

TOWARDS CROSS-CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH CROSS-INDIGENOUS METHODS AND PERSPECTIVE*

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In pursuit of universal knowledge, social scientists have taken to cross-cultural methods in their research work. However, what is presently recognized as cross-cultural approach is merely the application of Western models in different settings. Although it broadens psychology's data base, it does not in any way lead the researcher nearer to his goal. If ever cross-cultural, universal knowledge is to be had, it must come out of the cross-indigenous method and perspective. The paper discusses the nature of cross-indigenous approach and evaluates its merits.

Psychology as a scientific discipline has been partial to universal findings, or, at least makes modest claims to "generalizability". The history of psychology as it has evolved in the West and the Western tradition can be interpreted as moving towards this goal. In a sense, universality is the motive behind the series of systematically replicated experiments from rats to humans; from the laboratory to the field. The psychologists are no longer contented with sophomore white students from American universities; they are now *equally* interested in Blacks and other groups. In fact, they have gone beyond the convenience of captive university classes in the many countries of the world and just like their colleagues in anthropology would now occasionally risk the inconvenience of "mud huts and mosquitoes." While this development might not always be welcomed sociopolitically, i.e., more and more countries say no to cross-cultural researchers (see Brislin, 1977), it is probably a turning point in the growth of Western psychology for the

data base of Western psychology is now much broader.

It should be stressed however that a broader data base is far from adequate in assuring a universal psychology unless alternative perspectives from non-western psychologies are put to use.

REWRITING THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology as a field of knowledge in the Western tradition has been treated historically by psychologists themselves (e.g., Boring, 1929; Watson, 1968). One may look at the field as a science and date it back to 1879 or as has been a habit in the West, trace its history as a human concern to the Greeks. Psychologists would find Aristotle's *De Anima* a reasonable document for a start should they want to trace their roots. It must be noted however that historians of psychology consciously or unconsciously drop the word "Western" when they write about the history of Western psychology. On the other hand, Asian psychology (e.g., Murphy, 1968) is always properly designated as such, "Asian." This state of affairs can continue and admittedly with reason especially if the audience consists of western scholars and readers, exclusively.

Reference to national psychologies is not

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new at all. Psychologists also talk about Korean psychology, French psychology, Chinese psychology and Indian psychology, for example. What should be made clear however is that they usually mean psychology in Communist China or India or France (in the Western tradition) and not Chinese psychology or Indian psychology in the Chinese or Indian tradition. It is no surprise then should Westerners feel at home writing about "psychology of, by, and for" natives of a Third World country without being immersed in the native culture or at least having learned the local language (e.g., Sechrest and Guthrie, 1974). They must be referring to Western psychology of, by, and for the Third World. All these could very well be a product of a well-meaning interest in a former colonial country or a commitment to the discipline of psychology but the fact remains that the history of psychology has to be rewritten so as to reflect the different bodies of psychological knowledge, formal or informal, found in the different cultures of the world. If this is not done, what one has, is at best a history of western psychology with the word "Western" unsaid or unwritten.

ON THE UNSTATED BIAS OF THE "DEPENDENCY AND UNI-NATIONAL DOMINANCE" VIEW IN PSYCHOLOGY

— A growing number of social scientists have long been wary of the inappropriateness or even patent inapplicability of Western models in the Third World setting. The problem can be difficult or baffling because most of the people who express this kind of concern are precisely the Third World social scientists trained in the West or the Western tradition. Reservations range from a call to local adaptation or modification of Western models to outright charges of intellectual dependence and academic imperialism. However, there are some who acknowledge the issues or problems but shrug them off on the grounds that there are no other suitable models and concepts to use anyway. In addition, there are those who see nothing at issue at all because they are convinced that any departure from the Western approach is blas-

phemy in the altar of science.

Issues along this line are not limited to the Third World countries in relation to the West. It is also found in the West as can be gleaned from Graumann's (1972) report as past president of the German Society of Psychology on the state of German psychology. He noted O'Connell's (1970) perception of "...a relatively uncritical dependence on American psychology" as "thriving in Germany today." Graumann found this hard to deny because "at least 50% (or even more likely 80%) of all psychologists in the world live in the U.S.A. and a universal psychology as contrasted from the psychology based on generalizations from studies done in industrialized countries. While the arguments are forceful and the sentiments real, a "cross-cultural psychology" will continue to be only a promise for as long as the indigenous psychologies are untapped because of language and culture barriers. Of necessity, one must challenge the unstated bias in O'Connell's concern for the German dependence on American psychology and Graumann's measure for reacting to this concern. By "psychologist" they apparently mean someone who has an academic degree in psychology. A strict adherence to the union-card criterion to being a psychologist would of course exclude not only a sizable number of eminent thinkers in the Western tradition, or people who happen to get their degrees in history or anthropology in the specialized West, but also the unwritten but no less real psychologies of peoples who may not even have a tradition of publishing journal articles in psychology to speak of. The validity of unwritten psychologies does not depend on the extent and manner of their articulation.

Graumann's statistics on publications also imply a regard if not reverence for the printed or written word. In this mode of thinking, one immediately looks away from cultures with unwritten languages and almost unconsciously look up to the university-trained psychologist. Carl Jung's reminder is appropriate in this context: "If you want to learn psychology, avoid the university."

The issues implicit in the foregoing has been illustrated through a narrative on Philip-

pine and Western psychologies in contact. For a background to the cross-indigenous method as a resource and approach to cross-cultural research one may refer to a previous discussion of psychology in the Philippines, indigenous psychology and the Third World (Enriquez, 1977).

INDIGENIZATION FROM WITHIN AS BASIC TO THE CROSS-INDIGENOUS METHOD

The development and utilization of indigenous viewpoints can no doubt be approached in a number of ways. More importantly, it occurs at many levels and cuts across many disciplines. What appears to be an isolated development in a particular discipline in a particular country usually proves to be a part of an overall pattern. This observation obtains with greater impact in Third World countries where disciplinary lines are not really as sacred as they are in the West.

An example of a possible approach to indigenization from within is outlined in Figure 1. To be sure, there are many ways by which indigenization from within can occur. It may also be implemented as a policy (or as a strategy, depending upon native commitment to the idea) in a variety of ways. What seems to be workable in one Third World culture is not necessarily as effective or workable in another. The approach described in the present paper is the one used in a project on the development of concepts and methods in Philippine psychology (Enriquez, 1975). It is easy to see that a number of approaches can be developed. Identification of key concepts followed by semantic and lexical elaboration need not be an element of indigenization from within in every discipline or country. What is essential are the source and direction of culture flow. Figure 1 schematically shows the contrast between an example of indigenization from within and without. The perspectives of the two approaches can even be working at cross-purposes. In fact, the term indigenization from within might even be semantically anomalous. It is used in this paper only as a convenient tool in the task of showing the difference between 1) the development of

Third World cultures in their own terms as a natural process and 2) "indigenization" as seen by people who habitually perceive the Third World countries as recipients and targets of culture flow. At this point, it should be clear why Serpell's (1977) use of the notion of cultural validation is preferable not only because it moves us away from the political undertones of "indigenization" but more so because it leads us to even more fundamental human issues. In the area of cross-cultural psychology Serpell poses *the* issue as revolving around *appropriate* ways of describing and explaining the behaviour of human beings" (emphasis added). It can be argued that his use of the word "appropriate" advisedly takes the issue out of the exclusive arena of psychological and scientific disputations back to where it belongs: i.e., the philosophy of values.

Figure 2 suggests a model towards universal psychology through a cross-indigenous perspective. In this model, the different cultures of the world are tapped as sources of cultural knowledge. The resulting pool may then be called "cross-cultural" knowledge. More aptly, it is cross-indigenous knowledge, to distinguish it from the kind of "cross-cultural" knowledge derived from an application of the psychology of industrialized countries to data gathered from the Third World (See Figure 3). Social scientists now find more time and reason (cross-cultural research is one) to visit the Third World. Castillo (1968) identified several types of visiting researchers (sometimes fondly referred to by banter-happy Filipinos as "buisiting"* research-

*"Buisiting" comes from the Tagalog word *buisit* (nuisance) with the English morpheme "-ing." (Compare the examples culled by Forman 1973 on language mixing in a Filipino radio program in Hawaii). Contrary to the belief of some "linguists", "*buisit*" has nothing to do with "bull shit," however this interpretation might yet come down as another example of "linguistic borrowing" in the Philippines, accepted simply because a lot of people thought it to be so, e.g., the Tagalog "*Kamusta ka*" as coming from the Spanish "Como esta usted?" In fact, the linguist Chan-Yap (1973) reports that "*buisit*" was derived from Hookien Chinese.

ers) from the "data-exporter" to the "penny-collaborator" and "professional overseas researcher."

Brislin and Holwill's (1977) move towards increased cross-cultural understanding in their study of the insider's view of reactions to the writings of visiting scholars is not only suggestive in "the task of mediating between cultures" but also provocative as a step towards a cross-indigenous perspective. A tactical problem and advantage in Brislin and Holwill's study lies in the fact that the investigators themselves are not culture bearers. It is not altogether easy to crack the emic barrier. This is probably the reason why Harris (1976) confused relativism with solipsism through reasoning by association in his article which purportedly discusses the history and significance of the emic/etic

are notorious for eating up more time, paper and ink than necessary. However, Brislin and Holwill's (1977) warning against what they call "false etics" goes beyond semantics. The same holds true with Triandis (1972) caution on "pseudo-etics." Unfortunately, "going emic" on somebody else's "emic" is painfully difficult. It is no different from playing the role of informant without being a culture bearer. For which reason, one can look at an "imposed etic" as the strong version while the "etic-dimensions-plus-emic-definitions approach" as the weak version of the pseudo-etic method.

The etic-emic construct covers a lot of ground both across disciplines (which Brislin 1975 sees as an advantage) and across levels and extent of explanation (which Serpell 1977 sees as possibly leading to "over-elastic explanation") as well as across components or conceptually related or associated dimensions. We have the indigenous/exogenous; insider/outsider; particularistic/universalistic; culture-as-target/culture-as-source; and context-bound/context-free. To this can be added the salient issues involved in distinguishing the locally codified topic to the locally unlexicalized topic and the related issue of translatable-untranslatable. We also have within the component dimensions further refinements such as insider's view/outsider's view; insider-as-informant/insider-as-collaborator with the attendant issues of objectivity, distance and the informant-as-mis-informant (Bilmes, 1973) vs. the informant as co-author (admittedly, these are two extremes). Furthermore, we have usages in oral discourse (a reality which looms large in language use) which actually refers to the common-exotic and the transparent-opaque (as can be seen in the comment "if we don't understand something it's emic."). I doubt if ploughing thru Pike's (1967) work would help much in delimiting the extension of the construct. After all, nobody can legislate language use. Not even with the guidance of language planners. It can be readily seen that it is quite a job explicating the meanings of the above mentioned dimensions; not to mention the equally important job of explicating the theoretical linkages amongst them.

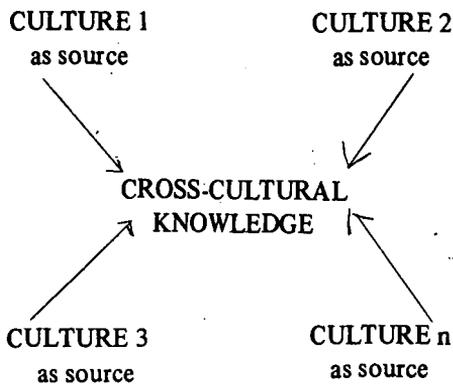
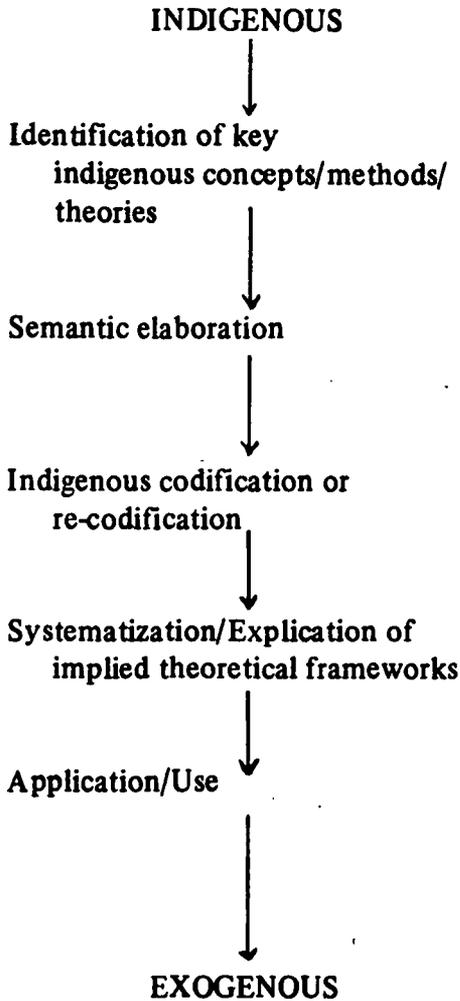


Figure 2: Towards a universal psychology through a cross-indigenous perspective

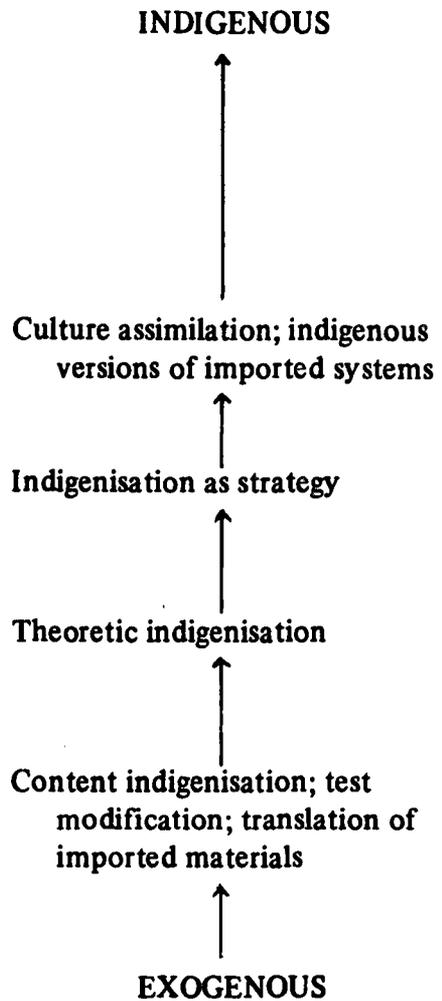
Note: The direction of arrows indicate "indigenization from within"

distinction. He is successful in further muddling the emic-etic distinction by associating the concepts with issues between idealism and materialism. Be that as it may, the problem with the emic-etic distinction can be partially traced to the ambiguity of the terms themselves (cf. Jahoda, 1976) and the apparent reversal of foci of meaning after the terms were borrowed from linguistics. Semantic controversies



INDIGENISATION FROM WITHIN
 Basis: The indigenous
 Direction: Outwards
 (Culture-as-source)

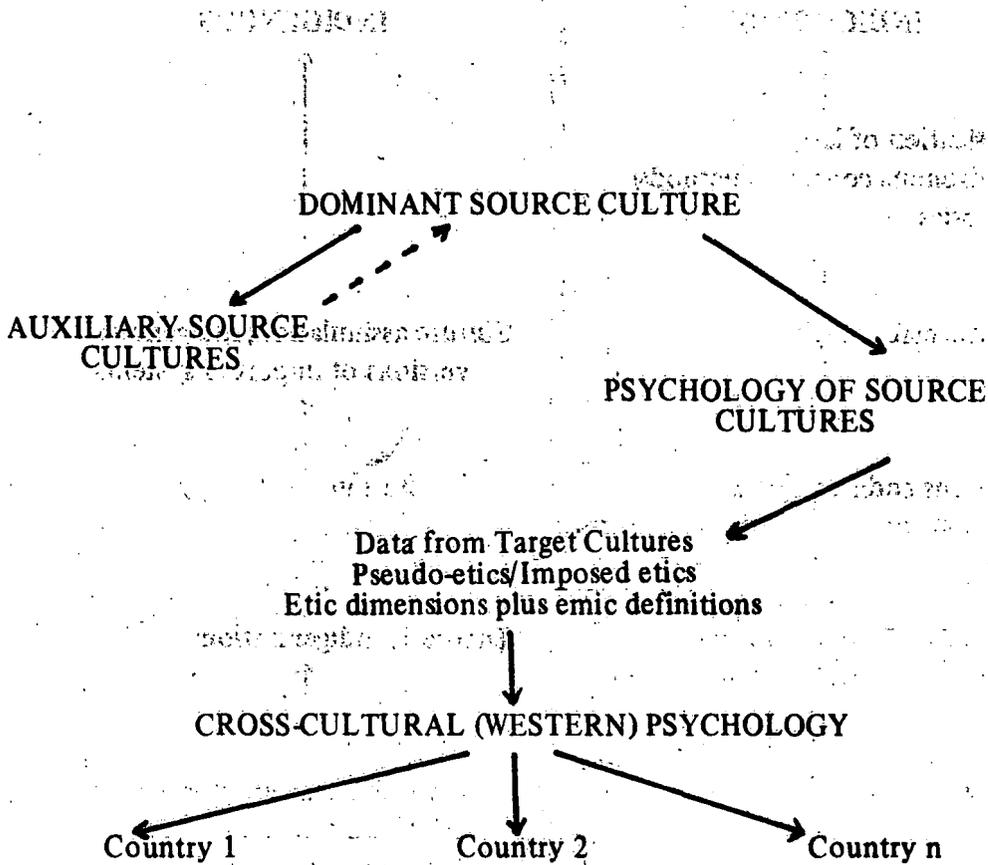
Comparison with other theories, methods, techniques, etc.



INDIGENISATION FROM WITHOUT
 Basis: The exogenous
 Direction: Inwards
 (Culture-as-target)

Transfer of technology; modernisation

FIGURE 1: INDIGENISATION ACCORDING TO SOURCE AND DIRECTION OF CULTURE FLOW



Cultures-as-recipients

**Third World Countries as
Recipients of scientific
cross-cultural knowledge**

FIGURE 3. A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF UNI-NATIONAL DOMINANCE IN PSYCHOLOGY (INCLUDING CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY) — 'INDIGENISATION FROM WITHOUT'

RATIONALE FOR THE INDIGENOUS METHOD

The indigenous method is of course motivated by the search for universals. As Jacob (1977) in another but similarly motivated context puts it,

"...the variables affecting human relations may differ radically across national cultures, so that studies within one country will not provide adequate evidence for universal generalizations about social dynamics. At least one cannot tell without conducting comparative studies in a number of differing cultural situations."

Jacob happens to be ahead of his time. He is quite right in saying that "common tools and techniques are essential for successful comparative research, and they must be relevant to the circumstances being investigated." However, such tools and techniques have to be identified and refined. Even the "simple" task of asking questions can have a variety of parameters to make its use in one situation in the same culture different from its use in another. More so if you have a number of cultural settings involved. Even assuming that the question are "the same" (after a series of translations, backtranslations, calibration according to functional equivalence, contextualization, etc.), the answers may lend themselves to a variety of interpretations (See Rubin, 1976 on "how to tell when someone is saying 'no'" and Torres, 1973 on "the Filipino 'yes'").

While people find it easy to appreciate indigenous concepts (this is by no means a closed issue, (cf. Ronifacio, 1976) they show initial puzzlement when the "radical cultural relativist" tell them about indigenous methods. It is excruciatingly hard to liberate oneself of ethnocentric bias especially when "your way" has been adopted and used in many situations and places in the world. In any case, it can be reasonably argued that simply because the questionnaire has evolved into a technology or even an industry in the United States of America, it does not follow that it should be used in the Third World. Simply because the interview has

been tossed about and refined (in certain particular ways) in the West (from research to therapy), does not mean, the Third World researcher should learn to do it the western way. (See for example, Feliciano, 1965; de Vera, Montano and Angeles, 1975; de Peralta and Racelis, 1974; Santiago, 1975).

Jacob (1977) sees that "too much of social science is guilty of influential propositions given broad applicability even though based on monocultural explorations." To this can be added the use of influential Western methods. Such wholesale use is sometimes tempered by token modifications but nonetheless genuine interest in reliability and validity. In any case little is heard or written about the issues of appropriateness and wastefulness! Researchers actually go to the farm or the mountains with questionnaires in a language the people do not truly comprehend even granting that said language is considered official in the country of research. It is one thing to use English or French as a tourist but another to use it as a researcher for one's Ph.D. dissertation.

The idea of cost validity is important. Some approaches can be very expensive by Third World standards and should be carefully weighed in terms of relative efficiency versus cost and immediacy of need. If the results can wait another year, it might even be practical from the point of view of resource training and institution building not to rely heavily on machines. The Third World's strength is in its people.

Instead of arguing about the relative merits of influential methods, the cross-indigenous perspective may be viewed in the light of Campbell and Fiske's (1964) argument for the multi-method approach. The cross-indigenous method is a call for the multi-language/multi-culture approach based on indigenous viewpoints (cf. Enriquez, 1975). Even if it is granted that the use of a foreign language and culture does not distort social reality in the indigenous culture, it still makes a great deal of sense for scientific and not maudlin reasons to use the local languages and cultures as sources for theory, method and praxis. As Alfonso (1977) puts it,

the exclusive use of supposedly international language "can lead to the neglect of the wealth of indigenous concepts and methods embodied in a language more meaningful to the culture." She argues that "developing and following a Filipino orientation in the conduct of research and teaching in psychology is not inconsistent with the goals of psychology as a science in search for universalities but rather a contribution to it." In fact, the cross-indigenous method better assures generalizability of findings precisely because several languages and cultures are used as sources and bases. The findings of Western based psychology as applied in research and practice in a Third World country using a Western language and orientation can very well be an artifact of the language and the method.

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