

Developing a Sociocultural Understanding of Personality

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PSY 249

4/25/2023

Announcements

- **Assignment 4 due 5/5**
- **Questions on the Final?**

3 Questions

What is your cultural heritage? How important is it to you? Why/why not?

A little Context

- Sociocultural Theory is a perspective said to have originated from Lev Vygostky.
- However during his time alive his work and ideas were aggressively suppressed as they challenged many of the one-size fits all notions held by western psychologists.
- His work recognized and highlighted the simple idea that culture and what surrounds someone can ultimately influence who they are.
- It is important to recognize that this is something scholars and communities of color had been discussing for quite some time who were facing similar forms of idea suppression, violence, and lack of access.
- The task of defining culture, and tracing how it leads to personality characteristics is not an easy one and requires folks to really understand and engage with scientific inquiry differently

A little Context

- Because of this mainstream Psychology has long ignored cross and inter cultural examination with regard to personality
- There have been some folks through time that have highlighted the importance of such work ((Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Price & Crapo, 2002; Segall et al., 1990; Vygotsky)
- As I've shared in this class psychology holds on tightly to norms, standards, and universal notions
- These norms often ignore cultural difference and instead label these differences unnatural, wrong, barbaric, backward
- Ex: Modern societies (North America, Europe, East Asia) fixation with speed, success and achievement tend to look down on cultures that value a slower, more thoughtful approach to life and solving problems (Aboriginal groups, Baganda)

Some words to know

- **Culture** - the languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities and memories developed by members of all social groups that make their social environments meaningful.
- **Emic** - Tasks/behaviors/mentalities that are specific to a certain culture
- **Etic** - Tasks/behaviors/mentalities that are common to all cultures
- **Cultural Flexibility** - How/how much individuals are willing to change/adapt when they know cultural differences are present
- **Cultural Response Sets** - How a person of a any given culture should typically response.
- **Enculturation** - a persons socialization into their own culture/ the culture they grow up in
- **Acculturation** - Assimilating to the dominant culture.
- **Ethnocentrism** – The believe that ones own culture has the correct beliefs/mentalities/practices
- **Epistemological Violence** - Epistemological violence is when interpretations of research implicitly or explicitly construct the Other as inferior or problematic

The Tasks



Task 1: Defining ourselves

Task 2: Defining our culture(s)

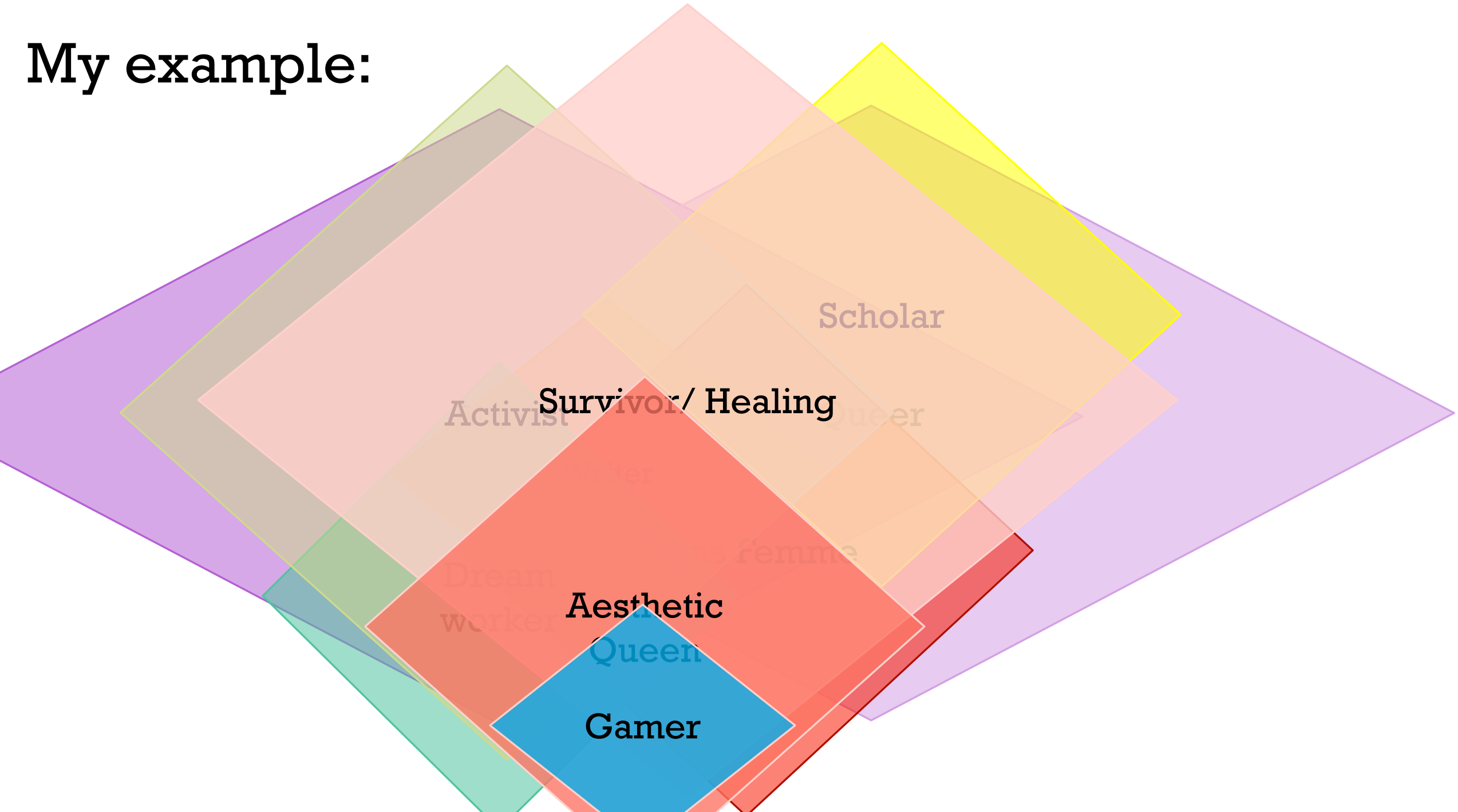
Task 3: Defining the dominant culture

Task 4: Defining what a culturally complex personality psychology might look like.

Activity: Defining ourselves

In shapes of varying sizes write down some of the most salient/important identities or pieces of who you are. Let the size represent its importance in defining who you are. Let the shapes overlap if you believe these pieces of you interact in meaningful ways.

My example:



Activity: Defining our Culture(s)

- Using your Self-Collage I want you to write down the culture(s) you consider yourself part of then discuss the following:
- Describe some distinguishing characteristics of your culture(s)
- Have your culture(s) changed throughout your life/throughout history? How?
- Do you find yourself easily and comfortably identifying as part of these cultures or is it more difficult? Why?
- In what ways has this culture/these cultures influenced who you are?

Reminder: Culture = the languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities and memories developed by members of all social groups that make their social environments meaningful.

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PSY 249

4/28/2023

Announcements

- Questions on the final? Due 12/16!
- Will post check in 9 today! Due Friday (will be on social cognitive perspective)
- Check in 8 re-do due Sunday Dec 4th

The Tasks



Task 1: Defining ourselves

Task 2: Defining our culture(s)

Task 3: Defining the dominant culture

Task 4: Defining what a culturally complex personality psychology might look like.

Activity: Understanding Cultural Categorization

- Often the cultures we exist in are compressed into 8 societal categorizations. While they make sense, I encourage us to also think about what might be missing/obscured.
- 8 categories: Ethnicity/Race, Language, Religion, Gender, Sexuality, Location, SES, Age/Generation.
- Using these categorizations as well as thinking beyond them (re)define your culture(s).
- Some extra probing questions:
 - How might a researcher define you or your culture? What words would they use? And which categories do they fall in?
 - In what ways do these forms of cultural categorization clarify and/or complicate your understanding of your culture(s)
 - Does your culture fall within one categorization or is it split across multiple? Why?

Activity: Defining a Dominant Culture

- In small groups answer the following questions:
 - 1. What is American Culture? & How is it structured?
 - 2. What are some of the dominant influences/ideologies/groups that shape American culture?
 - 3. Define a standard American personality? What traits are uplifted which are looked down on?

Activity: Understanding Comfort & Tension

- Now that you have defined your own culture and the dominant culture let's think a bit more deeply about where we're at using one simple question:
- Does your personality “fit” within American culture as we've defined it?
- Discuss why or why not and what this means?

Activity: Re-defining Personality psychology

Holding onto what you wrote in each of these activities work with your group to come up with some methods for understanding personality that utilize culture in some way.



Some guiding questions:

Are there some standards or norms in personality research that should be altered or destroyed completely?

Is it possible to measure personality across cultures? What does this look like?

What are some commitments we need to make to in order to engage integrate a cultural understanding into personality psychology?