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An important reason for the development of indigenous psychologies is the alleged imposition of western cultural ideas and beliefs embedded in mainstream psychology. This contemporary psychology found in the affluent western countries can be considered as an indigenous psychology of which the relevance for other parts of the world should be questioned. However, the unconditional endorsement of the need for a plurality of indigenous psychologies carries crucial implications. Such a plurality assumes, as a rule, that knowledge in psychology does not hold for the human species as a whole. Moreover, almost per definition cultural outsiders are (more) wrong and cultural insiders (more) right on issues concerning their own culture. The thesis of this chapter is that variations in knowledge and insights associated with various indigenous perspectives can enrich psychology as a universal science of human behavior, but that insiders do not have a natural advantage when it comes to theoretical insights.

Indigenous Psychologies and the Relativism-Universalism Contrast

To clarify the topic of discussion a distinction can be made between indigenization at three levels, namely (a) theory and conceptualization, (b) operationalization, and (c) the topics and issues addressed by the profession of psychologists, both in research and in practice.

To begin with the last point, archives such as PsycLit show that contemporary psychology is mainly engaged with concerns prevalent in western societies. Issues of illiteracy and poverty and how these can be addressed in intervention programs draw far less attention than, for example, individual psychotherapy or the psychological concomitants of heart surgery. Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (2002; see also Poortinga,

1999) speak about the ethnocentrism of psychology, including cross-cultural psychology, and they see the selection of topics, dominated by the affluent part of the world, as the most serious expression of such ethnocentrism. Obviously, research and application directed at local problems and needs requires local contextual knowledge. Does this mean that psychological findings acquired elsewhere are largely irrelevant, or only that they need to be screened for local relevance? Even a tentative answer to this problem depends on one's theoretical position concerning the relationship between behavior and culture.

The second level of ethnocentrism has to do with operationalization, i.e., the way domains of behavior and concepts are crystallized in assessment instruments and separate items within such instruments. Psychological processes and traits, however defined, can rarely be assessed without reference to actual behavior repertoire. In so far as this repertoire of behavior differs across cultures, common assessment instruments show inequivalent or incomparable results (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). The history of comparison of cognitive test scores as a basis for racial distinctions issues a loud and clear warning. However, the fact that data *can be* inequivalent does not yet mean that all data *are* inequivalent. Moreover, as we shall see later, different levels of equivalence can be distinguished. The answer to the question whether or not equivalence is a realistic goal, again depends on one's views of the relationship between behavior and culture.

The third level at which cultural imposition can take place is the level of theory and conceptualization. Typically, western theories and concepts are studied in cross-cultural psychology. These concepts have emerged in the socio-historical context of western societies and have been formalized in religious and philosophical thinking. Do these concepts apply elsewhere, and vice versa, do concepts from other contexts have relevance in western settings? In other words, are local theories likely to be more valid or is it more meaningful to work towards universal theories of behavior?

Answers to the questions raised so far depend to a large extent on one's (meta-) theoretical perspective. In contemporary cross-cultural psychology the major distinction is between cultural relativism and psychological universalism (Berry et al., 2002). The latter acknowledges deep influences of cultural context on behavior, but also recognizes that psychological functions and processes are shared by humans in all cultural

groups. This choice for primacy of the organism not only as a biological but also as a bio-psychological or bio-social entity implies that a search for what is psychologically universal can be productive despite all the cultural diversity in manifest behavior. In cultural relativism the primacy of the biological organism is not denied for basic processes like, for example, reflexes, but the emphasis is on typically human behavior for which a primacy of culture is postulated. Cultural practices are not explained in terms of common psychological principles, but rather seen as expressions of a unique culture and its historical roots. The literature on indigenous psychology tends to take the latter rather than the former perspective, either as an intermediate (Sinha, 1997; Enriquez, 1993) or as a definite (Kim & Berry, 1993; Shweder, 1990) position.

In my view there are various theoretical difficulties with such a perspective that will be presented in the following in the form of three paradoxes.

1. Ethologists compare across species, and culturalists emphasize non-comparability within the human species.
2. Postulates of incomparability pre-empt empirical tests of incomparability.
3. Smaller cross-cultural differences are found for more general traits.

Paradox 1. Ethologists Compare across Species, and Culturalists Emphasize Non-Comparability within the Human Species

There are now numerous studies of chimpanzees and other great apes that suggest cultural variations in behavior patterns. For chimpanzees Whiten et al. (1999) could list 65 behaviors that appeared to be socially transmitted. Thirty-nine of these were customary or habitual at some observation sites while they had not been observed at other sites. These patterns were mainly concerned with sexual advances, grooming and the use of tools, and variations resembled those between human societies. Russon (2002) studied how orang-utans raised in captivity and later gradually released in their traditional habitat acquired patterns of tool use and preparation of certain foods for consumption from other orang-utans that they met. Russon freely uses terms such as "culture and cognition," "apprenticeship," "enculturation" and a "life history perspective" for great apes. Rendell and Whitehead (2001) suggest that there is even fairly exten-

sive evidence from field studies to the effect that cultural transmission can be found in whales and dolphins, using definitions of culture centering on social learning.

While the general argument in ethology tends towards continuity and similarity across species and through phylogenetic history, cross-cultural psychologists with a relativist orientation lean towards essential differentiation. When Shweder et al. (1998) make a distinction between mind and mentality, they go on to emphasize the latter, culture-specific, orientation on human behavior. Similarly, Valsiner (2000, p. 85) argues that "both persons and contexts are *culturally constituted* .... the life of humans as species differs dramatically from other biological species even when rudiments of cultural organization of life can be found, as among higher primates."

Thus, ethologists focus on the analysis of psychological functions; variations in behavior are seen to provide evidence of culture as a faculty or aptitude of a species, rather than evidence of psychological differences (in mentality or psyche) between various groups. Cultural psychologists tend to see variations in behavior as evidence of differences in psychological functioning; the essence of human behavior derives from (culture-specific) meaning and/or intention.

It can be argued that genetic similarity across species and within the human species is pointing to culture as a biological faculty that defines constraints as well as affordances (or opportunities) for behavior variation within the human species (Poortinga & Soudijn, 2002). For two reasons this does not help much in the discussion about this paradox. First, the pathways from genetic information to manifest behavior remain largely uncharted, allowing authors freedom of interpretation about the extent to which there are constraints that would argue against relativism and to which extent variations in behavior-culture interactions point to affordances that would argue against a universalistic viewpoint. The second reason is that the boundaries between what is seen as shared/similar and what is seen as specific can change over time without much effect on basic positions. Thus, it is rather obvious that the strong version of relativism reflected by Shweder in 1990 has shifted considerably in later years (cf. Shweder et al., 1998). A similar shift can be observed when comparing a recent review of Miller (2002) with work of only a few years earlier (cf. Miller, 1997). Even though it can be argued that strong relativism has become

somewhat marginalized under the influence of biological thinking in psychology authors like those mentioned continue to distance themselves from a universalist perspective. Hence, this paradox has not come much closer to resolution.

Paradox 2: Postulates of Incomparability Pre-Empt Empirical Tests of Incomparability

The two (meta-) theoretical perspectives of relativism and universalism have consequences for the cross-cultural analysis of the empirical validity of psychological concepts. There are numerous concepts that according to the authors who published about them cannot be readily translated into English. Examples of such (non-western) indigenous concepts are the emotions of *song* (Lutz, 1988) and *liget* (Rosaldo, 1980) and personality constructs like *anasakti* (Pande & Naidu, 1992), *machismo* (Diaz-Guerrero, 1993), and *philotimo* (Triandis & Vassiliou, 1972).

Let me take the latter as an example. According to Triandis and Vassiliou (1972, pp. 308-309) someone who is *philotimous* "behaves towards members of his in-group the way they expect him to behave." They write: "A person who has this characteristic is polite, virtuous, reliable, proud, has a 'good soul,' behaves correctly, meets his obligations, does his duty, is truthful, generous, self-sacrificing, tactful, respectful, and grateful." When a large proportion of the Greeks report that they see themselves as *philotimous* there are two basic orientations in the interpretation of this finding. First, there is something to *philotimo* that the Greeks have and "we" do not have. Second, *philotimo* (*philotimous* behavior) can be observed with us, it is just not explicit in our language or self-reports; for example, it is a particular blend of common human dispositions that has become salient in the Greek language and society probably for socio-cultural-historical reasons.

Can we do empirical research that brings us closer to a solution? It follows from the first paradox that theoretical arguments pro and con these two positions are not going to provide a definite answer. If we turn to empirical research, this would have to be comparative in one way or another, either using the same instrument or different instruments, but with some means of linking data obtained from non-Greek samples with those of Greek samples. Comparison requires some common standard

(Berry et al., 2002; Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997) both at the conceptual level and at the level of measurement. There are three different opinions on the feasibility of such a standard; it tends to be either (i) denied, (ii) presented as a research question, or (iii) taken for granted.

Although comparability, or equivalence, of concepts and instruments transferred from one culture to another tends to be denied by relativistic researchers, it is not uncommon to find that they are actually making comparisons. At the very minimum these amount to the claim that something in another target culture is essentially different from the state of affairs found in one's own culture (what is the basis of such claims if all valid comparison is ruled out?). In addition, one finds explanations in the way local concepts are culture-specific (how can such explanations be given if comparison is ruled out?). For example, in the very same book where Shweder (1990) hackled the tradition of culture-comparative psychology, he coauthored a study conducted in India and the USA, interpreting "the similarities and differences in the moral understandings of children and adults in the two cultures" (Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1990, p. 131).

Virtually all researchers in cross-cultural psychology accept that cross-cultural differences in scores on tests and questionnaires cannot be interpreted at face value, because of the likelihood of cultural impositions and bias being introduced with the transfer of methods and instruments across cultures. However, in sources such as the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* and the *International Journal of Psychology* one can find numerous comparisons where the scores on some instrument administered in different cultural samples are being compared without clear evidence to the effect that the scores indeed can serve as a valid common standard for such comparisons. In other words, equivalence is assumed but not demonstrated. In my view many of the criticisms of culturalist researchers on culture-comparative research are justified because of the discrepancies between what is preached and what is practiced.

The remaining possibility is that equivalence of concepts and methods is neither taken for granted nor rejected summarily. If I am not mistaken, this option has been gaining ground in recent years. The need for establishing equivalence as a condition for valid comparison has become more widely recognized, as testified by literature on this topic, like the well-known text by Van de Vijver & Leung (1997). If one compares the

various levels of equivalence and the array of approaches distinguished by these authors with the rather simplistic notions in the 1960s and 1970s about absence and presence of (item) bias as a kind of dichotomy, considerable progress has been made. Unfortunately, there is a price to pay for more sophisticated research; design and analysis are becoming more complex, and the size of data sets has to be increased.

The empirical search for common standards does not only pertain to measurement, but also to the comparability of concepts. An issue on which fairly extensive research has been conducted in recent years, is that of the cross-cultural validity of personality trait dimensions, such as the dimensions ("Big Five") postulated by the Five Factor Model. The most commonly used instrument is the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Similarities in factor structures across a range of countries have been the basis of claims for universality (e.g., McCrae, 2000; McCrae & Allik, 2002). However, when local personality inventories were administered with the NEO-PI-R to Chinese respondents an additional factor emerged, labeled Interpersonal Relatedness. Such a finding can be seen as evidence of culture-specificity in personality make-up. One can also go a step further and raise the question what happens if instruments constructed in China are administered in the USA and elsewhere (cf. Cheung & Leung, 1998). The interpersonal relatedness factor has been replicated in a multiethnic sample in Hawaii, tentatively suggesting that this aspect of personality is not only present in Chinese cultures (Cheung et al., 2001). Similarly, Stewart et al. (2002) found that the Chinese notion of *guan*, which refers to the socialization and training of children, in part appeared to function in a similar way in the USA and Pakistan as in Hong Kong.

All in all, I am more optimistic about the scope for resolution of this second paradox than of the first one. Undoubtedly, the evidence will not always be straightforward and easy to interpret, but in so far as researchers can reach consensus that methods are tentative standards that should be examined for equivalence, there is a way forward. To which extent *philotimo* is better seen as a culture-specific ingredient of personality make-up among the Greeks and to which extent it is as a language-specific reference to a more widely shared trait or cluster of traits is one of the questions that can then be pursued further.

Paradox 3: Smaller Cross-Cultural Differences Are Found for More General Traits

For cultures geographically not too close together one can easily find psychological variables (e.g., specific skills, attitudes, beliefs) for which there is hardly any overlap in distribution, while individuals within each culture behave in a similar way; the within-culture variance is small compared to the between-culture variance. With measures that pertain to broader aspects of behavior, such as cognitive abilities, moral principles and personality traits, we find quite the reverse; between-culture variance is much smaller than within-culture variance (e.g., Poortinga & Van Hemert, 2001). Thus, if we examine broader and more inclusive concepts cross-cultural differences become less prominent. Among others Cole (e.g., Scribner & Cole, 1981; Cole, 1996) has argued forcefully for the context-specificity of relationships between culture and behavior.

This third paradox implies that in a psychological sense differences between cultures apparently are not coherent across broader domains of behavior and psychological functioning. This makes it doubtful whether culture does have system qualities at the psychological level. At the same time, it is difficult to find conclusive evidence. If two cultures differ simultaneously in respect of two variables these differences may hang together somehow, but causal relationships and coincidence often have a similar appearance; it is difficult to differentiate between coincidental and systematic relationships. Perhaps the most convincing arguments are to be found in the history of cross-cultural research. Even a superficial analysis shows that in new areas of research initially broad and inclusive characterizations tend to be postulated, leading to sweeping conclusions about more general differences between cultural groups. Subsequently, such differences are redressed to much smaller proportions. For example, in perception research earlier notions about greater sensory acuity of traditional peoples, or general differences in perceptual modalities (with African groups tending towards the auditory and Western groups tending towards the visual modality), have long been abandoned. What have remained are quite specific differences, for example in susceptibility for certain visual illusions, and the skill to perceive depth in certain pictures (e.g., Deregowski, 1980). In cognition different modes of thinking were postulated, notably on the basis of literacy and schooling. None of these "great divide theo-

ries" (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999) has been upheld. In personality research there has been a shift from the characterization of entire populations in a single "modal" trait to the above mentioned search of universal trait dimensions. Similar examples can be found in other domains of behavior (Poortinga, in press).

A resolution of this third paradox is possible if one conceives of a culture as a behavior repertoire consisting of a large set of conventions or practices (cf. Poortinga, Van de Vijver, Joe, & Van de Koppel, 1987). Such conventions and cultural rules are directly observable, or require only small inferential steps, as they tend to be limited to quite situation specific concepts. According to Girndt (2000) conventions are not limited to overt actions, they include beliefs, ways to handle problems (e.g., believing that stone houses are better than wooden houses), and explanations of rules and concepts (e.g., looking at someone while talking shows honesty and openness, versus not looking someone in the eye is a matter of respect). From such a perspective it is also conceivable that there can be local cultural variations in the conceptualization of psychological functions and processes.

Conclusion

Historically indigenous psychology movements can be seen as an appropriate reaction against the tendency among western researchers to see their psychology as an accomplished science and field of application to which "others" can only add details. Such a perspective in my view amounts to a serious overestimation of the state of development of psychology, even if one assumes that systematic accumulation of knowledge on human behavior is possible. However, if this critical view has merit, it should equally apply to other indigenous psychologies.

The resolution of paradoxes as presented in this chapter points to the need for an understanding of cross-cultural invariance as well as variations in behavior. Such understanding can constrain the range of plausible and valid answers to the lead question of this chapter, namely whether cultural imposition is less of an issue with indigenous psychologies. These more definite answers can be best pursued with a common research agenda of all indigenous psychologies, including the one called "mainstream." Power differences that continue to exist between the "North" and the "South" in

terms of scope for research, financial resources and access to international publication outlets (Adair, Coêlho, & Luna, 2001) form the main impediment to such a common agenda.

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