ONLINE READINGS IN PSYCHOLOGY AND CULTURE
International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology

Unit 1 *Historical Perspectives on the Study of Psychology and Culture*
Subunit 1 *Events Leading to the foundation of IACCP*

Article 3

10-1-2009

# The Ibadan Conference and Beyond

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Recommended Citation
Triandis, H. C. (2009). The Ibadan Conference and Beyond. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 1*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1002

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# The Ibadan Conference and Beyond

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In January 1967 a conference took place in Ibadan, Nigeria. The organizers were Herbert Kelman and Henri Tajfel. The purpose of the conference was to bring psychologists and others social scientists from Africa and the West together, and hope that they could develop research collaborations. In that conference I was most impressed by the paper of a Tunisian sociologist, who argued that social scientists engage in "intellectual colonialism." That is, they visit a country, collect the data, and go back to their country and publish their findings, without giving any credit to the local scientists, or helping the country that provided the data. That seemed unfair, and ethically questionable.

Thus I changed the way I did research. After that conference I included local social scientists in the design, theoretical development, data collection, examination of the findings, and write-up of the research. This resulted in much better research, because the local scientists often provided insights, that were not available to mainstream psychology. Consequently, most publications in cross-cultural psychology now have many co-authors. This became the standard way of operating in cross-cultural psychology, so that in some cases the publication has hundreds of co-authors.

Herbert Kelman, Rose Kelman, Arrigo Angelini, Rogelio Díaz-Guerrero

Prior to the conference there were some developments that fitted well with the new emphasis on using local ideas in cross-cultural research. Borrowing from anthropology and linguistics, I organized a chapter on culture and cognition by using the concepts of *etics* and *emics* Triandis (1964) What appears to be universal (etic) is in fact conceived differently in different cultures, requiring the use of "emics." For example, a concept such a "social distance" may exist in all cultures but it takes different forms in different cultures. In

some cultures it is a function mostly of race, in others of religion, nationality, social class, values, caste (India) and so on. The weights of such factors as determinants of social distance vary widely across cultures (Triandis, 1980). To study cultures correctly we need to use *both* etics, to compare cultures, and emics to describe each culture accurately. When we use emics we might end with descriptions of indigenous psychologies, such as the psychology of the Chinese developed by Yang Kuo-Shu, or the psychology of the Mexicans, developed by Rogelio Diaz-Guerrero.

The utility of studying emic concepts is exemplified by examining the meaning of the word *mamhllapinatapei,* that is used by the inhabitants of the Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. This word means "looking at each other hoping that either one will offer to do something that both desire but are unwilling to be the first to do." Understanding the meaning of this word one gets an insight about social relationships in that culture that one cannot obtain if only Western concepts are used.

Another example: the concept of "intelligence" as involving fast and accurate learning and behavior is not used in some cultures. In some culture they define intelligence as "knowing what the elders of the culture expect of you." The criteria used by Western psychologists to determine if a person is "intelligent" are not always appropriate in other cultures. For example, Glick (1968, August) asked Kpelle farmers (in Africa) to sort familiar objects. Western psychologists assumed that it is more "intelligent" to sort them by taxonomic category (tools, food) than by color (white, blue). The farmers sorted them by color. Glick did not believe that the farmers were less intelligent because of the way they sorted the objects, because they were obviously bright when they were in the market, and in everyday life. He asked them to sort them in many different ways, but all instructions resulted in sorting by color. Finally, he said: "Sort them in a stupid way." Then the farmers sorted them by taxonomic categories! In short what Western psychologists use as a clue for intelligence is used by the Kpelle is a clue for stupidity.

Methods were developed to use both etics and emics, e.g., Triandis (1972, 1992). These methods required the use of focus groups to develop stimuli that corresponded to a theoretical construct independently in *each* culture. Frequently, this operation resulted in some stimuli that were the same across cultures (etic) and other stimuli that were unique to each culture. Then the stimuli were standardized in each culture separately. One can then use the etic standardized stimuli to compare cultures and the emic to understand the cultures better (Triandis, 1992).

The new way of doing research was codified in Tapp, Kelman, Wrightsman, Triandis, and Coelho (1974) as ethical standards for cross-cultural research. The standards require researchers to make sure that their methods are ethically acceptable in each culture. They must use both etics and emics. To control rival hypotheses they must discover both similarities and differences among cultures (with differences embedded in the similarities), and they must use more than one method to establish a cultural difference. They must leave something of value in the culture that they study (e.g., useful information, procedures, material goods, payments). Not harming their collaborators is discussed in great detail, because in some cases collaboration with "an outsider" may be politically incorrect in the local culture, and getting paid by outsiders can result in serious problems

(e.g., envy) with local colleagues. Attempts to include this code in the ethical standards of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology were unsuccessful, because the code was deemed too restrictive, not allowing sufficient freedom for cross-cultural psychologists. Details about cross-cultural methodology, developed mostly after the Ibadan conference, can be found in Triandis (1972) and are more easily accessible in Triandis (1994).

An important outcome of the Ibadan conference was the agreement to publish a *Newsletter,* to report on developments in cross-cultural psychology and give cross-cultural psychologists a channel of communication with each other. The *Newsletter* was first edited by Triandis, later by Yasumasa Tanaka, and finally it was made the official publication of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology, with the name *Cross-Cultural Psychology Bulletin*. It is currently edited by Bill Gabrenya.

The conference brought together many psychologists (e.g., M. Brewster Smith, who was the mentor of Cigdem Kagitcibasi, from Turkey, who later became one of the leaders of the field of cross-cultural psychology), and Rogelio Diaz-Guerrero who developed an indigenous Mexican Psychology.

## Subsequent Conferences

In 1968 a conference was organized in Lagonissi, near Athens, Greece, to stimulate work on the analysis of subjective culture (Triandis, 1972). It was organized by George and Vasso Vassilou and Triandis. The conference was attended by several leading psychologists who had an interest in culture, such as Otto Klineberg. However, Henri Tajfel refused to come, because after most of the planning for the conference had been completed, a group of Greek colonels established a dictatorship in that country. Triandis argued with Tajfel that the people who will be hurt if he does not come were not the colonels but the local psychologists who had done all the work of organizing the conference. Tajfel did not come. But many others did come. For example, Cigdem Kagitcibasi was there, the late Wally Lambert, who became a major psycholinguist, and many others. In addition, soon after, Cronbach & Drenth (1972) organized a conference in Istanbul, Turkey on the cross-cultural use of mental tests.

Such conferences gave psychologists an opportunity to get to know each other, and eventually John Dawson, of the University of Hong Kong, convened a conference in Hong Kong in 1972 that established the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology. Among the most important participants in that conference were John Berry, who also developed the first *Directory* of cross-cultural psychologists, as well as important theories on the influence of culture on cognition (Berry, 1976) and on acculturation (Berry, 2001), Walter Lonner, who established the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology.* Jerry Bruner, who was elected President of the association, Gustav Jahoda who became the most important historian of the relationship of culture and mind (Jahoda, 1993), and many others. Dawson and Lonner (1974) edited the proceedings of that conference.

## More Recent Events

As research on culture and psychology increased it was summarized in handbooks. The first *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Triandis, 1980-81) appeared in six volumes. Lee Cronbach thought that the publication of this handbook established cross-cultural psychology as a distinct branch of psychology. The revised handbook (Berry, 1997) was published in three volumes, and the *Handbook of Cultural Psychology* by Kitayama and Cohen (2007), was published in one volume. The newer volumes sometimes referenced chapters in the earlier volumes so that they did not have to cover the same ground.

Culture entered psychology in a big way after the paper by Markus and Kitayama (1991), which showed that culture (interdependence and independence, which are related to collectivism and individualism) is closely related to cognition, emotion, and motivation. After that paper cross-cultural and cultural psychology (Kitayama & Cohen, 2007) became a really important part of psychology with more than 100 publications per year.

In addition to collectivism-individualism later work has included other "cultural syndromes" (patterns of beliefs, attitudes, role definitions, self-definitions, and values organized around a theme). For collectivism (Triandis, 1995) the theme is the centrality of the ingroup; for individualism it is the centrality of the individual. Other culture syndromes (Triandis, 1989) have included cultural simplicity-complexity (Chick, 1997) and tightness-looseness (Pelto, 1968; Triandis, 1994, Gelfand, Nishii, & Raver, 2006). Triandis (2009a) provided 75 hypotheses linking ecology and these three cultural syndromes. Future research will probably explore other cultural syndromes, such as Hierarchy vs. Equality, Mastery vs. Harmony, Time Orientation (Monochronic vs. Polychronic; Past-Present-Future; Short vs. Long Perspective). Universalism vs. Particularism, Gender Equality vs. Inequality, Specificity vs. Diffusion, Achievement vs. Ascription, Controlling Nature vs. Harmony with Nature, the Bond & Leung Social Axioms (contain five dimensions), and Emphasis on Realism vs. Self-Deception (Triandis, 2009b). An important research area will be the examination of the relationships among these syndromes (e.g., is emphasis on realism more common in individualistic societies?)

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