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## RESEARCH AND REFLECTIONS ON INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGIES

John G. Adair and William Gabrenya

Indigenous psychology has been a sometimes-contrarian feature of cross-cultural psychology congresses for at least the past decade, but this is the first time a separate section in the proceedings volumes has been devoted to the topic. Traditionalists often view indigenous psychologists as at one with that other great adversary, "cultural psychology," at the same time that indigenous psychologists struggle to define their own identity and place in the field (see the special issue on Indigenous, Cultural, and Cross-Cultural Psychologies in the *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 3 (3), 2000). At the risk of oversimplifying, we suggest that—as a part of this struggle—the congress presentations of indigenous psychologists and much of their published work share several features: (1) their primary message is to advocate and promote indigenous thinking and research methods; (2) in the service of this goal, they emphasize the qualitative uniqueness of local cultural psychology as a counter to traditional universalistic assertions; and (3) they define themselves and their approach, at least in part, as an alternative to Western psychology.

This characterization of indigenous psychology is reflected in Sang-Chin Choi's keynote address at the Yogyakarta congress, rewritten as Choi and Kim for the first chapter in this section. Choi and Kim emphasize each of these elements while comparing and contrasting the relational meaning of the concept of trust in Korean society with the individualistic meaning of trust within Western society. Because meaning is derived from culture, indigenous and cultural psychology, they assert, are necessary for an understanding of thought and behavior within eastern and western societies.

In addition to their distinctive research programs, indigenous psychologies may be viewed as intellectual-social phenomena, or as social movements that can be studied in their own right. The remaining chapters in this section were brought together as a symposium to look at indigenous psychology in this way, in contrast to advocating for it or developing its theory or method.

Taking a global rather than a culture-specific perspective on indigenous psychology presents interesting opportunities for analysis and discourse. Each of the remaining section contributors took distinctly different approaches to this task. In the first of these chapters, Adair looked at the process of indigenization, asking: how is a newly imported psychology nurtured, made culturally appropriate, and developed to become an established discipline contributing to the understanding of thoughts and behaviors in the new culture? He contends that beyond indigenization every national discipline must undergo a process of autochthonization or gradual development into a mature and independent, self-sustaining discipline. Gabrenya has studied indigenous psychologies as a social movement from a sociology of science perspective. In his chapter, he outlines various paths that lead psychologists to leave traditional, usually American, psychology behind and set off in an indigenous direction. He wonders who *can* and who *may* study other people's indigenous movements, and whether scientific progress matters in such an analysis. Vohra's chapter poses the question, is there substantial difference between the indigenous developments in one country compared to another, or is the model for all indigenous psychologies similar? To answer this question, she reviews and illustrates the unique conditions underlying psychology in India that have led it to develop quite a different indigenous psychology from those found elsewhere. In the fourth chapter, Hwang differentiates between two levels of conceptualization: the micro-world created by individual scientists and the life-world experienced by people living in the culture. Indigenous psychologies study the life-world experienced within a culture; universal psychology is defined by the micro-world. In the final chapter, Poortinga questions the underlying logic of an indigenous psychology approach, and concludes that insiders do not have a natural advantage when it comes to theoretical insights. However, variations in knowledge and insights associated with various indigenous perspectives can enrich psychology as a universal science.

The chapters in this section raise some interesting questions and issues for indigenous psychologists to consider. Whether or not they will influence thinking about indigenous psychologies, we perceive two not necessarily complementary trends on the horizon: First, indigenous psychology will continue to stimulate and enrich theoretical and methodological discussions and developments in cross-cultural psychology, and be

stimulated and enriched in return. Second, the extent of indigenous theory and research will grow and be characterized by an ever more serious and at times uncomfortable examination of the fundamental validity of indigenous views versus universalistic psychology as a science, and of the globalization of psychology as a discipline. This second trend accompanies, and perhaps is not independent of, the generally unsettled state of the global political situation and of international relations at the beginning of this Century. We presume that IACCP will be among the first of the psychological science organizations to witness how these intellectual and social challenges play out.