of one's specific potential' reflect this conceptualization of human nature. Based on this view, Markus and Kitayama define the independent self as the understanding of the self as an "autonomous, independent person", while other labels include "individualist, egocentric, separate, idiocentric, and self-contained" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991a, p. 226). Although it is clear that individuals within western cultures differ significantly in the extent to which they construe the self in this manner, the authors assume that these differences will be smaller than the average difference between western and non-western cultures. The independent self should not, however, be understood as unsusceptible to the social environment (Fiske, 1991), but the social context is mainly important as a standard of reflected appraisal, or as a source which verifies and affirms the inner core of the self.

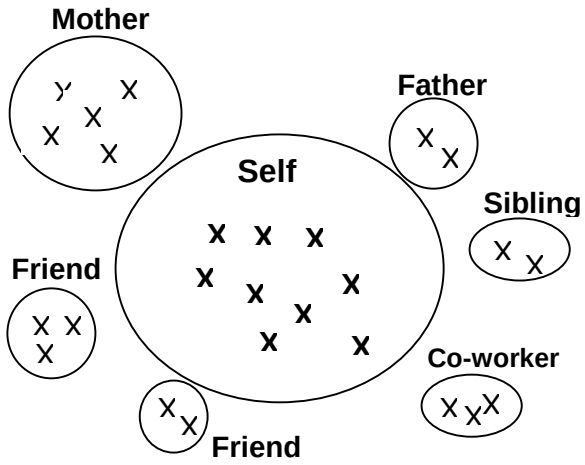

Figure 2.3: The independent self

The independent view of the self is illustrated in Figure 2.3. The large circle represents the self, the smaller circles represent significant others. The xs stand for various aspects of the self or the others. The closer the smaller circles are positioned to the big circle, the more important this social relation is for the self of the individual. Although there are several close relationships, the circles do not overlap, which means that the self is perceived as independent of others and relatively invariant over time and context. The bold **Xs** stand for *core*

conceptions, *salient identities* or *self-schemata* (Gergen, 1968; Markus, 1977; Stryker, 1986). Examples of **X** aspects would be 'I am creative'. These cognitions are significant in regulating behavior, and are more elaborated in memory, making them easily accessible when thinking of the self.

2.3.1.2 The interdependent view of the self

In many non-western cultures, the connectedness of human beings to each other plays a more important role than the individual alone (Kondo, 1982). The norm of these cultures is to maintain the interdependence between individuals (De Vos, 1985; Hsu, 1985; Shweder & Bourne, 1984). Individuals perceive themselves as part of an encompassing social relationship, and their behavior as determined by their perception of the thoughts, feelings and actions of others. The experience of the self is not isolated, but is part of a larger social unit (Sampson, 1988). In this conceptualization, the self can only be meaningful and complete when it is cast in the appropriate social relationship. According to Lebra (1976), the Japanese are most fully human in the context of others. The main goals in these cultures are finding a way to fit with relevant others, to fulfill and create obligation, and to become part of various interpersonal relationships. Based on this view, Markus and Kitayama define the interdependent self as "sociocentric, holistic, collective, allocentric, ensembled, constitutive, contextualist, connected, and relational" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991a, p. 227). Other people are needed for social comparison and self-validation, as in western cultures, but here they become an integral part of the setting to which the self is connected. Others participate actively in the definition of the interdependent self. This understanding of the self does not exclude internal attributes, such as abilities, opinions, and personal characteristics. These attributes, however, are regarded as situation specific, which makes them elusive and unreliable. As such, they do not assume a significant role in regulating behavior, especially when this behavior implicates significant others. One's own opinions, abilities and characteristics must be controlled, and must come to terms with the more important goals of

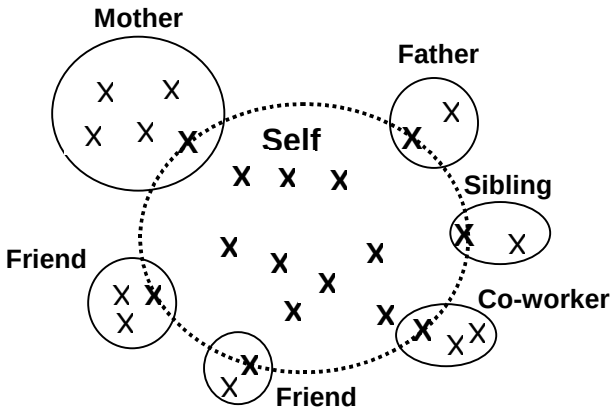

Figure 2.4: The interdependent self

interdependence. This voluntary control of inner attributes can be understood as the crucial cultural ideal of becoming mature.

The interdependent view of the self is illustrated in Figure 2.4. The significant self-representations (the bold **X**s) are those in relationship to specific others. Invariant personal attributes and abilities are included (the xs) but are less important, and are not assumed to be particularly diagnostic of the self. The self-knowledge that determines behavior is of the self in relation to specific others in particular contexts. This is why the interdependent self cannot be appropriately characterized as a bounded whole, since its structure changes with the social context. The uniqueness of the interdependent self lies in the specific configuration of relationships that each individual has developed (Hamaguchi, 1985). Hamaguchi states that "a sense of identification with others pre-exists and selfness is confirmed only through interpersonal relationships (…) selfness is not a constant but denotes a fluid concept which changes through time and situations according to interpersonal relationships." (Hamaguchi, 1985, p. 302).

The main differences between the independent and the interdependent self are summarized in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Summary of key differences between an independent and an interdependent construal of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991a).

Feature compared	**Independent**	**Interdependent**
Definition	Separate from social context	Connected with social context
Structure	Bounded, unitary, stable	Flexible, variable
Important features	Internal, private (abilities, thoughts, feelings)	External, public (statuses, roles, relationships)
Tasks	Be unique	Belong, fit in
	Express self	Occupy one's proper place
	Realize internal attributes	Engage in appropriate action
	Promote own goals	Promote others' goals
	Be direct ('say what's on your mind')	Be indirect ('read other's mind')
Role of others	*Self-evaluation*: others important for social comparison, reflected appraisal	*Self-definition*: relationships with others in specific contexts define the self
Basis of self-esteem (see footnote)	Ability to express self, validate internal attributes	Ability to adjust, restrain self, maintain harmony with social context

Footnote: Esteeming the self may be primarily a Western phenomenon, and the concept of self esteem should perhaps be replaced by self-satisfaction, or by a term that reflects the realization that one is fulfilling the culturally mandated task.

After explaining Markus and Kitayama's distinction of western and eastern self-conception, it should be mentioned that cultural dichotomies like individualism vs. collectivism and independent vs. interdependent self have been criticized, since the accelerating process of globalization with its increasing connections between cultures makes it seem unreasonable to assume an internally homogenous and externally distinctive cultural entity for changing societies (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Featherstone, 1993). New technologies like the internet, increased travel facilities, and the rapid expansion of media communication have allowed foreign models to mix with and transform cultural values. This process is known as 'hybridization' (Canclini, 1995; Hermans & Kempen, 1998). The anthropologist Wolf (1994) warns that dichotomizing cultures turns dynamic, interconnected phenomena into static, disconnected ones which cannot reflect the complexity of cultural agreements, norms, and values. There is also empirical evidence that societies, which are believed to be collectivistic and interdependent, can show strong individualistic and independent tendencies. Verma and Sinha (1993) asked 110 Indian college students to write 20 sentences describing themselves, and a paragraph describing their concept of a happy life. The responses were content analyzed, and the findings show that the students referred to the private self more often than to the collective self. They were preoccupied with their studies, job, college, and psychological well-being, a finding, which is comparable with US subjects. Their picture of a happy life reflected partly their current concerns, and partly their future goals.

Tiziano Terzani, a vastly experienced Far Eastern correspondent of the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, describes how modern western influences take over eastern traditions, changing their culture and setting new standards and values:

> *"One after another the countries of Asia have managed to free themselves from the colonial yoke and show the West the door. But now the West is climbing back in by the window and conquering Asia at last, no longer taking over its territories, but its soul. It is doing it without any plan, without any specific political will, but by a process of poisoning for which no antidote has yet been discovered: the notion of modernity. We have convinced the Asians that only by being modern can they survive, and that the only way of being modern is ours, the Western way" (Terzani, 1997, p. 53-54).*

It is, however, still common and has proven useful to take these dichotomizations into account when investigating different cultures, since cultural distinctiveness is obviously not

eradicated by globalization, and neglecting cultural realities would do more harm than good (Holdstock, 1999). Berry (1997) included dimensions for host and home culture in a study about immigration, acculturation, and adaptation, and found that while acculturation affects both host and immigrant groups, cultural characteristics do not disappear. Rosenthal and Feldman (1992) explored the ethnic identity of 62 first- and 34 second-generation Chinese-Australian adolescents and 77 first- and 64 second-generation Chinese-American adolescents. Ethnic identity was assessed by ethnic identification, the extent to which individuals engaged in culturally expected behaviors and their knowledge of the culture, the importance of maintaining these behaviors, and the value ascribed to their ethnic origins. There was a decrease of ethnic identification and behaviors/knowledge over time, but not of the importance and evaluative components of ethnic identity. No change over time occurred in individualism-collectivism.

Many researchers report data which often confirm and sometimes shatter assumptions about existing classifications, but it does not seem reasonable to give up dichotomizations completely (eg. Fijneman, Willemsen & Poortinga, 1996; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Singelis, 1994; Han & Park, 1995).

2.3.2 Oerter's theory of universal structures and culture-specific characteristics of the concept of human nature

In search of both specific and universal characteristics in the concept of human nature, Oerter (1996) conducted a cross-cultural research project in eastern and western countries. Subjects were young adults between 18 and 25 years with higher school education from the USA, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, China, and Korea. His main hypothesis, which claimed that people from different cultures conceptualize similar structures of understanding human nature at different levels of complexity, could be confirmed (Oerter et al., 1996). He was also able to replicate the finding that subjects from eastern countries perceive human beings in the frame of society (collectivistic view), whereas subjects from the USA perceive human beings as independent units (individualistic view). Oerter concludes that the perception of human nature takes place at different structure levels of increasing complexity, which is a universal characteristic found in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Oerter's theory of universal structures shall be explained in detail since this thesis, comparing a Peruvian and a German sample of young adults, is incorporated into his cross-cultural research project.

Oerter states that many cross-cultural studies on human nature do not take into due account the developmental aspect of the conceptualization of the self. He points out that the

concept of human nature changes continuously with the progressive cognitive complexity of the individual and its deeper capacity of understanding the world, no matter which culture it belongs to. Increasing cognitive complexity does not depend on chronological age alone, but also on school education and life experience, which seem to be two main sources for developing new schemes through confronting the individual with input which is inconsistent with its old schemes, forcing it to develop more complex ones in order to explain and integrate the new data into its worldviews (see Piaget, 1992; Lurija, 1976; Sharp, Cole & Lave, 1979; Scribner & Cole, 1973; Olson, 1986). Oerter therefore assumes that at the beginning of the conceptualization of human nature, people will focus on concrete and salient (e. g. physical) characteristics, and include abstract characteristics in parallel with increasing development of cognitive capacity.

Oerter's methodological approach of assessing the conceptualization of human nature consisted in a semi-structured interview about human beings and their central aspects, such as tasks, family, work, politics, happiness and meaning of life. He also presented two dilemma stories sensu Kohlberg, which were culturally adapted. In the dilemma stories the hero faces different conflicts, and participants were asked for possible solutions. The structure of these conflicts were the same for all cultures, while the contents varied from culture to culture. Based on hundreds of interviews and dilemma stories from different cultures, Oerter proposes his universal structural model (see Table 2.6) of the concept of human nature.

Table 2.6: Oerters' universal structural model.

Stage	Stage Label	Personality Theory	Social Theory	Action Theory	Thinking Style
I	Humans as actors	Naming and description of overt actions	Possession of persons and objects	action as an entity, no further differentiation: A (G,M,E,C)*	Pre-operational, Concrete-operational
II	Humans as owners of psychological traits	Conception of psychological traits, abilities, skills, and competencies	Instrumentality of other persons	Differentiation of action into: G - M - E	Concrete logical and formal logical operations
IIIa	Autonomous identity	Self-control, self-realization, identity as organizing entity of traits and actions	Others are equal with regard to structure and different with regard to content	Further differentiation of action into: G - M - E - C	Relativistic thinking
IIIb	Mutual identity	Reflection of internal contradictions with regard to incompatible life-styles, values, goals	Identities are defined through each other and the relations between them. The persons involved are not exchangeable	Consequences of the action for others are considered G - M - E - C	Subjective dialectic thinking
IV	Societal (cultural) identity	Contradiction between individual and society; incompatibility of societal demands	Humans as exchangeable elements of a system which determines the individual (macrosystem)	Action as elements of big systems the functioning of which is not predictable through individual actions	Objective dialectic thinking

* A: Action; G: Goal; M: Means; E: End; C: Consequences

The model shows five levels which can be regarded as different developmental stages. These stages follow an internal logic, and their course is invariable (see Piaget, 1992). They can be described by three dimensions: a) increasing complexity, b) increasing integration, and c) increasing permeation from superficial to deeper structures in perceiving and describing a human being. The enumeration of the stages roughly corresponds to Kohlberg's stages of moral judgments (see Kohlberg, 1996). Oerter also identifies a personality theory, a social (or environmental) theory, and an action theory in the understanding of human nature. The fourth element he includes in his model is the thinking style.

Individuals on **stage I** describe a person by overt behavior (personality theory) and possession (social/environmental theory) ("*An adult is someone who goes to work and has a car*"). The action theory does not yet distinguish between the aim, means, result, and consequences of an action. The thinking style can be pre-operational or concrete-logical (Piaget, 1992).

Individuals on **stage II** perceive a person as someone who possesses psychological attributes, competences and values (personality theory). This shows a progression from focusing on overtly observable characteristics (behavior) to underlying characteristics (inner attributes). The social theory recognizes the mutual interdependence of human beings in terms of an instrumental function ("*I help you and you help me*"). The action theory already distinguishes between goals, means, and results, which is reflected in answers showing an orientation toward the future. The thinking style is still concrete-logical, sometimes progressing to formal-logical.

Under normal circumstances, levels I and II are only predominant during childhood, where cognitive capacities are relatively limited.

Individuals on **stage IIIa** subsume behavior and inner attributes of a person under the core concept 'identity' (personality theory). This identity is perceived as autonomous, and human beings are consequently described as self-determined, independent, and responsible for their actions. Autonomy also includes economic independence, self- and environmental control, and self-realization. An adult person knows about his/her inner attributes and potential, and tries to achieve his/her personal goals. The social theory also defines others as autonomous identities who must be respected and tolerated. The action theory now makes a distinction between goals, means, results, and consequences. If an autonomous individual makes a decision, he or she must bear all the positive and negative consequences related to it. The thinking style has advanced to following the rules of logic, and relativistic thinking is introduced (for empirical studies on relativistic thinking see Kramer and Woodruff, 1986).

This relativism is mainly rooted in the recognition that different people have different needs and interests, which are equally valid and must be respected. This new cognition leads to the awareness that there can be several truths which exist in parallel to another.

Individuals on **stage IIIb** regard the human being as a social one, whose identity can only be determined through exchange with others (social theory). This implies, however, that a concept of autonomous identity must have been acquired first (personality theory). This concept leads to the discovery of internal contradictions, since the exchange of two identities can easily result in the conflict of finding the other values, goals and interests attractive, which might be incompatible with one's own. Conflicts for the individual are also perceived in present vs. future goals, ideal vs. real self, and independence vs. interdependence. Autonomy now extends from coping with external demands which are not in line with one's own interests to dealing with internal conflicts of values, goals, and ideas. Another new element in the social theory is the conceptualization of human exchange and interdependence as more than merely functional (mutual help), but as a basic element for satisfying co-existence. Individuals are not easily exchangeable, rather they have acquired a unique significance within a certain configuration. The personality theory also comprises a new component, which is the inconsistency of human beings. Dialectic thinking had to be developed before this concept could arise. The dialectic thinking style at stage IIIb is called subjective, since the origin of inconsistencies is seen as within one or between two or more subjects. Social and personality theories are closely linked at this stage, and influence each other. The individual learns to understand different worldviews and life concepts through the exchange with others, which also helps in comprehending internal contradictions. At the same time, the exposure to own, incompatible goals is the basis for understanding people who are different from what we know. The action theory now considers the consequences of one's actions for all people involved. Social responsibility becomes as important as responsibility for personal fulfillment.

Individuals on **stage IV** conceive the human being as part of a system, which can either contain culture and society as a whole, or identifies entities and structures as subsystems of society. This personality theory leads to a revision of the original visualization of human beings as autonomous by redefining autonomy as being co-determined through socio-historical conditions (including own decisions), and more importantly as assuming responsibility for one's culture and society. Tensions emerge between the individual and society, which lead to the need for adaptation of personal goals in a frame of limiting societal demands. The social theory conceptualizes living together as reciprocally determined within

the system, in which each individual fulfils a certain task as part of the whole organism. Individual members of the system are perceived as exchangeable. The action theory abandons its linear causality of goal, means, result, and consequences since circular causality is needed in a systemic conceptualization. Actions can only change the system if they are performed in solidarity with others. The concept of responsibility is extended to the whole system. The thinking style at this stage is characterized by high complexity and objective dialectic. This means that contradictions cannot be anchored in the individual, but in the objective conflicts within a society at any given historical time.

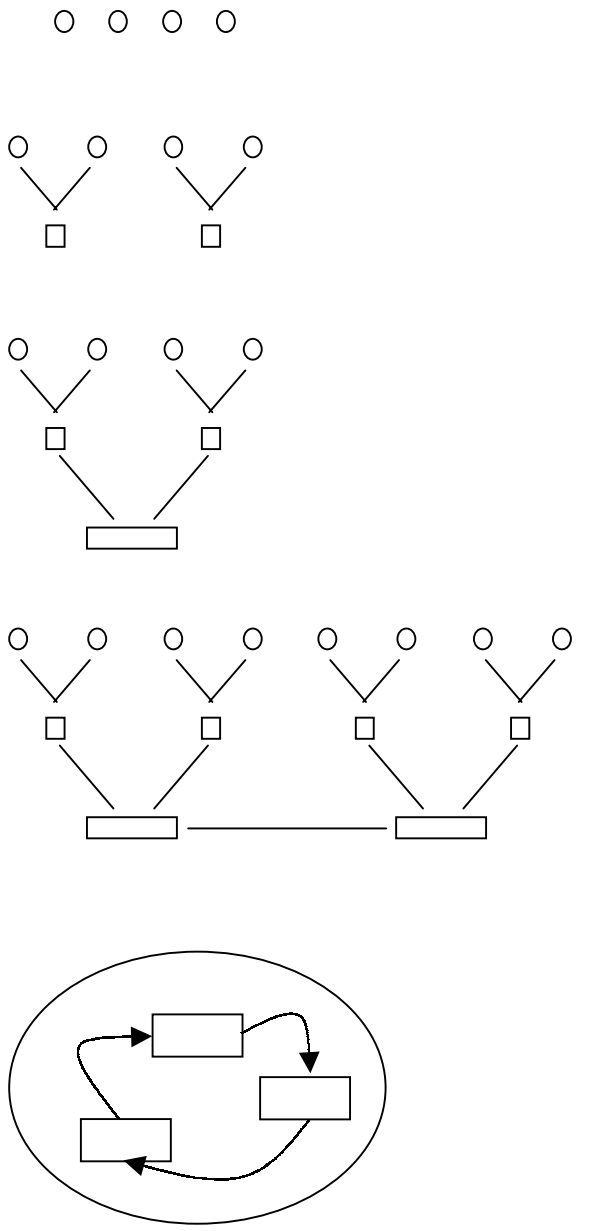

Figure 2.5: Developmental logic of the stages

Summarizing the developmental logic of the five stages, we only find the level of action at stage I, whereas stage II already includes the second level of conceiving human beings, namely inner attributes. At stage IIIa a new level (autonomous identity) is added, and the thinking style becomes dialectic. The level of mutual identity at stage IIIb prepares us for the systemic approach of all levels at stage IV. The level of integration is the highest at stage IV since it comprises the system through personality-, social-, and action theories, and

illuminates different aspects of the same phenomenon. Figure 2.5 illustrates the developmental logic of the stages.

To illustrate the qualitative differences between the stages, five answers to the question 'How would you define responsibility?' found in the Peruvian sub-samples (for detailed description of the sub-samples, see Methodological chapter) are presented in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7: Answers to the question 'How would you define responsibility?

"How would you define responsibility?", Peruvian sub-samples, data collected in 1996	
Stage I	You are responsible when you have a husband and children.
Stage II	A man can be called responsible when he works on the field and does not get drunk every day. A woman can be called responsible when she has prepared supper by the time her husband comes home from work.
Stage IIIa	It means that you know what to do when you have a problem and that you answer for what you have done, even when it was wrong.
Stage IIIb	It means that you don't do anything that could hurt yourself or others. It also means that you should not do to others what you don't want them to do to you.
Stage IV	If you are a responsible person you consider the interest of everyone. I believe that a society can only function when people are not exclusively concerned about their own advantages. This includes not polluting the planet with radioactivity, not making your children's decisions for them, and intervening when injustice is happening around you.

In his cross-cultural study Oerter found that, in spite of their collectivistic society, eastern subjects also conceive human beings as autonomous identities (level IIIa), and western subjects, in spite of their individualistic society, conceive human beings as mutual identities (level IIIb). Both ethnical samples reach an understanding of human beings on level IV (see Table 2.8).

Table 2.8: Distribution of levels of conceptualization of human nature in four different cultures (Oerter, 1996).

	IIIa, IIIa-IIIb	**IIIb**	**IIIb-IV, IV**	**N**
USA	16 (14.8%)	56 (51.9%)	36 (33.3%)	108
Korea	22 (19.5%)	44 (38.9%)	47 (41.6%)	113
Japan	21 (42%)	18 (36%)	11 (22%)	50
Indonesia	29 (40.8%)	25 (35.2%)	17 (23.9%)	71

In Table 2.8, Oerter opens two 'semi-categories', namely IIIa-IIIb and IIIb-IV. The first one forms one category with IIIa, the latter forms one with IV.

While most Indonesian participants conceptualize the human being at stage IIIa, and only reach the transitional level at IIIb-IV (not distinguishable in Table 2.8), Korean subjects

cover the whole range from level IIIa to IV, with the lowest weight at stage IIIa and the highest at IIIb-IV. Interestingly, Japanese participants have a stronger focus on stage IIIa than on higher stages and more than American subjects, who are most strongly represented in the developmental category IIIb.

Both western and eastern subjects stressed the importance of acquiring knowledge about oneself as an individual. This finding is in contrast to Triandis' (1989) and Markus and Kitayama's (1991) results. Oerter did confirm, however, that western participants defined autonomy according to individualistic principles (self-fulfillment, personal control, independence from parents and other authorities), while the conceptualization of eastern participants were in line with collectivistic principles (interdependence, relationship with significant others). Western subjects regard autonomy as being able to act independently, eastern subjects define it as being able to act in a way which is useful for society and contributes to maintaining harmony within the group. Economic independence in western concepts is important for reaching personal goals, while the eastern subjects strive for economic independence in order to reach goals for their reference group or society. It is important to point out that Oerter found bigger differences between some eastern cultures like Japan, China, and Korea than between Japan and the USA. Möhwald (1996) also reports increasing individualistic tendencies in Japan. This shows how inaccurate a global distinction between 'East' and 'West' can be. One reason for finding western elements in eastern cultures could be the increasing influence of western standards over the rest of the world during the last decades (Featherstone, 1993). This would imply that the same findings in different cultures are not so much a proof for universal characteristics in the concept of human nature, but rather an indicator for a strong recent expansion of western values (Oerter, 1999). Furthermore, collectivistic characteristics were found in the USA sample. Western subjects conceptualized human beings as independent and interdependent identities. Oerter concludes that the structure of the concept of human nature (increasing complexity of stages) should be regarded as universal (like the development of cognitive skills), while the different focus on the self as independent or interdependent on these different structure levels is culture-specific, although a broad variation of this focus within a culture can be found.

In his *integrative model of universal stages and culture-specific pattern* Oerter (1996) combines universal and culture-determined findings, and extends Markus and Kitayama's approach of the independent vs. interdependent self to the universal structures he found in western and eastern cultures.

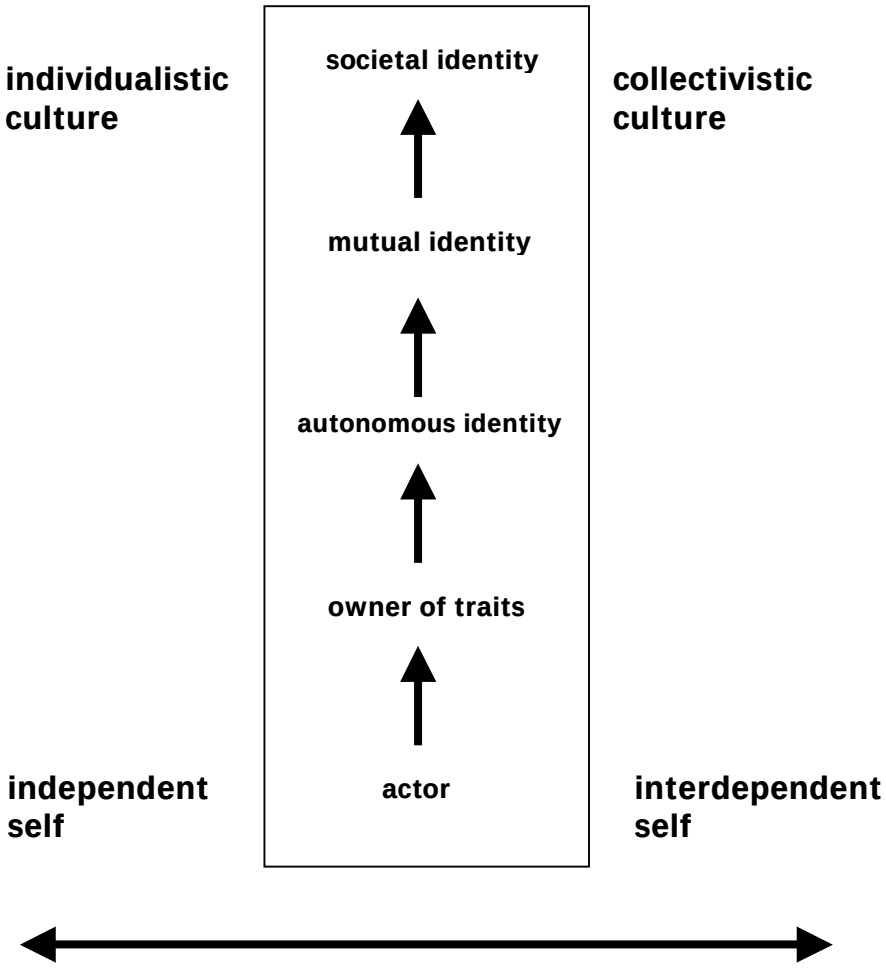

Figure 2.6: Oerter's integrative model.

The stages are assembled vertically, showing the universal development from simple to complex concepts of human nature. Higher levels always integrate lower levels, which form a necessary condition for the next stage. Left and right from the vertical axis, the culture-specific development of individualistic and collectivistic societies with their respective focus on independent vs. interdependent self is illustrated. The model does not show the collectivistic elements in individualistic cultures or the individualistic elements in collectivistic cultures, but it represents the strongest findings from empirical studies in which the independent self is mostly predominant in individualistic societies and the interdependent self is mostly predominant in collectivistic societies.

It should again be stressed that societies are becoming less and less homogeneous, and most cultures under investigation seem to be dominated by cultural change rather than by cultural tradition (Helfrich, 1999; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Mays et al., 1996). Even in the USA, which can be regarded as the prototype of an individualistic society, significant variation in individualism has been found in a recent study conducted by Vandello and Cohen (1999). The authors created an eight-item index, which ranked American states in terms of

collectivist versus individualist tendencies. As predicted, collectivist tendencies were strongest in the Deep South, and individualist tendencies were strongest in the Mountain West and Great Plains. In the second part of the study, convergent validity for the index was obtained by showing that state collectivism scores predicted variation in individual attitudes, as measured by a national survey.

In addition to changes of values in societies, the extent of cultural impact varies significantly between individuals, since every individual constructs its 'personal culture' (Valsiner, 1989; 1994). Thus, every kind of generalization must only be made with due precaution.

2.4 The search for meaning and the pursuit of happiness

This chapter begins with an overview on meaning in life and its effects on people's cognition, emotion, behavior, and health. It suggests possible reasons for the universal quest for meaning, and looks at the circumstances under which people are searching for meaning. The chapter then presents empirical studies on people's meanings at different stages of their lives. Subsequently, the construct of happiness and empirical studies of its assessment are presented, and possible interconnections between meaning and happiness are discussed. The chapter then returns to some selected empirical approaches to assess meaning in life. It does not claim to present an exhaustive overview of studies on meaning, but tries to offer an insight into different techniques of how to explore what people perceive as meaningful. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the development of an instrument to assess meaning in life. In research literature, the terms 'meaning of life' and 'meaning in life' are found to describe the same construct. I will use both terms as synonyms.

Throughout history, people of all nations have searched for explanations for the events they encounter, whether big or small, and the experiences they have, whether positive or negative. It seems to be against human nature to accept the things that happen around us without searching for underlying reasons. The urge to understand and the inner drive for meaning, for internal logic, for structure and coherence, seems to be an ineradicable part of human nature (Johnson, 1987; Loewer & Rey, 1991; Heider, 1958; Binswanger, 1963; Schmalt, 1984; Weiner, 1985; Jones et al., 1972). To believe in life's purpose is to believe that we are here for a reason, whether chosen by ourselves, assigned by society, or decreed by divine powers (see Frankl, 1976, 1985). The belief that there is no purpose in life, which inevitably questions our significance and value, seems much harder to bear, and decreases psychological well-being as well as the ability to cope with stress, illness, and life crises (Kish

& Moody, 1989; Rothbaum, Weisz & Snyder, 1982; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992; Antonovsky, 1979; Taylor, 1983). There are empirical studies on the relationship between perceived meaningfulness in life and recovering from traumatizing events, such as cancer (Kreibich-Fischer, 1996; Csef & Flingelli, 1993; Taylor, Lichtman & Wood, 1984), stroke (Thompson, 1991; Frey, Wingerter-Wolters & Schulz-Hardt, 1997), HIV diagnosis (Bliemeister et al., 1992), addiction (Lukas, 1994; Kern, 1992), rape (Draucker & Stern, 2000), and incest (Silver, Boon & Stones, 1983), which all indicate the protective effect of perceived meaning.

Two general types of meaning of life can be distinguished: the *ultimate* or *cosmic* and the *specific* or *personal* meaning (Wong, 1998b). The ultimate meaning addresses questions of a universal purpose of human existence and is approached by philosophical and religious weltanschauungen. Specific meaning in everyday living is constructed by individuals through engaging in activities, which they perceive, as worthwhile and pursuing personal goals. Specific meaning can be part of the ultimate meaning, but can also exist independently. Effective coping with traumata such as suffering, loss, illness, and death often requires both types of meaning.

Even ideological currents like existentialism and nihilism, which emphasize existence rather than essence and deny a general purpose in life, still propose the creation of individual meaning in absence of a cosmic one, to cope with both daily and major crises (Sartre, 1956). This search for a personal meaning is a major theme in existentialism. Albert Camus, for example, proposes love as a human goal which is both attainable and worthwhile. In his novel 'The Plague', which can be seen as a parable of the terror caused by the German occupation of France in the Second World War, Camus resumes:

> *"But others (…) had, without faltering, welcomed back the loved one who they thought was lost to them. And for some time, anyhow, they would be happy. They knew now that if there is one thing one can always yearn for, and sometimes attain, it is human love. But for those others, who aspired beyond and above the human individual towards something they could not even imagine, there had been no answer. (…) Rieux was thinking it was only right that those whose desires are limited to man and his humble yet formidable love, should enter, if only now and again, into their reward" (Camus, 1947, pp.244-245).*

Klinger (1998) argues that the necessities of life development have, through the process of evolution, led every organism to strive for goals in order to survive, which makes the meaning of life a biologically determined characteristic of human beings. He concludes his evolutionary explanation:

> *"The human brain cannot sustain purposeless living. It was not designed for that. Its systems are designed for purposive action, and when that is blocked, they deteriorate, and the emotional feedback from idling those systems signals extreme discomfort and motivates the search for renewed purpose and hence meaning" (Klinger, 1998, p. 33).*

Similarly, albeit from a psychological point of view, Rogers (1980) believed that

> *"our organisms as a whole have a wisdom and purposiveness which go well beyond our conscious thought" (Rogers, 1980, p. 106).*

Schulz-Hardt and Frey (1997) suggest three possible reasons for the universal quest for meaning:

1. Meaning enables us to find an orientation in life
2. Meaning can be understood as a defense mechanism. We refuse to accept that we are finite and our existence is arbitrary, and cling to the hope that all existence must have a meaning. Solomon, Greenberg and Pyszczynki (1991, p. 93) state that we have to cope with "the terror resulting from our awareness of vulnerability and death". Meaning helps to reduce this feeling of terror.
3. The personal search for meaning can be understood as the reflection of an objective meaning. This metaphysical approach claims that we look for a meaning because there is one

Terzani (1997) adds a fourth possible explanation, which is the wish to comprehend life's mystery in order to find a way to influence and partly control the future, and thus to have power over one's own fate.

Psychological research on meaning of life has strongly been influenced by the work of Victor Frankl (1969), who regarded the will to meaning as a universal human characteristic which determines mental and physical well-being. Frankl was imprisoned in several concentration camps in Nazi Germany from 1942 to 1945. He observed that some prisoners were able to adapt to the horrifying environment, and managed to find some purpose in their destiny and the suffering they were exposed to. In contrast to others, who had apparently lost

any sense of purpose, these prisoners seemed more likely to survive (see Korotkov, 1998). Frankl defined meaning as the need to find sense through serving some worthy purpose, and founded his '*logotherapy*' to fight the '*existential vacuum*', which can be regarded as the opposite of meaning, making people ill (Frankl, 1976). In an informal survey of patients and staff in a hospital Frankl (1985) concluded that a remarkably high figure of 51 % reported lack of meaning in their lives.

Also Seligman (1988) regards the loss of meaning as a main source for high depression rate in western industrialized countries today. He states that finding meaning requires

> *"an attachment to something larger than the lonely self. To the extent that young people now find it hard to take seriously their relationship with God, to care about their relationship with the country or to be part of a large and abiding family, they will find it very difficult to find meaning in life. To put in another way, the self is a very poor site for finding meaning" (Seligman, 1988, p. 55).*

Petrie and Azariah (1990), as well as Petrie and Brook (1992), found that a perception of meaningfulness predicted life satisfaction, pain intensity, and suicide ideation in their sample of 150 hospitalized patients, which is in line with Frankl's observations.

Research in organizational psychology provides evidence for the influence of perceived meaning on well-being, work satisfaction, work motivation, and achievement, as well as low absenteeism and turnover (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Kleinbeck, 1987; Gatersleben, 1995). Management style also seems to profit significantly from perceived meaning (Kieser, Reber & Wunderer, 1995; Frey, 1994).

An inverse relationship between the perception of a meaningful life and fear of death has been reported by Florian and Snowden (1989), Yalom (1980), Tate (1981), Ochsmann (1994), and others.

It is not likely that the explicit search for meaning is a topic for all individuals and all cultures. Although research provides strong data for having important purposes as a human universal at any stage of life (DePaola & Ebersole, 1995; DeVogler & Ebersole, 1980, 1981, 1983; Ebersole & DePaola, 1987, 1989; Ebersole & DeVogler, 1981; Klinger, 1977; Taylor & Ebersole, 1993), this does not imply that everyone is actively seeking meaning. Baumeister (1991) points out: "The meaning of life is a problem for people who are not desperate, people who can count on survival, comfort, security, and some measure of pleasure" (Baumeister, 1991, p. 3) and Klinger adds "It is not a problem for people who for any other reason find

themselves persistently engaged in striving for valued goals. The more introspective among them, especially when someone else raises the issue, may well be inclined to formulate for themselves one or more consistent life purposes, but probably most would not otherwise be bothered" (Klinger, 1998, p. 33). Similarly, Auhagen (2000) believes that it is not likely that day to day practices will be questioned as to how meaningful they are. The question why one is actually doing the things one does and whether they make any sense other than 'keeping it going' is more likely to arise during times of particular stress.

Baumeister's view was preceded by the German philosopher Brecht (see Thomson & Sacks, 1994). Based on Marx' theory, Brecht argues that our basic needs must be satisfied before we begin asking philosophical questions about the purpose of life. Marx had distinguished *constant needs* (e.g. sleep and nutrition), which are equal across cultures, from *relative needs*, which vary between cultures (e.g. possessing goods or belonging to certain groups). He adopts an anti-constructivist view, arguing that both the social environment and the physical and material conditions to which human beings are exposed determine their self-conceptualization and their thoughts. Thus, a person who is struggling for mere survival is most unlikely to be concerned with abstract questions such as meaning. Only once basic conditions of life are given will the individual make full use of his or her intellectual abilities, including the search for a purpose (see Fromm, 1980). Maslow's hierarchical model of needs supports this hypothesis, claiming that the higher individuals move from basic needs to meta-needs, the more meaningful their lives become (Maslow, 1968, 1971). Empirical research has not been able to provide systematic evidence for the conditions that raise the question of life's meaning.

In this context, it should be mentioned that some philosophers as well as researchers believe that human's urge for meaning is a western myth (Yeats, as cited in Hepburn, 1965). The belief that life must serve a purpose to be perceived as worth living should not be regarded as a tragic, existential fact but as a cultural artifact. According to this position the eastern world has never assumed a purpose in life, or perceived that the search for meaning represents a problem to be resolved. They view life as a secret which merely requires to be lived and does not need any explanation. The Indian philosopher Bhagwan Shee Rajneesh states that "existence has no aim. It is just a journey. The journey in life is so beautiful – who cares for an aim?" (Rajneesh, as cited in Gunther, 1979). However, this position is contradicted by empirical and philosophical evidence (see Terzani, 1997), which suggests that the search for meaning is equally prevalent in eastern cultures, although these cultures

conceptualize their purpose in life differently, and may view 'nothingness' as the ultimate meaning (Lebra, 1992; Florian & Snowden, 1989).

2.4.1 What are people's meanings in life?

Peter Ebersole and colleagues have conducted several studies to identify the most frequent personal meanings over the life span. They asked their subjects of different age groups to write about the things that had meaning in their life, to rank them in order of importance, and to cite an example of the strongest one (for a summary, see Ebersole, 1998).

There has not been much research on the age at which people start looking for meaning in life. Most empirical studies focus on college students and older adults, but an investigation conducted by Taylor and Ebersole (1993), who asked 26 children in first grade about their understanding of meaning, revealed that six-year old children already have a concept of meaning. It should be noted, however, that Taylor and Ebersole substituted their usual question "What is your deepest life meaning?" with a more child-oriented question, namely "What is most important to you?". It could be argued that not everything that is important in one's life must be connected to meaning in life. The importance could emerge as a result of outer circumstances such as compliance (e.g. while it could be important for the child to get to school on time because it is the rule, being punctual would not necessarily be regarded as a meaning in the child's life). Further research with a clear definition on what distinguishes 'important goals' from 'meaningful goals' would be needed here to confirm whether young children already have an understanding of meaning.

Another study with young participants was conducted by DeVogler and Ebersole (1983), who asked 116 US teenagers in eighth grade, age 13-14, about their comprehension of meaning. The authors found that the percentage of participants who were able to discuss this topic coherently was not lower than that found in older samples. Their self-reports were more simple and naïve than those of older samples, but the participants were able to write with clarity about those matters which provided meaning for them. The following is an example taken from that sample:

> *"The one thing that is very meaningful to me is my family. They are important to be in my life. They help me, they are kind to me, and they love me. I would be lost if I didn't have them. I would feel as if I was alone and I would be scared. I love my family and I know they love me so we all get along well. If I didn't have a father, it would be sad, and if I didn't have a mother it would be sad. Having*

> *one would be like not having any at all. I could only talk to my one parent about certain things and then have no one to tell the other things to. That's why my family is so important to me" (DeVogler & Ebersole, 1983, p. 429).*

To provide a comparison with participants of older samples, the following quote about the family as meaning in life is from a 43-year-old man:

> *"My family is an important meaning in my life. It is they that comfort me when I'm down, share my success and failures with me, provide companionship and help me with my problems. It is with their help and guidance that I keep a reasonable balance in my life between work and play. They are also responsible for providing some of the challenges in my life that help me grow" (DeVogler & Ebersole, 1981, p. 89).*

Table 2.9 gives an overview of the categories into which the self-reports about meaning in life of different age groups were listed. The percentages refer to the total number of answers given by all the participants, not to the number of subjects. On average, each person named three meanings. Most of the first graders named only one. The individuals' order of importance is not distinguishable in this table. Each column adds up to 100 %.

Adults' answers can usually be listed in the following eight categories: *Relationships* (interpersonal orientation including family, friends, and romantic relationships), *Belief* (living according to one's religious, spiritual, political, or social beliefs), *Growth* (self-improvement, reaching goals, and developing talents), *Service* (a helping and giving orientation towards other people), *Health* (maintaining physical and/or mental health), *Life Work* (meaning derived from one's occupation or job), *Obtaining* (emphasis on materialistic preference, does not include psychological rewards like obtaining respect or prestige), and *Pleasure* (general expressions that meaning consists in pleasure, happiness, and contentment) (DeVogler & Ebersole, 1980, 1981; Ebersole & DeVogler, 1981; Ebersole & DePaola, 1987). The teenagers sample added three new categories, which were *Activities* (sports or hobbies), *School* (obtaining better grades), and *Appearance* (attractiveness and clothes) (DeVogler & Ebersole, 1983). The category '*Understanding'*, originally referring to getting deeper insight into life, was later subsumed under the category '*Growth'*, and is no longer part of the current categorization system.

Table 2.9: Main meaning in life across the life span.

	Age 6-7 (*N* = 26)	**Age 13-14 (*N* = 116)**	**Age 30-80 (*N* = 96)**	**Mean Age 76 (*N* = 36)**
Relationship	42 %	46 %	46 %	45 %
Health	4 %	9 %	6 %	22 %
Obtaining	8 %	8 %	2 %	3 %
School	4 %	8 %	-	-
Activities	21 %	9 %	-	-
Growth	8 %	2 %	7 %	-
Appearance	-	5 %	-	-
Belief	8 %	3 %	17 %	3 %
Service	-	1 %	5 %	6 %
Life Work	-	-	7 %	-
Pleasure	-	1 %	-	19 %
Understanding	-	-	2 %	-
Miscellaneous	4 %	8 %	8 %	2 %
Study	Taylor & Ebersole, 1993	DeVogler & Ebersole, 1983	DeVogler & Ebersole, 1981	Ebersole & DePaola, 1987

This system has proved to be a satisfactory classification for meaning in life since only a relatively small number of answers (usually around 5 %, so far never exceeding 8%) could not be included in the established categories. These were placed in the 'rest' category '*Miscellaneous'*. For the studies presented above, different raters were able to reach an inter-rater-agreement between 73 % and 93 % when categorizing the essays.

In an earlier study on the congruence between self-reports and second-order reports, McCarthy (1983) had used six of these categories to assess meaning of life in 25 residents at the Orleans Convalescent and Retirement Center, aged between 72 and 99 years. He asked a confidante or close relative to rate the resident's main sources of life satisfaction on a five-point scale, presenting items which reflected the categories Health, Life Work, Growth, Relationships, Belief, and Service. As in the sample of Ebersole and DePaola (1987) the respondents rated Relationship and Health as the most important categories, Service and Belief were given intermediate ratings, while Growth and Life Work were perceived as less important.

The importance of interpersonal relationships for a meaningful life could also be replicated by Debats (1999), who found in his samples of 115 male and female patients of

psychotherapy and 169 male and female non-patients that relationships are the most frequent sources of meaning in life.

Similarly, Richter (1993) showed in a sample of 213 German participants (average age 44 years) that 'social relationships' was the most common response (63 %), followed by 'doing good for other people' (50 %), and 'being engaged in one's job' (45 %).

Jenerson-Madden, Ebersole and Romero (1992) used Ebersole's categorization system to compare the personal life meanings of 46 Mexicans with an American matched sample, and found some significant differences regarding the most prevalent types of meaning. 70 % of the Mexicans reported that relationships, especially those with their children, were the most central to them, while only 47 % of the Americans held relationships as their first preference, and only half as many emphasized their children within the Relationship-category. Another interesting difference was that nine Americans, as opposed to only one Mexican, chose Belief as their most important meaning.

In all their studies on meaning across the life span, Ebersole and colleagues found no evidence for a perceived lack of meaning in life, as argued by Frankl (1985) or Yalom (1980). Participants were asked to rate on a seven-point scale whether their lives were 'empty of meaning' (1) to 'full of meaning' (7). Less than 5 % (no gender differences) of all their subjects reported that their life had no meaning. The over-all mean for this item was 5.9, and option 1 (lack of meaning) was hardly ever chosen in any sample. The authors concede, however, that a considerable number of participants held relatively superficial meanings (e.g. Ebersole, 1998). The discrepancy between Frankl's startling revelation that 51 % of patients and nursing staff in a hospital setting felt that their life had no meaning (Frankl, 1976) and Ebersole's findings of less than 5 % can be explained by their different methodological approaches. Frankl asked people if they had ever experienced meaningless in the course of their life, while Ebersole et al. asked if people considered their life meaningless at the present time. One would expect a larger number of people to have experienced the feeling of purposeless at some stage in their lives than to be doing so at one given point, which bridges the gap between the varying percentages.

2.4.2 What makes people happy?

My electronic search of literature on happiness showed that this subject has only very recently demanded more room in empirical research. This finding is in line with Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), who describe a switch of research interest over the last decade from negative variables such as depression, stress, and anger to positive variables such as

subjective well-being, quality of life, and happiness. In their introductory article of the millennial issue of the *American Psychologist*, which is entirely dedicated to Positive Psychology, they state that

> *"the aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).*

Diener (2000) defines happiness as one of two components of subjective well-being, emerging from people's affective and cognitive evaluations of their lives. The second component is life satisfaction. According to Diener (2000, p. 34), people experience happiness under the following circumstances:

- When they feel many pleasant and few unpleasant emotions
- When they are engaged in interesting activities
- When they experience many pleasures and few pains
- When they are satisfied with important domains of their life, and consider it worthwhile

It seems plausible to combine the frequency and intensity of pleasant emotions when assessing happiness. One would assume that those people who are intensely happy for most of the time are happier than those who are intensely happy for a short time, or only moderately happy for a long time. However, the findings of Diener, Sandvik and Pavot (1991) show that frequency is a better predictor than intensity for happiness.

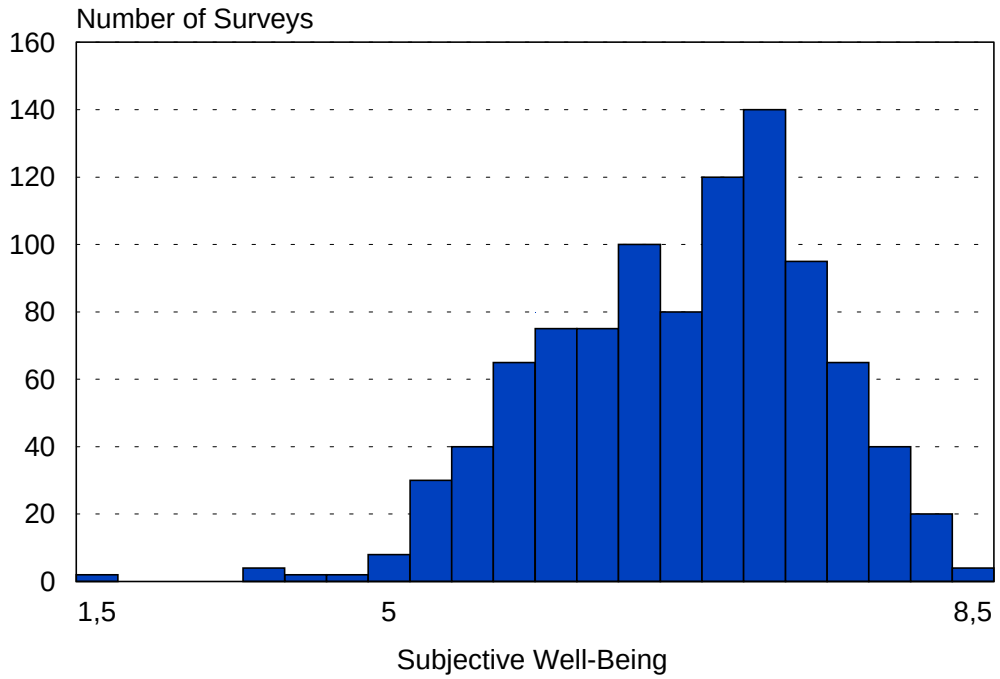

Figure 2.7: Subjective well-being (Myers & Diener, 1996).

Cross-cultural studies could show that all over the world, most men and women of all ages under investigation report being at least moderately happy, which means being above neutral in mood most of the time (Diener & Diener, 1996). Nevertheless, intense positive moments seem to be rare, even among the happiest individuals. This suggests that, contrary to popular opinion, intense, ecstatic, positive experiences are not necessary for a happy life (Diener et al., 1991; Parducci, 1995).

Diener aggregated data from 916 surveys of 1.1 million people in 45 nations. He recalibrated subjective well-being onto a 0-to-10 scale, with 0 being the low extreme (unhappy, completely dissatisfied with life), 5 being neutral, and 10 being the high extreme (completely happy). The results are shown in Figure 2.7.

Table 2.10: Importance of subjective well-being to college students (Diener, 2000, p. 36).

Nation	How often do you think about?		How important is?		
	Life satisfaction	**Happiness**	**Life satisfaction**	**Happiness**	**Money**
Argentina	5.63	5.62	6.67	6.78	4.46
Australia	5.27	5.51	6.59	6.66	4.44
Bahrain	5.25	5.14	6.08	6.21	5.01
China	4.20	4.43	5.67	5.91	4.82
Germany	5.43	5.27	6.62	5.95	4.11
Greece	5.52	5.54	6.73	6.77	4.89
Hungary	5.43	5.59	6.43	6.57	4.30
India	4.74	5.20	5.75	5.97	4.81
Indonesia	5.17	5.78	6.16	6.63	4.89
Japan	4.27	4.74	6.02	6.31	4.70
Lithuania	5.31	5.38	6.18	6.62	5.23
Singapore	5.06	5.24	6.25	6.59	4.80
Slovenia	5.56	5.22	6.78	6.62	4.60
South Africa	5.53	5.75	6.44	6.61	5.00
Tanzania	4.46	4.61	5.06	5.45	5.17
Turkey	5.16	5.63	6.25	5.75	5.25
United States	5.19	5.45	6.39	6.58	4.68

Note: The 1 to 7 "How often do you think about?" scale was anchored by 1 (*never*), 4 (*sometimes*), and 7 (*very much, several times a day or more*). Importance ratings were reported on a 1-7 scale, where 1 was *of no importance whatsoever* and 7 was *extraordinarily important and valuable*.

Suh, Diener, Oishi and Triandis (1998) asked 7,204 college students of 42 nations how they viewed happiness, life satisfaction, and money. Table 2.10 shows the mean values for how frequently the respondents reported thinking about happiness and life satisfaction, and how important they perceived happiness, life satisfaction and money.

An interesting result is that students from all countries included in the study - western and eastern, highly industrialized and hardly industrialized, rich and poor - considered happiness to be important, and thought about it often. Among the whole sample, 69 % placed happiness at the top of the importance scale, and only 6 % rated money as more important than happiness. It must not be forgotten, however, that students all over the world mostly belong to families with an above-average income compared to the rest of the population, and do not usually have to be worried about matters of sheer existence. They might therefore not be representative for the rest of the nation.

Self-reports on happiness reveal that, whatever research strategy was used, people of both sexes, all ages, and all races under investigation, usually consider themselves to be happier than most other people. In 1998, a survey conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation asked 1,003 American adults whom of the following five persons they thought would be the happiest (Black & McCafferty, 1998). Almost half (49 %) believed themselves to be the happiest, followed by 'Oprah Winfrey' (23 %), 'the Pope' (12%), 'Bill Gates' (7 %), and 'Chelsea Clinton' (3 %), with the remaining 6 % answering 'I don't know'.

After reviewing surveys across many countries, Myers and Diener (1995) conclude that no particular time in life is the happiest or unhappiest. Contrary to common opinion, neither the insecurities of adolescence, the midlife crises, nor the decline of physical and mental skills in old age produce a larger amount of unhappy people. Every age group contains a large number of happy people and a small number of unhappy people. Inglehart (1990) reviewed surveys of 170,000 adults in 16 countries and found no gender differences in self-reported happiness. Michalos (1991) supports this conclusion, reviewing surveys of 18,000 university students in 39 countries. Haring, Stock and Okun (1984), who conducted a meta-analysis of 146 other studies, also confirm this result.

Convergent validation for self-reported happiness is provided by reports from family members and close friends, who share the participant's perception of his/her happiness (Pavot, Diener, Colvin & Sandvik, 1991; Sandvik, Diener & Seidlitz, 1993). Self-reported happiness predicts other indicators of well-being. As opposed to depressed people, happy people are less hostile, less abusive, and less vulnerable to disease. They are also more forgiving, trusting, creative, sociable, helpful, and healthy (Myers, 1993; Veenhoven, 1988; Weisse, 1992).

What makes people happy? Brickman and Campbell (1971) view happiness as relatively independent from outer circumstances. They introduce their concept of the 'hedonic treadmill', which means that people might initially react strongly to positive and negative

events, but then tend to adapt over a relatively short time and return to their original level of happiness. This level of happiness, according to some researchers, is influenced by people's personality rather than by situational factors, and is partly hereditary (Tellegen et al., 1988; Goldsmith, 1996; Diener & Larsen, 1984; Magnus & Diener, 1991). The hedonic treadmill might present a disadvantage in those cases, where raised accomplishments and possessions also raise higher expectations. People very soon acclimatize to the new level, so it no longer makes them happy. On the other hand, it presents an advantage in those cases where misfortune loses its original negative impact and people adapt to the negative circumstances so they are no longer unhappy. Argyle (1986) found that lottery winners tend to gain only a temporary rise in happiness from their winnings. Silver (1982) found that persons with spinal cord injuries were intensely unhappy immediately after their accident, but adapted (emotionally) over the course of only eight weeks to their new condition. Positive emotions predominated over negative emotions in her sample, returning to the baseline conditions of mood. Similarly, Suh, Diener and Fujita (1996) could show that the effects of major positive and negative life events, such as losing one's job or being promoted, lost their emotional impact and people mostly returned to their original level of happiness. Headey and Wearing (1992) propose a dynamic equilibrium model which also claims that positive and negative events might move individuals temporarily away from their original level of happiness, which is determined by their personality, but they will sooner or later return to it.

In spite of the impressive body of literature on adaptation, there is also evidence that people do not completely acclimatize to all conditions. Frederick and Loewenstein (1999) conclude that most people adapt rapidly to some circumstances (e.g. imprisonment), more slowly to other conditions (e.g. the death of a loved one), and little or not at all to other circumstances (e.g. noise). A study by Mehnert, Kraus, Nadler and Boyd (1990) could show that individuals who were born with one or more physical disabilities reported lower levels of subjective well-being than persons without these disabilities. This finding suggests that people do not always adapt fully to all circumstances.

Apart from studies investigating the influence of personality on happiness, the scientific research focuses on three possible correlates of happiness: *money* (personal income and national economic growth), *close relationships*, and *religious faith*. Research on wealth and well-being yields two main results: overall, happiness seems to be lower amongst the very poor, but once a certain standard is reached, money matters surprisingly little for people's well-being. Argyle (1999) found that in poor countries, such as India, a higher income predicts greater well-being. In richer countries, however, affluence has remarkably little

influence on happiness (Inglehart, 1990; Lykken, 1999). Diener, Horwitz and Emmons (1985) surveyed the 100 wealthiest Americans, as depicted in *Forbes*, and found that the average of this sample was only slightly happier than the ordinary American, and even included deeply unhappy individuals. Myers (2000) was able to show that economic growth in affluent countries, such as the USA and Great Britain, did not lead to an increase in happiness. In America, the number of people reporting themselves 'very happy' has even declined slightly, although not significantly, from 35 % in 1957 to 33 % in 1998.

As for close relationships, their positive effect on happiness could be empirically confirmed. Pavot, Diener and Fujita (1990) found that people report happier feelings when they are in the company of close others. There is an impressive amount of literature, which shows that people are happier in a partnership than without a partner (see Mastekaasa, 1994). Several surveys in the USA and Europe concur in the result that married women and men are significantly happier and more satisfied with life than single women and men, even when other variables such as age and income are statistically controlled. They are also significantly happier than those who have separated or divorced (Diener et al., 1999).

As shown in Figure 2.8, the National Opinion Research Center surveyed 35,024 Americans between 1972 and 1996 and found that 40 % of married participants said that they were very happy. This is almost double the 24 % of never-married participants who said the same.

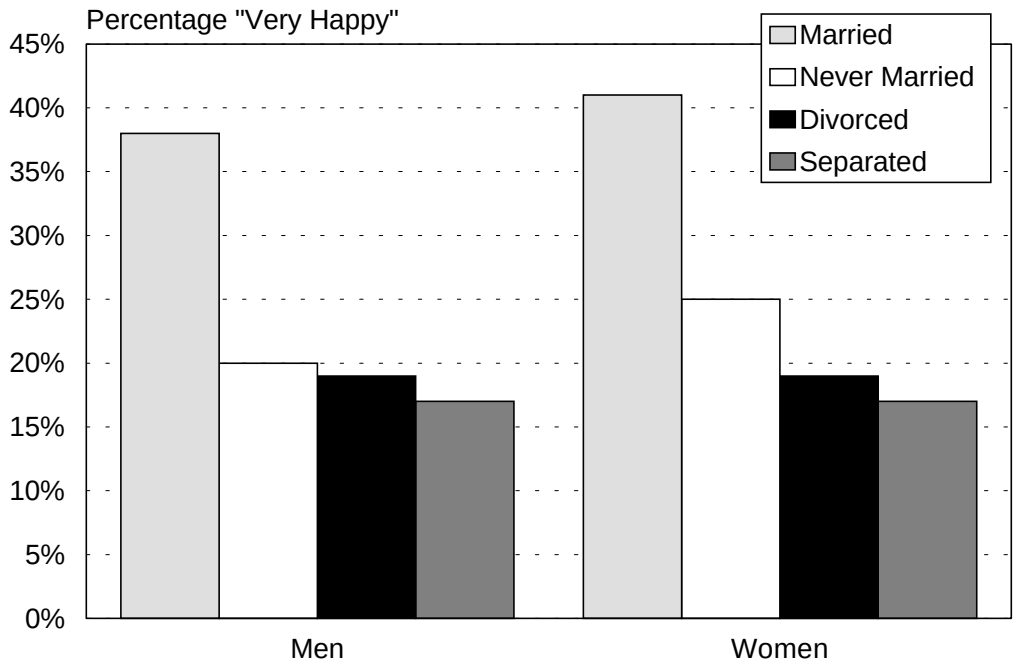

Figure 2.8: Marital status and happiness (Myers, p. 63).

What these data are not able to show is why married people are happier than singles. Does marriage lead to happiness, or does happiness lead to marriage? Both directions seem plausible. Veenhoven (1988) could show that happy people are socially more attractive than unhappy people and are therefore more appealing marriage partners. Viewed as such, happy people are more likely to form happy relationships and get married. On the other hand, Mastekaasa (1995) suggests that happiness emerges from the beneficial effects of marriage, such as intimacy, commitment, and support. Thus, it seems sensible to assume in line with Myers (2000) that "the traffic between marriage and happiness appears to be two-way" (Myers, 2000, p. 63).

As for religious faith and happiness, surveys in various nations revealed that religiously active people report higher levels of happiness than religiously inactive people (Inglehart, 1990). The National Opinion Research Center surveys showed that there is a higher number of people who report to be 'very happy' amongst the group which feels 'extremely close to God', namely 41 %, while 29% of the group which feels 'somewhat close to God' says that they are 'very happy', and only 23% of the group that feels 'not close to God or unbelieving' reports to be 'very happy'. Figure 2.9 shows the same correlation between religious attendance (going to church and participating in religious activities) and the percentage of people who report to be very happy.

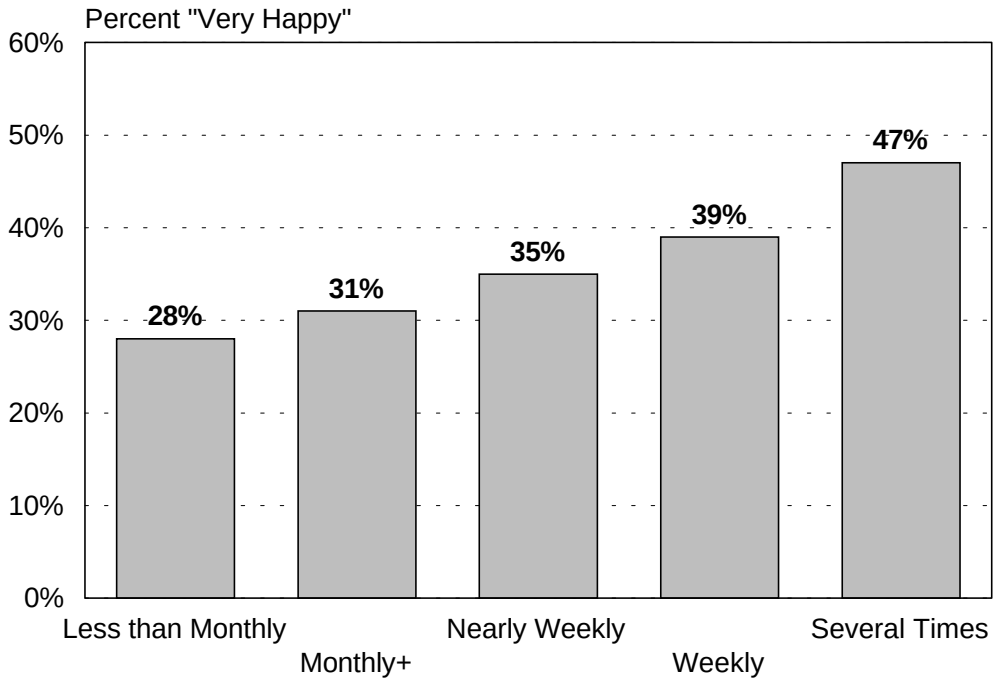

Figure 2.9: Religious attendance and happiness (Myers, 2000, p. 65).

Friedrich, Cohen and Wilturner (1988) could show that mothers of mentally handicapped children are less vulnerable to depression when they are religious. Okun and Stock (1987) revealed in their meta-analysis that the two best predictors of life satisfaction for people of older age are health and religiousness.

And again the question arises why religious people are happier than non-religious people. Ellison, Gay and Glass (1989) suggest that communities sharing a strong faith provide a high amount of social support, which leads to an increase in happiness. Another highly plausible explanation is that religion makes people perceive their lives as meaningful, which in turn leads to an increase in happiness (see chapter 2.3). The inverse theoretical assumption would suggest that happy people are more likely to engage in religious activities and to believe in God. I did not find any studies investigating this assumed relationship between happiness and faith.

Csikszentmihaly (1990, 1999) followed a different approach to explore the nature of happiness. He observed increased quality of life when our skills meet the demands of our work and leisure activities. If persons are stressed and overwhelmed by the conditions of their environment, or conversely underwhelmed and bored, they are unlikely to be happy. If they find themselves in the middle of these opposing poles, managing the challenges around them, they are likely to experience what Csikszentmihaly calls '*flow'*, an intense feeling of happiness.

Summarizing these results, it can be concluded that internal factors, such as personality, and external factors, such as money, close relationships, religious faith and the right amount of challenging stimuli at work and leisure, influence happiness. It should also be noted that some sources of happiness and subjective distress differ profoundly for men and women, for parents and children, and for the same individuals at different stages of life as they confront predictably different adaptive problems (Buss, 1999).

The American researcher David Buss (1999, 2000) also investigates happiness. In contrast to the studies just cited, he focuses on the group of unhappy people, and the possible reasons for their unhappiness. He claims that "happiness is a common goal toward which people strive, but for many it remains frustratingly out of reach" (Buss, 2000, p.15). In his article 'The evolution of happiness' Buss (2000) examines some impediments to happiness, and then offers suggestions for how to overcome these obstacles. He observes remarkable discrepancies between modern and ancestral environments. Although life has become progressively easier since ancient times, it also generates many situations which can lead to subjective distress. Buss does not only refer to the more obvious 'civilization illnesses', such

as drug abuse, delinquency, or environmental destruction, which affect human health. He assumes that modern societies, often consisting of millions of people, have lost their original realistic societal frame their ancestors used to have. Subjected to multitudinous media images of beautiful and successful people, people must necessarily build unreasonable expectations of what their own lives should be. Although only a handful of the three billion women in this world are super-models, and not many men share Schwarzenegger's albeit impressive physique, these few unrepresentative specimens have become the standard to which we lesser mortals aspire. Gutierres, Kenrick and Partch (1999) demonstrated a link between negative self-concepts and these unrealistic media-created expectations: women exposed to successive images of other women who were unusually attractive subsequently felt less attractive themselves, showing a decrease in self-esteem. Men exposed to descriptions of highly dominant and influential other men showed an analogous diminution in self-concept. These results confirm Buss' evolutionary psychological hypotheses. He predicted that the exposure to excessive media images must result in higher levels of dissatisfaction. Throughout evolution, people have always compared themselves to those around them, which was conducive to the survival of the fittest. However, in the modern world our reference group has become unhealthily distant from the norm, which has led to a reduction in self-esteem, and increased dissatisfaction with our partners.

Similarly, Nesse and Williams (1994) believe that

> *"mass communications, especially television and movies, effectively make us all one competitive group even as they destroy our more intimate social networks (…). In the ancestral environment you would have had a good chance at being the best at something. Even if you were not the best, your group would likely value your skills. Now we all compete with those who are the best in the world. Watching these successful people on television arouses envy. Envy probably was useful to motivate our ancestors to strive for what others could obtain. Now few of us can achieve the goals envy sets for us, and none of us can obtain the fantasy lives we see on television (Nesse & Williams, 1994, p. 220)".*

This analysis explains today's increased levels of depression (see Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; Seligman, 1988) as a result of a sense of failure when comparing our lives against the role models we see portrayed in the media.

Nesse and Williams (1994) see another source of unhappiness in the fact that modern living conditions of relative anonymity and isolated nuclear families deprives people of the intimate social support networks that characterized ancestral social conditions.

Buss states that the modern style of life must collide with the pursuit of happiness, since happiness is so deeply entwined with conditions which are less prevalent today, such as being a valued member of an enduring social group, intimacy, and being part of an extended family.

The evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker (1997) regards the 'hedonic treadmill' (Brickman and Campbell, 1971) as another reason why happiness is so difficult to achieve. When people acquire more possessions, they adjust so quickly to having them that whatever pleasure they bring soon fades.

Kahneman and Tversky (1984) mention another source for unhappiness. They observed an inequality between the intensity of positive and negative emotion, which follow gains and losses. As the former tennis star Jimmy Connors observed "I hate to lose more than I like to win" (cited by Ketelaar, 1995). People appear to be more unhappy with what they haven't got than they feel happy when they get it. While this imbalance of emotional intensity may have been useful in the evolutionary struggle for fitness, it has an adverse affect on people's ability to sustain long-term happiness. In my opinion, one could go so far as to say that achieving long-term happiness is at odds with the basic principles of evolution. Prolonged happiness would imply that we give up our aspirations to improve ourselves and our environment, which is the driving force of evolution.

However, understanding the impediments which evolution presents for happiness provides us with a heuristic for side-stepping them. Buss (2000) suggests the following strategies to overcome these obstacles and re-gain happiness:

1. Increase closeness of extended kin
2. Develop deep friendships
3. Reduce subjective distress through
    - Selecting a mate who is similar, reducing jealousy and infidelity
    - Education about evolved psychological sex differences
    - Managing competitive mechanisms through teaching reciprocity and cooperation, and insisting on no more than equity, which means that we do not expect to get more than we give
4. Knowledge of evolved desires whose fulfillment brings deep joy. If we focus on the fulfillment of non-materialistic desires such as health, professional success, helping

friends and relatives, achieving intimacy, and having the confidence to succeed, this may bring deeper happiness than the mere accumulation of material goods.

2.4.3 How are meaning and happiness connected?

The meaningfulness of a person's life has a strong association with happiness (King & Nappa, 1998; Debats, 1990; Klinger, 1998; Wong, 1998a, 1998b; Yalom, 1980; Frankl, 1976; May, 1940), but there are different assumptions about their connectedness. Frankl (1969) claims that happiness does not lead to the perception of meaning, rather it ensues from the achievement of a goal which is directed outward, beyond the self. Wong (1998a) regards happiness as an inevitable byproduct of a meaningful life (see below).

King and Nappa (1998) view happiness and personal meaning as key constructs for leading a satisfying life. They used three variables to examine folk concepts of a 'good life', namely happiness, meaning of life, and money, all of which have proven significant for the concept of a good life in western cultures. Their sample consisted of 104 college students and 264 community adults in Dallas, Texas. The results provide evidence for a general perception that happiness and meaning in life are essential elements in people's folk concept of a good life, whereas money turned out to be relatively unimportant. The last finding was in line with the research of Diener and colleagues who found the correlation between income and happiness to be only .12 (Diener et al., 1993).

McGregor and Little (1998) investigated the role of personal projects (e.g. losing weight, finding a new job or clarifying ones spiritual beliefs) on meaning of life and happiness in a group of Canadian adolescents. They found that meaning was conceptualized as goal achievement and purposiveness in life, whereas happiness was related to enthusiastic activities and an exciting daily life. Personal projects aimed at self-identity and importance were the best predictors for meaning, and were uncorrelated with happiness. Happiness was significantly correlated with projects aimed at efficacy, support, and fun.

Many empirical studies could confirm that people want to be happy (Richards, 1966; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; King & Broyles, 1997). But this does not imply that happiness per se determines one's quality of life and leads to meaning. History provides many examples of people who sacrificed those things which are commonly regarded as bringing personal happiness for higher ends, whose lives we might not consider to be happy, but which seem to have had meaning. Example could be Joan of Arc, Nelson Mandela or Mother Theresa (Becker, 1992).

There is a correlation between religious belief, happiness and meaning in life. Rabbi Harold Kushner (1987) claims that religion satisfies "the most fundamental need of all. That is the need to know that somehow we matter, that our lives mean something, count as something more than just a momentary blip in the universe" (Kushner, 1987, p. 92). It seems convincing that people who feel that their life is not insignificant are more likely to be happy than those who do not share this conviction.

The exact nature of the link between happiness and meaning of life has not yet been investigated thoroughly enough to make causal predictions. Theoretically, both Wongs's assumption that perceived meaning leads to happiness (e.g. Wong, 1998) and the inverse assumption that happiness increases a sense of meaning (e.g. Ebersole, 1998) seem plausible. Also, the assumption that variables such as satisfying personal relationships determine both perceived meaning and happiness seems sensible. Unfortunately, when Wong (1998) argues that happiness is a byproduct of a meaningful life, he does not specify whether this implies that a meaningful life must necessarily lead to happiness. Does the byproduct happiness always follow, or does it only appear occasionally? Focusing on the reverse perspective, does happiness have to increase a sense of meaning or is this only occasionally the case? Can either of these two constructs be regarded as a necessary condition for or result of the other? Further research is needed to explore the interconnection between these constructs more thoroughly.

2.4.4 Schulz-Hardt and Frey's theses of meaning

Stefan Schulz-Hardt and Dieter Frey claim that events or actions are perceived as meaningful if they fulfill a function which is in accord with the value system of the individual (Schulz-Hardt & Frey, 1997). The authors put forward ten theses to show light on the manifestation of personal meaning and its effects.

1. Human beings yearn for meaning, i.e. they want to perceive their actions and experiences as meaningful.
2. The wish for meaning presents itself prospectively and retrospectively. Individuals want to act meaningfully (prospectively), and interpret their experiences and activities as meaningful (retrospectively). This does not imply that individuals explicitly ask and search for meaning, rather they act implicitly according to their principles of meaning (e.g. wearing a coat in winter).
3. The question of meaning cannot be answered in general terms. Meaning is a highly subjective construct. What is perceived as meaningful for one person can be meaningless for another.
4. Various attributions of meaning are interwoven and build a hierarchic system. The single units can be distinguished in terms of their significance and extension (see thesis 5).

5. The higher the hierarchic rank of the meaning, i.e. the more general and extensive, the more difficult it is to verbalize. It is easy to explain why one should get up in the morning, it is much more difficult to explain why the human race exists.
6. Attributions of meaning are resistant against changes. The degree of resistance depends on the extent of cognitive, motivational and social support for the attribution, i.e. how deeply it is embedded in the cognitive system of the individual or shared by significant others. The resistance is also high if no alternative attribution of meaning is available. People seem to prefer to cling to a dubious meaning rather than giving up the notion of meaning altogether.
7. The search for meaning begins when a previous meaning cannot be maintained. This can be due to events and actions which do not match the individuals' expectations, or it can be due to a change in the individual's value system.
8. The more serious, unexpected, and negative an event is perceived by the individual, the higher the urge to find a meaning for this event.
9. Perceived meaning has positive consequences such as enhanced feelings of well-being and satisfaction, effective coping with stress, illness and critical life events, a greater identification with a task which is regarded as meaningful, and increased motivation and persistence for these tasks.
10. A strong perception of meaningless leads to negative consequences such as depression, aggression, alcoholism, addictions and suicide.

These theses show how complex the area of personal meaning is, and why it can only partially be the subject of scientific research. So far, theses 6 to 10 were tested empirically (e.g. Yalom, 1980; Petrie & Brook, 1992; Bliemeister et al., 1992), and were confirmed.

2.4.5 Baumeister's distinction of four basic needs for meaning

Baumeister (1991) defines meaning as "shared mental representations of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, meaning *connects* things (…) Without meaning, behavior is guided by impulse and instinct" (Baumeister, 1991, p.15, p.18). He categorizes the human quest for meaning into four basic needs (see Table 2.11).

Table 2.11: Psychological Markers of the Four Needs for Meaning proposed by Baumeister (1991)

Need	Psychological Markers
Purpose: Objective goals and subjective fulfillment	Forming new goals when old goals are reached; linking negative events to future, positive fulfillment states – such as greater appreciation for life; reflecting on one's accomplishments
Efficacy and control	Perceiving a link between present behaviors and future outcomes; maintaining 'illusions of control' over uncontrollable events; reporting success in overcoming difficult obstacles in one's past
Value and justification	Downplaying the consequences of, or externalizing responsibility for, immoral or hurtful actions; reporting good and admirable intentions; claiming the victim status
Self-worth	Comparing the self with less fortunate others; reiterating one's appeal to others; relegating personal failures to the past; assuming credit for success but not failures; asserting superiority over others

Baumeister (1991) claims that people are most happy when all four needs of meaning are satisfied. The difficulty in satisfying them consists mainly in abundant minor and major life-experiences which question the purpose of one's existence, being efficacious and in control, as well as being a moral and worthy individual. People have to find ways to cope with inconsistent information which contradicts their personal meanings. This includes finding higher purposes for negative and tragic life events (such as illness or the death of a loved one), finding a coherent connection between unpredictable outcomes, and the cognitive reinterpretation of events which present a threat to the self.

Several needs can be satisfied or threatened by one single life event. So the boundaries between purpose, efficacy, value, and self-worth can frequently be blurred. These needs can also be in conflict with each other, and it is hard to determine which will predominate when two or more collide. For instance, the need to regain lost self-worth can easily conflict with the need for efficacy and control. Research on rape victims suggests that the need for control decreases when self-blame is associated with a sense of deserving this negative outcome. When no long-term negative implications for one's character is involved, individuals seem to prefer feeling guilty to giving up the notion of being efficacious and in control. (Schwartz & Leggett, 1999; Pitts & Schwartz, 1997; Meyer & Raylor, 1986; Janoff-Bulman & Wortman, 1977).

2.4.6 Baumeister's empirical studies of personal narratives

Baumeister used autobiographical narratives in which individuals describe the events preceding and following important life outcomes. These life stories provided a lot of empirical data on ways that people find a sense in their experiences and respond to threats against their personal meaning in life. Baumeister's analysis revealed that his participants used the opportunity of the autobiographical narration to restructure negative events in their memory. This helped them to regain a positive view on the self, and made unpredictable and random events more coherent. This restructuring made it easier for subjects to re-establish a sense of control over their life and the environment.

The first need of Baumeister's categorization is to find a purpose in life. These purposes are invariably linked to the future. The anticipation of a desired outcome of present activities in the future makes these activities meaningful. People draw a sense from their existence by pursuing objective goals (e.g. becoming a well-paid and highly respected politician) and through subjective states of fulfillment. (e.g. feeling loved by God). Apparently, the process of working toward a goal is more important than the actual achievement, which supports the hypothesis that purposes are anchored in the future (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998). The sense of fulfillment and satisfaction does not rest on achieved goals, so new goals are needed. Baumeister (1991) introduces the term '*myth of fulfillment'*, which describes the contrast between popular ideas of fulfillment, conceived as generally permanent, and actual experiences of fulfillment, which are transient. A salient example of the myth of fulfillment is the western conception of passionate, romantic love, which movies, novels, songs, poetry, and other media present as undying, while sober empirical evidence suggests that these fervent feelings do not last for long (Baumeister, Wotman & Stillwell, 1993; Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Thompson and Janigian (1988) point out that the search for meaning is evoked by negative life events which question people's belief that the world follows an inner logic, and that life has a purpose. Positive and negative events are interpreted and evaluated in a mental framework (*life scheme*) of the world and the self. Building up a personal meaning in life follows the same structure as this life scheme.

Janoff-Bulman and Wortman (1977) discovered that para- and quadriplegics who associated their fate with a higher purpose, such as a newfound appreciation for life or God's plans, could cope much better with their disability than individuals who were not able to ascribe their victimization to any kind of underlying reasons or predetermination. Taylor (1983) found support for this position in her research with victims of traumatizing life events,

such as breast cancer. She concluded that successful coping is directly associated to the belief that negative events serve a higher purpose.

The second need which Baumeister mentions is people's desire for efficacy and control. A large body of literature across several domains, such as divorce (Spanier & Castro, 1979, Murray & Holmes, 1994; Baumeister & Leary, 1995), domestic violence (Walker, 1996; Claramunt, 1998), sexual abuse (Amann & Wipplinger, 1998) and life change (Heatherton & Nichols, 1994) shows that people prefer to assume a greater proportion of responsibility for negative incidents than reality demands. In the long run, perceived control seems to be a more effective coping mechanism than self-enhancing strategies such as blaming others for negative outcomes (Gray & Silver, 1990). People feel the need to master their lives, control their environment, change undesirable situations, prevent critical life events from happening again, and in this way contribute to their life's purpose (see Sommer & Baumeister, 1998). Perceived self-efficacy also facilitates functional coping processes to health threats and illness, and contributes to initiating and maintaining health behavior (Schwarzer & Renner, 2000; Renner, Knoll & Schwarzer, 2000).

Thirdly, people want to believe that their actions are morally justified. Research on specific areas, such as interviews with sexual offenders, seems appropriate for confirming this hypothesis. The aggressors use several techniques to retrospectively minimize or deny their guilt, which allows them to retain feelings of self-value and justification. These include blaming the victim, downplaying the negative consequences, and claiming that they acted from good intentions without anticipating the harm that their actions would bring (for an overwiew, see Amann & Wipplinger, 1998; Deegener, 1995). In general, people who have inflicted harm on others reinterpret these events in a way that absolves them of responsibility (see Baumeister, Stillwell & Wotman, 1990). Blame is externalized or presented as unavoidable, while one's own intentions and moral integrity can remain beyond reproach.

And finally, people long for a sense of self-worth. This includes a positive self-concept and wishing to be viewed favorably by others. People can be very creative in finding ways of appearing good, admirable, and respectable, especially when their sense of self-worth is threatened. Critical events, such as interpersonal rejection, often lead to harmful facts being reinterpreted in order to recover a sense of self-worth. Baumeister et al. (1993) found that rejected lovers emphasized their superiority over their rivals and declared the ex-lover's decision to change partner as foolish and incomprehensible. They were also eager to get involved in a new relationship as soon as possible to reject the implication that they might not be desirable. Tice (1991) describes how low (as opposed to high) self-esteem individuals are

mainly concerned with self-protection, or sustaining whatever positive self-feelings they do have. Research in Health Psychology also supports the significance of positive self-worth for emotional and psychological adjustment to illnesses and physical limitations (Taylor, 1993). People undergo considerable cognitive efforts to avoid feelings of low self-worth. Downward comparison is a common strategy for enhancing self-worth when critical life events question one's perception of self-worth (Wills, 1981; Wood, Taylor & Lichtman, 1985).

It is interesting that Baumeister includes two 'moral' dimensions in his categorization of meaning: moral justification and self-worth. To my knowledge there are no empirical studies about negative and morally questionable meanings in life. Therefore, findings on the correlation between a perceived purpose in life and positive variables such as mental health must not be prematurely generalized. It seems plausible that mentally disturbed people can have a high notion of meaning, and reports of mass murderers who seem to find some sense and logic in their killing offer impressive examples of this. Fanaticism, which could be regarded as an extreme form of perceived purposiveness, can lead to genocide, torture, or the mass suicide of members of a religious sect. So far, only the relationship between absence of meaning and poor mental health has been based on solid empirical evidence, suggesting that perceived meaning is a necessary condition for mental health. Further research on morally reprehensible perceptions of meaning and mental health would be needed to investigate the influence of purposes which could be described as damaging on well-being, and I would expect this to show that meaning is not a sufficient condition for mental health (see Tausch, 1995; Ebersole, 1998).

Summarizing Baumeister's empirical studies of personal narratives, it can be concluded that people who have a sense of purpose, efficacy, moral justification for their actions, and positive self worth generally find their life meaningful. The four needs also influence ways of interpreting negative life events and coping techniques.

2.4.7 Personal goals as one of the main sources for meaning

Literature on coping processes suggests that people adapt easier to traumatic life events if they manage to find or create meaning in them (Emmons, Colby & Kaiser, 1998; Janoff-Bulman, 1989, 1992; McIntosh, Silver & Wortman, 1993; Pennebaker, 1990; Vash, 1994; Karoly, 1991). The traumatic connotation of a life event stems from the fundamental changes in people's self-concept and worldviews that the event evokes. The death of a partner can change the individual's role within the family, raise fears of one's own mortality, and evoke all kinds of negative and threatening cognitions, emotions and new tasks (see Emmons, Colby

& Kaiser, 1998). Epstein (1991) and Janoff-Bulman (1992) have both been able to show that adaptation and coping processes are significantly influenced by the individual's ability to integrate the traumatic event into their basic belief system and general worldview. Traumatic events frequently raise questions about purpose and meaning in life, such as why suffering and injustice must exist (Ernst, 1994). One's own goals can similarly be affected by traumatic experiences. Emmons (1996) defines human beings as goal-oriented organisms, and goals as desired states that people want to obtain, maintain, or avoid. His goal theory assumes the following:

- Behavior is organized around the pursuit of goals, with goals being defined as objectives towards which a person strives to obtain or avoid
- Goals influence ongoing thought and emotional reactions, as well as behavior
- Goals exist within a system of hierarchically organized superordinate and subordinate goals, where functioning in one aspect of the system has ramifications for other parts of the system
- Goals are accessible to conscious awareness, though there is no requirement that the goal be consciously present while the person is in active pursuit of it

Source: Emmons, Colby & Kaiser, 1998

Studies have been able to show that people's goals, and the gradual approximation towards them, are highly correlated with long-term well-being (Brunstein, 1993; Omodei & Wearing, 1990). When facing a critical life event involving a loss, the individual can either attempt to preserve meaningful goals or, if the threat or loss has destroyed them, find new ones. Pargament (1996) refers to these two different strategies as *conservational* versus *transformational* coping. They are both processes which "guide and sustain the person throughout the life span" (Pargament, 1996, p. 2). A person is likely to use both forms of coping over time. According to Pargament we will stick to old priorities and goals for as long as possible but, should this turn out to be in dissonance with the new life circumstances, we will re-examine our priorities and strive for new goals.

Emmons, Colby and Kaiser (1998) conducted two studies with college students to examine the role of personal goals in adaptation to life transitions. These revealed that 60 % of the participants changed their life goals after a traumatic event, while 40 % enhanced their commitment, focus, and purpose to keep the threatened goal intact. A change of goals is more likely to occur gradually than abruptly. There seems to be a need for individuals to maintain stability, continuity, and their conceptual system after a critical life event. However, more

participants changed their personal goals due to a traumatic experience than those who preserved their old goal hierarchy.

The results also confirmed the previous finding that people were more likely to successfully recover from a traumatic event, such as the loss of a loved one, if they were able to find meaning in it. The change of personal goals was positively correlated with both being emotionally affected by the loss, and the belief that one's own life became more meaningful after the traumatic event. The authors were able to replicate these findings in another study with older participants who also reported higher goal change when their recovery from a trauma turned out to be difficult. They also confirmed that recovery was easier and faster if they could find some meaning in the trauma.

Another finding from the studies was that *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* goals must be distinguished. Intrinsic goals, such as self-acceptance, affiliation, and a sense of community, were associated with increased well-being, whereas extrinsic goals, such as material success and social recognition, were detrimental to well-being. Also, reaching and striving for intrinsic goals was positively correlated with self-reports of finding meaning in life, whereas reaching and striving for extrinsic goals was negatively correlated with having found meaning.

Furthermore, the authors found that those participants who were committed to spiritual and religious goals reported the most successful recovery and the highest perceptions of meaning. This result is in line with other studies on the effectiveness of religiosity in coping with stressful events (Brown 1994; McIntosh et al., 1993; Park et al., 1996). One explanation for this effectiveness could be that spirituality can provide a unifying philosophy of life which integrates unexplainable critical events into a frame within which suffering, death, and injustice make sense and serve some higher purpose. They can then continue to believe that events make sense, and that tragedy does not occur in vain (Emmons, Dank & Mongrain, 1996).

Raina and Vats (1990) investigated the life goals of Indian and American college students by administering a life goals inventory, which explored how the participants perceived their future in terms of vocational, social, and personal goals. For women in both cultures, the authors found a high degree of concern for the traditional values of being a good wife and mother. Men in both cultures were more likely to be concerned with achievement (prestige goal, personal happiness, scientific attainments) and with gaining a reputation.

2.4.8 Psychological assessment of meaning in life

A number of instruments to assess meaning of life have been developed over the past four decades. Many of them were based on Frankl's theory of meaning as a basic human need, while others were mainly grounded on goal achievement theories. Table 2.12 shows a brief overview on the most frequently used instruments.

Table 2.12: Psychological assessments of meaning.

Purpose in Life Test (PIL)	Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964
Life Regard Index (LRI)	Battista & Almond, 1973
Seeking of Noetic Goals Test (SONG)	Crumbaugh, 1977
Unnamed questionnaire and categorization procedure for eliciting varieties of life meanings	DeVogler & Ebersole, 1980
Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC)	Antonovsky, 1983
Procedure for rating Meaning in Life Depth (MILD)	DeVogler-Ebersole & Ebersole, 1985
Three Item Meaningless Scale	Newcomb & Harlow, 1986
Interview Questionnaire (goal oriented)	Klinger, 1987
Life Attitude Profile (LAP) with the sub-dimensions Life Purpose, Existential Vacuum, Life Control and Will to Meaning	Reker, Peacock & Wong, 1987
Motivational Structure Questionnaire (goal oriented)	Cox & Klinger, 1988; Klinger, Cox & Blount, 1995
Work Concerns Inventory (goal oriented)	Roberson, 1989
Personal Meaning Profile (PMP)	Wong, 1998

The first questionnaire to assess the degree to which people experience meaning in life was introduced by Crumbaugh and Maholick in 1964, and was an attempt to operationalize Frankl's theory. The Purpose-in-Life test consists of 20 items, which are rated on a 7-point attitude scale. It has been employed in a variety of clinical patient populations, and is probably still the most widely used instrument in research on personal meaning. Despite its satisfactory reliabilities (split-half and retest), the scale has been subject to criticism by several researchers. Its validity was questioned, since personal meaning seems to be blended with different concepts such as freedom and fear of death (Yalom, 1980). The items do not appear consistent for some sub-cultural groups (Garfield, 1973), and are highly susceptible to social desirability as operationalized in the Crowne-Marlow Social Desirability Scale (Braun

& Domino, 1978). It was also criticized for being an indirect measure of depression (Dyck, 1987). Therefore, other instruments were needed to measure personal meaning.

One of the most recent instruments is the *Personal Meaning Profile* (*PMP*) in the frame of Paul Wong's research on laypeople's implicit theories of a meaningful life, which was developed as follows.

2.4.8.1 Implicit theories of a meaningful life

Wong (1998a) adopts an implicit theories approach for investigating prototypes of personal meaning. Implicit theories have a long history in psychology. The term '*implicit personality theory*' was first used by Bruner and Tagiuri (1954) to describe assumed relationships between human traits, and was broadened by Cronbach (1955) into a wider set of assumptions about why people behave the way they do. Implicit theories were then extended to laypeople's understanding and beliefs about any psychological construct, as opposed to models proposed by experts. Some tendencies to perceive people and the environment in a certain way may be triggered by prototypes or schemas that an individual develops in the course of his or her life (Schneider & Blankmeyer, 1983). Wong chose this approach to explore the internal prototypical structures by which laypeople view the components which make a life meaningful.

Wong conducted a series of studies on people's understanding of a meaningful life. Based on this research, he developed the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP), which is a questionnaire for assessing people's perception of meaning. In an exploratory study, 60 Canadian subjects of different age, sex, educational level, and profession were asked to describe the ideal characteristics of a meaningful life. The majority of respondents listed five or six attributes, which were combined, and linguistically similar statements were rewritten. The result was a list of 102 items. The first ten items are listed in Table 2.13.

Table 2.13: Characteristics of an ideally meaningful life, First 10 of 102 (Wong, 1998a).

1.	Makes the best use of life's opportunities
2.	Believes in one's own worth
3.	Has zest for life
4.	Respects other people's feelings and rights
5.	Believes that one has made a difference in this world
6.	Feels content with who one is
7.	Has a good family life
8.	Is grateful for what one has
9.	Believes one can make a difference in this world
10.	Is satisfied with life

The breadth of the characteristics mentioned revealed that people's ideas about a meaningful life were very complex. Not only did the participants take systemic factors such as the role of society in an individual's life into account, but they also mentioned certain personal characteristics (e.g. creative, intelligent, responsible) which suggests that personal meaning is not only dependent on *what* a person thinks, feels, or does, but also on *who* this person is. Closed-minded, irresponsible and dogmatic people will have difficulties in finding meaning in their life. So personality seems to be a relevant factor in laypeople's conceptualization of a meaningful life. Based on this exploratory study, Wong concluded that meaning consists of five components: cognitive, motivational, affective, relational, and personal. Table 2.14 shows examples for each component.

Table 2.14: Sub-dimensions of the conceptualization of a meaningful life (Wong, 1998a).

Cognitive	'believes that there is an ultimate purpose in life' 'believes in moral laws' 'believes in an afterlife'
Motivational	'pursues worthwhile goals' 'seeks to actualize one's potential' 'strives towards personal growth'
Affective	'feels content with who one is and what one is doing' 'feels fulfilled about what one has accomplished' 'feels satisfied with life'
Relational	'is sincere and honest with others' 'has a number of good friends' 'brings happiness to others'
Personal	'likes challenge' 'accepts one's limitations' 'has a healthy self-concept'

Wong's previous studies had already introduced a concept of personal meaning based on the three interrelated components cognition, emotion, and motivation as shown in Figure 2.10 (Wong, 1998b). His new findings confirmed these categorizations, and added the dimensions 'relational' and 'personal' to his original classification.

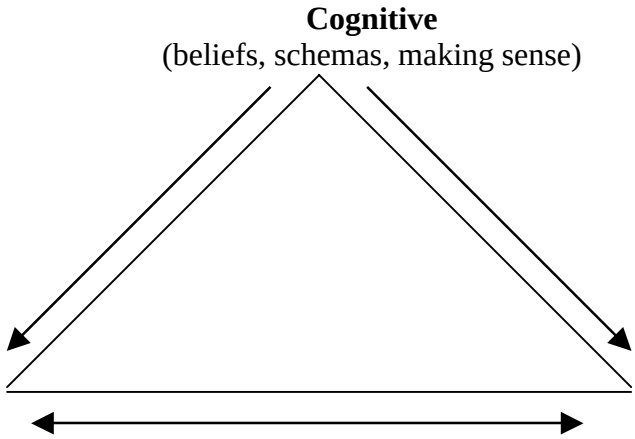

Figure 2.10: Components of personal meaning (Wong, 1998b)

The *cognitive system* can be understood as a "road map in the quest for meaning" (Wong, 1998b, p. 405). It contains beliefs, expectations, schemas, self-concepts, worldviews, and assumptions about people and values. These cognitions affect a) how people feel about themselves and their environment and b) what activities they engage in, and the goals they set for themselves. The cognitive component is influenced by the individual's cultural background with its beliefs, norms, and values, and by the past experiences and life events that the person had to deal with. So Wong understands personal meaning as a cognitive system which is individually constructed and culturally influenced. The system varies in complexity and ideology. It attempts to make sense of life, and attributes a purpose to events that happen around the individual. If it fails to do so, the individual will suffer an existential crisis (Frankl, 1985; Maddi, 1970; Klinger, 1998; Wong, 1998b).

The *motivational component* defines meaning as the pursuit of life goals, and engaging in activities which are perceived as valuable. It is guided by the cognitive system, and can be understood as the behavioral component of personal meaning. A meaningful life is always regarded as an active one which goes hand in hand with commitment and the expenditure of energy and time.

The *emotional component* defines meaning as the perceived satisfaction and fulfillment evoked by the commitment for worthwhile causes and the pursuit of life goals. Another source of positive feelings is the notion that life is worth living and offers a variety of choices which can lead to self-fulfillment. A positive affect is regarded as "the inevitable byproduct of living a meaningful life" (Wong, 1998b, p. 406).

Wong resumes that "the structural definition of personal meaning is that it is an individually constructed, culturally based cognitive system that influences an individual's choice of activities and goal, and endows life with a sense of purpose, personal worth, and fulfillment" (Wong, 1998b, p. 406-407).

After developing this structure, Wong's first study of implicit theories revealed the additional dimensions '*relational'* and '*personal'*. Seventeen of the 102 items reflected the importance of maintaining a good relationship and being part of a community, as well as being caring and altruistic (*relational*). Twenty-four items referred to the importance of personal qualities and attributes, as well as the person's status in life, e.g. financial security and good education (*personal*).

A second study aimed to determine the average rating of these 102 items. A high average rating on an item indicates that most respondents consider it to be a central element for a meaningful life. In addition, participants of the second study (62 students from Trent University, Canada, between 18 and 25 years) were asked to indicate if the 102 items characterized themselves. This was meant as an implicit 'meaningfulness indicator' of the subject's own life. Thirdly, participants were given criterion measures (eight items reflecting meaning such as "My life as a whole has meaning") to provide an explicit indicator of meaning in their lives.

The results showed that in that sample, items which expressed religious beliefs (e.g. "seeks to glorify God") and hedonism (e.g. "seeks pleasures") were not regarded as being characteristic for a meaningful life. The five-component-structure of meaning as suggested by the pilot-study could be confirmed in the second study, with the affective component having the highest average of all. The self ratings (102 items) were highly significantly correlated with the criterion measures. This implies that although these items made no direct allusion to a meaningful life, they were heading in the same direction than the criterion items. Ideal ratings (to which extent the 102 items were characteristic for the subjects) were only weakly correlated with the criterion measures.

A third study was aimed at determining whether people in different age groups have different implicit theories about meaning. 289 subjects were divided into three age groups: there were 96 subjects in the Young Adult Group (age 18-29), 107 subjects in the Middle Age group (age 30-59), and 86 subjects in the Elderly Age group (age 60+). They all rated the 102 items. After the elimination of unrepresentative items, factor analysis resulted in a 9-factor solution, accounting for 63 % of the variance. Table 2.15 shows the nine factors with corresponding examples.

Table 2.15: Factors of an ideal meaningful life (Wong 1998a).

Factor	**Accounted for % of variance**	**Number of items**	**Item as example**
Achievement striving	32,2 %	15	"Successful in achieving one's aspirations"
Religion	8,8 %	10	"Is at peace with God"
Relationship	4,6 %	6	"Is trusted by others"
Fulfillment	4,3 %	10	"Is satisfied with life"
Fairness-Respect	3,5 %	5	"Is treated fairly by others"
Self-confidence	2,7 %	4	"Has a positive outlook"
Self-integration	2,5 %	4	"Engaged in creative work"
Self-transcendence	2,5 %	3	"Strives to make this world a better place"
Self-acceptance	2,3 %	2	"Accepts what cannot be changed"

Wong's MANOVA found a significant age main effect, $F(18, 550) = 5.24$, $p<.001$. Univariate F tests revealed that the main effect of 'religion' was significant, and was rated most highly by the elderly group. The oldest participants also had the highest score for self-acceptance. MANOVA did not reveal a main gender effect. However, univariate F tests showed a significant gender effect in both religion and relationship, with females scoring higher than males.

A fourth study was conducted in order to confirm the validity of the Profile of Personal Meaning (PMP), as identified in previous studies and shown in table XY. Wong predicted that the higher individuals scored on the PMP, the higher they would score on the criterion measures and on various well-being measures, such as the 'Perceived Well-Being Scale' by Reker and Wong (1984), and the lower they would score on unwell-being measures such as Becks's 'Depression-Scale'. A sample of 335 subjects of all age groups confirmed these hypotheses. The results indicate that self-ratings on the items which stand for the idealized prototypical structure provide a valid measurement of meaningful life. The higher the score on the PMP, the greater the perception of one's life as meaningful. The PMP factors were positively correlated with psychological well-being and perceived physical well-being, and almost all factors were negatively correlated with depression (correlation between total PMP and Beck's depression scale = -.70).

Research to improve the psychometric properties of the PMP still continues, and new items are included, while others are eliminated. The present version contains 57 items, which are now stated in first-person singular.

The following conclusion can be drawn from Wong's four studies on meaning of life: people conceptualize an ideal meaningful life on the ground of different sources, such as relationship, achievement, fulfillment, self-acceptance, and religion. Interestingly, fair treatment seems to play an important part in the notion of a meaningful life, whereas the role of sheer hedonistic pleasures can be neglected. The role of meaning as a mediator of well-being and mental health could be confirmed. The four studies to develop the PMP suggest that there is a broader prototypical structure of a meaningful life than assumed by most researchers, who regard the concept of meaning as a highly idiosyncratic matter (Frankl, 1976; Little, 1998). Further research, preferably cross-cultural comparison, is needed to test how general this conceptualization really is.

2.4.8.2 Measuring depth of meaning

An additional approach in the study of meaning was initiated by Ebersole and colleagues, who developed specific rating criteria to find out how deep people's personal meanings are. The traditional Purpose in Life Test asks participants to rate the depth of their meanings on a seven-point scale. Ebersole et al. also included an item to assess depth of meaning in their studies ("Support to the best of your ability why you feel your meaning in life is deep or not deep. Use examples, tell how much you are involved (or not); in general, try to convince me that you know what you are talking about."). However, the researchers transferred the decisive judgment process to two outside raters, who used the whole of participants' essays as a reference frame; an advantage that the subjects of the study did not have. More important than the social comparison are the criterial standards to evaluate depth. Participants' written statements about what they consider to be their meaning, including one example, are rated for depth by researchers according to five criteria:

- Rate the meaning more deeply the more the central meaning is discussed with complexity and the writer conveys a sense of the individuality of the meaning.
- Rate the meaning more deeply the more the meaning and example are specific, believable, concrete, and down-to-earth. Also, be sure the example is significant, not trivial.
- Rate the meaning less deeply the more the meaning is new and therefore relatively untried and shallow. Also rate it as less deep if the meaning has been held for a while and it is evident that it has not undergone development.

- Judge on your own whether the person has high or low meaning; do not automatically accept the person's judgment of depth of meaning.
- If you are confused and uncertain, tend to put the essay into the middle category. Also, if no example is given or of the one produced is insignificant, the rater should tend not to rate the essay any higher then the middle category.

Source: DeVogler-Ebersole & Ebersole, 1985, p. 305

Examples of how participants' essays were judged by these criteria are given by Ebersole and Quiring (1991). The inter-rater reliability varied between .78 and .82 in Ebersole's studies, which suggests that the five criteria offer a satisfactorily objective methodological approach for measuring depth in meaning. Unfortunately, the authors do not report if the correlation between researchers' judgment and participants' own rating was high or low.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to quote Albert Camus once more, who in his essay 'The absurdity of life' resumes:

> *"I have seen many people die because life for them was not worth living. (…) I therefore conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions" (Camus, 1992, p. 70).*

2.5 Culture

Following Miller (1999), I would like to define culture as a system of shared worldviews, beliefs, values, knowledge, relationships, skills, habits, and symbols (such as spoken and written language). It includes physical settings (such as urban or rural areas), objects (such as hunting devices or television and computers), and art (such as poetry, music and paintings). We usually find several subcultures within the overall culture, which vary according to ethnical descent or/and different weltanschauungen and life styles. Daily practice, such as the process of child rearing, differs among different subcultures, and is divided by race, social class, rural vs. urban communities, single- vs. two-parent families, etc. Culture also comprises physical, social, and historical influences such as the climate, population density, health care, war and revolution, natural disasters, and so on. Culture should be understood as both a product of its history and the provider of a context that determines its future (Miller, 1999). It can be seen as a group's response to its physical and social environment. The environment provides the frame for the economic activities, such as

hunting, farming, or working in an office. The economic activities determine to a great extent the kind of division of labor and social organization, which in turn influence child-rearing practices and consequently the 'incorporation' of new members into the given culture. The process of enculturation, which is the transfer of cultural knowledge and values from the environment to the individual, influences how the individual acquires information and skills, and what kind of information and skills he/she acquires. Bruner warns us, however, to conceive culture as "a mould into which thought is poured" (Bruner, 1999, p. 232). The individual must not be regarded as a passive entity, which is determined by its culture in a behavioristic sense. It also affects and can change its context. These changes usually occur over the time course of one generation whose needs are not fully met by the existing environment and standards, and which therefore introduces changes in established attitudes, values, and behavior. Changes can also be put forward by single individuals who influence a whole nation's worldview. Philosophers, researchers, politicians, and the leaders of revolutionary and civil rights movements, such as Galilee, Columbus, J.F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Ché Guevara, or Mahatma Gandhi had a strong forming influence on their contemporaries and their zeitgeist. More frequently, however, we find more unspectacular cases of individuals affecting their systems, where one single corrupt civil servant might be able to bring a governmental institution into discredit, and thereby shatter a nation's trust in the present societal model (see Peseschkian, 1981). Neither the individual nor its culture can be understood without the other.

2.5.1 Cross-cultural research

Although cultural diversity has always fascinated researchers, systematic psychological investigation is a relatively new field. Lazarus and Steinthal were the first to use standardized empirical methods to study cultural differences a hundred years ago, and they were followed by Wundt (1911). However, it was only in the nineteen-sixties that the field of cross-cultural psychology became more integrated into scientific research, and different methodological approaches have been discussed ever since (Klineberg, 1980).

2.5.1.1 Classification of cross-cultural studies

Van de Vivjer and Leung (2000) distinguish four types of cross-cultural studies and their respective strengths and weaknesses in current research. Table 2.16 shows the categorization, and Table 2.17 gives the advantages and disadvantages of the studies.

Table 2.16: Types of cross-cultural studies (van de Vivjer & Leung, 2000).

consideration of contextual factors	**orientated more toward hypothesis testing**	**orientated more toward exploration**
No	generalizability studies	psychological differences studies
Yes	theory-driven studies	external validation studies

The first underlying dimension of this categorization is the distinction between *hypothesis testing* and *exploration*. Hypothesis testing is guided by a theoretical framework, usually based on earlier empirical evidence, which allows the researcher to formulate a priori hypotheses. On the other hand, exploration covers those studies which investigate cultural differences without having a priori hypotheses about the results. The second underlying dimension refers to the consideration of contextual factors, which varies depending on the theoretical standpoint of the researcher. *Generalizability studies* are based on a solid theoretical framework, and a priori hypotheses are made about expected cultural similarities and differences. Contextual factors are neglected because these studies assume universal mechanisms of human functioning. *Theory-driven studies* are also based on a solid theoretical background, but also investigate contextual factors. The researcher assumes universal mechanisms, which can be significantly altered by different environments to achieve an optimal fit of the individual to its surroundings. *Psychological differences studies* are not based on a theory, and do not consider contextual factors. This is the most frequent type of study in cross-cultural psychology (van de Vivjer & Leung, 2000). It is most commonly used to test the cross-cultural validity of structures and concepts, and to compare the scores obtained by a measurement in one culture with the translated instrument in another culture. The investigation could be aimed at finding out if perceived self-efficacy is the same concept around the globe, and if there are differences in the average level of self-efficacy between two or more countries (Baessler & Schwarzer, 1996; Schwarzer & Born, 1997). *External validation studies* combine the approach of cultural comparison of average scores with specific cultural characteristics, such as population density, per capita income, or climate. One external validation investigation conducted by Georgas, van de Vivjer and Berry (1999) found that religion and affluence lead to opposite psychological effects. Subjects in a highly religious country tend towards interpersonal characteristics such as power, loyalty, and hierarchy, whereas those is in highly affluent societies tend towards more intrapersonal characteristics such as individualism, utilitarian commitment, and well-being.

Table 2.17: Major strengths and weaknesses of the four types of studies, (van de Vivjer & Leung, 2000).

Type of study	Major strength	Major weakness
Generalizability	study of equivalence	no contextual variables included
Theory-driven	study of relationship of cultural factors and behavior	lack of attention to alternative interpretations
Psychological differences	open-mindedness about cross-cultural differences	ambiguous interpretation
External validation	Focus on interpretation	choice of covariates may be meaningless

Generalizability studies are able to obtain insights into the basics of human functioning, regardless of specific context variables. Samples are usually chosen very carefully to assure comparability across nations, which is often neglected in non-comparative psychology. As long as the studies are aimed at investigating underlying structures of psychological processes (e.g. language acquisition), cultural specifics can be neglected. Problems arise, however, when those contextual variables which could explain the nature of cross-cultural differences are not taken into account.

Theory-driven studies specifically investigate the influence of cultural variables on human functioning, which is their most important contribution to cross-cultural psychology. Their weak point consists in focusing on one single theory, which can lead researchers to neglect alternative interpretations of their results.

Psychological differences studies are very suitable for exploring the wide range of human functioning from around the world. Since they are not based on a strong theory they are open to accepting differences, which provides further insight into the human mind. This openness, on the other hand, can also lead to problems when interpreting the data, as we cannot be sure if the same results would have been obtained if different instruments had been used.

External validation studies try to avoid the weakness of ambiguous data interpretation by making cultural differences the subject of their analysis. The weakness of this approach consists in the arbitrary choice of demographic context variables (such as indicators for ecology, economy, education, mass communication, etc.), which can be strongly intercorrelated (see Georgas et al., 1999). The lack of theory leaves the researcher with a sometimes inestimable variety of possibly interdependent context variables that could explain cultural differences.

2.5.1.2 Basic problems in cross-cultural psychology

Three main approaches with different underlying assumptions and goals can be distinguished in cross-cultural psychology: the universalistic, the contextualist, and the integrationist positions (see Kim, Park & Park, 2000).

2.5.1.2.1 The universalistic position

The universalistic approach aims to discover universal, nomothetic laws of human cognitions, emotions, and behavior, and assumes underlying determinants for human functioning, which are mostly biologically rooted.

> *"The question of the extent to which basic psychological processes are common to mankind is still perhaps the major one being pursued in cross-cultural psychology." (Jahoda, 1980, p. 111).*

One aim is thus to test and verify psychological theories for their universal validity (Berry, Poortinga & Pandey, 1997). However, some scholars of the universalistic standpoint view psychological theories as valid per se, and that they have no need of further verification in different cultures. Faucheux (1976) argues that a theory must be universal by definition:

"But to the extent that a theory is understandable by researchers from other cultures, and assuming that a universal theory of human social behavior is possible, it is not immediately clear why a theory aiming at formulating universal proportions and being experimentally substantiated in a given culture should need further testing in other cultures".
(Faucheux, 1976, p. 274)

However, most researchers agree that the universal validity of psychological theories must be constantly verified through empirical testing, especially since inconsistent results are frequently found (Poortinga & Malpass, 1986). The most appropriate field of gathering data is certainly the earliest behavior in childhood across all nations. There is an impressive body of literature about universals in infant development and interaction (Piaget, 1992; Keller et al., 1999; Keller & Greenfield, 2000). From the very beginning it is a universal characteristic that newborns depend entirely on a special care-giving environment in order to survive. Unlike all other species, human beings are completely helpless for a relatively long time after birth. Keller and Greenfield (2000) argue that this is due to the phylogenetic development of the human brain. The head would be too large to pass through the mother's birth canal if the pregnancy continued until the brain were completely developed, so the baby must leave the

womb in a premature state after nine months. This helplessness enables the infant to acquire crucial behavior patterns from its parents. Babies are very susceptible to environmental stimuli, which facilitates cultural learning (Keller & Greenfield, 2000; Bruner, 1999). The universal characteristic which goes hand in hand with infants' helplessness is a set of patterns enabling them to interact with their caregivers, who are concurrently motivated to look after the baby. The two most investigated patterns are the facial configuration called 'babyness' ('*Kindchenschema'*) (Lorenz, 1969), and attachment behaviors (Bowlby, 1969). Infants are biologically equipped with basic communicative and interactive skills, such as innately preferring faces to objects (Fantz, 1963; Bruner, 1999), and being happier in company than alone. Moreover, they are able to recognize significant others, and behave differently with persons than with objects (Trevarthen, 1979). From a very early age they can detect contingencies, are socially responsive, and react to body contact (Brambring, Rauh & Beelmann, 1996). Parents or caregivers tend to respond intuitively to the infants' behavior repertoire with looks and smiles, and by carrying, nursing and talking to them. These are universal patterns, but they are already culturally shaped (Keller, 2000; Liedloff, 1999).
In addition to the undisputed universal of the human capacity to construct and operate in a culturally organized environment (Miller, 1999; Cole, 1992), Peseschkian (1981) suggests that love is a universal characteristic of mankind. According to him, this basic ability leads to human traits such as patience, hope, trust, faith, contact, doubt, and unity (Peseschkian, 1981, p. 8). This assumed universal has not been demonstrated empirically to the same extent as the above described.

2.5.1.2.2 The contextualist position

Representatives of the contextualist (also called the *non-universalistic* or *relativistic*) approach reject claims of universalism in human functioning. They argue that behavior cannot be explained in terms of universal categories because researchers find too many cultural specific inconsistencies that cannot be integrated meaningfully into psychological theories that claim to be universally valid (Poortinga & Malpass, 1986). Moreover, they perceive the implicit acceptance of the culture that the theory was developed in (mainly European industrialized countries and the USA) as the standard by which other cultures are judged as arrogant and dangerous (Kim, 1995). Segall, Campbell and Herskovits state:

> *"he [the researcher] reminds himself that his original culture provides no Olympian vantage from which to view objectively any other culture" (Segall et al., 1966, p. 17).*

Indigenous psychologies in particular contest claims of universality (Kim & Berry, 1993; D. Sinha, 1997, Enriquez, 1993; Koch & Leary, 1985).

> *"Although existing psychological theories and concepts are assumed to be objective, value free, and universal, in reality they are deeply enmeshed with Euro-American values that champion rational, liberal, individualistic ideals" (Kim et al., 2000, p. 64).*

Cultural relativism, as opposed to universalism, attempts to describe behavior in another culture without imposing one's own ethnocentric concepts and evaluations (Berry, 1981).

> *"Any characterization should be relative to the particular adaptive requirements [of the cultural context], rather than to some assumed universal dimension" (Berry, 1981, p. 397).*

The contextualist approach focuses on the interaction between the individual and its process of exchange with the environment. A reciprocal determination between the subject and its context is assumed. Culture is not understood as an consistent entity, external to the individual, but as a process (Vygotsky, 1978; Keller & Greenfield, 2000). Shweder (1991) points out that the main danger of the universalistic standpoint lies in regarding cultural differences as either superficial deviations from the assumed universal mechanism, or as representations of different stages of evolution or development (e.g. from primitive to civilized or from traditional to modern). The contextualist position, however, regards culture as stronger than biological, universal predispositions, which makes it obsolete to investigate universal characteristics.

> *"Humans do not have a basic, fundamental, pure human nature that is transhistorical, and transcultural. Humans are incomplete and therefore unable to function adequately unless embedded in a specific cultural matrix. Culture*

> *'completes' humans by explaining and interpreting the world, helping them to focus their attention on or ignore certain aspects of their environment, and instructing and forbidding them to think and act in certain ways. Culture is not indigenous clothing that covers the universal human; it infuses individuals, fundamentally shaping and forming them and how they conceive of themselves and the world, how they see others, how they engage in structures of mutual obligation, and how they make choices in the everyday world." (Cushman, 1990, p. 601).*

The incompatibility between the universalistic and the relativistic standpoint is best reflected in the debate on general principles in cross-cultural psychology known as the *emic-etic controversy*. This distinction can be compared with the one between nomothetic and idiographic approaches in personality studies.

The emic-etic-controversy. The basic dichotomy was first proposed by the linguist Pike in 1954, who located the two different means of studying cultural phenomena onto the linguistic distinction between *phonemics* and *phonetics*. The study of phonemics looks at sounds and their unique meanings in one particular language, while the study of phonetics attempts to generalize from phonemic studies in separate languages to a universal science of sounds which are relevant to all languages, irrespective of their meaning (see Davidson, 1976; Berry et al, 1992; Helfrich, 1999). In 1963 D. French introduced these concepts into Psychology, and since then the emic-etic debate has become an integral part of discussions in cross-cultural research (Berry, 1999; Helfrich, 1999; Jahoda, 1976). The *emic* (from phonemic) approach aims to describe behavior in a particular culture utilizing only concepts employed in that culture (see contextualist position). The *etic* (from phonetic) approach aims to describe behavior using external criteria which are imposed by the researcher (see universal position).

> *"Pike identifies the emic approach as a structural one: the investigator assumes that human behavior is patterned, even though the members of the society being studied may not be aware of many units of the structuring. In Pike's view, the goal of the emic approach is to discover and describe the behavioral system in its own terms, identifying not only the structural units but also the structural classes to which they belong.*

In contrast, an etic approach can be characterized as an external one. Items of behavior are examined not in the light of the system in which they occur, but rather in that of criteria brought to bear on them by the observer. The observer classifies all comparable data into a system which he is creating, using criteria which were in existence before the classification began". (French, 1963, p. 398)

Berry (1969, 1989) summarizes the emic-etic distinction as follows:

Table 2.18: Steps in operationalizing emics and etics (Berry, 1989, p. 730).

Emic approach	Etic approach
Studies behavior from within the system	Studies behavior from a position outside the system
Examines only one culture	Examines many cultures, comparing them
Units and classifications are determined during the analysis. They must be discovered, not predicted	Units and classifications are available in advance, based on prior sampling or surveys
Structure discovered by the analyst	Structure created by the analyst
Criteria are relative to internal characteristics	Criteria are considered absolute or universal
Every unit must be seen as distributed and functioning within a larger setting	Not every unit must be viewed as part of a larger setting
Two units are different when they elicit different responses from people acting within the system	Two units are different when instrumental measurements can show them to be so
Data require a knowledge of the total system to which they are relative and from which they ultimately draw their significance	Data are obtainable early in analysis with partial information

According to the etic approach, 'culture' is an influencing factor which can help to explain differences in human functioning. According to the emic approach, 'culture' is not an external factor which has certain effects on the individual but an integral part of human behavior, which cannot be separated from its cultural context (Gergen, 1985).

Researchers following the emic approach will obtain an accurate within-culture description, but cannot, by definition, do cross-cultural research. Researchers following the etic approach can impose universal categories and make cultural comparisons. However, their universal categories could mislead them and make them blind to culture-specific phenomena which do not fit into an external model. The difficulty of cross-cultural research to describe cultural phenomena accurately and compare them to other cultures is described as the emic-etic dilemma (Davidson, 1976; Jahoda, 1976).

There is a big ideological gap between researchers. We find extreme positions like that of the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard (1965), who rejects all attempts of generalization. According to him, patterns must be analyzed within the culture, and interpreted within the system framework of that culture. Comparative studies generalizing across cultures are

regarded as inappropriate. The opposite extreme of this 'emic-only-view' (Jahoda, 1977) is represented by Murdock (1955), who claims that a reliable set of universal constructs have already been identified, making research within one culture less interesting.

A number of solutions have been presented to solve the emic-etic dilemma (see Triandis, Malpass & Davidson, 1973). The most frequently adopted solution is called the 'pseudo-etic' approach. Emic measures (usually developed in western industrialized countries) are simply assumed to be etic. Instruments reflecting western conditions are translated and used in other cultures with little regard for reliability, validity, and culture-specific conditions. Mean differences discovered by these instruments are interpreted as cultural differences in the variables that the instrument is supposed to measure. Finifter (1977) criticizes the pseudo-etic approach as follows:

> *"Failure to reproduce a finding in the* same *culture usually leads the investigator to question the reliability, validity and comparability of the research procedures used in the two studies for possible method artifacts. But failure to corroborate the same finding in a* different *culture often leads to claims of having discovered 'cultural' differences." (Finifter, 1977, p. 155)*

A more fruitful solution has been suggested by students of language and cognition (Triandis et al., 1973). They developed a 'combined etic-emic' approach which comprises three stages: First, the researcher identifies an etic construct which is supposed to have universal status. Second, emic ways of measuring this construct are developed. Third, the emically defined etic construct can be used for cross-cultural comparison. The Achilles heel of this approach again lies in cross-cultural validity. Since the instruments have been adapted emically, they will not be the same. Linguistic equivalence was lost in order to achieve a psychological equivalence between cultures. How can researchers still guarantee that they are still measuring the same hypothetical construct? Proving two different measures as equivalent is regarded as one of the most difficult methodological problems in comparative research (Davidson, 1976).

Up to now, psychologist have not been able to solve the dilemma satisfactorily, but the awareness of the limitations of comparative research is constantly growing and taken into account (see van de Vivjer & Leung, 2000, Sachdev, 1997).

It should be mentioned that some cross-cultural psychologists prefer to give up the distinction between emic and etic, and just refer to culture-specific and universal (see Jahoda, 1976) since these terms are immediately clear, and bear the same connotation.

2.5.1.2.3 The integrationist position

The third current in cross-cultural psychology stresses the importance of integrating knowledge gained from the cross-cultural testing of psychological theories with local indigenous results. It can be regarded as a synthesis of the universalistic and the relativistic approach.

Indigenization from without and within. Within the integrationist approach, two types of indigenous psychology can be distinguished: *indigenization from without* and *indigenization from within* (Enriquez, 1993). Indigenization from without is the modification of psychological concepts, models, and theories until they fit the local cultural context. Berry's approach of '*derived etics'* is probably the most frequently used operationalization for indigenization from without (Berry, 1989). He proposes an integrationist research strategy that rejects the usual universalistic procedure, which he calls '*imposed etic'*. He agrees to begin research etically (transporting theories which are supposed to be universal into specific cultures), but expects a progressive modification of those elements alien to the culture until they approximate the indigenous ones. If they possess similarities, he suggests building a '*derived etic'* which can be used for comparison. Thus, only those aspects of the original theory which can be verified in different cultural contexts are retained as assumed universals. Berry concludes:

> *"When all systems which may be compared (…) have been included, then we have achieved a universal for that particular behavior" (Berry, 1989, p. 124).*

Figure 2.11 shows these steps of operationalizing emics and etics.

Enriquez (1993) criticizes this approach as still being an external imposition, despite taking emic knowledge into account, because it treats indigenous knowledge as an auxiliary rather than the primary source of knowledge. Kim (1995) supports this criticism, arguing that new and different perspectives are simply added to existing paradigms, while the falsification of the underlying model through cultural-specific findings is not possible. He states:

"Although this approach can modify and expand existing psychological theories, it cannot challenge the basic, paradigmatic, and scientific foundation of psychology. Within this approach, existing theories can limit, rather than aid, scientific discoveries. For example, if cross-cultural data do not fit an existing theory, they are often viewed as a problem in translation, data collection, or methodology and not as an example of the falsification of the theory" (Kim et al., 2000).

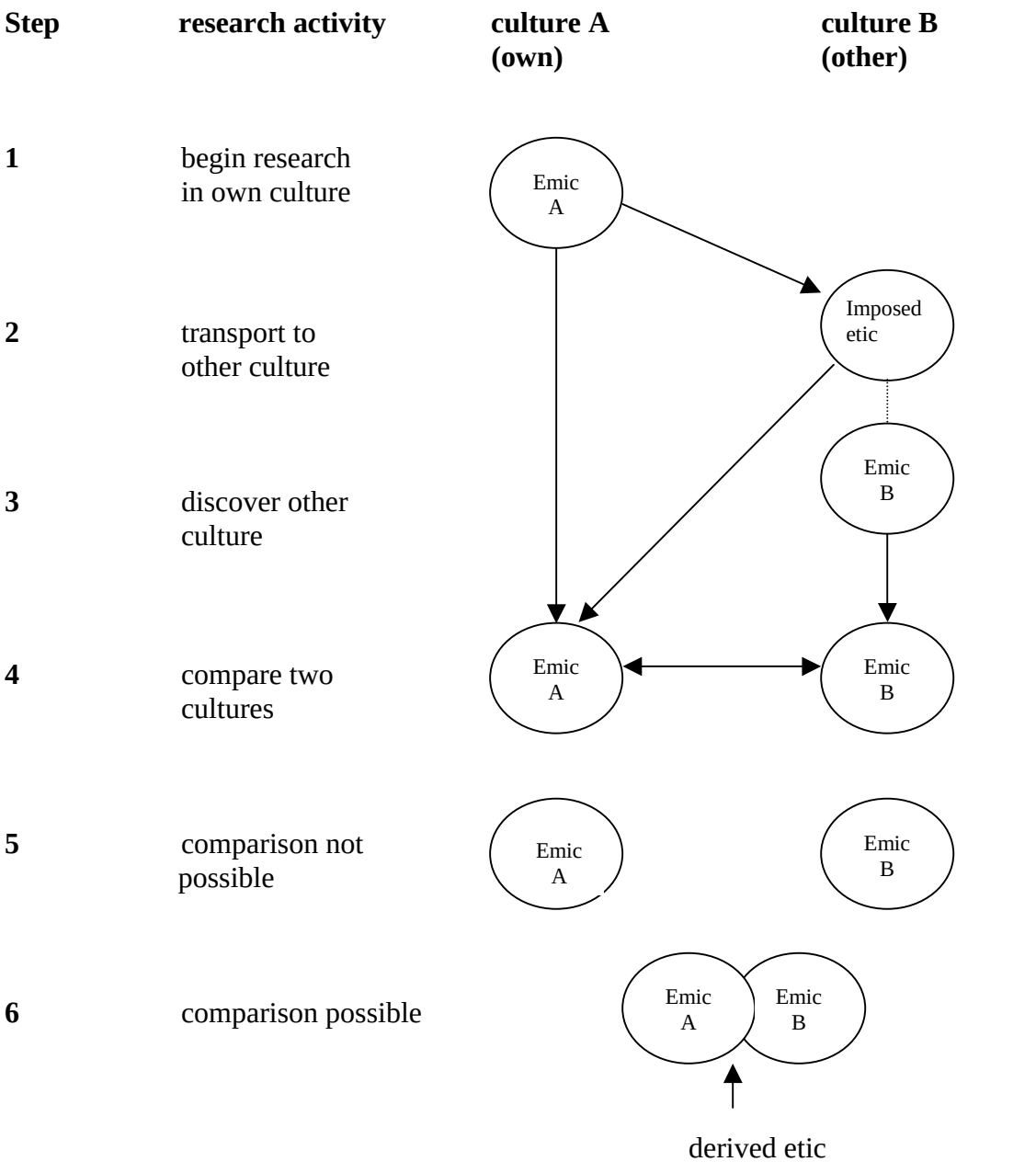

Figure 2.11: Steps in operationalizing emics and etics (Berry, 1989, p. 730)

Indigenization from within develops psychological concepts, models and theories internally, i.e. in one single culture, using indigenous information as the primary source of knowledge. Research aims at obtaining a probabilistic understanding of the world rather than an objective and deterministic one. The research topics must be meaningful and contextualized, rather than created arbitrarily by researchers. The objects of research, namely the members of one culture, are recognized as proactive and interactive rather than reactive (see Kim, 1999). Research instruments need to be developed according to the cultural context, and they should allow subjects to add their expertise. The approach of indigenization from within focuses on practical validity. The knowledge gained by contextualized research should provide insights with practical implications. What separates the integrationist indigenization-from-within-approach from the emic approach on a practical level is the inclusion of concepts, which are salient and significant in other cultures, into one's own topics of investigation, and on a theoretical level the goal of combining established psychological theories with new indigenous insights to arrive at verified universal knowledge (Kim et al., 2000).

Kagitcibasi and Poortinga (2000) focus on the same difference when they distinguish '*indigenous orientation as a means'* (integrationist) from '*indigenous orientation as a goal'* (emic only). Indigenous orientation as a means intends to uncover the diversity in human behavior in order to understand this diversity and enrich psychological theories. Indigenous orientation as a goal aims at developing a separate psychology for each cultural reality, which bears the risk of producing an incomparable body of knowledge of highly restricted use (Kagitcibasi & Poortinga, 2000).

2.6 Peru

2.6.1 Brief description of the Peruvian culture

Peru shares borders with Ecuador and Columbia in the North, Brazil in the East, Bolivia in the Southeast and Chile in the South, while the Pacific Ocean lies off the West Coast.

Peru is the third largest country in South America with an area of 1.285.216 square kilometers. It has approximately 24 millions inhabitants, with a density of 18 inhabitants per square kilometer. Roughly 7 million people live in the capital, Lima. The ethnical distribution is as follows: 50 % Indians, 33 % Mestizos (mixed Spanish and Indian descent), 12 % white people, 4 % Asians, and 1 % black people. The annual growth rate is approximately 2.7 %.

The average male life expectancy is 63 years, and the average female life expectancy 67 years. The infant mortality rate is 75.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, and 126 of every 1,000 children will die before they reach their 5th birthday. Approximately two thirds of the population suffer from imbalanced or insufficient nutrition. The illiteracy rate is 12.5 % in urban regions and 15-70 % in rural areas. The most common religion is Catholicism (93 %),

mixed with Pre-Columbian elements among Highland Indians, and 'natural' religions in inhabitants of the lower regions. Peru declared itself an independent state in 1821, and its sovereignty was officially recognized in 1824. Today Peru is a presidential republic. The official languages are Spanish and Quechua, which is the ancient Incan language.

The earliest findings of human civilization in Peru are dated at 2,000 BC. The period from the second millennium BC to around the first century BC is known as the formative period, when the first signs of the high culture of Andean society appeared. More than 2,000 years ago, pre-Inca cultures in South America had already developed sophisticated irrigation and canal systems, an agricultural system, taxation and a social system, all of which were highly superior to European and Arabic cultures.

The country was ruled by the Incas from the 12th century until the arrival of the Spaniards at the beginning of the 16th century. The people we call the Incas were a small aristocracy, numbering only a few thousand, who were centered in the Andean city of Cuzco, at 3,400 m. In 1438 the Inca Pachacutec Yupanqui built the legendary Inca Dynasty, which expanded in less than 100 years from a small highland principality to the most powerful empire in South America, with a highly advanced culture. Covering over 950,000 square kilometers, their empire was about 30 times bigger than the land of the Pharaohs. The Incas were warriors, who also developed an astonishing ability to generate wealth through highly efficient systems of agriculture and distribution. They were famous for their diplomacy and alliance-building, and their unique social and economical system. They were also famous for their astronomical knowledge. This huge empire was held together by an extensive and efficient highway system. The Inca State kept records and transmitted information in various ways. Accounting and statistical records were kept on lengths of knotted string known as *quipus*. Neither the Incas nor their Andean predecessors had a system of writing as we understand it, but there was a system of encoding language into quipus. The Incan empire was conquered by the Spanish between 1531-1533, and the fact that roughly 200 Spaniards were able to destroy this highly developed state, with an army estimated at between 50,000 and 200,000 men, can only be explained through the favorable circumstances which the conquerors found in Peru at their arrival. A feud amongst the ruling dynasty hindered a united defense, the higher nobility had become fragmented, while the lower nobility hoped to get firearms from the conquistadors to increase their own power. The population's will to resist had been broken through centuries of Inca ruling, and another decisive element might have been that the conquistadors resembled the Gods whose appearance was prophesied in Indian legends.

Spanish rule lasted from 1533 to 1821. Argentine troops led by General José de San Martín, invading from Chile, defeated the Army of the Spanish Viceroy in 1818. In 1821 San Martín marched into Lima and proclaimed Peru's independence on the 14th of July. However, power was not passed back to the Indians but remained in the hands of white descendants. There were 59 changes of government, through coups d'état and assassination, between 1821 and 1842. From 1845, under president Ramón Castilla, Peru experienced an economical upturn based on exporting minerals and the fertilizer guano, which lasted for two decades. Castilla also abolished slavery in 1854. During the last 150 years Peru has gone through economical ups and downs, and during this time the rural inhabitants have been unable to enhance their unprivileged social and economical position. Several farmer revolts occurred, which were bloodily suppressed by the military. The communist General Velasco Alvarado, who ruled between 1968 and 1975, was also unable to ease the farmers' conditions, despite his agrarian reforms. The situation of the country became more and more unstable in the late seventies due to high unemployment, immense foreign exchange debts and corruption amongst politicians.

In 1980 the guerrilla organization *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) launched their armed struggle, which they called the 'popular war for social justice'. By the mid-eighties, Shining Path was believed to have 2,000 to 3,000 regular fighters, with many more in part-time militia and urban cells. The popular war, which the guerrilla expected to last for 50 years, aimed to take over the countryside before invading the cities, overthrowing the government and reinstating Indian rule. Its ideology is closest to the traditional Maoism of the 'Gang of Four', though it also draws on the principles of other foreign communist movements. The operations of Shining Path have included sabotage, kidnapping, and the murder of local officials and members of security forces. Suspected informers have been mutilated and sometimes killed. Government counter-insurgency forces responded with great brutality. Indeed, some of the alleged terrorist massacres have been shown to be the work of these forces. Of the approximately 15,000 deaths which have been attributed to this struggle up to 1988, most are said by human rights organizations to be the work of security forces. Sendero Luminoso also established a presence in the upper Huallaga valley, which is Peru's main coca growing region. After a series of pitched battles, it succeeded in driving out the police, army, other guerrilla groups and even the drug trafficker's gunmen, and was then able to collect an estimated US$ 40 million a year in taxes on the cocaine trade. Shining Path shows no interest in a negotiated peace, preferring to fight for an eventual total victory, however high the cost. Their strategy, though, had to be reconsidered after the arrest of their

leader, Abimael Guzmán, in 1992, who was sentenced to life imprisonment. Although Sendero Luminoso did not capitulate, in 1994-1995 many of its members took advantage of the Law of Repentance, which guaranteed lighter sentences in return for surrender, and freedom in exchange for valuable information. The military still continues the fight against the last few remaining active terrorists.

From 1985 to 1990 Peru was governed by Alan García, who plunged the country headlong into economical ruin. In April of 1990 60% of the population were estimated to be living in poverty. The national product had sunk to the level of 1960, the inflation rate fluctuated between 3,000 and 6,000%. In 1990 it culminated at 7,650%. The civil war between guerrilla and military had by then cost about 21,000 casualties, and approximately a fourth of the country was said to be controlled by terrorists.

Since 1990 the agricultural scientist Alberto Kenyo Fujimori, the son of a Japanese immigrant family, has been the president of Peru. Without an established political network behind him, Fujimori failed to win a majority in either the senate or the lower house. This lack of congressional support was one of the reasons why he dissolved congress suspended the constitution in 1992. Fujimori declared that he needed a freer hand to introduce market reforms and combat terrorism and drug trafficking, while at the same time rooting out corruption. His initial massive popular support, which was not matched internationally, did not evaporate. The economical situation of the country relaxed significantly under his reign, but once again the farmers have taken least profit from his reforms. Constitutional changes allowed Fujimori to run for president for the third time in May 2000, when he was re-elected. His opponent Alejandro Toledo, the first Indian presidential candidate in the history of Peru, is still protesting that the election was manipulated, and his claims are supported by independent international observers. The peoples' enthusiasm for Fujimori and his governments achievements has declined, since rising unemployment and the austerity imposed by his economic policy both continue to cause hardship for many. A bribery scandal in September 2000 forced Fujimori to call re-elections, which will be held in 2001, when he promises that he will no longer run for president. In November 2000 Fujimori did not return from a journey to Japan and declared that he was no longer president of Peru. The country is now ruled provisionally by his deputy Valentín Paniagua.

2.6.2 Peru's people

At the time of the Spanish conquest, there were an estimated 9,000,000 indigenous inhabitants of the region that is now Peru. In the subsequent hundred years, Spanish genocide

reduced this figure to 600,000. About three centuries later, by the time of independence from Spain, while the total population had risen to 1,200,000, the Indian population had remained static. To this day indigenous people as a proportion of the total population has remained the same, so roughly half of Peru's inhabitants are indigenous people from different ethnic groups. The Indians are mainly divided into Highland and Amazonian Indians, who are then subcategorized into 40 to 50 ethnic groups. The statistics about proportions within indigenous people vary remarkably, but there seems to be a consensus about the total number of the indigenous population, which is the third largest in Latin American republics, after Bolivia and Guatemala.

The non indigenous population began with the Spaniards in the 16th century. Like most of Latin America, in the late 19th century Peru received many émigrés from Europe, seeking land and opportunities. Asian immigrants also provided a sizeable contingent. Chinese laborers were introduced in the 1860s to work the guano on the Pacific coast. The Japanese community has approximately 100.000 members, and established itself in the first half of the 20th century. Peru also has a small black community, whose forefathers were originally imported into Peru as slaves.

The structure of Peruvian society, particularly in the coastal cities, has been radically altered by internal migration. This movement started in the 1950s, and reached its culmination in the 1960s under Velasco's agrarian reforms, as people from the highlands came in search of urban jobs. It was a time of great upheaval as the old system of labor on large estates was threatened by the peasant majority's growing awareness of the imbalance between rich coastal cities and poor highland communities. The second wave of internal migration from the highlands to the cities resulted from the war between the government and Sendero Luminoso. Many communities which were depopulated in the eighties are now beginning to come alive again.

2.6.3 Peru's indigenous people

The literacy rate of the indigenous population is the lowest of all comparable groups in South America. The war between guerrilla and military has caused the deaths of thousands of highland Indians. Many communities are threatened by colonization, development and road-building projects. Some indigenous groups continue to be dispossessed and exploited for their labor. The indigenous population has no representatives in the congress, and is entirely dependant on the government's reforms, which have so far failed to stop impoverishment.

The Quechua people. The origins of the Quechua people are shrouded in mythology. According to Inca legends, the Quechuas were a small group who originally lived near Lake Titicaca. They later moved to Cuzco and expanded their territory to create the Inca empire. Their language and culture spread from Ecuador in the north to Chile in the south. The Quechuas were an agricultural society, and knew no money economy. Their language, which is also called Quechua, is still an unwritten one. About 2,000,000 Peruvians speak Quechua and not Spanish.

The Aymara people. The Aymara people make up about 5.4% of the Peruvian population. They live on the *altiplano*, a wide, barren plateau high up in the Southern Andes. Their culture is much older than the Incas, and is centered around Lake Titicaca. Most of the Aymara people live in Bolivia, the rest in south-western Peru and northern Chile. The climate on the altiplano is very harsh, so the Aymaras are very poor. Their language, which is also called Aymara, is like Quecua an unwritten one.

The Amazonian peoples. Before the arrival of the conquistadors, an estimated 6,000,000 people inhabited the Amazon basin, including more then 2,000 tribes or ethnic-linguistic groups who had adapted to their surroundings through domesticating animals and plants, and acquiring knowledge of the nutritional, curative, and narcotic properties of thousands of wild plants. It is not possible to determine the exact origin of these aboriginal people. High humidity and other regional characteristics contributed to rapid deterioration of their archaeology. It is known, however, that this population decreased constantly after the Europeans invaded the country, mainly due to western diseases such as influenza and measles. The demographic decline reached its culmination during the rubber boom of the late 19th and early 20th century, as a result of slavery. Today the population is calculated at 2,000,000 inhabitants, separated into 400 ethnic groups.

Note:

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