

Preface

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Textbook psychology has typically assumed that there is a fixed state of mind whose observation is obscured by cultural distortions and which relates behaviors across cultures to some universal definition of normative behavior described in those textbooks. This book reviews the need for a global community psychology and a re-evaluation of the contemporary premises, methods and practices in “textbook psychology.” The science of psychology is in transition from emphasizing dissonance reduction to valuing the tolerance of ambiguity in the global context as a primary purpose. Globalization has been defined elsewhere as reducing/consolidating social organizations to a single uni-modal common denominator. Globalization as defined in this book however, is the complex task of combining the globally universal with locally diversified perspectives at the same time, making this book’s unique “glocal” perspective of particular value for psychologists.

While globalization has increased wealth, it has also contributed to job instability increased urban migration and supported an illegal drug trade estimated to exceed \$400 billion in 1995. The vivid historical memory of economic, political and military colonialism in non-Western cultures remains an extreme example of what globalization could become. However, as other cultures around the world experience the erosion of traditional village, family and rural traditions they come to depend more on Western-based psychological services for social maintenance. As other cultures around the world become consumers of psychological services they are re-framing the assumptions of textbook psychology to better fit their indigenous cultural contexts. As the field of psychology becomes more of a global phenomenon, indigenous assumptions that complement and compete with one another need to be incorporated into psychology textbooks, research and direct service practice.

Each behavior was learned and is displayed in a particular cultural context so accurate psychological assessment, meaningful understanding and appropriate intervention requires attention to the multicultural context. The science of psychology reflects the Euro-American cultural context in which psychology has flourished, based on Westernized assumptions of individualism and the “self-interest” motive. These underlying assumptions are being questioned even in their cultures of origin while many other non-Western cultures consider these assumptions as a dangerous threat to traditional social values. The demonstrations against the World Trade Organization and the upsurge in terrorism can be understood as a response to that threat by non-Western cultures. Increased interaction across cultures requires us to accommodate the contrasting assumptions of many different cultures for accurate communication.

It is unfortunately true that our psychological colleagues outside the US know as much as we do about “American” psychology while we in America know almost nothing about the indigenous psychologies thriving in other countries. The resources for combining a global with the many local perspectives are available in journals such as the *South Pacific Journal of Psychology*, which has defined the values of indigenous and regional psychological perspectives. Promoting psychological pluralism and helping psychology be more relevant outside the US is an urgently essential priority for the survival and global relevance of psychology as a science. The basic aim of the SPJP is to disseminate locally relevant and theoretically challenging psychology to the broadly defined community of psychologist colleagues.

The following chapters demonstrate those articles that articulate these indigenous perspectives most effectively. The ideas presented are fresh and sometimes controversial to many readers unfamiliar

with psychology outside the US. Each chapter was carefully reviewed to address the wider issues of globalization while representing the perspective of the SPJP as well. In this way the global issues as well as the local issues of the South Pacific combined to provide a “glocal” perspective. Globalization represents consumerism, Westernization, capitalism and individualism and has widened the gap between the rich and the poor around the world. Globalization without controls will result in a backlash of localization. Globalization combined with the perspectives of local and indigenous will bring about constructive progress at all levels. It is this combination of global and local which defines the primary focus of this book.

This third stage of psychological development provides an important resource both for understanding the indigenous psychology of the Asia and Pacific region and that of a larger, more inclusive synthesis. This book explores the possibility of each social group and each individual being simultaneously a member of multiple communities at the local and global levels, in the dialectic of social change. While mainstream psychology has thus far been able to pretend that American Psychology provides a norm for assessing all other perspectives, indigenous psychologies represented in the SPJP and in this book describe the re-invention of psychology in each localized indigenous context. There is much for all psychologists to learn in the outcomes of this reinvention process.

The themes of assimilation, fragmentation, self-destruction and re-building personal and social identity indicates that it is not easy for local indigenous groups to challenge the universal norms of mainstream psychology. With increased technology through the media and the Internet the infusion of global values into local communities becomes unstoppable. However, those same conduits provide a channel to voice the local perspective to the world as well. This book is an excellent example of how the local perspective can be broadcast globally. The search for culturally “appropriate” psychologies that combine global and local perspectives provides the key to successful social and individual development throughout society.

The unsuccessful importation of an “Americanized” social system has consistently failed, even in the face of fast-food chains and soft drink companies that give the illusion of Americanization. Local reactions, as in the “tall poppy syndrome”, demonstrate the local resistance to Americanization. By linking psychology to the American cultural context and promoting assimilation implicitly, as well as sometimes explicitly, this failure is magnified to the detriment of the local communities and of psychology as a rigidly defined resource. Even as psychologists become more aware of the need to recognize indigenous variations of psychological theory there is as yet no awareness about how to make that recognition happen. In the Asia and Pacific region as well as in other indigenous communities traditional concepts of social organization inconsistent with mainstream psychology continue to thrive. Cultural and community pride continues to oppose the imposition of outside influence.

Neither assimilation to the norms of globalization nor regional rebellion against those outside influences can provide the foundation for effective individual and social development. Glocalization is described as a third alternative towards complementarity, where both the global and local perspective is valued, without either perspective losing its integrity. This third way defines and describes the “common ground” on which lasting personal and social development can be achieved. Making human services more pluralistic is not a quick and easy solution to the complex problems of social change but it does provide a starting point

Human service providers learn multiple repertoires to translate global resources into each different local context. This does not require discarding psychological concepts as much as rejuvenating them to increased relevance and vitality.

The only social system alternative to either anarchy on one hand or authoritarianism on the other hand is the untried possibility of cultural pluralism. Both providers and consumers need to become multi-disciplinary to match the complex multiple facets of cultural pluralism. The local and indigenous cultures described in the following chapters not only look forward toward an optimistic future but also

look backwards at historical local traditions based on village-life that can be redefined in the new global context. Not only do these hybrid variations of psychology enrich the local society but they enrich the rapidly changing field of psychology as well at a global level. Samuel Huntington's prediction that future conflict will focus on the clash of civilizations more than wars between nations demonstrates the urgency to expand our perspectives beyond national boundaries. The encapsulation of psychology is no longer tolerable, if it ever was. The need to move beyond American Psychology is met by books such as this one where cultural bias is repeatedly challenged and alternative rival perspectives are presented.