



[IP--Shall we tell China or the Other what to do? Yes, if you do it with respect. by](#)

[Louise](#) by Louise S. [2012, Aug 29]

Dear All,

What a wonderful conversation we have been having, concerning the APA delegation to China! I see emerging a thread that might lead to another interesting discussion. This is the question concerning approaches to the Other. Al Dueck's concern about the right to counsel China stands in sharp contrast to K. K. Hwang's plea to set China straight. While the difference between the two is obviously that between outsiders and insiders—a non-Chinese should not tell China what to do, whereas Chinese may not hesitate to tell each other what to do, since “we are family.” But with globalization the world is shrinking, we have a choice between two possible models of approaching the Other—as stranger or as family. The stranger-based approach to the other is embodied in multiculturalism, in which the major concern is not to impinge on the other's rights; not stepping on each other's toes; and tolerance for differences become the supreme good. In sharp contrast is the insiders talk within the family, where it is not rights, but concern for and obligation toward the other's wellbeing that loom large. This insider's approach I have referred to elsewhere as the harmony model. Contrary to the stereotype notion of harmony as honoring the status quo, the Chinese notion of harmony is a fertile ground for creative change, because of its multi-dimensional structure (Sundararajan, in press; 2010; Frijda & Sundararajan, 2007). Harmony may be understood as a two tiered structure—yin and yang; implicit and explicit communication; surface versus hidden messages, and so on. Let me use the exchanges between K. K. Hwang and Michael Bond as an illustration. I choose this conversation for analysis because it is the best dialogue I have seen between IP (represented by K. K. Hwang) and cross cultural psychology (represented by Michael Bond). The conversation goes on at two levels: at one level, there was tension and conflict between different epistemologies, as evidenced by the “criticisms” toward Michael alluded to by Hwang, on the one hand; and on the other, by the subtle reminder of Michael that China needs to transcend ethnocentrism and see itself as only one of the “great traditions.” At another level, a sense of congeniality prevails. What makes it possible for the tension and conflict to be contained within a prevailing sense of harmony rests upon, I believe, a genuine respect for the other. I got this idea from Wallner, who claims that intellectual respect for the other is possible only when there is the insight that knowledge of the other is needed for self understanding. This is different from what he calls the “liberal nonsense” of cataloging cultural differences in the service of tolerance of diversity. I think this harmony model has great potentials in capitalizing on differences for growth and change. What makes this IP community unique is that we can try out different models among ourselves and learn from them. I would be interested in knowing how to expand the exchange between Hwang and Bond to an ongoing dialogue between IP and cross cultural psychology. Any ideas?

Thanks for the stimulating conversation,
Louise

 [Comment by Peter Ping Li](#) by Louise S. [2012, Aug 29]

Dear Louise:

As you know that I have written an article about the indigenous research, which touches upon the link between the indigenous approach and cross-cultural approach. See the attached for two articles. I hope they shed some light on this very topic you are interested in.

Peter Ping Li

 [IP-- doing research in a yin-yang way by Michael Bond](#) by Louise S. [2012, Aug 30]

dear Peter,

thank you for this on-going conversation on indigenous inputs in our discipline! I have spent my academic career working from within Chinese culture and have always wondered if I am honoring the indigenous perspective. given my language limitations in Chinese, I have always tried to do so by consulting attentively with my Chinese collaborators, albeit in English.

i invariably ask them what we might be missing in studying the phenomena, where "missing" means to me some conceptualization that might enlarge our capacity to predict more of the variance in the phenomenon we are trying to address. to answer this question, we need measures. these measures need local inputs, so as to tap fully whatever phenomenon we are exploring, e.g., the behavioral manifestations for the maintenance aspect of leadership.

ideally then, we should proceed multi-culturally to test the processes in an open way, in each cultural group separately. then, we proceed to the comparative cross-cultural part of the study, asking about what we lose in detail when moving from the culture-specific to the culture general. some detail is always lost, of course, but how much and with what consequences for the phenomenon under investigation?

we tried this approach many years ago in:

Smith, P. B., Misumi, J., Tayeb, M., Peterson, M., & Bond, M. H. (1989). On the generality of leadership style measures. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 62, 97-109.

this seems to me to be a yin-yang approach. would you agree?

journals do not like this approach, because it is very space-intensive. in our press to get our collaborator grad students published, we often revert to the cross-cultural study, leaving the culture-specific analyses out of the article. i always regretted doing so with this early article on trust:

Zhang, J. X., & Bond, M. H. (1993). Target-based interpersonal trust: Cross-cultural comparison and its cognitive model. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*, 2,164-172. (in Chinese with English abstract)

I wonder if you would countenance such a yin-yang approach in your new journal on trust? at least, ask for one culture-specific analysis before authors move to the culture-general? then readers could explore what is lost and what is gained by going cross-cultural...

just a thought for your consideration...

with my regards to you and to Werner,

michael bond, attaching a picture from Boston and from AoM

Michael Harris Bond, Ph. D.

 [Comment by Peter Ping Li](#) by Louise S. [2012, Aug 29]

Dear Michael:

Thanks a lot for your excellent input.

In my opinion, native language is a plus but not necessary and of course never sufficient. What really counts is the truly indigenous perspective. For example, if guanxi is the same as social capital or social tie (as so many Chinese scholars assume so), there is no need to study guanxi as indigenous. What guanxi research does contribute is to extend and expand the notion of social capital or social tie derived from the West by contributing something unique: guanxi is unique and indigenous because it is high on BOTH instrumental and sentimental dimensions in contrast to the typical Western ties that are high in EITHER instrumental OR sentimental. Guanxi is also unique in its structure (with multiple tiers or circles of differential associations) in contrast to the typical Western 2-tierd structure of in-group and out-group ties.

As for Michael's approach of single-cultural study first and then move on to cross-cultural study as a yin-yang approach, I agree in principle to the extent that cross-cultural study should follow single-cultural (indigenous) research. However, if all single-cultural studies are conducted from their own indigenous perspectives without the biased influence of the imposed perspectives from other cultures, and then they are integrated to highlight both differences and similarities, the latter approach is NO LONGER a simple cross-cultural approach, but a new approach that I call "geocentric approach". That is the ultimate goal of indigenous research.

To me, there are only two legitimate approaches to cultural research: indigenous and geocentric. I hope you will agree with me on this point.

In my journal on trust, I cannot impose my position too much. It takes time for the mainstream scholars to respect the indigenous approach from the non-Western perspective. As you well know, all social studies are indigenous in nature, even if the scholars do not admit or do not realize that.

Peter Ping Li



[Comment by Peter Ping Li](#) by Louise S. [2012, Aug 29]

Dear Michael and All Other Colleagues:

I forgot to mention that Michael's fifth cultural dimension of time or Confucian Dynamics as the perfect example of what I refer to as the ultimate goal of indigenous research: from indigenous to geocentric.

Peter Ping Li



[Comment by Dharm Bhawuk](#) by Louise S. [2012, Aug 29]

Namaste Peter and colleagues:

Aloha!

Perhaps the ULTIMATE GOAL of indigenous research should be plurality of goals, and each researcher should follow what in his or her wisdom is appropriate in the context. Some of us may like to build theory, others may like to solve problems, and yet others may like to develop measurements (or innovate methodologically). Clinicians would like to solve indigenous problems using indigenous psychological principles and tools, and are also free to adapt ideas from global psychology. What is not useful is to run to western psychology without looking around in the indigenous literature (oral tradition is also literature), for that often leads to NOT REALLY SOLVING THE PROBLEM. The field of economic development is replete with examples of how western solutions don't work, and yet are continuously sold like over the counter drugs as readymade solutions.

Search for etics is a perspective that needs to be seriously examined, and not viewed as the raison d'etre of research. I support those who pursue etics, but I would like them to offer the same courtesy to those who do not. I can see my short life getting spent in building models from scriptures, and would appreciate if the etic-hunters do not despise it (I would send metta in return anyway!). I would also like to remind those among us who are gung ho (extremely enthusiastic) about being scientists (for them psychology is science or social science) that humanists like me also have value in understanding human psychology. I think sometimes we forget that humanists are also capable of logical, abstract, and mathematical thinking. Our goal is to address human issues, not to do science for the sake of science. Science might have done as much damage as religion, to be provocative. Etic-hunters seem to have a strong

scientist-identity, and that naturally creates a hierarchical world in which scientists are on the top.

We need to get away from creating a hierarchy in research tradition. Replacing one hierarchy with another does not sound like a solution to me.

Indigenous for the sake of indigenous may be as valuable as attempting to go from indigenous to geocentric. Perhaps, we also need plurality of values.

My apology, Peter. I know you did not mean anything like this. I thought I should clarify.

And Michael (Bond), you know I respect you and your work, and love you as a friend. Your contribution to the study of Chinese values stands on its own ground. It seems less important to me that it should be considered the 5th Dimension. To distill all Chinese values into time orientation or future orientation sounds a bit too much of a simplification; but it is a valid perspective in the reductionist domain.

Have a wonderful week everybody.

Bhawuk