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ON THE INDIGENIZATION AND AUTOCHTHONIZATION OF THE DISCIPLINE OF PSYCHOLOGY

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My social studies of science approach over the past several years (Adair, Puhan & Vohra, 1993; Adair, Pandey, Begum, Puhan, & Vohra, 1995) has addressed the question: How does a basically North American (US) discipline of psychology get imported, implanted as an academic discipline, and indigenized (or made culturally appropriate) and developed within quite different cultures around the world into a mature discipline contributing to the understanding and resolution of social issues within each country? In short, this program of research has attempted to discern through empirical study across cultures the manner in which an imported psychology is shaped into a discipline that fits so well to the new culture that it may appear *as if it was indigenous*. In a fully-realized indigenous psychology the theories, concepts, research problems, hypotheses, methods, and measures emanate from, adequately represent, and the results of the research reflect back upon the cultural context in which behavior is observed, rather than coming from and addressing a foreign research literature. Through longitudinal content analyses of published research, bibliometric analyses, interviews and surveys of researchers in several countries my colleagues and I have developed an empirical base from which to make a number of observations about the indigenization process.

I have previously defined the goal of an indigenous psychology as transformation of the imported discipline into a mature, self-sustaining scientific discipline addressing the needs of the country and culture. In addition to its cultural adaptation, we have studied the national development of the discipline of psychology within different countries. Because my research and definition of an indigenous psychology is somewhat more inclusive than that typically held by indigenous researchers, this program of research offers a different perspective on the indigenization process. In this paper I provide some of these observations and reflections,

raising questions to be asked and issues to consider that may have been tacitly assumed, explicitly overlooked, or never raised within the conceptualizations of proponents of indigenous psychologies.

Some indigenous psychologies are more advanced than others, so that some of the questions or issues I have raised may appear to these proponents already to have been resolved. Yet there are more incipient indigenous psychologies for which these observations will be meaningful and important. In short, the indigenization process is so complex and uncharted that a fuller discussion of these questions and issues may help to illuminate the path.

Source of the Problem

Psychology has roots in Europe, however, it is the universalistic and positivistic experimental psychology developed in the United States that over the past several decades has been imported into countries around the world. Perceptive individuals in these countries noted that this newly imported psychology did not always work, that there was a need to shape it to the local culture. The blame for the ill fit was often placed on flaws in the model of the psychology that had been imported. Culture was not recognized as having a place within the model, and the positivistic experimental methodology accompanying the imported model was inappropriate, especially in the rigid manner in which it often was applied. But at the same time, overlooked have been Western expressions of dissatisfaction with this model and calls for both increased attention to culture and alternative methodologies. Rather, the blame consistently has been placed on U.S. psychology, or even less constructively politicized by pejorative references to U.S. colonialism or imperialism.

Assigning blame, well understood as part of an anti-colonial reaction, unnecessarily externalizes the problem facing psychologists in the country importing the discipline. Replacing this need to belittle or denigrate U.S. psychology with an emphasis on the need to modify, build upon and shape the imported discipline to the needs of one's culture provides a constructive context and attitude for the psychologist who must now cope with the problem. Psychology seemed at one time to be worthy of being imported; there may be much to be gained by recognizing that portion of the imported psychology to be retained and the portion to be modified or indigenized. Curiously, this is not the strategy most often adopted. Rather,

indigenous researchers typically set aside the imported discipline to look to their own culture, historical texts, and expressions in the native language in their search for indigenous concepts and unique (emic) behavior patterns within their culture.

Changes in the content of the imported discipline, in the questions to be asked, of the concepts and behaviors to be studied, and of the variables to be considered are substantial undertakings. But changes in the content of the newly formed psychology need not alter the scholarly "discipline" that binds us together as psychologists. Discipline is more clearly identified with methodology and of our data meeting accepted criteria of being objective, replicable, and verifiable.

Dissatisfaction with the methodology of the imported discipline is an even greater challenge. Some of the problems may be due to imperfections in the model and some to inappropriate application of existing methodologies: Forcing textbook methods onto problems that could be addressed with better-fitting methods, or using hypothesis-testing methodologies on new topic areas suited to descriptive, exploratory methods. Considerable attention has been devoted to searching for the appropriate methods for indigenous psychologies, similar to the search for culturally appropriate variables. Yet more likely, the solution will be found in a greater tolerance for simple adaptation of existing methods to fit the new context. Such context-adapted data collection procedures are important achievements and should be fully documented for indigenous researchers yet need not be regarded as defining a new indigenous methodology. All researchers are faced with methods problems, and ensuring the methodology provides an answer to the questions asked while meeting the accepted criteria of the discipline is all that is required.

Stages within the Indigenization Process

Indigenization is the process by which these changes are made to transform an imported psychology into a discipline that is more appropriate to the culture. Based on my research across several countries I have proposed (Adair, 1999) that indigenous psychology typically develops and evolves through a series of four stages: Importation, implantation, indigenization, and autochthonization.

In the first stage, **Importation**, the discipline is introduced to a new country, usually by someone who has been trained elsewhere and returns to an academic position. The new psychology becomes part of the university curriculum, becomes a popular subject and prospective faculties are sent abroad to be trained. The second stage, **Implantation**, occurs when these scholars return in some numbers and begin functioning as psychologists. They attempt to conduct research as they were trained to do. Emulating the Western model they initially research topics selected from western journals and textbook application of methods guides their research. They teach the imported discipline as it was taught to them in graduate school. Some of the more mature scholars among them begin to reflect critically on their research activities and conclude that what they are doing seems not to fit their native culture and may be irrelevant to their society. In this third stage, **Indigenization**, the use of Western models and methods by colleagues is criticized as inappropriate, and there are calls for more culturally appropriate research. Initially, modification of the discipline proceeds with translation and adaptation of psychometric tests to more appropriate content and language. There also may be calls for research on topics in the national interest. In later stages culturally unique behaviors and thoughts are identified by their linguistic distinctiveness or by traditional cultural writings or lore, and these become the focus for the new discipline. Transforming the discipline to make it culturally sensitive or appropriate is the primary objective of the indigenization process. In the final stage, **Autochthonization**, which may begin sometime during the previous two stages, local psychologists begin to worry about the need to perpetuate the newly founded discipline through the training of their successors. Focus is on the establishment of graduate training programs, the need for locally-authored or -edited textbooks collating culturally-relevant research, the creation of strong discipline associations to promote quality journal publication, and discipline standards for research, ethics, and practice. As the number of active scholars and those with substantial research experience increase, a critical mass is formed to address problems in the national interest and to build on the culturally relevant research initiatives begun in the previous stage. Hopefully this will be followed by reliable national research funding and public recognition for the discipline. Development of the imported psychology into a self-sustaining independent indigenous discipline is achieved as the final step in this process.

Although emphasis within indigenous psychologies has always been on making the discipline more culturally sensitive, advancements toward an autochthonous discipline are at least equally important. The more the discipline moves to an advanced state, the more likely experienced researchers will confidently identify and investigate behaviors observed within their own culture, and adapt methods to collect meaningful data. As the four-stage model suggests, development of the discipline only to the goal of making it culturally appropriate, falls short of the ultimate goal of achieving a truly indigenous, autochthonous discipline.

Universal Need for Indigenization, but Unequal across Countries

An additional significance to this latter stage is the realization that there is a need to develop an indigenous (and autochthonous) psychology in all countries. Although the need for indigenous psychology development is universal (outside of the United States), the extent of that need and the degree of transformation of the discipline that is required is not uniform throughout the world. For example, differences between European and American social psychology have been observed (Jaspars, 1986). Such differences are obviously not as large as those between psychology in the U.S. and in Taiwan, but the need for indigenization of the discipline is present for developed-world countries as well as for those in the majority world. This is true because (a) Psychology has been imported from the U.S. into every country in the world, and (b) Psychology was developed earlier and is more established in the U.S. There will be differences between sets of countries in the extent of transformation required; not only differences between developed and developing countries, but also differences among various majority-world countries. The extent of change required will vary largely as a function of (a) the extent of differences from the U.S. culture, (b) the extent of usage of the English language, and (c) the stage of development of the discipline. The greater the cultural and language differences and the less developed the discipline; the greater degree of indigenization of the discipline will be required. For India, in which the English language is used as the basis for research and as a common language among the large, modern segments of Indian society, the extent of indigenization required may be less than for the rest of Asia. Similarly,

all of Latin America, because of its cultural roots and linguistic ties to European countries (Spain and Portugal) will require considerably less indigenization than India and other Asian countries. Indigenization may also vary as a function of the extent to which the discipline seeks to explain the traditional rather than the modern culture, or focuses on cultural adaptation vs. applied problem solution. Based on this analysis, the need for the indigenization of psychology will be (a) greatest in Asia and Africa, (b) much less in Latin America, (c) even less in Europe, and the least in Canada.

Indigenous Psychology Is Not a Unitary Concept/Approach

Although various authors have referred to the indigenous psychology approach (See Kim & Berry, 1993) as if it was a unitary construct and that indigenous research would be similar across countries, there is substantial variation among indigenous psychologies. The clearest example of this is the difference between indigenous research developments in India, which I have studied most extensively, and in Taiwan where an elaborate programmatic development of an indigenous psychology has been pursued.

Indigenous Psychology of Taiwan

The strategy for the development of indigenous psychology in Taiwan was articulated in the early 1980s by K. S. Yang. His approach (Yang, 1997), is the most articulate, programmatic statement of what researchers should and should not do to develop an indigenous psychology. His plan has methodically guided indigenous research in Taiwan over the past two decades. Although not rejecting a search of the imported psychology for concepts and theories that fit the local culture, Taiwanese researchers were urged to concentrate their efforts on developing an entirely new set of concepts and theories suited to the Chinese culture and to produce these in the native language. Psychologists were to think, read and write in Chinese. Rather than be guided by the Western literature in the English language, researchers were to produce a psychology made in Taiwan. Indigenous theory was to be based upon traditional Chinese writings and cultural experience. Empirical research and theorizing was to be published in Chinese to be read by other indigenous researchers in Taiwan. Indeed, a publication, *Indigenous Psychological Research in Chinese Societies*, was

specially created for this purpose. Yang's program for development of what seems to be an ethno-psychology or cultural psychology of the Taiwanese people has worked: Indigenous psychology of Taiwan, unparalleled in its accomplishments after such a short period (Yang, 1999), is the strongest and most clearly enunciated of all such approaches around the world.

Indigenous Psychological Research in India

By contrast, indigenization of psychology in India has proceeded in an entirely different manner. Factors specific to India have been instrumental in shaping the unique character of its indigenous psychology movement. These factors were reflected in Durganand Sinha's calls for indigenization of Indian psychology. In contrast to the leading proponents in other countries, i.e., Yang (Taiwan), Enriquez (Philippines) and Diaz-Guerrero (Mexico), each of whom focused on cultural aspects of the problem in their native language, Sinha's (1973) initial call was for increased relevance for application of psychology to informing and resolving national social problems of the Indian people. His subsequent appeals for indigenization (e.g., 1984; 1986; 1994) were always made in the English language, and continued to emphasize relevance as well as the importance of looking at research from the Indian context or perspective. He regarded research based on cultural traditions or early Vedic writings as acceptable modes for indigenizing the discipline, but seemed more inclined to promote the full transformation of the discipline into an indigenous psychology applicable to Indian thought and behavior, rather than a cultural psychology of the Indian subcontinent, an ethno-psychology, or subspecialty of Indian psychology.

The result has been to make Indian indigenous psychology somewhat different from that of other countries. There is not a specific journal or forum in which indigenous contributions are collated, nor is there a single accepted format or model for indigenous research. According to Sinha (1994), even some locally-conducted, Western-based research has yielded indigenous contributions by virtue of findings interpreted and researched from the perspective of the Indian context. Achievement motivation (Agarwal & Misra, 1986), for example, has been demonstrated to be based by Indian participants upon familial and social goals rather than on personal achievement. Similarly, J.B.P. Sinha's (1980) organizational re-

search has led him to postulate a theory of a nurturant-task leader as a better fit than Western leadership models for the Indian context. Other indigenous contributions to Indian psychology have been derived from concepts identified within ancient Indian religious-philosophical writings, such as Pande and Naidu's (1992) study on detachment as a means of stress relief. Viewed positively, J.B.P. Sinha (2000) has labeled this process of accepting indigenous insights from all manner of sources as "integrative" indigenization. To the contrary, these scattered, diverse indigenous contributions are rarely interconnected, thus giving the impression of indigenization of psychology in India as lacking focus and proceeding quite slowly.

Another consideration is the effect of English as a "national" language on the indigenization process in India. Although it is unclear whether it has diminished progress, it is obvious that the widespread use of English among academics has fostered Indian participation in the larger world of psychology. For example, among all of the countries around the world, Indian psychologists were found to have a greater presence at international congresses and their research more frequently included within publications listed in PsycINFO than any other majority-world country and even more than many developed-world countries (Adair, Coêlho, & Luna, 2002). But has this external presence of Indian research diminished its indigenous thrust within? These interesting questions reinforce the view that indigenization of psychology within a country is a complex, multi-determined process, and not a matter of exclusively increasing sensitivity toward one's own culture.

At the same time that Indian research has been gradually becoming more culturally sensitive, psychology in India has made significant strides toward autochthonization of its discipline. The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), a national source of funding for research, has promoted and financed several significant infrastructure developments. Recognizing the difficulties of researchers maintaining awareness and gaining access to the vast amount of psychological research conducted within the country, ICSSR has sponsored the regular publication of a journal, *Indian Psychological Abstracts and Reviews*, each issue of which contains a feature review article together with indexed abstracts of recent Indian research. ICSSR has also sponsored a series of edited books compiling and reviewing the accumulated Indian research since the last publication. Although

published less frequently than the *Annual Reviews*, the format is similar. The impressive three-volume series, *Psychology in India: The State of the Art* (1988), has been followed by another set of volumes *Psychology in India Revisited: Developments in the Discipline* (2001). Both series, under the general editorship of Janak Pandey, are important for taking stock and for the promotion of further research within the discipline. These infrastructure developments, if strengthened by additional high-quality journals, a strong discipline association, and other professional development within the country would be useful in moving Indian psychology toward its ultimate goal of an autochthonous national discipline.

Questions Raised by Comparison of the Indigenous Psychologies of Taiwan and India

Differences in these approaches to the development of indigenous psychologies raise several questions about the process and highlight several fundamental variables that should be considered regarding the indigenization process: (a) ethno-psychology vs. autochthonous indigenous psychology, (b) how much of a national psychology needs to be made indigenous, (c) languages of science and of culture, and (d) to whom should the research be communicated?

Ethnopsychology vs. Autochthonous Indigenous Psychology?

The indigenous psychology of Taiwan resembles the indigenous psychologies of several other countries, notably the Philippines and Mexico. In each of these countries, as in Taiwan, the movement toward indigenous psychology is promoted by the strong leadership of a single individual around whom adheres a following of psychologists committed to the group's goals of a search for culturally unique phenomena that are linguistically- or culturally-based. A circumscribed research program, within-group communication of results, and commitment to the group's goals gives the group cohesiveness and momentum. For example, in both Taiwan and the Philippines journals have been established for publication of indigenous research; in Mexico, the *Asociación Mexicana de Psicología Social* (AMEPSO) biannually publishes a soft-cover congress proceedings volume in which Mexican ethno-psychology is published in a separate section.

Although the goal has been stated as promotion of an indigenous psychology there is often little effort toward the broader goal of an autochthonous national discipline. All efforts are focused on identifying and researching unique indigenous concepts and developing indigenous theories. As a consequence, each of these disciplines appears to be evolving as a cultural psychology or ethno-psychology of their respective countries. Diaz-Guerrero, for example, refers to his approach as the ethno-psychology of the Mexican. Yang's psychology is housed in the Institute for Ethnology of the Chinese Academy of Science. The large numbers of remaining psychologists within the country who are not part of the indigenous group typically pursue their research activities with universalistic strategies on the imported model. Because of the way they have evolved, the two groups of researchers may go their separate ways with limited interaction, with the result that the focused indigenization strategy may have the unintended effect of negating or at least diminishing the impact indigenous research may have had on the psychology of the country. The outcome of this evolutionary dilemma is dependent upon two things: what are the goals and criteria set for the indigenous psychology group's activities, and how is communication planned with the rest of psychology. Interacting with psychologists who are non-indigenous in their approach may give a better perspective of the strengths and limits of indigenous research.

In a recent assessment of the indigenous psychology of Taiwan, Liu and Huang (2002) conclude that the plans for future directions of indigenous psychology are more elaborate than that of an ethno-psychology. The strategy seems to have been to first develop an indigenous discipline and then to generalize and communicate the concepts externally, and apply them locally. In other words, sufficient concepts and theories had to be developed in the Chinese language and an empirical base of data collected before moving to the next phase of the research program. Once indigenous concepts had been identified, labeled and researched, Taiwanese psychologists should be able to engage psychologists from around the world on a more equal basis. Similarly, once an indigenous psychology of Taiwan had been developed, the next step was to pursue its generalization to a psychology of the Chinese people on the mainland. And lastly, the plan is to now proceed with application of the indigenous psychology to social problems within the country. This step-wise strategy to first develop indigenous concepts and theories before pursuing international communica-

tion, applied research, or extension of the model to other Chinese people is unique to Taiwan and certainly contrasts with the more gradual development of an autochthonous indigenous psychology in India.

How Much of a National Discipline of Psychology Needs to Be Made Indigenous?

The development of an indigenous psychology almost by definition compels the researcher to identify and research culturally unique phenomena. However, some topics and behaviors are likely to be universal. Which topics, behaviors, or cognitions are not determined or substantially influenced by culture and hence do not need to be indigenized? What portions of social, developmental, and clinical psychology, i.e., areas substantially influenced by culture are likely to result in derived etics or universals, and hence supplant the need for indigenous research? Our study of Canadian psychology offered some rough insight into this by some increasing, yet relatively modest levels of "culturally sensitive research" contained in its broad band social/developmental/applied journal *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* over 15 years of study. Some measures had risen to indicate a degree of cultural sensitivity in as much as 20 to 30% of published research, but its absence in the majority of studies. More meaningful than these precise percentages is the suggestion that some finite proportion of research and behaviors may not require indigenization. We haven't done so, but maybe we need to consider assessing the types of research that do not reflect the cultural sensitivity our measures were designed to assess. The similarity of the Canadian culture to that of the U.S. also may impose limits on our ability to pursue this strategy in Canada.

Languages of Science and of the Culture

The centrality of the native language to the development of indigenous psychology in Taiwan and its virtual absence in Indian psychology raises the profile of language as a multi-faceted determinant within indigenous psychologies. A dilemma for indigenous psychologies arises from the language in which research must be conducted, in which the science is taught, and in which the science must be written. The language of science is English; the language of culture may be Hindi, Mandarin, Spanish or German. This dilemma was vividly articulated for me by a psychologist I interviewed during my research in India: She said, "As a psychologist

I think in English; but as a person I feel in Hindi." In other words, although writing and publication may need to be in the language of science; indigenous research is likely to be more successful if it is conceptualized and the data are collected in the native language.

But language has a different and much greater role to play in the indigenization process that is often forgotten or overlooked in striving for culturally-relevant concepts. Strong native language preferences coupled with a reluctance to read or publish in the English language of science can also impact on the indigenous discipline. For example, bibliometric analyses of the language of references used within Mexican research, and mail surveys of publication preferences, indicate a strong bias among Mexican psychologists toward almost exclusive use of the Spanish language, both as the impetus for their research and as the target of their publications. Publishing in Spanish for colleagues who read predominantly Spanish-language literature as the basis for their research creates a "language loop" that has the effect of limiting their international participation and feedback. Such language loops, not found within German or French research, may be peculiar to Spanish-language, majority-world countries.

English is the language of science in order to facilitate communication. International scientific communication occurs primarily through scientific publications and presentations at international congresses. Scientific publications are not widely disseminated except through their listing on PsycINFO, the electronic database of the world's literature in psychology. PsycINFO is an international database, more than 45% of the entries to published research are by psychologists from outside the United States, yet non-English entries have substantially declined from about 12% of the database to only about 6% on average in recent years (Adair/et al, 2002). With only about 3% of PsycINFO entries from majority-world countries, psychologists from these countries are discouraged from attempting to communicate with the broader world of psychology. Yet, as I argue below, it is important to the indigenous discipline to make that effort.

Communicating Indigenous Research within the Country or to the Larger World of Psychology

Where to communicate indigenous research results is a dilemma. Indigenous results often are limited to circulation within the country. It may be at early stage that such work would not be well understood and

hence not accepted by foreign journals. Communicating research to others within the country who can research indigenous concepts is a stimulus to further development of the indigenous psychology. But science is a public activity. Eventually, some balanced approach will have to be pursued. Communicating research to a broader audience provides wider feedback, criticism, and advice. Such communication can also provide opportunities for cross-indigenous comparisons with other cultures and countries and for indigenous psychologies to contribute to "universal" psychology. For both of these purposes it seems that, in light of the numerous accomplishments worldwide, it may be time for the development of an International Journal of Indigenous Psychological Research.

Summary

In the foregoing I have discussed the process by which psychology is spread around the world, particularly, but not exclusively to majority-world countries. I have described the stages of indigenization and autochthonization that my research and analyses in several countries have suggested. Although portrayed as a universal aspiration for all countries to which the discipline has been imported, indigenous psychology is not a uniform concept or approach even within majority-world countries. This was illustrated by the stark contrast between the indigenous psychologies of India and Taiwan. Although my analysis and research has clarified the indigenization process, it has raised fundamental questions and issues for further research and consideration. It is hoped that this analysis from outside the world of indigenous psychologies contributes a useful perspective for those engaged in indigenous discipline development.

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