



Cultural Influence On The Personality Of The Lake Vitoria Region's Community Of Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The conceptualization of culture is by no means a simple matter. One possible way to think about culture is that "culture is to society what memory is to individuals. It includes what has worked in the experience of a society, so that it is worth transmitting to future generations. A useful idea such as how to fish is adopted by more and more people to become a culture. There are three distinguished kinds of culture: Metaculture, Evoked culture, and Epidemiology culture. The biology that has been common to all humans as a species distinguishable from other species, results in a "metaculture" that corresponds to panhuman mental contents and organization. Biology in different ecologies results in "evoked culture" such as hot climate leads to light clothing. Which reflects the domain of specific mechanisms that are triggered by local circumstances, and leads to within-group similarities and between-groups differences. This can be described as epidemiological culture. Elements of culture are shared standard operating procedures, unstated assumptions, tools, norms, values, habits about sampling the environment, and the like. Because perception and cognition depend on the information that is sampled from the environment and are fundamental psychological processes. This culturally influenced sampling of information is of particular interest to human beings. Cultures develop conventions for sampling information and determine how much to weigh the sampled elements from the environment. For example, people in hierarchical cultures are more likely to sample clues about hierarchy than clues about aesthetics. People in individualist culture, such as those of North and Western Europe and North America, sample with high probability elements of personal self e.g. I am busy, I am kind etc. People from collectivist culture such as those from Asia, Africa, and South America, tend to sample mostly elements of the self e.g. my family thinks I am too busy, my co-workers think I am kind. All these kind of behavior or trends are imposed on people by culture which then becomes their way of life.

Key Words: Culture, Personality, Individualism culture, collectivism culture.

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON PERSONALITY.

Funder (1979) defined personality as an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotions and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms hidden or not-hidden in those patterns.

The term *culture* refers to all the beliefs, customs, ideas, behaviors, and traditions of a particular society that are passed on through generations. Culture is transmitted to people through language as well as through the modeling of behavior, and it defines which traits and behaviors are considered important, desirable, or undesirable.

Within a culture there are certain norm and behavioral expectations. These cultural norms can dictate which traits are considered important to personality. These cultural norms can dictate which traits are considered important to personality. The researcher Gordon Allport considered culture to be an important influence on traits and defined common traits as those that are recognized within a culture. These traits may vary from culture to culture based on

differing values, needs, and beliefs. Positive and negative traits can be determined by cultural expectations: what is considered a positive trait may be considered negative in another, thus resulting in different expressions of personality.

Considering cultural influences on personality is important because western ideas and theories are not necessarily applicable to other cultures (Bent-Martinez & Oishi, 2008). There is a great deal of evidence that the strength of personality traits varies across cultures, and this is especially true when comparing individualist cultures and collectivist cultures. People who live in *individualist cultures* tend to believe that independence, competition, and personal achievement are important. In contrast, people who live in *collectivist cultures* tend to value social harmony, respectfulness, and group need over individual needs. These values influence personality in different but substantial ways; for example, Yang (2009) found that people in individualist cultures displayed more personally-oriented personality traits, whereas people in collectivist cultures displayed more socially-oriented personality traits.

In much the same manner that cultural norms can influence personality and behavior, gender norms (the behaviors that males and females are expected to conform to in a given society) can also emphasize different traits between different genders, influencing the development of personality.

AFRICAN CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON PERSONALITY

As a child grows up from birth, the child develops certain desires and drives due to situations the child passes through the early life. These desires and drives enables the child to develop certain personality traits in attempt to satisfy the very drives in the child's life. All of the personality traits that appear later on usually have one common goal, which is fulfilling these desires that the child developed provided that his culture allows him to fulfill them that way.

Culture channels the person's efforts in different direction so that his actions become accepted by the community as a result his personality is affected. Among us the Luos, there certain roles in the community which are meant for certain sex i.e fetching water from the river is the female's role not the males', male are the bread winners who should work harder while women are just to be taken care of among other

Supposing the experiences a child passed through he developed desires to become superior to others, it is the culture that put certain restrictions on that child to dress differently or refrain from doing the activities that other people from his community do or not. Among us the Luos, ones' mode of dress signifies respect, honor and maturity and so on and every occasion commands certain attires. But because the culture forces most people to be bound by certain rules then that child will develop different personality traits that would allow him to appear superior to other and that are in the same time accepted by his culture. In such a case that child might become obsessed with cleanliness or even become a perfectionist to differentiate himself from others in an acceptable way.

Alfred Adler (1994), one of the greatest psychologists who ever existed once said that some of those who have repressed aggression drive become surgeons or policemen because these jobs allow them to channel their drives in a way that is acceptable to the culture. Among the Luo, children who have repressed aggression, who esteem cleanliness, not sociable became doctors whereas children who like constructing/making play toys, dismantles and assembles them become engineers later on in life hence are nurtured towards achieving with much influence on their personality

If the culture was to not effect on a person's personality then each person would have tried to fulfill his desires directly without taking any turns and his personality would have been affected in another way. For example, overly sarcastic people who have the hidden goal of wanting to devalue others might bring discriminating acts to the surface because they are no longer bound by the culture. Among the Luos, the elders, the favored or the fortunate are accustomed never to discriminate on their fellows who are less fortunate or disabled in the community but offer necessary help to the needy around them irrespective of their personality.

Personality is developed when the person tries to move from point A to point B in order to fulfill his drives. The culture in this case acts as a wall blocking the direct road between those two points, as a result the person starts to move around the wall and so his personality is shaped indirectly as a result of the rules set by the culture he lives in. Among the Luos, no matter where one goes or lives may be as a result of education acquired or social status, the males have a cottage at home where he was born and when he dies his body must be brought into that very cottage pending his burial at home, all the dead bodies must be brought home for burial and women who do not set their foot at home where they are married are no regarded as wives by the husbands' parents.

People who live in individualist culture tend to value independence, competition, and personal achievement, while people from collectives cultures tend to value social harmony respectfulness, and group needs. The Luo community value independence, competition and personal achievement and respect among the clan members whereas social harmony is highly esteemed among the society and community as a whole i.e a family would struggle to educate a child who when he/she succeeds brings pride to the family and the achievements of such families through the individual members of the family are always valued by the community as the community's pride

In such same manner that cultural norms can influence personality and behavior, gender norms can also emphasize different traits between different genders and thereby influence the development of personality among the Luo culture community. This effects exits especially among different clans of the Luo community. This effect exist especially among different clans of the Luo community who live in different geographical setup where, aggression and assertiveness is emphasized as a positive traits in males, while submissiveness and caretaking are emphasized in females regardless of one's social status in the community. This further influences an individual's personality.

Traindis (1994, 1996) proposed the hypothesis that collectivism is high in cultures that are simple and tight. Carpenter (2000) obtained empirical support for the correlation of collectivism and tightness. On collectivist cultures people are interdependent with their in-groups (family, nation, e.t.c), give priority to the goals of their in-groups, shape their behavior primarily on the basis of in-group norms, and behave in a communal way. Marriages among the Luos are family affairs primarily but attract the community at large during the ceremony and the success of such marriage becomes the pride of the family as well as the community. Death also primarily affects a family but the community also embraces the effect and the loss due to such death is a community loss. This influences ones personality with regard to ones family and the community.

CULTURE, HABITS AND TRAITS.

Social relations among the Luos are governed by rules of Kinship, gender, and age. Descent is patrilineal which is traced through the male line to determine Kinship. Kin align themselves for purposes of exchange of goods, marriage, and political alliance. Names are received through

the male line, and after marriage women reside in the homesteads of their husbands. A married woman builds up alliances for her husband's family by maintaining strong relationships with her brothers and sisters who live at her birthplace or elsewhere. It is expected that after marriage a woman will bear children for her husband's lineage. Bride wealth, given by her husband and his family. Contributes to the woman's ability to maintain ties with her own family throughout her life. By having children, a woman greatly enhances her power and influence within the lineage of her husband. As the children grow. They take special care of her interest. Perhaps as many as 30 percent Luo homesteads are polygamous; in which a man has more than one wife. This contributes to solidarity between a mother and her children, and between children born of the same mother. Polygyny is commonly accepted by both men and women, provided traditional ideas and regulations are maintained. These include, for example, a special recognition for the first wife or "great wife," whose house and granary are located prominently at the back of the homestead opposite the main gate. Subsequent wives have homes alternatively to her right and left in the order of their marriages. Sons are provided with homes that are adjacent to the main gate of the compound in the order of their birth. The husband maintains a homestead for himself near the center of the compound, his own brothers, if they have not yet formed their own homesteads; reside on the edge of the compound near its center. As Luo became wealthy in Luo land or elsewhere, it is common for them to build a large house for their mother. This is especially necessary if she is a "great wife" as it is considered improper for younger wives to have larger homes than wives more senior to themselves. Visiting and being visited is the major source of pleasure for the Luo. The social principles regarding age, Kinship, and gender impose heavy schedule of ritual obligations on Luo, regardless of their place of residence. Attendance at funerals is a significant obligation for all Luo. At funerals, Luo consume large amounts of meat, beer and soft drinks and socialize with friends and relatives. Funerals last for four days for a male and three days for a female. After the burial and expression of grief through speeches and viewing of the body, there is a period of feasting and celebration. After the funeral of a man, a rooster which symbolizes masculinity to the Luo is taken from his house and eaten by his relatives. This signifies the end of his homestead. When a new homestead is founded, a man is given a rooster from his father's home. Visitors for funerals gather from far and wide and are housed around the compound of the dead person, which is where he or she will be buried. This location and the duration of the ritual is an excellent opportunity for young people to meet and observe members of the opposite sex, or for elders to discuss marriage alliances that they might wish to promote. Dating may well follow initial meetings or deliberations at the funeral.

GENDER BASED CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND SOCIAL STATUS.

Ideas of appropriate behavior for each gender vary among cultures and tend to change over time. For example, aggression and assertiveness have historically been emphasized as positive personality traits in males in Africa. Meanwhile, submissiveness and caretaking have historically been held as ideal traits for females. While many gender roles remain the same, other change over time, for example, only 1 out of 5 African men agreed that a married woman could earn money in industry and business fields. This type of attitude change has been accompanied by behavioral shifts, which coincide with changes in trait expectations and shifts in personal identity for men and women.

People in individualist culture have more positive self-esteem (Heine et al 1999) and are more optimistic (Lee and Segman 1997) than people in collectivist culture, and those factors are associated with high objective wellbeing. Trainders (2002) has proposed a wide range of factors that must contribute to cultural differences in subjective wellbeing. The more important ones are good differences between personality and culture, openness to new

experiences, extroversion, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life and self-acceptance.

On this premise, people in higher social status are more respected than those in the lower caliber. As a result the former have a studier and more confident personality than the latter. The social phenomenon of personality is clearly prevalent in the Luo community where even young people who climbed higher on the social ladder are accorded more respect and attention than those in lower class. Those who have made great achievements in the society therefore have a stronger personality than those on the lower rungs on the ladder.

People in collectivist cultures belong to groups as a matter of right by birth or by marriage, whereas those in individualist culture often have to earn their relationship in a group. Thus the former rarely develop excellent skills for entering new groups, whereas the latter are more likely to acquire such skills (Coshen 1991). People in collectivist cultures usually establish non-intimate and short-term relationships. Collectivist culture members are strongly influenced by the behaviors and thoughts of their people. For instance, Cialdini et al (1999) examined how people from collectivist culture were influenced by social proofs arguments such as your peers have complied with this request. People from individualist culture however, were influenced more by commitment and constituency arguments such as you have complied with a similar request in the past.

The collectivist tendency in the standards above is typically of the Luo where people of the same group have immense influence on the behavior and overall personality of their members. It involves around trying to appear good to the public and earn a good name and acceptance even at the expense of one's own welfare. The terms collectivist cultural unification is the explanation for their complacency as a group even if it works against them, hence the contemporary community slogan, 'jaluo ok sechi'- that is Luo does not plea for favors.

In Luo community, community codes are important. Violation of community coeds, including hierarchy, evokes contempt. In Luo community, helping an in-group member is a duty-based and one feels very responsible for helping their siblings. This is because there exist a very strong bond among members of the in-group. There are traditional ways of lying that are understood as 'correct behavior'. Similarly, moral personas behave as their roles, in-group members and society stipulate. If the individual deviates from such a real behavior, there is loss of face, no only for the individual, but also for the whole group, but also for the whole group. In tis sense, morality basically consists of doing what the in-group expects.

KINSHIP EFFECT ON THE COMMUNAL WELFARE.

This factor is the very social organization in the Luo society, it defined the obligation of the members of the Luo Society it also defined privileges of members, Kinship has two levels; the nuclear and the extended family, the nuclear family is made of the male head who ahs unchallenged power, his wife or wives, their children and the unmarried daughters of the male head. The nuclear served many functions and it is important in the Luo society; it is the center of education where parents teach their children values common practices and customs., it is also the survival of the Luo society and it ahs a role to protect the children. The extended family comprises of the parents, children, relatives, aunts and uncles this formed a clan. The clans where identified by totems. Kinship therefore still plays an important role in the Luo society up to date even though some believes and values have been eroded by the modern world like the unchallenged power of the male head. Politics, economy, and education is therefore played from the male down to the siblings, the male head is the decision maker when it comes to the running of business within the nuclear family and the leadership goes down to

the wives then to the male sons from the eldest to the youngest. Education is done in gender basis the female are educated by their mothers and aunties while the male are educated by their father and uncles,

THE POWER OF CULTURE ON SEX AND AGE.

In the traditional Luo society sex is very important factor in term of advantage in the social structure, the female is termed as the second sex, when it comes to food the male has the advantage over the female because the belief says that the male has to take care of the kinship and the clans as a whole and therefore he has to be strong and eat good food. The male also have an advantage over the woman, they are always the beneficiary in division of wealth. In the division of labor men are advantaged, since women are the laborers and this led to men marrying many wives who will provide more labor when it comes to house work and food production. Sex also plays a big role in religion and leadership within the Luo society, the leadership is that the hierarchal and patriarchal, the women have a low status when it comes to leadership even though this element of sex is not important in the modern world due to human rights, and the upraised civil societies. The most notable fact about the Luo economy is that women play primary role in farming. Before the introduction of the modern money economy, the garden was the centerpiece of the women's world of work. Industrious women could earn considerable wealth by exchanging their garden produce for animals, handicrafts, pots, and baskets. A young girl is expected to help her mother and her mother's co-wives in farming land owned by her farther, brothers and paternal uncles. Even though a girl may go to school and rise to a prominent position in the society, there is often still a strong association with the land of digging. Men are preoccupied with livestock and spend a great deal of time in "social labor" concerned with placing their cattle in good contexts, such as bride wealth exchanges, traditional partnerships, and commercial sales. In the modern economy, cattle and goats have a monetary value as well. Men have control over animals and cash crops.

The woman can not build a house on her own there has to be a man, in case of death of her husband she has to be inherited by one of the male in that community since customs indicate that there is no house without a male head to make decisions.

Age is important factor in the Luo society. Age is divided into two which are age-grating and age set; age is the stages one passes from infancy through adolescence, adult hood to death. Age-set is group of persons of the same sex, age, going through the same life circle at the same step and same time. Luos have roles in age grade, one is expected to behave certain way according to his or her age, they also believe in ancestral spirit which is the last stage in age grading. Politics is played according to one's age; children and young adults are not expected to lead meetings of where adults and senior adults are, in most cases any leader of the Luo like the Craftsman, Traditional chiefs, or medicine men are either adult male or senior adult male. The age set also plays an important role in the Luo community people who are of the same age or have obligations to do certain things together or are expected to behave in certain ways; people of the same age are expected to grow and mature in the same manner and if one tends to delay it is questioned by the society and the elders advice the victim to try and catch up with the age-set. However the age is not very important in the modern world since some of the roles of an upper age grade can be taken by the lower age grade therefore age does not reflect that much as it used to be in the past.

Children are expected to obey the elders under any circumstances; they are not allowed to question or socialize with the elders. If boys from the age-set are married and one is still

delaying the community might decide to look for a wife for the delaying one so as to make them equal in terms of maturity.

CULTURAL IMPACT ON THE LOCALITY, OCCUPATION, AND RANKING ON THE COMMUNITIES

According to the last National census conducted in 1989, the Luo number over three million people, or about 13 percent of Kenya's total population. Along the Luhya, the Luo are the second largest ethnic group in Kenya, behind the Gikuyu. Most Luo live in Western Kenya in Western Province or in the adjacent Nyanza province. two of the eight provinces in Kenya. Some Luo live to the South of Kenya in Tanzania. Many Luo also live in Nairobi. Most Luo maintain strong, economic, cultural, and social links to western Kenya. Which they consider home. Over the past 500 years. The Luo have migrated slowly from the Sudan to their present location around the western shore of lake Victoria. This area changes from Low, dry landscape around the lake to lush, hilly areas to the east. The provincial capital of Kisumu is the third largest city in Kenya and is a major cultural center for the Luo.

Home has a great importance for the Luo community, when a member of the Luo community Dies in a different place or outside the western or Nyanza province it is important for his or her funeral to take place in his home area since they value home and traditional customs according to their believe has to take place like 'Teroburu' which is chasing the bad ancestors who brought death.

There is a factor which affects the social structure in a subjective manner; it affects one's conscious to reference group with one who share status, these reference implies to group one would like to belong, imagine to belong and actually belong. The Luo society has created stereotypes in their behavior towards ranking and occupation. They give respect to people of higher ranking and respect to those who have no ranking or occupation. One would feel comfortable if they belong to a certain group with relatively equal ranking or occupation. The Luo society valued ranks like Traditional chiefs, elders, medicine men and midwives. To some extend the ranking and occupation went hand in and with age.

The traditional chiefs in the Luo society would get a high sit in a gathering and would be treated in a special way since they were leaders and deserved respect. They would always be allowed to eat first, pass their opinion before anyone else and sometimes their decisions were final.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN RELIGION AND PROPERTY

Christianity has had a major impact on Luo Religious beliefs and practices. Today' religious communities draw on beliefs both fro indigenous practices from Christianity. The Anglican Church known as the ACK and the Roman Catholic Church are very significant among the Luo. Many People, however, do not draw sharp distinctions between religious practices with European origins and those with African origins. Mainstream churches draw on a rich Luo Musical and dance tradition. For many Christians, the ancestors continue to play a significant role in their lives. In traditional belief, the ancestors reside in the sky or underground, sometimes perfumed when naming a baby to determine if a particular spirit has been reincarnated. The spirits of the ancestors are believed to communicate with the living in their dreams. In Luo religion, troublesome spirits may cause misfortunes if they are not remembered or respected. Luo refer to spirits by the term 'Jajuok' or "shadow." The Luo refer to God by many names that indicate his power for example, 'Were' means "one certain to grant requests"; 'WuonKoth, "the rain-giver"; and 'Nyakalaga,' "the one who flows everywhere." Prayers and requests are addressed to God by those in need of his assistance. Christianity has

fused most notably with traditional religious beliefs and customs in “independent Christian Churches,” which have attracted large followings.

The Nomiya Luo Church, which started in 1912, was among the first independent church in Kenya. The founder of this church, Johanwa Owalo, is believed to be a prophet similar to Jesus Christ and Muhammad. Owalo later teamed up with a catholic priest and began teaching a new theology that rejected both the pope and the doctrine.

The Luo people had property ownership which in various levels promoted a sense of belongings, influenced their social economic and political network; it indicated status. A person who has no property is rated as of low status and when he/she acquires property he/she is promoted to a high status. One climbs the political ladder due to his wealth, social capital is also important as far as property is concerned in the Luo society, one could get prestige and have networks not only with material wealth but also through social networks. Property like land was communal in the ancient Luo Communities though now the land Swynnerton plan which was brought by the British eroded the system. Land was owned by a superior authority and it was very important, Luo people had land rights which were strictly observed by the community which was divided into clan and further divided into nuclear family where the males were head and the owner of the land of which they could divide it to their married sons for permanent ownership. Material property like cattle also played a big significant in the Luo society. Cattle were used for economic and social functions.

Polygyny was/ is practiced among the Luo community as a show of wealth and property ownership. A man with a lot of land and animals could marry many wives who will take care of his land in terms of cultivating it and producing more food.

DEATH AND LIFE CULTURALLY

Death is a big issue among the Luos. There is always a cause for the death. Among the Luos there is no “natural death.” A man who dies of old age has been called by the ancestors to join them for more duties because they believe that spiritual beings are more powerful than the living.

Death marks the beginning of an elaborate rite of passage for both the dead person and living kin. At death a man's physical body is disposed of in a highly respected manner with all ceremonies that befits it. The burial is a whole community affair. People come from far and wide to wail and dance to chase away the “death spirits” who come to take away the diseased. Once the corpse is buried the process of cleansing starts. A bull must be slaughtered for the final sacrifice. There are also death dances for the recognition for the recognition of the transition from natural life to spiritual life.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The contribution of culture and personality research is substantial, ranging from elucidating links between individual and ecological influences on personality, dispelling cultural stereotypes and national characters, to testing theory generalizability. Furthermore, cultural personality studies bring about tangible societal benefits by offering scientists, managers, policy-makers, and the public way to understand, manage, and benefit from the omnipresent cultural diversity that characterizes our society (Flower & Richardson, 1996).

Now again the excitement for research on culture and personality is palpable. The grand ambition of early culture and personality psychologists can be realized with more

measurement precision and sophisticated data analytic techniques than ever before. In away, culture and personality psychologists have finally began to fulfill the century old promise, and cultivate new and exciting horizons beyond the traditional communal agenda. Today a new culture is building up which is between the new and the old.

The culture in which a person lives is one of the most important environmental factors that shape their personality (Triandis & Suh, 2002). Personality psychologists are interested in understanding the role that both culture and gender play in the development of personality. Research investigating the variations of personality traits across cultures suggests that there are both universal and culture specific aspects that account for this variation.

The new generation is steadily coming up with a modified and perhaps suitable in the current times. This calls for urgent research on the sa

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