Beyond Stress and Coping: The Positive Psychology of Transformation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Often, it is easier to study a subject than to define it. Anyone foolish enough to attempt a comprehensive and universally acceptable definition of human culture would be like a blind person trying to describe an elephant. A similar difficulty exists in defining the psychology of stress and coping. Nevertheless, we cannot simply run away from these challenges; we still need to clarify and differentiate some of the key concepts, such as multiculturalism, stress, and coping in order to synthesize the vast and complex subject matter of this edited volume.

It is our hope that this book will inspire scholars and professionals to develop new visions of the human drama of surviving and flourishing in an ever-changing cultural context. We want to challenge our readers to venture out from their familiar territories of well-defined and rigorous research paradigms and consider larger but more abstruse issues of human existence. It is through integrating and transcending the various fragmented research paradigms that we can gain greater understanding of both the universal and culture-specific adaptive process of human beings.

2. WHAT IS CULTURE?

In our everyday conversations, the word “culture” is typically used to connote the customary practices and language associated with a particular racial or ethnic group. Culture is also commonly conceived as a way of perceiving the world based upon a shared set of social beliefs and values. However, at a deeper level, culture is a much more complex construct. Cultures are human creations, socially constructed and transmitted through language, conventions, socialization, and social institutions. Cultures are

created not only to enhance human beings' physical survival and creature comforts, but also to meet their deeper psychological needs for meaning and significance through shared cultural metaphors and symbols. According to Brislin (1990), "culture refers to widely shared ideals, values, formation, and uses of categories, assumptions about life, and goal-directed activities that become unconsciously or subconsciously accepted as right and correct by people who identify themselves as members of a society" (p.11).

In many important ways, cultures are the expressions of human nature in all its complexity and duality – fears and hopes, cravings and aspirations, selfishness and generosity, cruelty and compassion. Cultures are also manifestations of the human capacity for imagination, creativity, intellection, and adaptation. Cultural differences exist because each culture is shaped by its unique set of physical environments, historical context, political events, and dominant religions and philosophies. These differences may gradually diminish, when the hegemony of one culture dominates the global village.

We cannot overstate the importance of culture. Pedersen (1991, 1999) has emphasized that all behaviors are shaped by culture. Even when behaviors are largely genetically determined, their manifestations are still subject to cultural influences. At the same time, we also shape and create the culture in which we live. Various chapters in the first Section of this book clearly document that culture influences every aspect of our existence and prescribes ways for living. Segall, Lonner, and Berry (1998) are absolutely correct, when they write that "human behavior is meaningful *only* when viewed in the sociocultural context in which it occurs", but psychology has nonetheless "long ignored culture as a source on human behavior and still

takes little account of theories or data from other than Euro-American cultures" (p. 1101).

All cultures are fluid and dynamic, subject to the impact from epochal events in the world and from frequent encounters with other cultures. To the extent a culture is resistant to change, its likelihood for survival is reduced. However, cultural changes need not follow the path of least resistance; both leaders and ordinary citizens of every nation have the responsibility to safe-guard their cultural treasures and protect their civilization from pathological elements. This kind of awareness and vigilance is necessary, because culture is a powerful change agent, both for good and evil.

Ho (1995) proposes the concept of internalized culture that describes the psychological process of enculturation rather than culture as a reality external to the person. He suggests that internalized culture functions as a cognitive map for our social world and influences the formation of our worldviews. Ho also writes: "human beings are both the products and creators of culture" (p. 19), and that "the relation between individual behavior and culture is best conceived as one of continuous interaction" (p.19). Chun, Moos and Cronkite (Chapter 2) also emphasize the constant interplay between culture and individuals.

Because of the interactive nature of culture, psychologists need to study not only how culture impacts cognitive and behavioral processes, but also how human and social factors impact emerging cultures. The greatest challenge facing psychologists is to understand what contributes to the development of toxic, pathological cultures of tyranny, terrorism, and despair,

and what contributes to healthy and salugenic cultures of freedom, compassion, and optimism.

3. THE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATION

When we apply the challenge of transforming culture, different kinds of questions arise in studying stress and coping. Instead of simply asking how people in different cultures cope with stress differently, we need to ask more fundamental questions, such as: What are the toxic and healthy elements in any particular culture? What are the social-economical, political and behavioral factors contributing to a high level of stress or psychopathology? What can be done to transform the toxic culture? Some theorizing and research have been done about the positive psychology of cultural transformation at the organizational or corporate level (Wong, 2002; Wong & Gupta, 2004), but to our knowledge, little has been done regarding positive cultural transformation at the national level.

Different from situational coping, cultural transformation is a meta-coping strategy, which requires a variety of leadership skills, such as team work, shared vision, transparency, and treating people with dignity. It may include multicultural competencies (Sue & Sue, 2003). Cultural transformation may also be conceptualized as a form of macro-stress management, because it is aimed at a complete overhaul of the total environment rather than the solution of specific problems.

In some communities with pervasive, chronic conditions of poverty, terror and suffering (Naji, Chapter 20), nothing short of regime-change and culture-transformation can provide some relief to the suffering people. However, it may take more than one generation to transform a society from a

culture of oppression and terror to a culture of freedom and love. The important lesson is that for many pervasive societal stressors (Wong, 1993), it requires national/communal leadership and cultural transformation, and demands much more than what an individual could offer. The entire area of cultural transformation as a way of coping with societal or organizational stress remains under-researched.

Another challenge to psychologists is to discover the potential of personal transformation. This mode of coping refers to the strategy of changing one's personal meaning-value systems, worldviews, lifestyles, and some aspects of one's personality as a result of enlightenment (Chen, Chapters 4 and 5), spiritual conversion (Klaassen, McDonald, & James, Chapter 6), transcendence and duality (Lee, Chapter 8), personal growth and restructuring (Wong, Reker, & Peacock, Chapter 11). Personal transformation is developed and practised mostly in Asia and has received only scant attention in Euro-American psychology.

The relevance of personal transformation is self-evident, when the stressful situation is chronic and beyond personal control. In such situations, at best one can do is to transform oneself so that the stress would become less threatening and the pain more bearable. In some cases, such as a Zen Master or a Catholic Saint, personal transformation can attain such a high level that everyday hassles and even major life events become passing vapour that hardly stirs a ripple in the calm water.

Different from cognitive reframing, personal transformation is proactive rather than reactive. Cognitive reframe typically occurs in an encounter with a specific problematic situation, while personal transformation is typically an

ongoing, holistic change process. It would be instructive to carefully examine the different types of personal transformation in Chapters 4, 5, 8, 11, and 20.

The positive psychology of transformation is beyond stress and coping because it takes us to a point in time prior to a stressful encounter, and to a space much larger and deeper than the actual stressful transaction. Transformation can take place in the deepest recesses of the human spirit. It can also take place in the political arena or boardroom. Transformation is more effective than coping, because when it is successful, it can eliminate most of the stress, whatever it maybe, and makes coping unnecessary in many situations.

4. MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

What makes this volume unique among stress-and-coping books is that it not only highlights the positive psychology of transformation, but also emphasizes the cross-cultural psychology of stress and coping. A word of explanation is needed to clarify the relationship between multiculturalism and cross-cultural psychology.

According to Leong and Wong (2003), multiculturalism, as a social movement in North America, is an important part of the larger, global human rights movement. As a social-political policy, multiculturalism endorses diversity, inclusiveness, and equality while recognizing the legitimacy and value of ethnic differences and cultural heritage. Multicultural counseling stems directly from this social movement. Leong and Wong (2003) make the point that technically, multicultural counseling should be called cross-cultural counseling, because it involves counseling across culturally different clients.

However, multicultural counseling connotes a policy of embracing diversity, and challenging domination of “majority” values and worldviews.

Ibrahim (1991) emphasizes the importance for counselors to be aware of other people’s worldviews. She believes that "the multicultural encounter is to a large extent dependent on ethnicity, cultures, and sociopolitical histories of the parties involved" (p. 17). It is through the multicultural perspective that we can gain a deeper understanding of individual differences. Ho (1995) makes the further distinction between ethnicity and culture because an individual may belong to a particular ethnic or racial group, but may have internalized one or more cultures from other ethnic backgrounds.

Cross-cultural psychology grows out of cultural psychology. It refers to the study of different cultures and nations in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of a psychological phenomenon – both its *etic* (universalist) and *emic* (culture-specific) aspects. Leong and Wong (2003) point out that the major flaw in Euro-American psychology is not that it is Eurocentric, but that it fails to recognize that it is Eurocentric. It is noteworthy that even the Euro-American brand of cross-cultural psychology is often Eurocentric, because it attempts to apply Euro-American psychological research to cultures that are very different. Segall, Lonner & Berry (1998) have pointed out the problems associated with the application of Euro-American theories and instruments to conduct research in other cultural settings. To impose our own culture’s values and theoretical constructs as the standard to study and understand behaviors in other culture groups would not only be ethnocentric but also “bad science”.

Therefore, we have chosen “multicultural perspectives” as part of the book title to signal that, much like counseling and education, the cross-cultural psychology of stress and coping needs to assume a multicultural stance as an antidote to the pervasive, insidious ethnocentric tendency. In other words, any theoretical model, any empirical finding, and any claim of truth must be examined through the lens of multiculturalism. It is only through multicultural perspectives that cross-cultural research can break away from the mindsets of Euro-American psychology and encompass the richness and complexity of indigenous psychology in diverse cultures.

If anything, this edited volume has provided ample evidence that our conceptions and understanding of stress and coping have been enlarged by learning from how people in other cultures cope with the demands of life. It has also documented the inadequacy of Euro-American psychology of stress and coping when it is applied to cultures with a very different history and dynamics. The future of psychology must take on multicultural and international perspectives, not only for the sake of scientific progress, but also for the practical benefits of learning to understand and get along with each other in multicultural global village.

5. CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY OF STRESS AND COPING

One of the most frequent complaints of Euro-American stress research is about decontextualization or acontextualization. For example, Moos and Swindle (1990) have pointed out that the ongoing context in which stressful events occur is typically ignored. Stress must be viewed in context, both cultural and situational. However, recent reviews of stress and coping (Lazarus, 1999; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Snyder, 1999; Somerfield and

McCrae, 2000) have shown a clear lack of research in cultural contexts. There are indeed a number of studies on ethnic/cultural differences in coping (Bjorck, Cuthbertson, Thurman & Lee, 2001; Chang, Tugade, & Asakawa, Chapter 19; Cross, 1995; Lam & Zane, 2004; Wong & Reker, 1985), but the comparisons are based on concepts and instruments rooted in Euro-American psychology.

Snyder (1999) asks a rhetorical but important question: “To what extent are our coping ideas a by-product of our Western society?” (p.331). He further points out that “most researchers merely have borrowed from the prevailing research paradigms that form the zeitgeist in clinical, social, and personality psychology more generally. This status quo mentality about our methods, however, will not suffice as we address the complex and grand coping questions in the twenty-first century” (p.327).

The lack of progress in stress and coping research has been attributed to theoretical and methodological limitations (Coyne & Gottlieb, 1996; Somerfield & McCrae, 2000; Snyder, 1999; Tennen et al., 2000). However, we believe that the hegemony of Euro-American psychology is not necessarily healthy for the field, especially when it is dominated by a single paradigm. The supremacy of Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model has remained uncontested for two decades and is clearly evident in this volume.

According to this model, coping is defined as the dynamic efforts, which involve “the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful” (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004, p. 745). Many of the existing coping questionnaires focus on problem-focused and emotion-focused coping behaviors (e.g., Lazarus &

Folkman, 1984) rather than on culturally specific coping strategies and resources. One of the major findings from coping research is that problem-focused or action-oriented coping is strongly related to positive psychological outcomes, while emotion-focused coping, such as avoidance, tends to be associated with poorer mental health (e.g., Endler & Parker, 2000; Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986b; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This cannot be the last word on coping. We really need to venture beyond the confines of Euro-American psychology and explore other coping strategies in different cultures. For example, research on the adaptive functions of personal transformation can greatly expand the knowledge of coping.

Although the importance of culture has been recognized (i.e., Slavin, Rainer, McCreary, & Gowda, 1991; Wong, 1993), we still do not have well developed constructs, methodologies, and paradigms that facilitate cross-cultural research. Stevan Hobfoll's (1989, 1998) ecological emphasis is a promising start. He focuses on resources which are an inherent part of every culture. He also addresses the importance of congruence and proposes that it is the fit or lack of fit between demands and coping resources that determines the occurrence of stress and the ability of an individual to successfully meet the challenge.

Similarly, Wong (1993)'s resource-congruence model posits "coping is effective to the extent that appropriate resources are available and congruent coping strategies are employed" (p. 51). Wong and his associates (Peacock, Wong, & Reker, 1993; Wong, Reker, & Peacock, Chapter 11) have proposed a two-stage model of appraisal. Primary proposal is the initial appraisal of the potential stressfulness of the situation. Secondary appraisal is an assessment

of coping options according to one's coping schema of what works in what situation. Coping schema is based on cultural knowledge, because it represents the accumulated and crystallized coping knowledge in a particular cultural context. Research on coping schemas and implicit theories of coping are promising future directions for cross-cultural research. We need to move beyond testing the generalizability of Euro-American theories and findings to other cultural contexts. For example, Wong and Ujimoto (1998) have advocated the methodology of developing theoretical models and planning research that involve partners from other cultures and indigenous psychologists. Tweed and DeLongis (Chapter 10) have proposed a similar strategy of combining *emic* and *etic* research procedures. A good example of this research strategy is Wong's multinational research program on personal meaning (e.g., Takano & Wong, 2004; Kim, Lee, & Wong, 2005).

Since every aspect of the stress process is affected by culture (Chun, Moos, & Cronkite, Chapter 2), we need to develop a cross-cultural psychology of stress. It is through research from multicultural perspectives that we can narrow the gap between theory and application, and make research more relevant to the everyday struggles of individuals in different cultural contexts.

6. CULTURAL VALUES AND CONSTRUCT EQUIVALENCE

One clear message from this volume is the need to pay more attention to construct equivalence, because theoretical constructs reflect our cultural values, worldviews, and hidden ideologies. For example, liberal democracy that emphasizes individual rights and freedoms is one of the most widely held ideologies by Euro-American psychologists, and this is clearly reflected in the popularity of such constructs as self-efficacy, internal locus of control,

optimism, and the pursuit of happiness in Euro-American psychological research. Therefore, we need to examine the values and assumptions of different cultures in the cross-cultural psychology of stress and coping.

Cross-cultural psychology has a long and venerable tradition of emphasizing differences in national or cultural differences (Hofstede, 1980; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Rokeach, 1973; Triandis, 1995). In most of these studies, values refer to attributes and preferences at the national rather than individual level. It is clear from the present edited volume that the most researched cultural values are individualism versus collectivism (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). However, there are other values that also deserve research attention, especially with regards to stress and coping.

According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), cultural values can be inferred from how people in every society answer five crucial human questions: (a) What is the basic nature of people? (b) What is the proper relationship to nature? (c) What is the proper focus in terms of the temporal dimension of life? (d) What is the proper mode of human activity? (e) What is the proper way of relating to one another?

Within each culture, responses to these questions naturally vary from person to person, but there is always a dominant response in any society. These value-orientations incorporate normative cognitive (thoughts about life), conative (inclinations towards a particular course of action), and affective (feelings about what is desirable or preferable) elements. This model deserves our attention, because it addresses basic existential assumptions and worldviews of different cultures. Furthermore, according to Zavalloni

(1980), “The existential or general beliefs were seen as influencing concrete choices in everyday life” (p.84).

6.1 Human nature orientation

There are three types of responses to the question of human nature: Evil, Good, or Both Good-and-Evil. To believe that human nature is evil is to believe that people are basically bad, and they need to be controlled by some form of authority, whether institutional, ecclesiastical, or political. This assumption may have contributed to hierarchical, authoritarian states in the Middle East (Naji, Chapter 20) and collectivistic cultures (Yeh, Kwong Arora, & Wu, Chapter 3), in which individual freedoms and rights are subservient to the needs and desires of the group and its leader.

The belief that people are born good and that most people are basically good at heart is more consistent with individualistic cultures emphasizing individuals’ freedom and ability to make good choices and lead successful lives. In the psychological and therapeutic culture of contemporary America, people have lost the sense of evil (Delbanco, 1996). In a curious way, personal responsibility has been replaced by victimhood in a culture that emphasizes empathy and the basic goodness of people. Individuals who commit horrendous evil deeds are viewed as victims of upbringing and circumstances. Thus, value orientations do have many practical implications.

The belief that people are capable of both good and evil justifies cultures that protect individual human rights and individual freedoms, but at the same time emphasize the role of government to protect society from criminal elements; this orientation favors strong central governments. The so-called “Asian values” of having a strong man running a democratic capitalist

society, as exemplified by the Singapore style of government, also reflect this value orientation.

6.2 Man-nature orientation

The three dominant responses are: Subjugation-to-Nature, Harmony-with-Nature, and Master-over-Nature. Subjugation-to-Nature represents the belief that life is determined by forces beyond one's control. This is the preferred response in primitive or poor societies, which feel powerless to protect themselves from the ravages of nature. Harmony with nature stresses oneness among people and union with nature. This orientation is consistent with Taoism (Chen, Chapter 5) and the general attitudes of North American Indians (McCormick & Wong, Chapter 22).

Taoism teaches non-action and subjugation to nature. Instead of fighting against circumstances, one should go with the flow. The best way to live is simple, spontaneous, and harmonious with nature, yielding continually to the changing life process. *I Ching* or the *Doctrine of Change* has this to say about the ideal life:

> "The great man is he who is in harmony: in his attributes, with heaven and earth; in his brightness, with the sun and the moon; in his orderly procedure, with the four sessions…He may precede heaven, and heaven will not act in opposition to him; he may follow heaven, but will act only as heaven would at that time" (Liu, 1979, p.131).

Mastery-over-Nature orientation is consistent with individualistic cultures; it is the preferred orientation in North America and Western Europe. The attitude of mastery and domination over nature is responsible for the

technological progress and the accumulation of wealth in Euro-American societies, but it has also resulted in problems of environmental pollutions.

6.3 Time orientation

The temporal focus of human life can be logically broken down to Past, Present, and Future. Clearly, every society and every individual must deal with all three aspects of the temporal dimensions; however, they may differ in terms of their preferences. Past orientation refers to an emphasis on traditional customs and cultural heritage. It is associated with traditionalism and conservatism. Traditional Chinese culture has a past orientation, because of its emphasis on ancestral worship, respect for traditions, and the elders; it also values classical writings by Confucius and other sages as the foundation for personal and society development. Aboriginal cultures also value traditions and learning from the elders (McCormick & Wong, Chapter 22).

Americans tend to favor the Future orientation – they are willing to work hard and make sacrifices in order to realize a better future. The future orientation of producing products that are faster, bigger, and better, is part of the impetus to material progress in a consumer society. However, material success is often achieved at the expense of character development. Thus, moral failure and decadence often follow the steps of material success.

In ancient China, Confucius pursued a very different kind of future orientation. He preached the gospel of social order and world peace through personal development and serving others. “Confucius said: Wanting to develop themselves, they also develop others; wanting to achieve things themselves, they also allow others to achieve what they want. This is the direction humanity takes: to use what is close to oneself as an analogy to be

extended to others" (Sommer, 1995, p.44). This emphasis also has its down side. An education that only emphasized propriety and moral virtues failed to prepare China militarily against the invading Western imperial powers.

A future orientation offers the best promise of successful adaptation, because it capitalizes on the human capacity for imagination, projection, and planning. Proactive or anticipatory coping is possible because of this orientation. The lesson learned from history is that the future must not be narrowly focused; the future must be expanded to include the large picture of other people and humanity.

The Present orientation emphasizes the here and now as being most important. The lifestyle of drug addicts is present oriented, because their all-consuming desire is to relieve their cravings and achieve an instant "high". An emphasis on the here and now would value the "flow" experience. The Present focus can indeed enrich our enjoyment of life, and make us more appreciative of the fleeting moments of joy. The Present orientation is also important in teaching us to value what we do have rather than regret what we have lost in the past or worry about what we may not attain in the future. However, a culture that only values the present is unlikely to develop its full adaptive potential and meet the challenges of societal changes.

6.4 Activity orientation

This has to do with the preferred mode of self-expression or modality of activity. The Being orientation focuses on the release of one's desires and spontaneous expression of one's emotions, impulses, and personality. Fiesta

activities in Mexico are examples of this orientation. “Being” may be related to the present orientation.

In contrast, Being-in-Becoming orientation focuses on personal development. “The idea of development, so little stressed in the Being orientation, is paramount in the Being-in-Becoming one” (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961, p.16). The primary goal of Being-in-Becoming is aimed at the development and integration of personality through self-control. This Orientation would favor the coping strategy of personal transformation.

The Doing orientation is prominent in American society. It focuses on “the kind of activity which results in accomplishments that are measurable by standards conceived to be external to the acting individual” (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961, p. 17). It is illustrated by such expressions as “Let’s do it” or “Let’s get it done.” However, an instrumental orientation may not be adaptive in situations which are totally beyond one’s control (Wong, 1993).

6.5 Relational orientation

This is concerned with how we relate to each other as human beings. This orientation is again sub-divided into three alternatives: the Lineal, the Collateral, and the Individualistic. The individualistic orientation values individual autonomy and personal agenda more than group needs. The material successes of capitalistic, individualistic societies are self-evident. It stands to reason that a culture that emphasizes self-efficacy, competition, and winner-takes-all economy, will lead to greater prosperity, especially for the “winners”. However, an individualistic culture may lead to dehumanization and the weakening of human bonding.

Collaterality emphasizes individuals as part of a social group. The prototype of collaterality is biologically related sibling relationships. To further expand the circle, collaterality would encompass the extended family, neighborhood, community, and nation. It involves the expansion of the self to include many others in one's consciousness, concerns as well as concrete interactions. A Collateral orientation naturally leads to a collectivistic culture and collective coping (Yeh et al., Chapter 3; Zhang & Long, Chapter 24).

Lineality emphasizes that "individuals are biologically and culturally related to each other through time. There is, in other words, always a Lineal principle in relationships which is derived both from the biological givens of age and generational differences and from the fact of cultural continuity" (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961, p.18). When the Lineal principle is dominant, the continuity of group goals through time and succession of leadership positions become more important than individual performance. A Lineally oriented group tends to favor a clear and continuous line of authority. Its emphasis on cultural continuity makes it resistant to change. Examples of Lineality include the aristocracy of England and the caste system in India.

The Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck model may be criticized for including only a very limited set of cultural characteristics (Carter, 1991). For example, cultural anthropology has found people in every culture seek answers regarding spiritual or existential questions. Therefore, we propose to include two foundational questions regarding religion and the meaning of human existence.

6.6 Religious orientation

Religious orientation is concerned with questions such as: Where is God? What is God like? How can I know Him? What does God want from me? Bond's (2004) research on social axioms has identified religion as a major component of human life across cultures (e.g., "Belief in a religion helps one understand the meaning of life," p. 557), although cultures differ in their tendency to assert this belief.

There are three basic types of answers: Atheistic, Agnostic, and Theistic. A predominantly secular culture or a strongly communist society would advocate an atheistic orientation. A highly educated and technologically advanced nation may favor the agnostic alternative. According to this position, the existence of God cannot be proved or disproved; therefore, we should not take the God-concept seriously, nor should we place our trust in God even in extreme situations.

The theistic alternative assumes that God exists, although conceptions of the deity differ. These may range from the Hindu belief in pantheism, the Christian belief in one God, and some aboriginal people's belief in the presence of a divine spirit in nature. There are also cultural differences in beliefs regarding God's role in human lives. In America, according to Gallup polls, it is not uncommon for people to believe in a personal God, who answers prayers. Klaassen, et al. (Chapter 6) has documented a wide range of ways in which religious beliefs serve an adaptive function.

6.7 Existential orientation

Existential orientation is concerned with the assumptions regarding the nature and purpose of human existence. This human quest for meaning

seems universal, and it is probably one of the oldest, most persistent philosophical concerns. We are all familiar with questions such as: What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? What is life all about? There are again three alternative responses to this existential question: (a) There is no meaning in life; (b) there is no inherent meaning in life, but one can create meaning through one's own efforts; and (c) there is inherent and ultimate meaning to be discovered.

For nations as well as individuals, denying the possibility of meaning would likely lead to hedonism or nihilism. If life has no meaning, then let's eat and drink and have fun, because tomorrow we die. An existence totally devoid of meaning can be self-handicapping and self-destructive. Generally, a lack of meaning has found to be related to substance abuse and suicidal ideation (Harlow, Newcomb & Bentler, 1986). Meaninglessness is also linked to psychopathology (Yalom, 1981). At the national level, the absence of a clearly articulated national purpose may also lead to stagnation, decay, and internal strife, because it is difficult to unite and mobilize the people without a shared vision or a national goal.

For those who believe that they can create meaning in this life through achieving personal goals, they are likely to live a very productive life (Baumeister, 1991; Reker & Wong, 1988; Wong & Fry, 1998). However, there are also limits to self-efforts in creating meanings. For example, what do people do when they can no longer fully function because of health problems? Self-efficacy and instrumental activities, powerful as they may be, cannot be always depended on as the royal roads to meaning.

The third alternative response seems to be the most adaptive in adverse or even catastrophic circumstances, which shatter our assumptions and overwhelm our abilities to cope. To survive such situations, it takes a heroic attitude to affirm the intrinsic meaning and value of human existence. To affirm that meaning can be discovered even in the worst possible situations has enabled Dr. Viktor Frankl and many others to endure horrific suffering and loss with dignity and optimism (Frankl, 1984, 1986; Wong, 1999, 2002, 2005).

The belief in intrinsic and ultimate meaning is often associated with the religious faith in God and in an afterlife. Research has shown that affirmation in faith and meaning enables people to adjust to traumas and tragedies (Wong & McDonald, 2002). The existential orientation is important because questions about meaning of existence have to do with the basic assumptions about life and go to the very heart of what each culture cherishes as its core values.

A contingency model of cultural competence (Leong & Wong, 2003) predicts that adaptation is likely to be successful if it takes into account the various preferred values in different cultures and the unique demands of different life situations. Stress and coping models based on Euro-American values do not always work in other cultures, which have vastly different preferred values and very different kinds of pressing circumstances. The main challenge to cross-cultural psychology of stress and coping is to develop constructs and instruments that reflect the preferred values of other cultures. The main problem of the current Euro-American approach to cross-cultural research is the lack of construct equivalence.

6.8 The challenge of construct equivalence

In view of the cultural differences in values and beliefs, it has become increasingly clear that cross-cultural research cannot simply generalize Euro-American constructs to other cultures. Sanchez, Spector and Cooper (Chapter 9) point out that translation of an instrument could perfectly capture the same linguistic meaning and scale value, but that instrument may reflect different constructs. Furthermore, the same construct might manifest itself differently across cultures, so that different items describing the same construct need to be added (Brislin, 1990). Thus, Tweed and DeLongis (Chapter 10) emphasize the need to research indigenous coping constructs in order to include constructs and values that are important in other cultures. Such research would need to be based on the accumulated evidence on cultural differences in values and beliefs systems (Tweed and Conway, Chapter 7).

This volume has shown that construct nonequivalence has received far less attention than measurement nonequivalence in cross-cultural research and this neglect has hindered the progress of cross-cultural psychology. Without a good empirical base of cultural differences in values and constructs, it would be difficult for us to draw any valid inference about the similarities and differences across cultures.

8. FROM STRESS TO SUFFERING

Stress is a dynamic and multidimenional construct, thus posing a serious challenge for psychologists (Wong, 1990). Stress originally is an engineering concept referring to the amount of external pressure, such as weight or force, acting upon a certain structural material. In Euro-American

psychology, stress is generally defined as “external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.52). More recently, Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) define the coping process as “the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful” (p. 745). Here, stress is more clearly conceptualized as originating from external situations, such as major life events or everyday hassles.

Antonovsky (1990) comments that stress research often fails to recognize that stressful events are more commonplace than daily hassles and major events; there are also chronic life strain and frustrations. He proposes that a stressor may be defined as “a stimulus which poses a demand to which one has no ready-made, immediately available and adequate response” (p.74). Wong (1993) also defines stress as a “problematic internal or external condition that creates tension/upset in the individual and calls for some form of coping” (p. 55). In all these definitions, the stress process begins with cognitive appraisal of a specific situation or condition.

However, existential psychologists (i.e., Yalom, 1981; Wong, 2005) have long recognized that sources of anxieties and stress can stem from our inner awareness of the vulnerable, impermanent, and unfulfilling nature of the human condition, in the absence of any immediate stressful situation. For example, even when one is living very well materially, the realization that we can never fulfill some of our fondest aspirations because death will put an abrupt and definitive end to all our pursuits; this will result in existential angst.

The concept of stress does not quite capture the essence of such inner agony.

When we first approached Professor Chen to contribute something on the Buddhist and Taoist ways of coping with stress (Chapters 4 and 5), he was puzzled as to why we asked him to write about coping with stress rather than coping with suffering, for the two concepts were different to him. In one of his emails, he offered the following comments:

> In Chinese, suffering is "shou ku" (literally, experiencing bitterness). As you know, "ku" has many meanings, such as pain, hardship, adversity, difficult times, etc.; these are all externally oriented. As the sage Meng-tzu says, when Heaven is going to assign a great mission to a person, it always inflicts "ku" on his mind and will. Ku in this context means hardships, pain, adversities and difficulties, etc. "Shou Ku" means experiencing these things, but it also means "suffering" in the western sense. In Buddhist psychology, "ku" (suffering) is always connected with the defense mechanism of clinging and rejection, craving and aversion, or greed and hatred, along with the primordial ignorance that gives rise to this mechanism. Therefore, to end suffering is to end ignorance and gain liberating insight. The Chinese concept of stress, on the other hand, is "tension and pressure," which can be relieved by relaxation of mind and body, and has little to do with suffering. I wish to know why suffering is not accepted by American academic psychology, and how suffering can be mixed up with stress.

We have no ready answer to Professor Chen's question, except that Euro-American psychology, in its endeavors to develop psychology as a

scientific discipline, prefers the stress concept, because it can be objectively manipulated and measured. However, from a cross-cultural standpoint, there is clearly a lack of construct equivalence between stress and suffering. According to Chen (Chapter 4), Buddhism locates the primary source of stress and suffering within individuals. "It is the psychological mechanism of craving and aversion and the ignorance about its workings that are responsible for most of our troubles and difficulties in life." The first Noble Truth of *dukkha* (suffering) has a very existential flavor. Keown (1996) points out that " *dukkha* has a more abstract and pervasive sense: it suggests that even when life is not painful it can be unsatisfactory and unfulfilling. In this and many other contexts 'unsatisfactoriness' captures the meaning of *dukkha* better than 'suffering.'" (p. 47)

Naji Abi-Hashem (Chapter 20) focuses on the agony, silent grief, and deep frustration of many communities in the Middle East. The prolonged ethnopolitical conflicts and wars, the danger and brutality of terrorisms, coupled with poverty, multiple losses, and the depletion of coping resources, have created a great deal of mental and physical suffering to the people in that region. The concept of stress seems to minimize the horrors of ther living conditions of these people caught in the midst of endless cycles of violence and terrorism. Perhaps, the cross-cultural psychology of stress and coping needs to include "suffering" as a distinct construct. Suffering, as different from stress and physical pain, may be defined as a condition of prolonged and often intense psyche pain as a result of traumas, catastrophes, existential crises, and prolonged deprivation.

8. COLLECTIVISTIC AND COLLECTIVE COPING

Recently, Lazarus (2000) emphasizes the "relational meaning" in the stress process and there has been some research on what may be called the relation-focused coping (Lyons et al., 1998; O'Brien and DeLongis, 1996). This new addition to the problem-focused and emotion-focused coping is a welcome development, because it recognizes that coping cannot be completely based on solo efforts.

This volume has extended relation-focused coping to collective and collectivistic coping. Chun et al. (Chapter 2) maintain the need to distinguish "*collective coping strategies* (i.e., mobilizing group resources) from *collectivistic coping style* (i.e., normative coping style of collectivistic individuals)". Yeh et al. (Chapter 3) have developed a collectivistic coping scale (CCS) that is based on East Asian's collectivistic values. Their research on the CCS has revealed seven factors: *Respect for Authority* (the tendency to cope by relying on community elders or mentors); *Forbearance* (one's preference for enduring the problems quietly); *Social Activity* (utilizing social networks); *Intracultural Coping* (drawing support from networks with racially similar individuals); *Relational Universality* (seeking social support from those with shared experiences); *Fatalism* (accepting problems as predetermined); *and Family Support* (coping with help from family members). These coping strategies, prevalent in collectivistic cultures, rely primarily on social resources within one's family and ethnic-cultural community.

Zhang and Long (Chapter 24) have developed a collective coping scale based on such strategies as support seeking. This scale is also based on the values of collectivistic cultures. Collective coping depends on group members rallying behind the individual with the problem, as described by Ho and Chiu

(1994) "one's business is also the business of the group; and friends should be concerned with each other's personal matters" (p. 139). Zhang and Long borrowed some items from O'Brien and DeLongi's (1996) relationship-focused coping scale that emphasizes empathic and social support from others.

However, Wong (1993) has differentiated between collective coping and social support. He noted, “collective is more than receiving social support, it means the concerted effort involving all members of a group to tackle the same problem” (p. 57). Thus, the family takes on a family member's problem as their own, and works together to find a solution. This is quite different from an individual who uses his or her own effort to garner social support based on personal relationships.

Liang and Bogat (1994) found that Chinese group had less functional social support than the Anglos. This is how they explained their results: “measures initially developed for Western populations are potentially biased and insensitive to Chinese support patterns because they may include items less germane to Chinese culture and/or exclude items that measure support qualities specific to Chinese” (p. 143). Taylor et al. (2004) also found that Asian Americans were less likely to utilize social support than European Americans. However, it is too simplistic to assume that individuals from collectivistic cultures are more likely to seek social support. Yeh et al. (Chapter 3) have made it very clear that Asians do not like to seek social support from professionals, colleagues or strangers; in fact, they are even reluctant to reveal their personal problems to outsiders. Their collective coping is primarily drawn from their in-groups.

Both collectivistic coping and collective coping reflect an interdependent self-construal rather than independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). It remains an interesting question whether collective coping is more advantageous than problem-focused coping in stressful situations that are beyond the coping capacity of any individual.

9. FROM SECONDARY CONTROL TO PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

According to Rothbaum and colleagues (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982), *primary control* is basically problem-focused coping, while *secondary control* includes changing one's own feelings, thoughts or behavior, when situational control is no longer applicable. Secondary control is used to restore a sense of primary control in an uncontrollable situation. Four types of secondary control have been identified: Vicarious control by aligning oneself with powerful others; illusionary control by believing that luck will bring about a positive outcome; predictive control by predicting what will happen in future situations; and interpretative control by interpreting the situation in a way that will help restore certain sense of primary control.

Morling and Fiske's (1999) harmony control is similar to secondary control, because individuals try to align themselves with luck, fate or a higher being, when they are not able to have any power to change the environment. (Morling & Fiske, 1999, p. 382). When comparing primary control coping to secondary control coping, studies indicate that individuals from Asian cultures are more likely to engage in secondary control coping than those from Western cultures (Yeh et al., Chapter 3).

The various types of secondary control strategies are all motivated by the desire to restore a sense of control. It is fascinating how far Euro-American psychologists are willing to go in order to maintain the centrality of control in their theorizing about the coping process. Wong (1992) has pointed out that control is a double-edged sword, because "control can cut both ways with respect to our well being. A great deal of research has been done on the beneficial effects of control; it is now time to pay more attention to its negative effects in all three areas of control research. I believe that psychology can make a lasting contribution to humanity, if it can make people aware of the insidious effects of control and helps prevent ambitious, unscrupulous individuals from gaining power" (Wong, 1992, p.145). Moreover, a narrow perspective of control may have directed researchers' attention away from transformational coping, which is widely employed in Asia to cope with situations over which individuals have little or no control.

Chen (Chapter 4) presents the Buddhist transformational approach to coping with stress and suffering. It advocates the development of the pathway of enlightenment and mental disciplines -- to build up one's inner resources such as wisdoms and compassion, so that one is able to face whatever life may throw at him or her with equanimity and compassion. Effective coping results in becoming free not only from the negative effects of stress, but also the source of suffering. Chen writes: "We can be freed from suffering by transforming our craving and aversion, or equivalently, by dispelling the dark clouds of ignorance and confusion with the light of liberating wisdom."

Buddhism appeals to the Chinese who have endured many hardships and adversities throughout history. Buddhism shows them the way to be free

from the bondage of cravings and protects them from sufferings. Buddhist teaching and practice also give them an abiding sense of serenity even in the midst of incomprehensive and uncontrollable evils.

Taoism prescribes yet another pathway towards personal transformation (Chen, Chapter 5.). It emphasizes the way of the Tao – the authentic, spontaneous, and natural way. Paradoxically, through the Tao of “do nothing” (*wu wei* in Chinese), and letting go of our impulse to strive, we achieve serenity, wisdom and enlightenment (Lao-tzu, trans., 2000, chapter16). Thus, the coping strategy of actively attacking the problem becomes superfluous. One learns to flow like water, going around the problem, and still achieve a goal of living an authentic and fulfilling life.

This is another example of coping through personal transformation. Taoist teaching enables the Chinese to accept the harsh realities of life, transcend all their troubles with serenity and courage. The virtue of enduring in the face of adversity, and accepting one’s fate (Marsella, 1993) has its origin in Taoism. Different from secondary control or cognitive reframing, Taoism, like Buddhism, actually prescribes a way of life or a philosophy of life that is relatively immune to the vicissitudes of fortunes.

Lee (Chapter 8) describes a bio-socio-existential model of posttraumatic response from the general systems perspective. He was able to demonstrate that the personality structure of a sample of Koreans without prior experience of trauma was consistent with the bipartite view of the psychobiological model (Cloninger et al., 1993), however, for Koreans that had been traumatized, their personality structure was consistent with the bio-social-existential model. The subscales constituting the Existential Factor

included: Self-transcendence (transcending our limitations as a human being), Sentimentality (mourning our loss and suffering), Self-acceptance (accepting the uncontrollable problems as the reality of life), Exploratory excitability (exploring new positive meanings in negative situations), Persistence (taking actions to pursue new possibilities in spite of setbacks). It is noteworthy that these subscales of the Existential Factor are very similar to the components of Wong's model of tragic optimism (Wong, 2005). Lee's findings of personality transformation can be viewed as a way of transformative coping.

Maddi and Harvey (Chapter 17) define hardiness as the existential courage to face stressful circumstances openly and directly and the motivation to cope with them constructively. Hardiness is also referred to as transformational coping (Maddi & Kobasa, 1984), because it involves the process of transforming the stressful circumstance into a solvable problem through commitment, control, and challenge. Conceptually, hardiness is rooted in existentialism (Maddi, 1978, 2002), which emphasizes that meaning can be achieved through the courage of making commitment and facing the challenge through one's own resourcefulness. Strictly speaking, hardiness is based on problem-focused instrumental coping, but the motivation to overcome uncertainty and obstacles may involve the existential courage to confront ontological anxiety (Tillich, 1952). The transformation is often limited to one's subjective reaction to the problematic situation, rather than a more fundamental change in one's attitudes, values or philosophy of life. However, with intentional hardiness training or unintentional life experience of having

survived difficult situations, individuals may be transformed into hardy persons.

The various possibilities of transformative coping promise to be the new frontier for cross-cultural psychology of stress and coping. It is our hypothesis that transformational coping would be more effective than both primary and secondary control in chronic and uncontrollable situations.

10. RELIGIOUS, SPIRITUAL AND EXISTENTIAL COPING

Related to transformational coping are religious/spiritual and existential coping (Wong, Reker, & Peacock, Chapter 11), because they too can be transformational, and serve adaptive functions in traumatic or extremely difficult situations. The Frankl-Wong model of tragic optimism (Frankl, 1984; Wong, 2005; Wong & McDonald, 2002) is transformational, because it is predicated on hope and optimism through affirmation of meaning and faith in God and others.

10.1 The role of meaning in coping and survival

Frankl (1986) argued that the “Will to Meaning” is a universal human need or fundamental motive for survival. When life is full of pain and suffering, it is the will to meaning that enables one to endure with dignity and hope. Antonovsky (1990) proposes that a sense of coherence, whereby individuals experience an orientation to the world that is characterized as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful, is a core variable in shaping coping responses and has a positive impact on health status.

10.2 The adaptive functions of religion and spirituality

Klaassen, McDonald and James (Chapter 6) document the wide range of adaptive functions of religions and spirituality, which have received

increasing research attention in recent years (Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Pargament (1997) defines coping as “a search for significance in times of stress” (p. 90) and propose 8 assumptions about the coping process: (1) people seek significance; (2) events are constructed in terms of their significance to people; (3) people bring an orienting system to the coping process; (4) people translate the orientation system into specific methods of coping; (5) people seek significance in coping through the mechanisms of conservation and transformation; (6) people cope in ways that are compelling to them; (7) coping is embedded in culture; and (8) the keys to good coping lie in the outcomes and the process. Note that most of these assumptions imply meaning-seeking, meaning-making, and resorting to an orientation system that often includes religious faith.

10.3 The existential and transformational functions of religion

It is important to note that religious coping can be both existential and transformational. Pargament, Koenig, & Perez (2000) proposed that religion serves five main functions, represented by the five dimensions of the *RCOPE* Questionnaire, namely: (1) Finding meaning in the face of unexplainable and often horrific circumstances. (2) Gaining control through religious means. (3) Gaining comfort from achieving closeness to God. (4) Seeking intimacy with others and closeness with God, and (5) Experiencing life transformation. Klaassen et al. (Chapter 6) cite numerous studies which demonstrated the existential function of religious/spiritual coping in facilitating the discovery of positive meaning and purpose in adverse circumstances, such as HIV-

infection (Siegel & Schrimshaw, 2002) and breast cancer (Gall & Cornblat, 2002).

11. ACCULTURATIVE STRESS

Acculturative stress not only highlights the importance of a multicultural approach to study stress and coping, but also provides a neat paradigm to study cultural uprootedness and minority status as unique sources of stress not covered by the traditional stress and coping paradigms. Acculturation research is also unique in that instead of going to different countries to study cultural differences and similarities in stress and coping, we can study how different ethnic or cultural groups in the same host country adjust to the same acculturation stress. Differences in acculturation strategies and outcomes may shed some light on cultural differences in values, attitudes, and resilience. Given the ethnocultural populations in most countries (see Chun, Balls-Organista & Marin, 2003; Sam & Berry, 2005 for overviews), acculturation research can yield considerable practical as well as scientific benefits.

Berry (Chapter 12) emphasizes that from the perspective of cross-cultural psychology (Berry, Poortinga, Segall & Dasen, 2002), it is imperative that we study acculturation by examining its cultural contexts. We also need to link the acculturation of an ethnic group and the *psychological acculturation* of individuals in that group.

Berry further points out that long-term adaptation to cultural change is multifaceted. There is a distinction between psychological and sociocultural adaptation as initially proposed by Ward (1996). Psychological adaptation or adjustment involves one’s psychological and physical well-being (Schmitz, 1992), while socio-cultural adaptation refers to how well an acculturating

individual is able to manage daily life in the new cultural context. Both aspects of acculturation need to be taken into account in research on acculturative stress.

The effects of acculturative stress can be seen in several chapters in this volume. Padilla and Borrero (Chapter 13) show that the traditional values of the Hispanic family, such as clearly defined gender roles, intergenerational interdependence, and the importance of religion in the “sacred” family, are undermined by the individualistic culture of the host country, and its culture of divorce that supports marital dissolution through its no fault laws. The negative forces of acculturative stress include marriage and family conflicts resulting from different rates of acculturation among family members.

A similar kind of domestic problem is documented by Takano (Chapter 14) in his study of how Japanese-Canadian women cope with domestic violence. Being far away from their families, friends, and other supportive groups, Japanese women immigrated to Canada not only have to face a host of acculturative stressors, but also become vulnerable to abusive husbands.

Lilian Wong (Chapter 15) examined how visible minority students cope with the stress they experience in clinical supervision situations. Many of these visible minority students are either immigrants or sojourners. They often experience a triple-acculturative stress: the stress of adjusting to a host culture, the stress of adjusting to a new university, and the stress of having to cope with clinical supervisors who lack multicultural sensitivity. To compound their problems, these students’ own cultural values often make them over-sensitive to certain stressful situations, and hinder their ability to cope.

However, there is also evidence of resilience based on their traditional cultural values of endurance, persistence, and family support.

Tan Phan (Chapter 18) presents a more positive picture of resilience. She documents how some Vietnamese refugee women cope with uprootedness and acculturative stress. These women were motivated by a clear sense of meaning and purpose: all their sufferings were worth it, if their children would succeed and achieve a better future in Canada. This is a clear example of existential coping, even though they may not be able to articulate it this way. Another salient point is that these refugee women employed diverse ways of coping, which included collective coping of support from extended families, friends, and the Vietnamese ethno-cultural community. These refugee mothers supported each other, and cooperated among themselves to make it easier for them to achieve their goals and live a meaningful life under difficult circumstances.

McCormick and Wong (Chapter 22) report the adjustment and resilience of aboriginal people in Canada. Like other minority groups, they are able to draw strength and support from their own cultural heritage and their aboriginal community in a host society with a history of discriminating against aboriginal people. Spiritual and collective coping strategies play an important role in their resilience and optimism.

McCreary, Cunningham, Ingram, and Fife (Chapter 21) describe a culture-specific model of resilience and “The IMPACT Program”, which is an applied program of acculturation and stress based on their model of resilience. The IMPACT program is a family-based psycho-educational intervention that capitalizes on African American parents’ adaptive

childrearing strategies in violent neighborhoods, such as restricting play, keeping children inside the home and relying on prayer, spirituality, and religious support. This chapter demonstrates the importance of multicultural perspectives on coping and resilience.

Matsumoto, Hirayama and LeRoux (Chapter 16) developed and validated the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS). Different from other broader measures of acculturation, such as Berry's (1990) four acculturative strategies of integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization, ICAPS seeks to identify the specific psychological skills related to successful intercultural adjustment. Their research program has identified four basic psychological skills – emotion regulation, openness, flexibility, and critical thinking; all of these skills have been described in the coping literature as being effective. These coping skills seem general enough, but they are still based on Euro-American individualistic models of coping, because they do not include collective and transformational coping skills, which are widely employed in Asia.

Although Leong and Tolliver (Chapter 23) focus on occupational stress among Asian Americans, they do have something important to say on more recent developments in acculturation research, including cross-cultural models of stress and coping, and culture-specific measurements of occupational stress. It is a substantive chapter with broad implications for cross-cultural research.

12. COPING EFFICACY AND OUTCOMES

One of the major issues in stress and coping research is what constitutes coping efficacy and positive outcomes. Tweed and Conway

(Chapter 7) point out that “depending on which tradition one follows, the appropriate prescription for coping may be to adapt to the environment, bring the environment into submission, rely on a deity, eliminate personal desire, or seek self-improvement. These strategies are not all mutually exclusive, yet these differing ideals suggest possible continuing cultural differences in regions influenced by one or more of these or other traditions. Empirical research has the potential to clarify the extent of variation and consistency in coping around the world.”

Chun at al. (Chapter 2) recognize individualistic bias in the Euro-American psychology of stress and coping: “Part of this problem stems from the prevailing assumption that approach coping is overt, constructive, and adaptive, whereas avoidance coping is covert, passive, and maladaptive because it connotes lack of motivation and effort”. In a similar vein, Yeh et al. (Chapter 3) criticizes Seiffge-Krenke’s (1993) model, which differentiates functional coping from dysfunctional coping. *Functioning coping* includes active coping and taking concrete actions, thus reflecting a bias in favor of Western individualistic cultures. *Dysfunctional coping* includes withdrawal, controlling feelings, and having a fatalistic attitude, thus reflecting a bias against Asian collectivistic cultures. Even empirical studies in support Seiffge-Krenke’s model can be questioned, because the instruments and samples are culturally biased.

As a way of contextualizing coping, Chun et al. (Chapter 2) have argued for the need of a broader set of evaluation criteria of coping efficacy, which should be derived from the individual’s coping goals. These criteria should include an assessment of the goodness of person-environment fit

(Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), congruence between coping behavior and nature of the stress (Wong, 1993), and the individual's cultural values (Leong & Wong, 2003) and the multiple coping goals (Somerfield & McCrae, 2000).

Chun et al. (Chapter 2) propose four coping goals which reflect an implicit conflict between individualism and collectivism: (1) focus on the needs of self vs. the needs of others; (2) assert autonomy and independence vs. reinforce relatedness and interdependence; (3) control external environment vs. internal self; and (4) maximize gain vs. minimize loss. When one chooses other-focused coping goals, it may result in an increase in personal sacrifice and stress for the benefit of groups. Thus, the coping is ineffective in terms of personal well-being, but effective in achieving group harmony.

Cheng (2003) conducted an interesting study demonstrating that the flexible strategy of using different coping responses in different situations was associated with better adjustment. This finding suggests that the advantages of a multicultural perspective in terms of possessing a large collection of coping tools from different cultures and having the cross-cultural competencies to know what coping responses are appropriate for which situations in what cultural context.

Leong and Wong's (2003) contingency model of cultural competencies and Wong's (1993) resource-congruence model may have the heuristic value of studying coping effectiveness from multicultural perspectives. According to these models, coping efficacy depends on (a) sufficient coping resources, (b) multicultural competencies of what works in what situations, and what coping goals are valued in which culture, and (c) the selection of coping goals and responses that are appropriate to the situation and the cultural context.

13. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Coping with stress is a universal process because human survival depends on adaptation to stress, regardless of one's culture. The recent South Asian tsunami disaster poses a profound challenge to the psychologists working in the stress and coping field, and puts the spot light on the importance of cultural context of resilience.

To date, more than 3500 scientific papers have been published on the subject of stress and coping (Snyder, 1999). The lack of progress in cross-cultural psychology of stress and coping is partially due to the ethnocentric bias of trying to generalize popular American models to other cultures. Asian countries are well acquainted with sufferings – flooding, draughts, earthquakes, typhoons, civil wars, poverty, invasions and occupations by foreign powers. The most telling example is the recent Asian tsunami disaster. Most of the problems are beyond the control of individuals. Yet, through it all, they have survived for thousands of years. Surely, along the way, they have learned how to cope and survive. In this volume, we have invited a number of writers from Asian cultures. We believe that they have much to offer in

expanding our understanding and broadening our perspectives of stress and coping.

Some of the new frontiers of stress and coping, delineated by Wong (1993) are clearly evident in several chapters in this volume. In conclusion, we have to highlight several of the new developments:

13.1 From reactive to proactive coping

Proactive coping involves developing the resources through the process of (1) learning from experience and research, such as developing more reliable warning systems of tsunami to prevent or reduce loss of lives and properties, (2) relating – making friends, networking, developing love relationship, building communities, helping others, and (3) increasing the inner resources, such as the vitality of the person's mental and spiritual health, so that one can better deal with the stress and strains of every day life.

There has been some research on anticipatory coping (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997; Peacock & Wong 1996; Schwarzer & Knoll, 2003). However, proactive coping involves more than simply anticipating a problem and regulating one's behavior and emotions, because it also involves cultivating coping resources and personal transformation so that one can adjust to any circumstances.

13.2 From instrumental to transformational coping

The most widely used coping strategy in American psychology is instrumental coping, designed to solve the problem or change the stressful situation. However, when the problem is chronic, all pervasive, overwhelming, and uncontrollable as described by Naji (Chapter 20), instrumental coping is of limited value. Buddhist enlightenment (Chapter 4), Taoist way of nature

(Chapter 5), spiritual transformation (Chapter 6), existential coping (Chapters 11 and 17) are all examples of transformational coping. Aldwin's (1994) "transformational coping" indicates the concept of transformation has begun to attract some research attention.

13.3 From individual to collective coping

Collective coping is another welcome development. As long as we only focus on the solo coping efforts of individuals, we will not make much progress in understanding the coping patterns of collectivistic cultures. The history of human survival attests to the importance and power of collective coping. The global relief effort in dealing with the tsunami disaster is a good example of the power of collective coping. The tragedy has united the global community with different ethnic backgrounds and religions.

13.4 From cognitive to existential coping

Recently, psychologists have recognized meaning-based coping (Affleck & Tennen,1996; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Taylor, 1983). But their focus is still on the cognitive analysis, such causal attribution, or finding positive meaning of a stressful event. Existential coping also includes acceptance of what cannot be changed, and discovering meaning and purpose for one's existence. Existential coping often employs Frankl's three avenues to discover meaning (i.e., experiential, creative, and attitudinal avenues) and Wong's (1998) seven domains (i.e., achievement, relationship, self-transcendence, religion, intimacy, self-acceptance, and fair treatment).

13.5 From dichotomic to dualistic thinking

Another important point in the study of east and west is the dichotomous thinking of Euro-American psychology and the holistic,

paradoxical and dualistic thinking of the East. Thus, one can embrace both internal and external control (Wong & Sproule, 1984) and one can be both pessimistic and optimistic (Wong & McDonald, 2002). This fundamental difference in thinking demands new strategies in cross-cultural research comparing the east and west. For example, instead of using a unidimensional scale to measure locus of control, one needs to use separate and independent scales to measure internal and external beliefs simultaneously. The cognitive process of dualistic thinking also needs experimental investigation.

According to Buddhism, the reactive pattern of the mind implies one's refusal to accept both pain and pleasure as inevitable aspects of human existence. This failure to embrace life's experience in its entirety is at the root of suffering.

Dualistic thinking is also prominent in Taoism. One of the important insights of Taoism is that all things co-exist in opposites, making the existence of each other possible. Thus, goodness cannot exist without evil; hope cannot exist without despair. Suffering occurs when we identify with only the aspect of polarity. However, when we embrace the duality of opposites, we lead an integrated life.

From a general system's perspective, Lee (Chapter 8) emphasizes the importance of the dialectical, reciprocal process of converging opposite pairs into a dualistic union. Self-transcendence and personal transformation naturally occur in an open system of dialectics and duality. This union of opposites was independently discovered by Heraclitus and Lao-tzu, and later adopted by Hegel and Engels in their dialectic logics. The generation of

psychic energy and the development of personality transformation depends on the union of opposites, which can be facilitated by traumatic events. Dualistic thinking necessarily embraces the paradox of contradictions. (There are cultural differences in the belief that contradiction is an indication of error, Peng & Nisbett, 1999).

Such dualistic thinking would lead to different kinds of theorizing, such as Wong's (2005) existential model of tragic optimism, and Wong's (1992) dual-dimensional model of locus of control. Wong (1992) argues that "a dual-dimensional view of control is a more accurate picture of the complex interactions between internal and external sources of control. In other words, internal control and external control should be viewed as two independent dimensions and individuals can freely occupy various spots in this two-dimensional space. A person can be simultaneously high or low in both perceived and desired control in any given situation. For example, farmers generally perceive that a good harvest depends equally on hard work and good weather conditions." Dualistic models are able to explain behaviors in cultures that are more holistic than linear. Thus, dualistic versus dichotic thinking represents another major cultural difference in cognitive processes that requires research attention.

These new developments reveal a more complete story of human drama of survival and flourishing in the midst of stress and suffering. The multicultural perspective and positive, transformational orientation may open up new windows of multicultural understanding. In his concluding synthesis, Pedersen (Chapter 25) has identified additional gaps in cross-cultural

research and raised provocative questions. We hope that this edited volume will have a lasting impact on cross-cultural research of stress and coping.

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