Die Themen der zwei großen Konferenzen spiegeln die verschiedenen Interessenschwerpunkte wider, die sich durch das Programm ziehen.

- Workshop II Mathematical Aspects of Quantum Mechanics and Quantum Transport Theory, 23. – 28. April 2012 (s. S. 45)

The Cultural Constitution of Causal Cognition
Leitung: Andrea Bender und Sieghard Beller (beide Freiburg i. Br., DEU)

Does Cognitive Science Need Anthropology?—Diagnosing a troubled relationship
Anthropology once was a pioneer in the cognitive revolution and a founding member of the cognitive sciences (D’Andrade, 1995). Over the years, however, its presence and influence have continuously decreased—to the extent that it became the “missing discipline” (Boden, 2006). This alienation is particularly evident at the annual meetings of the Cognitive Science Society in which anthropology is meanwhile mostly absent.

At the same time, however, the role of culture is increasingly recognized as of prime relevance for the sciences of human cognition—in at least two different senses: as a source for cognitive diversity and as the context of cognition. Questions of cognitive and/or linguistic universals have been among the most hotly and controversially debated topics in recent years (e.g., Evans & Levinson, 2009; Norenzayan & Heine, 2005; and see Astuti & Bloch, 2010). They are directly related to a central assumption of cognitive science, namely that cognitive processes can be separated from the content processed. This assumption, however, is increasingly contradicted by cross-cultural findings which reveal that content and process may interact in complex ways (e.g., Atran & Medin, 2008; Kitayama & Uskul, 2011). The issue of cognitive diversity cannot be clarified from an armchair perspective, but requires empirical examination, and this must not rely on restricted samples of western university students only, but necessitates cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparisons (Arnett, 2008; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010; Medin, 2008). Theorizing culture and exploring cultural diversity is an inevitable corrective for the sometimes rash generalizations found in cognitive science.

Beyond these cultural differences in content and their implications for processing, culture also needs to be considered as shaping the very context in which cognition typically occurs—including, as a distinctive sub-type, psychology labs. This renders culture not just an optional interesting or exotic add-on to cognition, but one of its fundamental dimensions (Cole, 1996; Gatewood, 2011; Hutchins, 1995; Shweder, 1991, 2007). In this interaction of culture and cognition, language plays a specific, dual role: as a cognitive capacity/activity and as an essential part of culture. It is thus not by accident that much of the work perceived as being cognitive anthropology is actually done by ethno-linguists.

With questions of cultural and linguistic diversity coming to the fore of attention in the cognitive sciences (Barsalou, 2010; Boster, 1999; Gelfand & Diener, 2010), it might seem only natural to call for anthropology’s expertise in culture and language, and to advocate its re-integration into the cognitive sciences (e.g., Bender, Hutchins & Medin, 2010; Gentner, 2010). Considering
the on-going alienation between the two as detrimental to both sides, a range of initiatives has been launched recently to re-calibrate their relationship, including the 2011/12 ZiF research group 'The cultural constitution of causal cognition' that brings together researchers from cognitive anthropology and several other sub-disciplines of the cognitive sciences.

Although this call for rapprochement is generally endorsed in official communiqués, many on both sides appear to be reluctant to answer it. Neither anthropology nor other cognitive sciences are homogenous fields, and many scholars fail to see the benefits of renewing this relationship. Some scientists feel overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of scientific production and fast developments in their own discipline, leading to more specialisation and sub-disciplines. Others take issue with developments in neighboring disciplines and have stopped acknowledging each other's perspectives and findings as relevant. This renders rapprochement difficult to accomplish—so why bother?

There can be no doubt that, for a comprehensive understanding of human cognition, cognitive science needs to adopt a more diversified perspective, and in particular to take cultural diversity into account (Medin et al., 2010). But does cognitive science really need anthropology? What does anthropology have to offer? And how could anthropology, for its part, benefit from renewing this exchange?

For the current issue of TopiCS in Cognitive Science (3/2012), Sieghard Beller, Andrea Bender and Douglas Medin raised these questions to initiate a debate on the prospects for improving the relationship between anthropology and the other cognitive sciences. In order to encourage a frank sharing of perspectives, their opening essay is deliberately provocative. Several challenges for a successful rapprochement are identified, encompassing the diverging paths that cognitive science and anthropology have taken in the past, the degree of compatibility between cognitive science and anthropology with regard to methodology and research strategies, the importance of anthropology for cognitive science, and the need for disciplinary diversity. Given this set of challenges, reconciliation seems unlikely to follow on the heels of good intentions alone.

A range of scholars were invited to comment on this essay. Commentators come from different disciplinary backgrounds (including anthropology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and linguistics), and consist of both senior scholars, who are among the leading scientists in their fields, and junior researchers at different stages in their career with a fresh and unbiased perspective on this topic. These included fellows of the ZiF Research Group (marked with two asterisks) as well as participants in its opening conference (marked with one asterisk) that took place in October 2011 (cf. Bender, Beller & Schroven, 2012).

Each response provides a uniquely valuable contribution to this debate in its own right and should stand—and be read—for itself. In the order of print:

- Richard Shweder: Anthropology's disenchantment with the cognitive revolution
- John Gatewood**: Cultural models, consensus analysis, and the social organization of knowledge
- James Boster*: Cognitive anthropology is a cognitive science
- Clark Barrett, Stephen Stich & Stephen Laurence: Should the study of Homo sapiens be part of cognitive science?
- Annelie Rothe**: Cognitive anthropologists: Who needs them?
- Stephen Levinson*: The original sin of cognitive science
- Harvey Whitehouse & Emma Cohen: Seeking a rapprochement between anthropology and the cognitive sciences: A problem-driven approach
- Keith Stenning**: To naturalise or not to naturalise? An issue for cognitive science as well as anthropology

* participant in the opening conference
** fellow of the ZiF Research Group
• Shinobu Kitayama: Integrating two epistemological goals: Why shouldn't we give it another chance?
• Sara Unsworth: Anthropology in the cognitive sciences: The value of diversity
• Stephanie Fryberg: Cultural psychology as a bridge between cognitive psychology and anthropology
• Olivier Le Guen**: Cognitive anthropological fieldwork: Cross-disciplinary perspectives on Yucatec Maya culture and cognition
• Rita Astuti & Maurice Bloch*: Anthropologists as cognitive scientists

In conclusion to this debate, the editors present some examples of productive cross-disciplinary collaboration—including this research group—that evince a forward momentum in the relationship between anthropology and the other cognitive sciences and conclude by reminding the reader of the interdisciplinary mission and the integrative power of the cognitive sciences: "The Cognitive Science Society has always provided a platform for a range of different perspectives and has exhibited great integrative power in the past. It appears willing to create space for critical debates. If it is also willing to take seriously the cultural dimension of cognition—together with the discipline essential for grasping this dimension—we can all profit and prosper" (Bender, Beller, & Medin, 2012, p. 465).

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Informationen Further Information
zur Forschungsgruppe The Cultural Constitution of Causal Cognition
→ www.uni-bielefeld.de/ZiF/FG2011Cognition/
References


