



Symposium/Other Proposal

2016 APA Annual Convention

Proposal ID: sym16455

- 1. Type of program:** Symposium
- 2. Title of program:** Indigenous Psychology: New Developments in Theory and Research
First index term: 18 Cross-Cultural
Second index term: 58 Philosophical/Theoretical
- 3. Brief Content Description:** Since its inception more than three decades ago, indigenous psychology is found today at the forefront of debates on the new internationalization of the human sciences and psychology. A panel of experts will showcase new developments in this field.
- 4. Division to submit this proposal:** 32 - Humanistic
- 5. Length of time requested on program:** 1 hr. 50 min.
- 6. Chair(s) of the session:**
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- 7. Participants:**

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Membership status: APA Fellow
Title of presentation: Delphi Poll Survey on Current Status and Future Development of Indigenous Psychologies
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Membership status: Non-Member
Title of presentation: From Harvard Through the Kalahari Towards Indigenous Psychology
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Title of presentation: One Psychology or Many?: Indigenous Psychology and the Future of the Field
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Membership status: APA Member
Title of presentation: Resilience and Posttraumatic Growth in Cambodians: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Membership status: Non-Member
Title of presentation: Buddhism-inspired Creativity in the aftermath of a Taiwan Earthquake
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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Membership status: Non-Member
Title of presentation: Suffering and resilience among Yi religious group in China
Electronic Archiving: Yes
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8. Discussant(s):

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9. Accommodation request: None

10. Submit for CE: True

The audience will be informed of the recent developments and new research directions in indigenous psychology.

The audience will be able to assess critically the cultural assumptions behind any dominant paradigms in psychological science.

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Indigenous Psychology: New Developments in Theory and Research

Since its inception more than three decades ago, indigenous psychology (IP) is found today at the forefront of debates on the new internationalization of the human sciences and psychology. By going beyond Western psychology in researching the ontological, epistemological, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of the mental life, IP plays an increasingly important role in the emerging global psychology.

In this symposium, a panel of experts will showcase new developments in the field of IP. The panel is evenly divided into theory and research. In the theory section, the first paper explores future directions of IP, as indicated by the results of the Delphi Poll that was recently conducted on the Indigenous Psychology Task Force of Division 32; the second presentation consists of an eminent researcher's personal journey of IP; the third paper proposes new approaches to culture that take into account hybrid subjectivities and the multiple modernities. The research section focuses on the theme of trauma and resilience in Asia. The first trauma paper presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis of resilience in Cambodia; the second trauma paper presents a creative version of resilience in the aftermath of one of the most devastating earthquakes in Taiwan; and the third trauma paper examines the role religion plays in the suffering and resilience of the Yi minority groups in China. Two eminent psychologists, known for their contributions in the field of critical theory, will serve as Discussants.

(1) Delphi Poll Survey on Current Status and Future Development of Indigenous Psychologies

Indigenous psychologies (IP) have been developed in reaction to the increasing monopoly and dominance of western models or what has been referred to as WEIRD science, where our samples come primarily from Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democracies. A key assumption of IP is that Psychology by nature is culture-bound and that each cultural population needs to develop its own psychology. To assess the current status and future developments within the field of IP, we conducted a Delphi Poll of the international members of a research network that had been founded by Louise Sundararajan to exchange information on this topic. The Poll consisted of both qualitative and quantitative measures of participants' assessments of the field collected over two time points. The Delphi Poll technique is one form of expert forecasting which consists of multiple rounds of survey. In the first round, identified experts are provided open-ended questions regarding their assessment of a particular subject, in this case IP. This is followed by the second round where the responses from the first round are aggregated into a more objective form with the average responses shown in order to obtain a second assessment and work towards convergence. The survey items as well as results from the 2 rounds of the Delphi Poll survey will be presented and their implications discussed during this presentation.

(2) *From Harvard Through the Kalahari Towards Indigenous Psychology*

“Your experience is of ultimate value and meaning,” Danny Musqua, a Saulteaux elder told me, “and as a psychologist, you should tell your story.” Danny’s words, at the core of teachings I’ve received from Indigenous elders and healers for nearly 50 years, have inspired this presentation, now offered as one way to honour their wisdom and generous spirit. Hopefully the story of my journey in psychology can offer some views about Indigenous Psychology.

In 1965, I received a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Harvard. In 1968, I made my first visit to the Kalahari Desert to work with the Ju/’hoansi, Indigenous peoples still primarily hunting and gathering – and my eyes opened to what psychology could become. Since then I have worked with Indigenous elders and healers – who I consider our “first psychologists” –in the Fiji Islands, Rosebud Reservation, and First Nations in Saskatchewan. They have asked me to work toward making Western/mainstream psychology more relevant to and caring for Indigenous people, and by extension to all those marginalized by mainstream psychology and thereby denied their rightful access to psychology’s resources.

My journey has suggested ways of enhancing mainstream psychology towards cultural diversity and social change, including: realizing human development follows a circulating path rather than a linear trajectory; seeing issues of aging in the context of being an elder rather than simply being elderly; appreciating values like respect as guidelines for living; and recognizing the synergistic nature of healing resources so they become renewable and expanding, thus increasing access for all. My journey has also suggested we consider a rich range of psychologies, some of which expresses Indigenous perspectives, all collaborating respectfully, so that the whole of psychological knowledge and practice is greater than the sum of its parts, and what is good for one is good for all.

(3) *One Psychology or Many?: Indigenous Psychology and the Future of the Field*

In this paper, I highlight two goals found in recent work on indigenous psychology that are in tension with each other. For over thirty years, researchers in psychology and anthropology have called attention to the ways that culture influences theories and research in psychological science. They have emphasized the cultural and historical contingency of many hegemonic psychological models and approaches, as well as the limitations we face when trying to use them to study and generalize about humans in all cultures. Many scholars have also demonstrated the ethical value and salutary consequences of explicating and disseminating psychological models and practices that emerged from non-European cultures and civilizations. Researchers in fields such as cultural psychology, cross-cultural psychology, ethnopsychology, and ethopsychiatry have contributed to these endeavors. Indigenous psychology is connected to all of these projects.

At least two types of hopes and goals are present in writings associated with indigenous psychology. On the one hand, scholars in this field want to clarify the differences between cultures' conceptions of personhood, healing and other psychological categories and to facilitate the legitimation and use of indigenous knowledge and practices. But on the other hand, some also seek to integrate the psychologies of various cultures to construct a more global psychological theory. A variation on this second goal is sometimes pursued through the use of contrastive categories, such as "collectivist" vs. "individualist." This approach retains an emphasis on cultural difference, but such 'etic' binarism can underplay cultural distinctiveness and complexity. Recognizing that difference-emphasizing, unifying, and etically differentiating approaches are all likely to persist, I propose a pragmatic-interpretive approach to knowledge, in which researchers are self-conscious about using their constructs for particular purposes. I also discuss a second proposal: that we attend more fully to research on hybrid subjectivities and the multiple modernities from which they emerge.

(4) Resilience and Posttraumatic Growth in Cambodians: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

Decades after the 1970s Pol Pot era genocide, Cambodia continues to experience political instability and sociocultural consequences of trauma. This study examined Posttraumatic-Growth (PTG) among Cambodians, with quantitative data (N=70 participants, from urban Cambodian community centers/universities), and qualitative interview sub-sample data (n=12). Measures included Cambodian versions of: Posttraumatic-Growth-Inventory (PTGI), Adult-Resilience-Measure (ARM), and Life-Event-Checklist (LEC).

The quantitative sample was 87.5% Buddhist. Regression analysis revealed significant relationships between religious affiliation and ARM contextual subscale. Correlational analyses revealed statistically significant positive relationships between five PTGI subscales/three ARM subscales: Relating to others, New possibilities, Personal strength, Spiritual Change, and Appreciation of Life.

Interviews asked participants to reflect upon a trauma, focusing on post-recovery coping strategies. Results suggest Cambodia's emerging adults frequently rely on friends/family for support, rather than help-seeking from religious leaders/mental-health-providers. Some participants discussed karma's role. Most participants report finding meaning in their suffering, and improved self-efficacy, independence, self-reliance, self-insight and relations with friends/family post-trauma. Additionally most participants report being more open to helping others, but also more protective of self, and note recovery means accepting the reality of what has happened and being able to talk about it.

Results suggest the PTGI/ARM scales are culturally appropriate for Cambodians to assess posttraumatic growth/resilience. The strong association between posttraumatic growth and resilience suggests that growth after trauma is an important protective factor for individuals' resilience levels. Qualitative data converge, adding understanding concerning support sources, life meaning, and self-insight.

(5) Buddhism-inspired Creativity in the aftermath of a Taiwan Earthquake

The earthquake of September 21st 1999 was one of the most devastating in Taiwan's history for the past hundred years. Among the numerous earthquake victims was a couple, Tz-Hua Wang and Fang-Tzu Chen. In their struggles over a decade to become successful restaurant entrepreneurs, Wang and his wife Chen have many stories of resilience to tell. But this paper is not about how after an initial failure, they folded their first restaurant, doubled their effort and ingenuity to open a second restaurant which turned out to be a huge success. Rather, this investigation will focus on what happened when the 1999 earthquake destroyed it all. This time, instead of making another come back, Wang and Chen made a radical career change by abandoning the restaurant business for good. They gave away everything that could be salvaged from the rubbles, and devoted their time and energy instead to the relief work for seniors who had no family to turn to after the earthquake. The result is the internationally renowned Bodhi Evergreen Village, founded in 2000. To this day nearly 90 lone elders (the average age of the residents is 75) can call it their home. The phenomenal success of this non-profit senior residence can be attributed to one key factor: It functions as an extended family, with the head of the village--Wang's wife Fang-Tzu Chen—identifying herself as the elders' "daughter-in-law."

Challenging the conventional notion of resilience, which usually entails bouncing back or recovery of functioning, the success story of Bodhi Evergreen Village and its founders suggests the possibility of a radical departure from the past for a more creative and more fulfilling life after the trauma. The connection between this creative approach to trauma and the Buddhist notion of emptiness (Sundararajan, 2015) will be explored in light of the data collected from in-depth interviews with the residents and the founders of Bodhi Evergreen Village.

(6) Suffering and resilience among Yi religious group in China

As China has 56 ethnic minority groups, each of them embodied different set of indigenous traditions and spiritual beliefs, before other world religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity were transmitted to them. Yi people made up of 0.6 percent of Chinese populations and most of them reside in south-western part of China. Yi group has an indigenous religion called "Bimo" folk religion. It is a culture created and inherited by Bimo (the priest), transmitted by scripture and rituals, and revolves around ancestor-worship and witchcraft practices. It also contains Yi group's unique philosophical beliefs and healing methods. In this paper, I present our preliminary findings from field study among Yi's Bimo religion. We coded the themes of their perception, emotional expression and help-seeking behaviors in times of suffering and trauma. We also interviewed a comparison group—the Yi Christians community, to tease apart the influence of ethnicity and religion. We found that Yi-Bimo group, relative to their Christian counterparts, tend to use more external reference for emotion, attribute the cause of suffering to superpower, and prefer to seek help from strong-ties relationships. Future studies are warranted to examine this indigenous theory of suffering among the Yi-Bimo group.