

K.K. Hwang Question on Indigenous Psychologies
from Martin and Gregory- SE Review Collective
1st Interview – In Person / Skype
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1. For the benefit of those readers who are new to the topic of indigenous psychology or indigenous psychologies, could you please briefly explain how it differs from and/or how it relates to mainstream psychologies and anthropology? Is indigenous psychology IN the mainstream?

Ans:

The field of indigenous psychology is different from mainstream psychology for it takes into serious consideration the effects of cultural influence on human behavior in its theoretical construction. It is different from anthropology in the sense that it emphasizes the importance of theoretical verification by empirical methods of psychology, including experiment.

Geertz (1973: 5) said that 'Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning'.

I do not agree with Geertz that indigenous psychology and experimental psychology don't mix like water and oil. In fact, indigenous psychology is trying to establish a new paradigm of to integrate these two traditions of research.

2. A terminological question: How do you distinguish 'indigenous psychology' from 'indigenous psychologies' or 'psychology of indigenous peoples'? What kind of term is 'indigenous' – does it imply race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, politics, etc.?

Ans:

This discipline of mainstream psychology has been emerged from the European–American cultural region of the world, it is rooted in the religio-philosophical tradition of Judeo-Christianity, and had been passed on to the West by Greco-Roman thought tradition.

The mainstream Western psychology(WP) had been exported to non-Western countries in accompany with the victory and expansion of Western imperialism

and colonialism in last centuries, and it has been accepted by non-Western intellectuals with an earnest motivation to be modernized by learning the advanced Western science.

Because many scholars and practitioners found that the imported WP is irrelevant or inappropriate for them to understand their own people, the knowledge of WP cannot be used to solve their daily problems, some psychologists decided to devote themselves to the development of IP as a reaction to the dominance of WP.

They recognized that language is the most important carrier of culture. Therefore, the approach of IP pays close attention to the language games played by people in a given culture, as well as the wisdom for action, cultural value and worldview which support them to play the language game.

According to an international survey conducted by Allwood and Berry(2006), the indigenization movement of psychology has happened in different regions all over the world since 1980s. So we may have many indigenous psychologies, but not one indigenous psychology.

The term ‘indigenous psychology’ (IP) is used to denote the research approach of studying psychology of people in their own cultural context, while the term ‘indigenous psychologies’(IPs) is used when this approach is applied to study IP in a particular culture.

3. With regards to the history of the subject or sub-field, i.e. with respect to the maturity of indigenous psychology, what stage of development do you think it's at in terms of its scientific and academic status? i.e., compared to a sub-discipline/field such as history and sociology of sciences(HSS) – Journals, Conferences, Peers who make Review, etc. (Is ‘Indigenous Psychologies’ an underdeveloped, developing or developed discipline?)

Ans:

As suggested by Shweder et al. (1998), the most important rule for theoretical construction in IP is “one mind, many mentalities”. We have to construct theory which represents not only universal mind of human beings, but also mentality of people in a specific culture. Granting this as a goal for the development of IPs, I would say that it is still a developing discipline in most areas, but it may develop very fast in the near future.

4. What are the greatest challenges currently facing indigenous psychologies?

Ans:

Most researchers of IP advocated for the bottom-up approach of building theories on the basis of local phenomena, findings, and experiences by the research methods which are appropriate to their cultural and social context. They have conducted numerous empirical researches, accumulated a lot of empirical data, and constructed many substantial theoretical models. Many of them advocated that findings of IPs may contribute to the progress of mainstream psychology, and the final goal of IPs is to develop universal psychology or global psychology. But it is logically impossible for them to overcome the barriers to attain this goal by inductive method of bottom-up approach.

5. What 'schools of thought' or 'academic groups' have formed to face them?

Ans:

Since I devoted myself to the indigenization movement of social sciences in 1980s, I have realized that the fundamental barrier for Chinese social scientists to make genuine breakthrough in their research works is a shortage of comprehensive understanding on the progress of Western philosophy of science which is the essential ethos of Western civilization.

All the knowledge sought and taught in the Western colleges has been constructed on the ground of philosophy. In order to help Chinese young scholars to understand the progress of Western philosophy of science, I had spent more than ten years to write a book entitled *Logic of Social Sciences* to discuss different perspectives on crucial issues of ontology, epistemology and methodology which had been proposed by seventeen representative figures of Western philosophy in 20 century. The first half of this book addressed itself on the switch of philosophy of nature science from positivism to neo-positivism, the last half of it expounded the philosophy of social science including structuralism, hermeneutic and critical science.

6. Your paper printed in the SE draws on constructive realism which appears to be a relatively recent development in the philosophy of science. Could you give us a brief outline of it and tell us what its most important ideas are?

Ans:

Constructive realism is a relatively recent development in the philosophy of science, which is proposed by Fritz G. Wallner (1994, 1997), Professor of

philosophy in Vienna University, who attempted to integrate various philosophy of science emerged after World War II. He argued that when a particular term of language in A culture is translated into B culture, but no equivalent term can be found, it means that the term is specific to A culture.

Constructive realism emphasized the distinction between scientific microworld and lifeworld. I elaborated the difference between these two worlds and used it to emphasize the importance of theoretical construction in the progress of IP movement (Hwang, 2006).

In order to overcome the challenges currently facing IPs, I think it is necessary for indigenous psychologists to have a comprehensive understanding about various schools of thought in Western philosophy of science and use them to untangle the threads of difficulties facing them.

7. Who are the leading contributors to the discourse?

Ans:

I finished my Ph.D. training of psychology in University of Hawaii where Professor Antony Marsella served as my mentor and enlightened my cultural consciousness. Soon after I returned to Taiwan in 1976, my another mentor Professor Kuo-Shu Yang began to initiate the IP movement in Taiwan, which stimulated my problematic consciousness. I met Professor Richard Schweder in 1999 conference of AASP at Taipei, his works provided me the most important principle of cultural psychology for solving the crucial problem of IP. I would say that these three of them are the most significant contributors to my discourse on this topic.

In addition to them, Uichol Kim (Korea), James Liu (New Zealand), Girishwar Misra (India), Regelia Pe-pua (Philippine), Kwok Leung (Hong Kong), Faturochman and Kwartarini Yuniarti (Indonesia) and my colleagues of IP group in Taiwan, are major contributors to the current IP movement in Asia.

8. Could you also briefly explain how and why IPs have developed in terms of the main factors that have led to their development? For instance, why (what's special)now? (e.g. Declaration of Indigenous Human Rights, Official Apology by Australian and Canadian Governments, Land Returns in New Zealand, Meetings on Truth and Reconciliation, etc.)

Ans:

There are external and internal factors that may lead to the development of IPs: The most important external factor is the raising of new powers in contemporary world, especially China, India, Indonesia and other countries with huge populations. They are eager to build up their own theories of social sciences to recognize themselves and to solve their problems.

But, the most important internal factor to push forward the progress of a particular science is the academic achievement itself.

I have participated in Asian Association of Social Psychology since 1997 and was elected as its president from 2005 to 2007. The experience enabled me to realize that the shortage of comprehensive understanding on Western philosophy of science is a common problem to all social scientists of non-Western countries, therefore I decided to seek out a way to solve this problem by my own research works.

I was appointed as the principal investigator of the *Project In Search of Excellence for Research on Chinese Indigenous Psychology* since the beginning of 2000. When the project was ended in 2008, I integrated findings of previous related researches into a book entitled *Confucian Relationalism: Philosophical Reflection, Theoretical Construction and Empirical Research* which was published in 2009.

Based on the philosophy of neo-Positivism, this book advocated that the epistemological goal of indigenous psychology is to construct a series of theory that represent not only the universal mind of human beings but also the particular mentality of people in a given society. On the basis of this presumption, I explained how I constructed the theoretical model of face and favor which was supposed to represent the universal mind for social interaction, then I analyzed the inner structure of Confucianism and discussed its attributes in terms of Western ethics. In the following chapters of this book, I constructed a series of theories on the presupposition of relationalism to integrate findings of empirical research on social exchange, concept of face, achievement motivation, organizational behaviors, and conflict resolution in Confucian society.

Asian Association of Indigenous and Cultural Psychology held its first international conference on July 24-27, 2010 at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where I was elected as its first president. In my keynote speech delivered at its inauguration ceremony, I mentioned that Hendrich, Heine

& Norenzayan (2010, a, b) from the University of British Columbia reported findings of their research in *Nature* and *Behavioral and Brain Science*, which indicated that 96% of samples of psychological research published in the world's top journals from 2003 to 2007 were drawn from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies, which house just 12% of the world's population. In fact, the psychological dispositions of such a WEIRD sample are very particular and unique.

Therefore, I criticized that the theories of Western social psychology which had been constructed on the presumption of individualism are too WEIRD to be applied in non-Western countries. The mission of Asian Association of Indigenous and Cultural Psychology is to initiate a scientific revolution by constructing a series of theory on the presumption of relationalism to replace the Western theories of WEIRD psychology so as to help people of non-Western countries to solve various problems in their daily life.

Now I have translated *Confucian Relationalism* into English in order to provide an exemplar for non-Western indigenous psychologists to echo in support of the scientific revolution and to establish their own indigenous psychologies.

After the first international conference of AAICP, I also developed a Mandela Model of Self. According to my advocacy, the progress of indigenous psychologies in non-Western countries must be pushed forward by theoretical construction, but not only collection of empirical data. Therefore, I wrote a book entitled *A Proposal for Scientific Revolution in Psychology* to illustrate my ideas, which contains the following chapters:

1. Mandela Model of Self
2. From wisdom to theory
3. Philosophical switch of Positivism
4. From Behaviorism to cognitive psychology
5. Scientism and naive positivism
6. Anti-inductive theory and self-centered integration
7. Call for scientific revolution in psychology
8. Cultural value and wisdom for action
9. Self-cultivation and realms of life in Confucianism
10. Confucian ethics for ordinary people and model of action

9. You talk about relationism in comparison to individualism. First of all, what do you mean by relationism more specifically, i.e. are you referring to a kind of collectivism, holism or the interdependent self? Second, you mention that it is more comprehensive than individualism, and thereby making indigenous psychology more comprehensive than mainstream psychology. What exactly do you mean by this? For instance, is it simply an opposing methodology, an alternative to individualism as an ideology or perhaps some kind of integral approach?

Ans:

In Chapter 7 of my book *A Proposal for Scientific Revolution in Psychology*, I criticized the research paradigm of Individualism-Collectivism which has dominated the field of cross-cultural psychology for more than thirty years. I argued that individualism represents the cultural ideal of Western civilization after Renaissance, many psychological scales for measuring it are valid. But, collectivism is an ambiguous and all-inclusive concept, most instruments for measuring it are invalid. Therefore, it should be elaborated with some more exact concepts, including relationalism.

I constructed a theoretical *model Face and Favor* on the philosophical basis of scientific realism(Hwang, 1987), intending it to be an universal model that is applicable to various cultures. In Chapter 4 of my book *Confucian Relationalism*, I illustrated how the four kinds of interpersonal ties discussed in that model, namely, *expressive tie*, *mixed tie*, *instrumental tie*, as well as the *vertical relationship* between petitioner and resource allocator, are corresponded with Fiske's (1991) four elementary forms of social behavior, namely, *communal sharing*, *equality matching*, *marketing pricing*, and authority ranking.

Fiske is an anthropological psychologist. He argued that the four elementary forms of social behavior represent the universal mind in dealing with various kinds of interpersonal relationship which can be found in all cultures of the world.

Viewing from this perspective, the Western ideal of individualism emphasizes and exaggerates only the relationship of *market pricing* or *instrumental tie*. It is biased in the sense that it neglects or ignores other kinds of interpersonal relationship. Based on the philosophy of structuralism, I have strong confidence that any theory constructed on a biased presumption will suffer from the crisis of infinite regress, while a theoretical model of psychology which has been constructed on the deep structure of human mind tends to be more robust and enduring for empirical examination.

By the same vein of reasoning, I constructed a *Mandela model of self* to represent the deep structure of self with various stages of spiritual transformation that can be found in most religions of the world.

10. You argue that indigenous psychologists need to develop a theoretical model of human mind and use this model to successfully study different cultural mentalities in terms of how different cultural factors influence the people residing in that culture. Can you elaborate more on that and explain more specifically how it might actually be done?

Ans:

As I mentioned before, the most important principle for theoretical construction in cultural psychology is “one mind, many mentalities” (Shweder, et al., 1998) .

The accomplishment of *Mandela model of self* and the theoretical *model of face and favor* represents two universal models for future development of indigenous theories on self and interpersonal interaction respectively.

We may use them to analyze any great cultural traditions of the world. In Chapter 5 of my book *Confucian Relationalism*, I explained how I used the *model of face and favor* as a framework to analyze the inner structure of Confucianism. In my book *Knowledge and Action: A Psychological Interpretation of Chinese Cultural Tradition*, I also use it to analyze Daoism, Legalism and the Martial School (Hwang,1995). In Chapter 9 of *A Proposal for Scientific Revolutions in Psychology*, I used the *Mandela model of self* to analyze the Confucian teachings of self-cultivation and spiritual transformation. By doing so, we are able to construct a series of theoretical model at cultural level, which can be used to answer important questions for conducting empirical research of Chinese IP.

I have demonstrated how to use this strategy to conduct empirical research in my book *Confucian Relationalism: Philosophical Reflection, Theoretical Construction and Empirical Research* .

11. In your work you also indicate that as a result of globalisation, modernisation and industrialisation processes etc., most indigenous cultures are no longer 'pure' because they have become 'contaminated' with Western ideas. What problems does this present for the development of indigenous psychologies and how are they resolved?

Ans:

As a result of globalization, modernization and industrialization, cultural hybridization and interpenetration has become so common that the traditional cultural differences are being eroded (Hermans & Kempen, 1998), and some cultures and languages may even be disappeared. But, don't forget that language is the most important carrier of culture. Who can believe that Chinese language will disappear someday?

I certainly understand my approach of IP contains reification of culture. But, I would like to emphasize that Western psychology is also an indigenous one, because dependent on Western cultural background. This is the main point of my comments on

Allwood's article published in *Social Epistemology*: Why reification of Western culture is a merit for the progress of psychology, and reification of non-Western cultures is a mistake for understanding human being?

12. You mention that as a result of both internal and external factors, China alongside other countries wish to develop their own autonomous social sciences. How long do you anticipate it will take for a fully fledged Chinese social science to be developed? Furthermore, as you also mention, it seems that one of the problems in successfully achieving this aim, particularly in China, is that students who go and study abroad simply tend to rely on the knowledge of and adopt habits from the Western paradigms in which they have been taught when they return home thereby reinforcing 'colonisation'. If this is the case, it appears antithetical and counter-productive to the aforementioned stated aims of indigenous social scientific development and begs the question what should be done about it?

Ans:

I have confidence that it will be easy for non-Western countries, especially China, to develop their own autonomous social sciences so long as they recognize my advocacy in *A Proposal for Scientific Revolution in Psychology*, take times to comprehend the progress of Western philosophy of science, and think about how to apply it to their research works.

I don't think that studying abroad is a correct way to achieve this aim, because you cannot expect Western scholars to provide expedient answers to serious problems faced by intellectuals of non-Western countries.

I strongly agree with you that studying abroad may make non-Western students rely on the knowledge of and adopt habits from the Western paradigms in which they have been taught. They may become self-colonized when they return home without reflection on those issues.

My book *Logic of Social Sciences* had been published in both simplified character in mainland China and traditional character in Taiwan. I always tell my graduate students: "They spent four hundred years to develop philosophy of science. I used ten years to organize them and write this book. You should use at least one year to study it!"

Most graduate students in China are very intelligent and very smart. If they follow my advice, I do believe that they will establish their autonomous social sciences very soon.

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