Comments on the Paper by Walker, Deng, and Dieser

Evolution of Cross-Cultural Analysis in the Study of Leisure: Commentary on "Culture, Self-Construal, and Leisure Theory and Practice"

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In a 1997 review of the social psychology of leisure literature, Doug Kleiber and I concluded that there was no comprehensive social psychology of cultural differences in leisure (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, p. 27). A number of researchers at the time had raised this issue, arguing that leisure research had focused primarily on members of the dominant culture in North America and ignored cultural and ethnic differences (e.g., Floyd & Gramann, 1993). As noted by Walker, Deng, and Dieser in their paper, this issue has since been taken up by other leisure scholars (e.g., Floyd, 1998; Hutchison, 2000; Stodolska, 2000). However, I believe that the authors' paper goes some way toward correcting this lack of theory. It is important for its development of leisure theory on cultural differences and as a potential stimulant for future theory development and research.

Theory and research in cross-cultural psychology has until quite recently remained on the periphery of mainstream social psychology (Matsumoto, 2000), and this is certainly the case in its application to the study of leisure. However, the importance and contributions of cross-cultural psychological analysis is gaining in recognition in mainstream social psychology, and the conceptual analysis provided by the Walker, Deng, and Dieser paper makes its contribution by introducing this type thinking to the field of leisure studies. In their paper, they illustrate this perspective by providing a highly relevant example of how an important social psychological and leisure construct, like intrinsic motivation, might operate as a basic psychological process across cultures but affect experiential and behavioral outcomes, including leisure, differently depending on cultural context.

Though there has been a steady increase in interest in the ethnic and cultural dimensions of leisure in recent years, research has been largely de-

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scriptive of differences among various cultural, ethnic, and racial groups (Floyd, 1998). Researchers have focused on identifying differences in leisure constraints (e.g., Tsai & Coleman, 1999), meanings, needs and motives (e.g., Toth & Brown, 1997; Walker & Dieser, 2001; Yuan & McDonald, 1990), preferences (Shinew, Floyd, McGuire, & Noe, 1995), and behaviors (e.g., Floyd & Shinew, 1999), and how these vary in relation to recreational settings (e.g., Virden & Walker, 1999; Williams & Carr, 1993). Though some theory has been developed and tested to explain and predict these differences in leisure behavior, basic research on the actual social psychological mechanisms underlying ethnic and cultural differences in leisure remains to be done (Hutchison, 2000). It is here where I believe Walker and associates make their greatest contribution to our thinking about the cross-cultural dimensions of leisure. They illustrate how cross-cultural analysis can be used to acquire a detailed picture of not only how but why the meaning of leisure and people's reaction to it might differ from one culture to another. This development is important for two reasons. First, as the authors have noted, it is important to move beyond a description of differences to an understanding of why these differences exist. Second, the type of analysis and research discussed in the paper is a way of determining the extent to which various social psychological processes, including those involved in leisure, are culturally universal or culturally relative. Even though differences in leisure behavior, motives, and preferences for activities and settings may be found to exist, the psychological foundations of leisure (e.g., freedom of choice and intrinsic motivation) may be shown to be important regardless of culture once it is discovered how cultural values influence the underlying basic social psychological processes themselves. For example, as the authors suggest, intrinsic motivation is important to leisure for both Euro-North Americans and East Asians. However, because of cultural differences in self-construal, that is, the psychological basis on which people in these two cultures develop and maintain positive self-concepts, the essential needs underlying and critical to the experience of intrinsic motivation, and consequently leisure, may differ.

Consequently, we can ask "whether or not the phenomenon of leisure as conceptualized in western leisure studies is a culturally universal psychological state and experience, and at its best when characterized by a high level of freedom of choice and intrinsic motivation?" According to Walker, Deng, and Dieser, the answer may be a qualified yes. The authors are clearly not being culturally insensitive or ethnocentric with this assertion; they are certainly aware of the subtle influences of culture on people's thinking and the meanings they attach to their experiences, including leisure. In fact, the authors suggest that though intrinsic motivation may be an essential ingredient in the experience of leisure in different cultures, the underlying psychological processes that comprise experiencing or being intrinsically motivated may themselves may operate differently across cultures in understandable and predictable ways, and consequently, influence what is experienced as leisure.

In making this argument, the authors draw on and creatively apply recent cross-cultural social psychological theory and analysis; work, as noted

earlier, that in recent years has moved from the periphery of western social psychology to the mainstream. A number of social psychological theories and the social cognitive processes proposed to explain behavior are now being examined through the lens of cross-cultural analysis. In addition to new perspectives on intrinsic motivation and self-determination theory, this work is leading to the further refinement of other social psychological theories such as cognitive dissonance and self-affirmation theory (see Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993; Hoshino-Browne, Zanna, Spencer, & Zanna, in press) that have been developed by western social psychologists based on research with primarily Euro-North American populations. Just as important, this current cross-cultural theory and research marks a genuine effort by researchers to determine the cultural relativity-universality of theories developed in western social science in explaining behavior in a wide range of cultural contexts.

During the past several decades, social psychologists' approach to cross-cultural research on psychological constructs has gone through a variety of phases. Hoshino-Browne, Zanna, Spencer, and Zanna (in press) have described these phases in terms of three generations of development. They argue that the first generation of cross-cultural research focused on identifying cross-cultural similarities and attempted to demonstrate the universality of social psychological constructs. A second generation of cross-cultural research was focused on identifying culture-specific psychological phenomena with findings that demonstrated cross-cultural differences. The cross-cultural leisure research that has been reported could be said to be of the generation one and two types. The third generation, according to Hoshno-Browne and associates, and on which it could be said that Walker and his associates base their analysis, can be characterized as a synthesis of the first and second generations. In particular, this approach is an attempt to understand the role played by culture in shaping basic psychological functioning.

Walker and his colleagues make a substantial contribution to the social psychological study of leisure with their cross-cultural theorizing and analysis of the social psychological processes involved in intrinsic motivation and leisure by advancing us to this third generation of thinking. With respect to intrinsic motivation and self-determination theory, they essentially argue that people tend to experience intrinsic motivation when certain of their needs are met and those needs are an important part of their self-concept or self-construal as defined by the values of their culture. However, because different cultures espouse different self-construals or self-views as their cultural ideals (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Triandis, 1996), there should be cross-cultural variability in the processes of intrinsic motivation according the relevant self-construal. For example, in their discussion of North Americans and East Asians, Walker et al. argue that of the three basic needs that underlie intrinsic motivation, that is, self-determination, competence, and relatedness, the need for self-determination is more important to North American's independent oriented self-construals, and East Asians' self-construals are based more on the need for relatedness, that is, an interdependent self-construal. In particular, people will be intrinsically motivated

whenever their most important intrinsic needs are met. Consequently, what is perceived as leisure, its subjective and behavioral outcomes, and the motivation to repeat or continue this leisure will be influenced by the particular nature of the self-concepts espoused in a given culture. Essentially, then the authors attempt to demonstrate that this type of cross-cultural analysis and research can help develop a better understanding of not only relatively basic social psychological processes such as intrinsic motivation but leisure behavior, experiences, motivation, and preferences as well.

In making this argument, the authors provide a thorough and balanced overview of literature, drawing the reader's attention to the potential limitations of characterizing the members of different cultures as exclusively holding independent or interdependent self-construals. They alert us to the fact that in the literature on independent and interdependent self-construals, it is recognized that people from different cultures use both types of self-construals even though one type might predominate, and they discuss other dimensions by which self-construal may differ and be relevant for understanding leisure.

The conceptual framework proposed by Walker and associates would seem to have the potential to contribute to other issues of interest to leisure researchers as well. For example, the study of gender differences in independent and interdependent self-construals and the importance of the need for relatedness might be relevant to furthering our understanding of the ethic of care and feelings of leisure entitlement. Research on factors that influence how and when people switch from using an independent to interdependent self-construal and the influence of this switching on their leisure behavior could be carried out. The role of acculturation, particularly on new immigrants, and the influence on their self-construals and self-concepts, and consequently leisure, would likely also be a profitable direction for future theory and research.

The framework introduced by Walker and his associates also brought to mind the comments of those scholars who have been concerned that in North American leisure studies there has been an overemphasis on freedom of choice and autonomy as the basis for leisure. Some authors have suggested that the social psychological approach to the study of leisure with its focus on the individual has tended to divert us from considering important *value-based* ethical and social issues such as the nature of our responsibilities when making leisure choices (Sylvester, 1985). Goodale (1990) has argued that by defining leisure as perceived freedom and emphasizing the importance of people's subjective impressions of leisure, we have tended to ignore the sometimes negative objective conditions in people's lives that may limit their ability to experience meaningful and rewarding leisure. The theorizing of Walker and his associates provides a social psychological framework for thinking about self-determination and the importance of autonomous choices in leisure. Intrinsically motivated leisure based on meeting the need of relatedness and the idea of interdependent self-construals may provide a counterbalance.

Ultimately, researchers need to go beyond the appearance of cultural differences in leisure behavior and vigorously examine the cultural factors that produce the differences. The adoption of a third-generation approach to cross-cultural analysis, the approach suggested by Walker, Deng, and Dieser to the study of leisure, would appear to be critically important for further promoting our understanding of important differences and the basic psychological processes shaping leisure.

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