

Conditions of (Im)Possibility:

Indigenization of Psychology in India and the Philippines

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Indigenization offers a lens through which to view psychology and facilitates an examination of how a science and/or profession draw on the cultural resources of a time and place to “naturalize.” The extensive historical scholarship devoted to psychology in North America has made it seem as though its development was natural and inevitable and not the product of an “immigration and naturalization” process. Without a critical gaze, authentic scientific psychology came to be American psychology, so much so that the modifier, American, was not needed. In recent years, attention has begun to be given to the process of indigenization of psychology in North America, often as part of the challenge to American hegemony by those psychologists who have been self-consciously developing indigenous psychologies in their own locations around the world.

Psychologization/Indigenization: From Europe to North America

During the twentieth century, European and North American societies became thoroughly psychologized. This was the outcome of a long, multiply-determined, historical process (Smith, 1997). Without being reductionist, I suggest that the development of commercial society, with the attendant ascendance of self-interest exemplified by the emergence of economic man and the objectification of human relationships within a calculable matrix, was central to this process (Staeuble, 2004). This is to say that the possibility of psychologization is a process bound by culture and the historical contingencies of time and place. Thus, history becomes crucial for its analysis. Lest we celebrate too soon, we must remember that history is itself a part of the same cultural framework. There is no objective, independent place on which to stand.

In the United States, psychologization proceeded rather rapidly, as the dynamics of American society facilitated the transformation of European laboratory psychology into an

indigenized science and profession of practical use in the management of a large, culturally diverse population. The indigenization process in the United States involved a melding of a variety of practices and epistemologies ranging from religion, phrenology, mesmerism to mental philosophy, medical studies, and statistics (Danziger, 1985; Pickren & Rutherford, 2010; Schmit, 2005, 2009; Taves, 1999). All this was melded together under the rubric of science in a scientific age. The metaphor of the melting pot, so popular and so inaccurate in describing immigration in the United States, may be appropriate for describing the indigenization of psychology in America.

The indigenization of psychology in America in the interwar period and the attendant psychologization of American social and cultural life set the stage for the rapid growth in American psychology after 1945. Noteworthy was the rapid increase in the number of psychologists trained in the delivery of psychological services, especially psychotherapy. Although these services had been extant in American psychology since its beginning, as Eugene Taylor has shown (1999), it was in the postwar period that psychotherapy became central to the identity of American psychologists. This was reflective of the new fully indigenized psychology.

In a reflection and an abetting of these processes, there was a dramatic rise in the funding of psychology and related fields after the war. In response to policymakers' and the public's concerns about the nation's mental health and the perceived need to keep the U. S. competitive in the postwar world, funds for psychological research increased exponentially between 1948-1968. As a result, the psychological disciplines, science and practice, became resource rich for the first time (Pickren & Schneider, 2005). This resulted in the golden age of psychological research, an era when available funds increased significantly each year. It also was crucial for the rise to hegemony of U. S. psychology in the 20-30 years after the war. This is the background for the

development of indigenous psychology elsewhere in the world, as psychologists reacted to American hegemony.

From American Hegemony to Local Knowledges

The growth of U. S. psychology at a time when European nations were in the throes of rebuilding social and cultural structures after the devastation of World War II helped make U. S. psychology the preeminent producer of psychological knowledge and the location of the world's most productive psychological research laboratories. This did not occur in isolation. The rising influence of psychology was borne on the wings of the growth of American military, political, and economic power. With the exporting of American culture around the world, many young scholars and would-be scholars flocked to the U. S. for training in psychology, thus leading to the export of American psychological approaches and standards to many new and often quite alien cultures.

The growth and influence of American psychology produced a scientific imperialism. It was this imperialism that many of those who came from outside North America for training in the United States reacted to as they discovered that their training did not match local needs, nor was it congenial to local knowledge. But, what to do about it?

Before offering an analysis of responses to this question, I offer a brief account of the context for the response to American influence. In doing so, I outline modernization theory and a brief overview of decolonization and the post-colonial world.

The United States became one of two dominant world powers in the three decades after the end of World War II. During this time there was intense competition on many fronts between the United States and the Soviet Union in what is commonly referred to as the Cold War. Both sides deployed wide range of overt strategies to gain influence, as well as covert strategies of

threat and deception to keep their allies in line and destabilize satellite states of the other side (e.g., Solovey, 2001; Westad, 2007).

As a follow up to the Marshall Plan for Europe, in 1949 President Harry Truman announced in his inaugural address, a “fair deal” for the impoverished countries of the world, whereby the United States would send aid and expertise to countries to help them develop. Over the next decade or more, newer agencies, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development were created to foster development and extend influence.

Economic development was the stated aim of many of these strategies. In the postwar era, a new language emerged that sorted countries in to developed and underdeveloped categories. With the deployment of this language, the “developing world” appeared and was soon called the Third World (Escobar, 1995). Western social science theorists and academics were called on to explicate the meaning of development and how it could be used to advance the interests of Western states. One result was what came to be called modernization theory (Latham, 2003; Leys, 1996). Modernization was a term used to describe models of development on a historical arc, with traditional societies and modern societies at opposite end of the arc. Modernization theory asserted that traditional societies can become modern societies through the influence and resources of more modern ones. The end point for all societies would be the condition of modernity, in which citizenship would be defined by consumerism. The underlying view of this theoretical approach was that, in the end, the world would be increasingly homogeneous. The solutions that followed from the theory were intended to help others be like the West, especially the United States.

Thus, what social scientists, including psychologists envisioned, was an interventionist model. The agencies and institutions created to facilitate these ends were meant to keep Western nations at the center of economic and intellectual life and the client states at the peripheries, where they could play a useful role as both resource suppliers, including cheap labor, and markets for end products. At their core they were part of the effort to manage a changing world and to ensure that change flowed in ways that served American or Western ends. The part that social scientists played in these matters was a fulfillment of the Enlightenment ideals of progress and reflected the historical truth that the modern social sciences have been, above all else, sciences of social management. But, who were the target states of these interventions?

The Post-Colonial World

Approximately 450 million people in Asia and Africa experienced colonial rule between 1850 and 1920. For many of the colonial powers, one guiding principle was to undermine the world views of the people under their control.

There was active resistance to this imperialism from its beginning. This resistance accelerated after World War I and continued through WWII, with its apex in the immediate post-war period. More than 65 “new” nations emerged from the colonial domination in the period from 1945-1965. Many won their independence in wars of liberation. Their new found freedom brought with it many problems, not the least of which stemmed from efforts by both superpowers to continue domination through less overt means than direct colonization. In the West, modernization theory offered strategies to regain control over these former colonies through economic and political means, as well as covert manipulation.

Caught between two superpowers and inundated with the problems left over from colonialism, several of the postcolonial nations looked for neutral ground. In 1955, five Asian

countries—Indonesia, India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Pakistan—met in Bandung, Indonesia to try and find common ground for mutual support in a neutral stance toward the Cold War powers. These five countries represented more than 1.5 billion people. The five countries called for cooperation among themselves and a reliance on their own internal resources; the conference led to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961. NAM was part of the effort to reestablish an identity separate from that given by the imperial powers. Its members' calls for drawing on their own resources had implications for the development of psychology in many places. Indigenization in India will serve as an example of these influences.

India and Indigenization

The history of post-WWII psychology in India may serve as an apt illustration of the challenges of indigenization and how the “naturalization” process occurs when cultural contexts are different. The framework for psychology in India was constructed in the British colonial context of the first half of the twentieth century. Much of this psychology was derivative of British psychology. However, Girishwar Misra has recently shown how that even in this period there were some original voices articulating a psychology that was closer to Indian experience (Misra, in press). After independence in 1947, psychologists, by their own account, were left with a derivative and imitative science. What began the process of indigenization was the demand by the government of Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1950s and 1960s that social scientists apply their knowledge to help solve Indian social problems. Nehru's demand was an expression of the drive for self-sufficiency articulated by the recently formed Non-Aligned Movement. Nehru himself had taken the leadership of the Ministry of Science as part of his portfolio in the newly independent India. Nehru envisioned science as one of the avenues for making India a modern state. Like members of other scientific disciplines, Indian psychologists found that the science

left them by their British colonial masters was inadequate to the task of social reconstruction. Over time, some of the psychologists moved to create a psychology that would be useful in India. I give two examples in this account.

The efforts to find Indian solutions to Indian problems was not just a top down effort. Psychologists who worked on such problems began to see that strict adherence to Western methods and topics would not suffice. Durganand Sinha and J. B. P. Sinha have both written about this (D. Sinha, 1994; 1998; J. B. P. Sinha, 1995, 1997). Out of their frustration on the one hand, and out of their own knowledge of the richness of Indian culture, a few psychologists by the 1960s began to talk about and enact psychological principles derived from Indian life and culture in application to a range of issues.

Based on the histories provided by both Sinhas (J B P Sinha, 1997; D. Sinha, 1998), it becomes clear that the way forward out of the “alien-framework, to use JBP Sinha’s term, was to develop a psychology that could address social problems. I will give one example from the work of each Sinha. In a major study, Durganand Sinha, led a research team in an investigation of why villagers were having such difficulty with transitioning to more modern ways of life. Their conclusion was that many of the problems stemmed from the lack of exposure to new influences in farming and other technologies. This led to increased resistance to government programs meant to modernize farming. Sinha and his colleagues suggested that the government needed to deploy more resources to communicate with villagers and rural farmers. This kind of work, Sinha suggested, was just what psychologists could do to help solve India’s social and economic problems. Sinha led the effort to extend psychology to these larger level problems, such as population control, health practices, and poverty, as part of an effort to make psychology socially relevant. In order to create a space for psychologists to discuss and exchange information on

such a psychology, Durganand Sinha started the journal, *Psychology and Developing Societies*, which published its first volume in 1989.

Social psychologist Jai B. P. Sinha returned to India after earning his doctorate at Ohio State University. As he later recounted, he fully expected that he would be able to simply continue doing the kind of psychology that he had learned in graduate school (J.B. P. Sinha, 1997). However, he discovered that the Indian social context was different and that his participants often did not act like American undergraduates when asked to participate in research. He also began to find that some of the concepts he worked with were not applicable to the Indian context. For his work on organizations and leadership, he gained insights from various Indian psychological and philosophical traditions. Informed by these traditions, he transformed his research on dependency in work relationships into research on leadership. Based on his findings, he proposed the Nurturant-Task leadership model as the one most suitable for understanding work relationships in India. Because Indian social life was relational and Indians tended to personalize all relationships, including those at work, Sinha argued that in India an effective leader was someone who could provide support or nurture to his staff, yet still expect them to function at a high level in their work.

While these examples are too brief to even begin to capture the richness of efforts to make an Indian psychology in the postwar period, I use them as pointers toward understanding what the indigenization process can look like. In India, it was a mixture of drawing on both Western methodologies and Indian sources. Durganand Sinha, in fact, wrote about a two-pronged indigenization process, indigenization from within and indigenization from without. So, many Indian psychologists retained some of the principles and methods learned in Western graduate programs, but reshaped them to the Indian context. While at the same time, some

psychologists sought inspiration and guidance from sources native to India, including some of the ancient philosophical and religious traditions. This process is still underway, as exemplified in the recent *Handbook of Indian Psychology* (Rao, Paranjpe, & Dalal, 2008).

It should be kept in mind that psychology as a discipline and, increasingly, as a mental health profession, in India is a small entity, both compared to other scientific disciplines and to the population, not to mention comparison with the numbers of psychologists in most Western countries. But, within this small number, an active cohort is seeking to put psychology on a basis that reflects the richness of Indian life. To do so, D. Sinha and others have argued, psychology must be built on the relational character of Indian life. This relational character is all-encompassing, in that Indians assign meaning to the harmonious relationship with the physical universe, as well as in social relations with other humans. In India, then, a relevant psychology must take into account this fundamental fact of Indian existence. For example, unlike Western notions of identity, in India a person's identity is marked by the relationships that a person has, including personal, family, and community relationships. An Indian psychology, Sinha and others have argued, is one that is based on these facts of life, whether or not psychologists rely on methods and principles imported and learned from Western societies.

If, as mentioned earlier, we use a center and periphery model to frame this, then we understand that while psychologists at the center control the resources, intellectual and institutional, they do so to maintain control and influence. As long as psychologists at the periphery are dependent on the center, then it will be impossible to meet the standards of the center. Thus, the hegemony of the methods and theories of the center are maintained. By the end of the 20th century, a number of Indian psychologists were advocating for an abandonment of the Western ideal, as we see in the work of the Sinhas, discussed above. It was suggested that the

way forward was to “outgrow the alien framework,” by rethinking the basic assumptions of psychology. Doing so, it was argued, would put Indian psychology on new footing by removing the sense of deficiency that arose from the absence of the latest books or journals or computer equipment.

A More Radical Approach to Indigenous Psychology: The Philippines

There is a long history of colonization in the Philippines. The large number of islands that were brought together under the colonial flag had populations that were diverse in respect to language, religion, and ethnicity. Spain ruled the islands from the 16th century until 1898 and then ceded the Philippines to the United States after losing a war with the U. S. The Philippines were under the direct rule of the U. S. until 1946. American histories have sought to portray American rule as a positive condition for the Philippines. However, many Filipinos resented what they perceived as a second class status. It was in this post-colonial context that disciplinary psychology was created and in which a few psychologists sought to develop a Filipino psychology that made radical breaks with much of Western psychology. The two individuals whose names are most closely associated with these developments were Alfredo Lagmay (1919-2005) and Virgilio Enriquez (1942-1994).

Given the colonial relationship, it is not surprising that the first disciplinary psychologists in the Philippines were educated at American universities. Many of them brought the psychology they had learned there back with them when they returned. There remained a significant Spanish philosophical influence in the country, as well as a German influence centered at the country’s oldest university, the University of San Carlos in Cebu City.

Alfredo Lagmay, after earning his doctorate with B. F. Skinner at Harvard in 1955, returned to the Philippines, where he soon became the chair of the psychology department at the

University of the Philippines in Manila. Already there were signs of discontent among some of the faculty and students about the complete domination of psychology by American methods and subject matter (Enriquez, 1987). Under Lagmay, efforts began to create a Filipino psychology that would have a different epistemology and employ different methodologies that owed little to Western influences. Under Lagmay, new approaches were tried. One of the psychologists in the department who became a leader in the new approaches was Virgilio Enriquez (1942-1994). Together, Lagmay and Enriquez created *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology). Because of the primacy of the University of the Philippines as the flagship institution of higher learning in the country, the efforts of Lagmay and Enriquez were influential and their approach represented an innovative approach to how a Western scientific discipline could be indigenized in a post-colonial context.

With Alfredo Lagmay's encouragement and support, Enriquez became the active leader of the indigenization process as together they sought to develop methods and topics that reflected the reality of life in the Philippines. Enriquez had earned his doctorate in social psychology at Northwestern University in Illinois. Until his untimely death in 1994, he was the major force in arguing for a psychology relevant for the Philippines.

Enriquez and his colleagues established the Philippine Psychology Research and Training House where hundreds of students were engaged in developing the methods that came to be called *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. Rooted in Filipino culture and history, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* emphasized identity and national awareness, social awareness and involvement, and language and culture in an anti-colonial framework. Research methods included participatory observation, participant action, and qualitative interviews where both parties interviewed each other. Enriquez argued that psychological knowledge in this approach grows out of the collaborative demands of

relationships, rather than knowledge extracted by an expert from a naïve subject (Enriquez, 1987, 1993; Pe-Pua, & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). It was the contention of Lagmay and Enriquez that by developing and employing this approach that psychology would prove a liberating force for Filipinos rather than serve as tools of social management.

The long period of Western colonial domination in the Philippines made it imperative, Lagmay and Enriquez believed, to decolonize the mind by decolonizing methods and epistemologies (Smith, 1999). *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* is perhaps best understood as an effort to do just this. Language emerged early in their efforts as a key to the process of developing Filipino Psychology. Beginning, in 1970, Lagmay instituted psychology instruction in Filipino and with Enriquez returned from his graduate training at Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois) in 1971, the effort was expanded. The belief was that thinking and speaking in the native language would facilitate a greater understanding of the psychological processes and needs of Filipinos (Enriquez, 1987, 1993). A project to collect psychological publications in Filipino was instituted in the 1970s and many materials were translated from English. This was accompanied by the development of new materials, test instruments, personality inventories, and theoretical works. By the 1990s, one could earn a doctorate in psychology with a specialty in Filipino Psychology (Pe-Pua, & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

The development of research methods that accorded with Filipino culture has been one of the most singular innovations of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Enriquez, 1992). The work began with the realization by one of Enriquez's graduate students, Carmen Santiago, that there were no extant materials to guide her exploration of *pagkalalaki* (rough equivalent=maleness, manhood). She and Enriquez realized that they would have to abandon Western methods to explore this aspect of Filipino psychology. From this, she and Enriquez developed the method of "groping"

toward an appropriate design and methodology as the project moved forward, rather than beginning with a design and shaping the questions to fit the methods a priori. This was the major step toward creating a truly indigenous psychology. From this beginning, Enriquez and his students created research methodologies based on Filipino culture, rather than methods imported from the West. Foundational to the Filipino research methods is the notion of relationship. One must see the participants as another human being, not as a data point, and begin to build trust and genuineness in relationship before proceeding with data collection (Enriquez, 1992). Hallmarks of the Filipino methodology include equality and reciprocity in the collection of data. For example, when people are interviewed for a research project, their voices and their questions become equally important in shaping the questions asked. This often leads to a shift in the direction of research toward what the participants are interested in or think of great value. Enriquez trained his students to develop great sensitivity to social cues, so that interviews and questions were appropriate to the people involved and not intrusive. Among the techniques used were unstructured interviews, story-telling, and informal discussions, where both parties asked questions and all answers became part of the data. In all their research, Enriquez and his students used the local language, believing that it is the only for people to feel completely comfortable and at ease. All these methods together, Enriquez and Lagmay asserted, helped create a psychology that was truly of the Philippines and not beholden to the colonizers.

The two examples I have used here of indigenous psychologies represent two somewhat different historical reactions to colonialist domination and the scientific imperialism of Western psychologies. In both cases, there was a practical dimension, as one goal of developing an indigenous psychology has been to address social problems, especially those that did not yield to the methods or insight of Western psychologies.

However, there are other important questions about whether an indigenous psychology is even possible. I turn to this briefly before concluding.

Conditions of (Im)Possibility

Irmgard Staeuble has written convincingly about the difficulties faced by any indigenization of psychology in a non-Western context (2004). As she wrote, “In the aftermath of colonial domination and disqualification of ways of life...the scope of alternatives remains defined by previous transformations. On neither side can the colonial legacy simply be discarded (Staeuble, 2004, pp. 198-199). As she points out and to echo my opening statement, a critical history of psychology indicates that the ontological and epistemological bases of disciplinary psychology have been and remain grounded in the view of the human being as a calculable individual in societies in which relationships are framed in terms of self-interest. These are not the bases of human life in non-Western societies, such as India and the Philippines. Since psychology, like other systems of knowledge and practice, arises from the exigencies of daily life, it may well be that it is not truly possible to “indigenize” psychology, if what is meant is a psychology predicated on different assumptions of being. If so, what might remain possible?

A decade ago, Dutch psychologist Hubert Hermans wrote about the polyvalence of cultural transmissions at the confluence of contrasting cultures, intimating that culture is to be understood as dynamic, fluid, and permeable. Hermans labeled these points of confluence, cultural contact zones. Hermans drew upon the work of cultural anthropologists and sociologists for his notions of cultural contact zones, partly in support of the development of his theory of the dialogical self. In this conceptualization, these cultural meeting places are fluid rather than fixed.

Hermans suggests that we look to these contact zones to understand what happens in a dynamic world, where ideas, constructs, fashions, people are constantly on the move.

The concept of cultural contact zones embraces three constructs: cultural heterogeneity, hybridization, and fluidity. Many cross cultural researchers treat culture as a fixed homogeneous entity, in the worst case, as something out there. But, there is overwhelming evidence that heterogeneity is more the norm than homogeneity.

Secondly, when contrasting cultures come together, there is often hybridization, as sociologist Jan Pieterse has argued. Certainly, concrete examples of cultural hybridization are constantly seen in studies in immigration and transnational identities, such as the recent work by Sunil Bhatia on the Indian Diaspora (Bhatia, 2007). Thirdly, cultural contact zones indicate fluidity and permeability of cultural boundaries. There is always some borrowing and mixing that occurs in these zones. It is never the case that only one party is influenced by the other. All of these together contribute to what Hermans calls moving cultures. Cultural contact zones, then, are places where contrasting cultures come together. The concept implies fluidity, cultural heterogeneity, and hybridization. The concept of fluidity and hybridization may help us understand what is possible in terms of indigenization. Human beings make up human societies. Humans are adaptive and have agency; we are not just caught in discursive webs. In the cultural contact zones created, in our examples of India and the Philippines, by colonialist oppression, people did not just give up agency. Nor, did they simply embrace ideologies or practices brought by the imperial powers. Rather, in India and the Philippines, and elsewhere, Western principles and practices were sometimes adapted to the local situation, sometimes abandoned, sometimes subverted to Indian or Filipino ends. And it was not a one-way movement of ideas and practices.

Indians and Filipinos brought their own cultural knowledge and ways of life to their understanding of psychology and continue to do so. The possibility of indigenization, I argue, is in the hybridization inherent in the cultural contact zones.

CONCLUSION

When we try to understand the historical context for indigenous psychologies, in our case, in India and the Philippines, it is clear that the effort to establish psychology in colonized countries, on a basis congruent with the richness of local cultural contexts has moved slowly and continues to so move. In part, this is because of the intrinsic disciplinary structure of psychology as a Western construction. And in part because of the continuing influence of the West, even overt pressure, to adopt methods, tests, clinical practices, etc, that bear the approval of the psychological establishment. This often results in the desire among psychologists in non-Western countries to make the indigenizing psychology part, as one often reads, of a universal psychology.

But, the world is increasingly a cultural contact zone, India and the Philippines included. In contact zones, influence flows both ways. Fluidity, heterogeneity, and hybridity are the norms in such zones. It is clear that the greater overt power to influence and shape modes of thinking and knowledge production, including psychological knowledge, still lies with the West. Let me close, though, by suggesting the power of subversive thoughts and practices to create alternatives.

Remember, many people, British and Indian, never believed that non-violent civil disobedience would result in Indian independence. We are not, as some suppose, at the end of history.

I have sought to indicate the historical context for the rise of indigenous psychologies in India and the Philippines. It is complex, even more complex than I have indicated. We stand today in a fluid situation. There is no certain outcome. As the Indian psychologist and public intellectual Ashis Nandy wrote, “The search for a humane psychology never ends” (1983, p. 336).

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