**Psychopathy: Sociocultural Model**

In recent years, mental health professional have been looking more closely at the role culture plays in the causes and variations of psychological disorders. Culture is a significant factor in the development and structure of personality. Culture also exerts a strong influence on the development of unique variations of defined psychological disorders. While the medical model and other psychological models focus more on the individual, the sociocultural model emphasizes societal and cultural influences in the individual’s environment.

The DSM-5 reflects greater awareness and sensitivity to the cultural influences in the area of psychological disorders than earlier diagnostic manuals. Three culture specific concepts have been added to its appendix as follows:

* Cultural syndromes - categories of similar symptoms and explanations of causes that occur in a culturally-specific context and are recognized within the culture.
* Cultural idioms of distress - expression of distress that do not necessarily involved specific symptoms or disorders but provide shared ways of experiencing and expressing personal and social concerns.
* Cultural explanations of distress or perceived causes - refer to labels, attributions, are explanations that point to culturally agreed upon meanings for and causes of symptoms, illness or distress.

*Cultural syndromes* are psychological disorders specific to a particular culture. Some interesting examples include the following:

* **Taijin kyofusho** - This is a social anxiety disorder specific to Japan in which a man or woman experiences intense fear that his or her body, a bodily function, or appearance will embarrass others.
* **Susto** - Specific to ares in Latin America, this psychological condition includes severe anxiety along with physical symptoms caused by what is believed to be religious-magic traumatic event that separates the soul from the body. Symptoms include apathy, insomnia, irritability and physical symptoms such as diarrhea.
* **Amok** - Originating in Southeast Asia, this condition begins as period of brooding and manifests as sudden and possibly homicidal explosion of rage usually caused by a perceived insult.
* **Hwabyeong** - Specific to the Korean peninsula, hwabyeong is an overwhelming feeling of anger related to perceived unfairness. It is often caused by the buildup of unresolved anger that has been suppressed for a long time. The trigger is usually a family-related event, and symptoms include head sensation, respiratory symptoms, and heart palpitations.

**Cultural Relativism** is a concept that explains the intersection between psychopathy and culture. In this model, psychological disorders can only be fully understood within the context of the culture in which they occur. Sociocultural factors include gender, socioeconomic conditions, age, and the values, traditions, and societal expectations that contribute to the cultural context. The sociocultural context can help determine what is and is not considered abnormal. Such context can also determine how psychologists may handle universal psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia.

Cultural factors can influence not only the dimensions and severity of the disorder but also the treatment strategy. For example, in most Western cultures, depression is more accepted or tolerated amount women than men and is therefore more frequently seen in women. Another factor is the educational level and socioeconomic status of the individual. Poverty can be a key element of the development of depression or anxiety disorders and also limit access to treatment, sot he disorders are often undiagnosed. Additionally, cultural stressors such as violence are also highly correlated with stress related disorders.

Sociocultural factors play a role in the frequency with which disorders appear in a given society. For example, anorexia nervosa and bulimia tend to appear in Western cultures such as the United States, Europe and other cultures that hold thin, often unrealistic models as icons of beauty. Additionally, depression and anxiety disorders are much less common in Asian cultures such as China and Japan. Cultural norms for specific disorders vary widely between countries. In Japan, for example, mental illness, particularly depression, is considered a taboo condition that can bring disgrace and dishonor to the family and extended family. For this reason, Japanese men, women and children who experience depression will more often report physical illness or bodily ailments.