

Email Correspondence
Indigenous Psychology Task Force
Society for Humanistic Psychology (APA Division 32)

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to get the task force on indigenous psychology started. How about introducing ourselves to each other. Let me start with myself:

Louise Sundararajan: I have an interdisciplinary background, with a Ph.D. in History of Religions from Harvard University, and an Ed.D. in Counseling Psychology from Boston University. I am currently President of Division 32 (Humanistic Psychology), and making a living as a forensic psychologist. With over fifty publications, my research interests range from Chinese poetics to semiotics.

I look forward to self introductions from you.

After we get to know each other, we can start brainstorming about the projects for this task force. Let's start with Tony Marsella's suggestions below:

1. Hold a symposium at APA;
2. Sponsor a conference and publish papers (\$\$\$ from 32);
3. Do a book for the cultural and international psychology series;
4. Write a white paper on the topic;
5. Form a small organization of like-minded thinkers;
6. Identify the issues and solutions;
7. Get prepared for a lot of work and little reward.

Any suggestions, comments?

Looking forward to working with you all,
Louise 11/22/10

Louise,

Thanks for getting this together. I think it is really an important taskforce, particularly in today's psychology that often implicitly devalues much of indigenous psychology and other things non-mainstream.

Louis Hoffman Introduction: I am a faculty member at Saybrook University and serve on the board for the Society for Humanistic Psychology. Much of my work with indigenous psychology has been through involvement with the psychology of religion and existential psychology in China. I am working with several colleagues as part of a Templeton Foundation grant to develop the psychology of religion in China, which has focused a great deal on identifying indigenous Chinese psychology embedded in its religious traditions. I have also worked with colleagues from China in identifying and developing indigenous Chinese approaches to existential

psychology, which was part of motivation for the book *Existential Psychology East-West*.

Regarding ways to proceed, I like the idea of a goal of eventually getting to a book. For now, I wonder if it would be good to keep that in our consciousness while beginning with working on conference focused presentations. A symposium at APA would be great, but the would likely be a year and a half out given how soon the 2011 deadline is coming up. For conferences, we could also think of trying to get a focus or theme of one of the upcoming Division 32 conferences on Indigenous psychology. Maybe as a preface to starting an organization, we could start a listserv or something similar to begin discussions and, hopefully, generate interest. Another starting point could be to write an article on indigenous psychology that could serve as a call to action on indigenous psychology, and hopefully launch many of the possibilities.

Preparation for a lot of work with little (evident) reward, that sounds a lot like humanistic psychology in academia!

Louis Hoffman 11/23/10

Dear Louis,

Thanks so much for the self introduction. Besides its social function of getting acquainted with each other, the self introduction serves to let us know how we can help each other further our research endeavors. For instance, I would be interested in putting a plug for your project on Chinese religions at the Center for the Study of World Religions, where I got my Ph.D. As for your existential psychology project in China, I think the whole thing should be a dialogue, rather than a translation. Critiquing each other's research would be another benefit that grows out of common goals and interests.

Indeed, critiquing each other's work in the form of an East-West dialogue can make an important contribution to the field--so far most cross cultural dialogues are in theory, not in practice. If we can figure out a productive dialogue among ourselves, we can publish our insights.

As for starting an organization or listserv, I would be interested in getting international affiliates--how about your Chinese colleagues, can we recruit them?

I like your idea of starting our conference with the Division 32 Annual Conference. We can pledge to have the indigenous psychology theme included in every Division 32 Annual Conference, starting this year. Similarly, we can pledge to have at least one proposed symposium on indigenous psychology at every APA annual Convention, starting this year, see attached.

Lastly, I agree with you that we in humanistic psychology are used to this kind of job description, where the only reward is passion for the work itself.

I look forward to hearing from the rest of the gang.

Have a happy Thanksgiving,

Louise 11/23/10

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome Ken Gergen as another member of our task force. We have much to learn from Ken's qualitative research group. If you are not already on his email list, please contact him to be included:

Ken Gergen <kgergen1@SWARTHMORE.EDU>.

The following link is taken from Ken's weekly qualitative research update:

· Questions in Theory & Methodology: The Rule of Phenomenalism
<<http://cmcee.wordpress.com/2010/10/22/questions-in-theory-methodology-the-rule-of-phenomenalism/>>

In this blog, you will find a relevant quote from Geertz:

‘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’ (Geertz 1973:5).

Do we agree with Geertz that indigenous psychology and experimental psychology don't mix like water and oil, or is there the possibility of integration?

Here is another important link from Ken's qualitative research update:

- MIT's James Howe Charts Anthropology's Shift to a Collaborative Model
<<http://shass.mit.edu/news/news-2010-howe-charts-anthropologys-transition-collaborative-model>>

In this report, the natives function as collaborators with the researcher. Will indigenous psychologists play a similar role in tomorrow's psychology?

Looking forward to your comments,

Louise 11/26/10

Hi All,

Here's a bit about me... My interest in indigenous psychologies is a response to an existential crisis I had as a teenager. Coming into social consciousness in the early 70's I saw many indications of how American and Western society had significant structural problems and I became increasingly convinced that many of these were related to our cultural values and

assumptions (particularly individualistic and dualistic ones). In part to find existential meaning in my own life, and to find ways of better understanding and critiquing Western culture, I began to study other cultural and historical traditions, specifically how they understand the self or person, the mind, health, healing, and the good life. As my interests in college turned more towards healing I became puzzled and then frustrated that psychology was not taking seriously the outlooks on non-Western people. I turned this frustration into creating an independent major and have been pursuing these themes since. I also began practicing yoga and meditation in college and became a yoga teacher and lived in an ashram before going to graduate school.

Currently my work consists of 1) critiques of different areas of psychology to point how individualistic and dualistic assumptions shape theory research, and practice--especially in areas involving human flourishing (psychological well-being, positive psychology, character education, moral development), and 2) attempts to construct an alternative theoretical frameworks for psychology that support taking non-Western psychologies seriously. This includes work in the philosophy of social science and in developing non-dualistic process ontologies that highlight a view of agency that is prior to the dualisms inherent in Western thought (culture-self, fact-value, mind-body, subject-object, etc.). I have also been doing qualitative research for the past eight years on the impact teaching mindfulness practices to counseling students.

On an informal level for a number of years I've sought out traditional healers in other parts of the world—partly because it's fun and partly because I'm interested in understanding their views of health and healing and seeing if there are ways they could help offset the lopsidedness of most Western views of mental health and well-being. Most of work in this area has been with Balinese shamans.

I'm excited to be a part of this task force!

John 11/28/10

Hi John and All,

Thanks so much for the existentialist self introduction, which I am sure Louis Hoffman would really appreciate. You struck a cord in me that is the eagerness to learn. I would like to think that this task force is a place for us to learn together. If and when you feel comfortable enough, you can circulate a paper of yours for us to critique.

Let me start first. Attached please find a paper of mine that addresses some of the issues you raised here, such as a different paradigm for doing psychotherapy. Here is the reference:

Sundararajan, L. (in press). Spiritual Transformation and Emotion: A Semiotic Analysis. [Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health](#).

I look forward to your comments,
Louise 11/28/10

Dear All:

First, it is an honor to be a part of this group of amazing researchers and practitioners! I am open to any suggestions on how to proceed.

For introductions...

I am a PhD student in Clinical Psychology at Fordham University. My mentor, Dr. Fred Wertz, is also on this list. I spent much of the last 2 years living in India, conducting my dissertation on parents' experiences of their child diagnosed with autism. Prior to that, I conducted a qualitative Master's thesis on depression among various cultural groups, which specifically looked at ways in which scientific conceptualizations and treatment models were "incongruent" with people's everyday experiences. With regard to cultural work in general, I've published or presented on various theorists and philosophers who explored the nexus between culture and psychology/philosophy (e.g., Heidegger's dialogues with Japanese thinkers, Frantz Fanon's sociocultural and psychological methods, etc.). My overall interest is in helping to shape psychology as a global discipline with local results, which involves a serious attempt to recognize "**indigenous**" ways of being and to understand the relations between various spheres of existence (the social, the psychological, the cultural, etc.). I am also a Minority Fellow of the APA.

By the way, I am emailing from my Fordham account, not the one on the original Email. I look forward to continued correspondence.

Kindly,
Miraj 11/29/10

Dear All,

It is my pleasure to introduce Rick (Richard A.) Shweder as the 10th member of our task force. With the ten metaphorical fingers of this task force complete, we are now ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work. For a start, let me make up a list of tasks:

1. Recruit international affiliates.
2. Have a listserv or website, which serves the purpose of archiving and dissemination of relevant publications, and discussions.
3. Use humanistic psychology--including both the division journal and the yearly conference--as a suitable venue for indigenous psychology.
4. Have dialogues-- between indigenous psychologies, and with cross cultural psychology. These dialogues/debates can take place in either APA symposia or special issues of the division journal.
5. Pledge to have the indigenous psychology theme included in every Division 32 Annual Conference, and at least one proposed symposium on indigenous psychology at every APA annual Convention.

I look forward to your suggestions and comments.

Louise12/1/10

Dear All,

Professor K. K. Hwang from National Taiwan University sent his self introduction below.

Enjoy,
Louise

My Autobiography for APA

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 *Logics of Social Science* 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.

I have participated in Asian Association of Social Psychology since 1997 and was elected as its president from 2003 to 2005. 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 push forward by theoretical construction, but not only collection of empirical data. Therefore, I wrote a book entitled *A Proposal of 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

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

Based on these models, I will promote the theoretical construction as well as empirical research on Chinese indigenous psychology on the one hand, and try to expand my impact on international community of psychology on the other, in expectation to open up a new field of research for indigenous psychologies of non-Western countries.

12/1/10

Dear Louise and Task Force Members,

As part of our growing conversation I thought I might circulate an essay which was written over twenty years ago as a kind of manifesto for the reclaiming of the discipline of cultural psychology. It is titled "Cultural Psychology: What Is It".

Regards to all,

Rick Shweder

P.S. The attached essay originally appeared in 1990 as the Introductory chapter in an edited volume (James Stigler, Richard Shweder and Gilbert Herdt, Eds) titled "Cultural Psychology: Essays on Comparative Human Development" (Cambridge U Press) and was reprinted in my book "Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology" (Harvard U Press).

12/7/10

Dear Rick (and Task Force Members):

Thanks so much for sending out your chapter. I think it's a great idea for us to read seminal works that may help us with basic definitions. I enjoyed reading your chapter very much. I have some questions, though I don't mean for you to feel compelled to respond to them. Perhaps others will be inclined to respond to one or another of my questions and thoughts.

One of my questions is: What is the relationship is between your definition of "cultural psychology" and that of "**indigenous** psychology." You've been clear in your essay about the what cultural psychology is, so it remains for us in this task force to address the "what it is" of **indigenous** psychology.

I have some other questions about your chapter. Perhaps these are more responses than questions, but I am very curious about your thought processes as you chose to formulate matters the way you did in your chapter. First, I wondered why you identified "general psychology" (which term sounds to me like "psychology" in the broadest and least differentiated sense) with a particular psychological theory--that of the central inherent processing mechanism. I understand that this psychological theory has been quite pervasive in psychology and has been applied to various specific areas/subfields of psychology (making it "general"). In that sense it certainly qualifies as a very general psychological theory, but this theory is not coextensive with psychology in general as a broad discipline encompassing all specific subject matters, approaches, methods, theories, and so on. So, I wonder what your thinking was in using that

particular term "general psychology" for what you had in mind.

In many important respects, what you call cultural psychology fits in with a very long tradition in psychology that, although not adopted by the academic mainstream, has had a consistent presence throughout the discipline's history. I am not saying that what you are getting at in your chapter, cultural psychology, has been around that long, because I do think there is something new there that is aptly called "cultural." However, much of the *approach* you delineate has been consistently well articulated by a long line of thinkers who have in common the conviction that psychology, as a general discipline, is fundamentally different from the natural sciences. I am thinking, for instance, of Brentano (whose idea of "intentionality" is alluded to in your references to "intentional worlds"), Dilthey (who emphasized the fundamental importance of meaning and interpretation in psychology), and more recently the work of sociologists Berger and Luckmann, whose idea of reality as socially constructed came from Schutz, who got it from his mentor Husserl. Ideas similar to those you suggest under the designation of "cultural psychology" were developed by existential psychologists as a general psychology, that is, as an approach to psychology that would apply to all the discipline's various subject matters. Particular applications of this approach could be seen, for instance, in the work of Merleau-Ponty. His critique of theories that postulate a central inherent processing mechanism (in the psychology of perception, in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, and one could also cite his psychology of behavior, language, social life, and human development), anticipated much of what you say in your chapter. One could think of many others who have written about psychology in general and in reference to almost every specific subject matter encompassed by the discipline, along similar lines. I tend to characterize the opposition between these two different approaches to psychology as that between natural science and human science psychology. I wonder what your thought processes were when you called what you had in mind for your chapter "cultural psychology" instead of something like "human science psychology," or another term such as "interpretive psychology," "existential psychology," "phenomenological psychology," or even "constructionist psychology" though of course I understand that each of these carries its own meanings and that they are by no means equivalent with each other. These are all general psychology that are opposed to the natural science approach to psychology and do not necessarily postulate an inherent centralized processing mechanism or other such models like it.

I see very important originality in what you are suggesting in your chapter. You are not simply rearticulating the ideas of Brentano, Dilthey, and so on. The term "cultural psychology" as a distinctive name for what you are articulating is perfectly on target. It seems to me that perhaps you are articulating a content area, a subject matter for psychology, one that is very important in many ways because of its pervasiveness: culture. It seems to me that you are carving out a subfield of psychology that would thematize the cultural dimensions of psychological life and you are suggesting that these are to be studied using a human science approach.

If one were to discard the theory of a universal "inherent central processing mechanism" and study the psychological lives of peoples, individuals in various cultures, in a natural scientific way, would that qualify as "cultural psychology" in your sense, or does the field of cultural psychology as you conceive it privilege a continental philosophical stance? You say you accept a limited sense of causality and do cite natural science thinkers among those with a kinship to cultural psychology, so perhaps cultural psychology is not strictly based on the continental,

human science approach. Could it involve hypothesis testing and other natural science methods? On the other side, if one were to study something like perception, say in our own culture, neither presuming or in any way postulating a universal central processing mechanism nor thematizing culture in the study, would you consider that "cultural psychology" or "general psychology"?--I suppose not, because it does not explicitly focus on the cultural aspects of perception nor would it draw on the mechanistic postulates of what you call general psychology. So what would you call that, if it is neither cultural psychology nor general psychology? Do you conceive of psychology, as a discipline, as going beyond cultural psychology and general psychology--if so, how would you characterize the other "psychologies"--by content area, approach?

One last question. Is what you call cultural psychology a subfield of a larger discipline of psychology, which would include some subfields that are not cultural psychology? Cultural psychology as you define it seems to encompass all of psychology in a way that subfields focused on a particular content don't. But perhaps cultural psychology is not a subfield of psychology and is rather, as you suggest in your chapter, an *interdisciplinary* field, which, strictly speaking, would not be a subfield of psychology per se but a field that bridges psychology, in all its content areas, with other social sciences like cultural anthropology. Is that more what you have in mind?

I know you must be busy, Rick, as I'm sure we all are, and so please don't feel it's necessary to answer my questions. I'm just thinking out loud, sharing some thoughts evoked by your chapter. I'd be interested in hearing the thoughts of anyone in our task force concerning these issues, or perhaps even more to our point, thoughts about what **indigenous** psychology is.

Fred 12/7/10

Dear Frederick,

What a thoughtful response! Many thanks for thinking out loud this way, making all these on target observations and raising all these pertinent questions. I will try to react by and by. With regard to the call for a clarification of the notion of "**indigenous**" I am attaching my attempt to spell out the connections between cultural psychology, **indigenous** psychology and cross-cultural psychology.

When I saw the title of the task force and the use of the expression "**Indigenous** psychology" I assumed it was inspired by the intellectual movement by that name which I associate with the work of Kuo-Shu Yang and our own K.k. Hwang. That is to say the "**indigenous** psychology" work initiated by some deep thinkers in East Asia. But perhaps the expression was settled upon for other reasons and by way of other sources. It would be good to know.

Warm regards,

Rick 12/8/10

Dear Task Force Members,

Let's work on a manifesto together: What is Indigenous Psychology? I would like to start with a preamble, based on the note Fred Wertz sent me:

<I'm not sure what "indigenous psychology" even is. So, I googled it, read a few things, and started to think that the term refers to a number of very different things and that there may be a lot of confusions and disagreements about just what this is. I think it may be a controversial, contested area of scholarship.

I'd like to work with a group of like minded scholars in order to sort this field out in our own way--a "humanistic" way? I wonder if we could move toward some agreement, or whether our disagreements might be worth exploring and learning from.> (Personal communication, 12/6/10)

Following Fred's suggestion, I'll attempt a definition in order to invite agreements as well as disagreements, both of which will be equally beneficial.

Definition: Indigenous psychology is psychology of tomorrow, when it becomes a truly global psychology. This has the following implications:

- a. There will be one global psychology with multiple indigenous psychologies; one mind with multiple mentalities.
- b. The one mind and one global psychology are hypothetical, so far not realized, destination to which there is no royal road or super highways. Those who claim to have direct access to this destination are false prophets, characteristic of what Vico (1744/1972) referred to as "The impudent *scholars*, who **rupture the interconnection of life**" (p. 34). **In contrast, those "who attain the eternal truth by the uneven and insecure paths of practice," wrote Vico, "make a detour, as it is not possible to attain this by a direct road"** (p. 34). This detour mediated pathway from the particularities of life to the universal, Platonic laws is the trajectory of indigenous psychology.

At this point, I am already borrowing heavily from cultural psychology, so let's mark the distinction between cultural and indigenous psychology:

- a. Cultural psychology is a hybrid of Anthropology and Psychology, whereas indigenous psychology is a subdiscipline of psychology today, hoping to become the paradigm of all subdisciplines in the global psychology of tomorrow. What this implies is that when it comes to culture, indigenous psychology needs to consult culture psychology for a more nuanced view of culture characteristic of anthropology. This is what cross culture psychology generally fails to do, with disastrous results for the population it studies.
- b. Cultural psychology is a study of the Other, characteristic of anthropology; indigenous psychology is a study of the self. What this means is that unless you are an anthropologist, research is basically self search--the other might be used in a self serving way. This is a pitfall that indigenous psychology can avoid by consulting culture psychology, especially Rick's formulation of "thinking through the other." Again, cross culture psychology has failed on two accounts in this regard: First, it lacks the self-reflexivity that helps it to see that it is practicing

Anglo-American indigenous psychology, as Ken points out. Second, it fails to "think through the other," resulting in imposing on the other categories that contributes to the latter's alienation.

Lastly, according to my conceptualization of indigenous psychology, it is in agreement with culture psychology in the aspiration for a trajectory from local to global. I find Ken's model of inter-cultural dialogue very helpful. The road to global psychology and the universal mind will have to traverse through the meandering country trails of dialogue between indigenous psychologies. An attempt toward such a goal of mutual illumination between indigenous psychologies (savoring and rasa) is attached.

Looking forward to your comments,
Louise 12/10/10

Dear Colleagues,
Here is an article I wrote that appeared in a German language journal earlier this year. I offer it here in English. It provides a historical context for **indigenous** psychologies and gives examples from India and the Philippines. I welcome comment.

Wade 12/10/10

Louise,

I generally like what you've done but I'd like to step back a bit first and question what we want to do with folk psychology and ethnopsychology. And also with the literate traditions of Asia that have dealt extensively with what we like to call psychological issues (Taoism, Confucianism, Yoga, Buddhism, etc.).

Before turning to that I had a response to Rick's excellent article and his definition of cultural psychology. It seems that there is or should be room in cultural psychology for a reflexive and critical component. I thought I remember reading something about this once is one of Jahoda's writings (maybe going back to Wundt)... but isn't there an approach in which a cultural psychology is about situating mainstream psychology in historical and cultural context to help reveal underlying cultural values and assumptions and ideological influences? If so, then cultural psychology is both the endeavor of understanding the mentalities of different groups in their own terms, but also a way of seeing our own mentality and how it shapes our "science." (At least this is what I try to do in my work). To push the point I would think that it's possible to have a cultural psychologist who may not know much of anything about non-Western societies but still uses Western history as a vantage point to help Western psychologists identify the cultural values and assumptions they have presupposed. Rick, I was also wondering why you featured rationality so strongly in the article instead of meaning--does something make sense, is it meaningful, instead of is it rational?

Back to your proposal Louise... Indigenous psychology gets complicated to pin down as there already a number of different definitions or orientations. And there's a big difference between the Heelas and Lock version and what Huichol Kim does. Perhaps it would be useful to consider

what the different agendas and practical purposes are that indigenous psychology gets pulled into serving. I would tend to think about these agendas and purposes as mostly very legitimate—but possibly lumping them under the rubric of indigenous psychology might not. In any event, perhaps what we could do is try to lay out some of what we're trying to talk about and then see how to best categorize it. In Ken's terms what do we want indigenous psychology to accomplish.

Another way of proceeding might be to think in terms of ontology. Here we might want to distinguish between folk and indigenous psychology and Western "scientific psychology." I would claim that all people have a folk psychology—it is a "pervasive orientational necessity" to use Geertz's phrase. And it is implicit in an embodied, engaged, being-in-the-world type of agency. I like Bruner's definition of a folk psychology to refer to those presuppositions that people need to have about others and themselves in order to function in the world. These psychological presuppositions could be entirely implicit but might also be partially explicit. And I would think of them as necessarily requiring assumptions about the nature of what the self *is* and what the self *should be or become*

And then ontologically, we need to find conceptual room for what to do what these psychological meanings and interpretations begin to become explicit. And there are different levels of explicitness. So we might think of folk psychologies as existing at multiple levels of awareness, but it's always implicitly present in all of our thoughts, behaviors, and feelings.

And then some societies have really elaborated and articulated these folk psychologies, written them down, and have created an indigenous science around them (Buddhism being a classic example). This is where I've tended to use the term indigenous psychology, though I'm not too committed to the term.

And then there's Western academic/scientific psychology which is part folk psychology, part indigenous psychology, part ideology, and part science. And this gets complicated because there are other traditions, like Buddhism, use a different kind of science and its critical not to label them "unscientific" and recognize the validity of their methods to be careful and precise. At the same time, there may be some unique features of the Western scientific method that we want to acknowledge. And of course, there's a dialectical relationship, between these different levels—so that what I've called indigenous psychology or scientific psychology comes to shape folk psychology.

So, given all this Louise—while I like the spirit of what you've written and the goals, I'd like to quibble with the wording. I'm not sure I want to use indigenous psychology as the psychology of the future. I kind of like using indigenous psychology to recognize and honor the powerful, largely non-Western, contributions to psychological knowledge that exist outside of Western psychology. I'd prefer to use Global Psychology or International Psychology for the kind of project you're laying out for us. But more important to me is that we have ways of trying to lay out and distinguish the kinds of psychological knowledge and understanding that exist at multiple levels of awareness throughout the world and history.

PS—I'm attaching an article "Culture, Self & Identity" I wrote with Mark Bickhard trying to work out the ontology of this.

John 12/10/10

Louise, and all...I think it is already clear that we will have difficulty in laying out more than a rough, family resemblance, sketch of indigenous psychology. But such is the case with defining any professional field of endeavor. Most all are comprised of disparate enclaves with many disagreements, and the edges of most disciplines are always rough. (Think here also of Derrida's concept of differance). Building on the complexities that John has just outlined, one could distinguish at least among four ways of viewing indigenous psychology:

- the psychological processes particular to various peoples
- the discourses of psychology (and attendant performances) of various peoples
- the study of either one or both of the above (although the second of the above will tend to deconstruct the first)
- any form of psychological research within a given culture (in this sense, both cross-cultural psychology and cultural psychology as the study of the other are also indigenous)

I should add for the moment, that I also have some strong misgivings about the idea of "one global psychology with multiple indigenous psychologies." In rough parallel, would one wish to speak of one global religion with multiple indigenous religions? I do think that we should place a strong emphasis on global communication networks and sharing ideas and practices somewhere in our mission. I, for one, would be very suspicious of unifying discourses.

Ken 12/10/10

Dear Task Force Members:

First, I'd like to say what an honor it is to be on this committee with such esteemed luminaries in the field. I have been reading much of various members' work over the years as a graduate student. I admire your writing--and have found inspiration--in many ways.

I have just a few bits of input to share to the dialogue.

I have noticed a trend to pose "Psychology" as the foil for any new enterprise that approaches this difficult nexus between the cultural and the psychological/psychical. But what is this psychology, what is the region of being called the "psychological" in the first place, and what are the methods that best help us access knowledge and gain understanding of it? It seems to me that those questions need to be addressed before speaking of a Western, Buddhist or any other psychology, that is, a domain of inquiry concerned with the psychological. Many of the articles sent so far have addressed this issue in various ways, but I thought I'd just place the issue directly here. I hope it makes sense!

Kind Regards,

Miraj Desai 12/10/10

Hi all,

I am pretty sympathetic with Ken's comment and his distinctions are clear and useful.

The emphasis in cultural psychology is on conceptual content (“goals, values and pictures of the world”) as a central unit for psychological analysis and on the ethnic and cultural sources of the multiplicity of mentalities in the world. It does assume there is an object of study - local mentalities and that it is legitimate to view beliefs, values, feelings and moral evaluations as real (which is one place Ken and I may part ways). This makes the aims of cultural psychology as a research discipline very similar to the aims of **indigenous** psychology as that label has been used in the East Asian version of the movement by that name.

Here is Kuo-hhu Yang’s list of ways to “indigenize” psychological research in China - his virtues for the aspiring **indigenous** psychologist of China.

- 1) “Give priority to the study of culturally unique psychological and behavioral phenomena or characteristics of the Chinese people”.
- 2) “Investigate both the specific content and the involved process of the phenomenon”.
- 3) Make it a rule to begin any research with a through immersion into the natural, concrete details of the phenomenon to be studied.
- 4) Let research be based upon the Chinese intellectual tradition rather than the Western intellectual tradition.

Regards,

Rick 12/10/10

Dear Task Force members,

Thanks so much for the prompt responses.

Ken wrote:

one could distinguish at least among four ways of viewing indigenous psychology:
- the psychological processes particular to various peoples
- the discourses of psychology (and attendant performances) of various peoples
- the study of either one or both of the above (although the second of the above will tend to deconstruct the first)
- any form of psychological research within a given culture (in this sense, both cross-cultural psychology and cultural psychology as the study of the other are also indigenous)

My definition is based on the last assumption: "any form of psychological research within a given culture." My agenda is to place emphasis on self-reflexivity for responsible psychological

research--the term "Western" or "North American" need to be placed before all contemporary psychological disciplines. The prestigious journal of social psychology should be properly named "American Journal of Personality and Social Psychology."

>I should add for the moment, that I also have some strong misgivings about the idea of "one global psychology with multiple indigenous psychologies."

This formulation is an attempt to improve the current formulation of "multiple sub-disciplines of psychology." Since the truth is actually "multiple sub-disciplines of Western/American psychology," I hope the future will be a global psychology replacing Western/American psychology, and all the sub-disciplines of psychology will be enlightened enough to own up to their cultural roots to become indigenous psychologies.

>In rough parallel, would one wish to speak of one global religion with multiple indigenous religions?

As a matter of fact in inter-religious dialogues, the participants do talk about a global religious community. This is not necessarily a unifying discourse.

>I do think that we should place a strong emphasis on global communication networks and sharing ideas and practices somewhere in our mission. I, for one, would be very suspicious of unifying discourses.

The term global I used was used in the sense of global communication. I think the misunderstanding comes from reading "global" as "one unified" psychology. Unification is far from my mind. To avoid misunderstanding, maybe we can use "international psychology" instead of "global psychology."

John Wrote:

>I would think that it's possible to have a cultural psychologist who may not know much of anything about non-Western societies but still uses Western history as a vantage point to help Western psychologists identify the cultural values and assumptions they have presupposed.

A Western psychologist critiquing his/her own tradition would be doing Western indigenous psychology, according to my formulation.

>Perhaps it would be useful to consider what the different agendas and practical purposes are that indigenous psychology gets pulled into serving. I would tend to think about these agendas and purposes as mostly very legitimate—but possibly lumping them under the rubric of indigenous psychology might not. In any event, perhaps what we could do is try to lay out some of what we're trying to talk about and then see how to best categorize it. In Ken's terms what do you want indigenous psychology to accomplish.

There are indeed many definitions of indigenous psychology, placing them under the same rubric of indigenous psychology is not any more problematic than all of us calling ourselves psychologists--psychology is a Noah's ark, indigenous psychology won't be homogenous either. We can lump things by family resemblances and by task descriptions, both of which we can develop in the course of time.

>And then there's Western academic/scientific psychology which is part folk psychology, part indigenous psychology, part ideology, and part science. And this gets complicated because there other traditions, like Buddhism, use a different kind of science and its critical not to label them "unscientific" and recognize the validity of their methods to be careful and precise.

If both are considered indigenous psychologies, we won't run into this problem. Granting indigenous status to a tradition means that a tradition has its own measure of what constitutes careful and precise thinking, or in Rick's terms "rationality."

>I'm not sure I want to use indigenous psychology as the psychology of the future. I kind of like using indigenous psychology to recognize and honor the powerful, largely non-Western, contributions to psychological knowledge that exist outside of Western psychology.

Ha, here is the rub. Indigenous psychology applies to other people's psychology, but not to Western psychology, which is scientific or too advanced to be on a par with those indigenous people's stuff. That's why things get complicated for you, because you want to honor the indigenous people, but don't think you are one of them. My formulation of indigenous psychology will cure your dichotomous thinking.

Miraj wrote:

I have noticed a trend to pose "Psychology" as the foil for any new enterprise that approaches this difficult nexus between the cultural and the psychological/psychical. But what is this psychology, what is the region of being called the "psychological" in the first place, and what are the methods that best help us access knowledge and gain understanding of it? It seems to me that those questions need to be addressed before speaking of a Western, Buddhist or any other psychology, that is, a domain of inquiry concerned with the psychological. Many of the articles sent so far have addressed this issue in various ways, but I thought I'd just place the issue directly here. I hope it makes sense!

This is a good question, but difficult to settle. There is no way to decide beforehand the practices for an indigenous psychology, if we don't want to have the unifying discourse that Ken warns us about. It can happen that one tradition will have methodologies that the rest of the indigenous psychology community says, "No, that's voodoo psychology, not psychology." I believe only continued dialogue will solve this question.

This is a good start. Let's keep going.

With appreciation,
Louise 12/10/10

I was busy all day yesterday doing psychotherapy, and so I was only able to pick up bits and pieces of the fascinating conversation that arose out of Louise's proposal that seems to have culminated, but I'm sure only for the moment, in Louise's sharp and wonderful responses below. I was able to read this discussion over this morning, though not all the attachments, which I'm trying to get to in turn (now having only finished Richard's and Louise's first ones). If only I didn't have day jobs (which are so especially busy for us academics at this time of year), I'd like to drop everything and study the materials that this group is generating. I'd like to think and respond more substantively than I can now about the profound points that multiply as one reads down each email! It's a bit overwhelming, and I'm not sure I'm going to keep up with it, but I'll do the best I can given everything else that's going on.

I do think we are getting somewhere good, actually perhaps to many different places. I dare not say there is any unity but we are together in what to me is a very focused, coherent, and distinctive conversation. I do think our disagreements are extremely illuminating and I see no reason not to celebrate them. Since "unity" is such a problematic word, perhaps we could use one that I think Louise suggested, "community." Since my time is limited now, I'll give a (perhaps too) quick take on where and how we are going, though of course it might happily turn out to be very different from anything I can conceive at this moment. I think we have touched on a family of concerns, issues, problems, questions, challenges in growing areas of scholarship that many Western psychologists have touched on here or there but that they have not had the time to study in anything like a thorough way, and certainly not from the perspectives that this group is bringing to bear. I imagine many are fascinated, perhaps confused, and certainly not in possession of anything like a sophisticated grasp of the implications of these matters for their own work or for Western psychology in general. It seems to me that we have a pretty incredible group of people who might be able to take stock of what has been going on in these various areas and put together a document that would provide a very interesting a road map, containing at least all the things WE would like our colleagues to know about what is going on in these areas. I think this will undoubtedly involve some taxonomic clarifications of subdisciplines, indeed of the very (problematic) nature of our own discipline, and terms, some references to seminal and exemplary works in various areas, clarifications of big challenging issues, and pretty much anything else we want to include. I think that since we are mostly Western scholars, mostly psychologists (great for us that we are including international psychologist affiliates and non-psychologists), we should own up to our writing/contribution being from the perspective of Western psychology. Since we are writing in English and are probably not so inclined to presume that we know what non-Western, non-psychologist scholars need to know from us, we should view our primary audience as our Western psychologist colleagues. Although we would not be speaking primarily *for* or *to* groups other than Western psychologists, of course we would welcome a broader readership among scholars in other indigenous disciplines. Perhaps we could even call what we are doing, "Toward a Global Psychological Community" if that ends up describing it, or perhaps even more loosely and broadly, "Psychology and Culture." Within whatever this ends up being as a whole, we could identify the history, areas, and issues that are arising in our conversation, what think is most important about it, and share our work/conversation/conclusions with our colleagues in the form of some writing, with this task

force (we could keep or change the "indigenous psychology" phrase in our name), a collective group of scholars assembled by the Society for Humanistic Psychology, as the author. If my imagination would have its way, this document might appropriately appear in a venue like the *American Psychologist*. Given the group of people Louise has assembled, I doubt very much that such a document exists, and certainly I for one would like to read it, so if the rest of us would (and I imagine we would not be alone), let's do it.

I'm not sure how we could or should divide the labor, and perhaps doing so at this point is premature anyway. I think the kind of conversation we are having, getting to know each others' work and points of view, is exactly the right thing to do, and fun! So maybe we can just continue along these lines of a while. I'm going to create a file on my hard drive in which I can collect the documents that are shared as attachments, and if possible perhaps some excerpts from our email conversations that seem particularly worth my keeping in mind. I'll try to read all this as it continues to flow in.

One kind of document that I think would be helpful to collect, if anyone knows or runs across additional such material (some of you have authored and already shared some), is the attempts made to date to provide an overview, a manifesto, or some comment on this broad and growing area concerning Western psychology's awareness of the implications of culture. I think scholarly materials like that will help orient me and may help us see more sharply, as a group, what we have to contribute that is original at the present time.

Before signing off I'll take the liberty to attach bit of my own writing, which may be of interest to some as it does touch on issues that we have been discussing, particularly the self critical dimension of Western indigenous psychology and the way that an awareness of other cultures can enhance that critical awareness and enhance the future of our psychology through a intercultural dialogue.

Anyway, thank you all for the great material and the fascinating conversation. I hope you have a good weekend!

Fred 12/11/10

Fred and All,

I would like to follow up on Fred's suggestion to produce a document, based on our ongoing discussions, for possible publication in the *American Psychologist*. This will be a manifesto on indigenous psychology, written by the task force. I suggest that Fred takes up the editor's job to give order and organization to the accumulating documents as we proceed. Now the question of archiving. Everything so far is in the process of being posted at the website of Division 32. However, it's not happening as fast as I would like. Things would be a lot faster if we could have our own webmaster, and our own website. If anyone can find a tech-savvy student, I wouldn't mind paying him or her out of my own pocket to get ourselves a webmaster.

Back to the definition of indigenous psychology. The typo in the subject line "That" instead of "what" turns out to be quite apt: I like the fact that we seem to be modeling what an ideal global

psychological community would be like: we leave no stone unturned in the process of defining indigenous psychology. We took care to spell out the implications of every word. This is much more productive than rushing to add another definition of indigenous psychology to the existing, and confusing pile.

Thanks again,
Louise 12/11/10