APPLIED CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

Selected papers from the Second International Conference of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology, held at Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, August 6-10, 1974.

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION

During the second week of August, 1974, over 180 psychologists from 28 countries assembled in Kingston, Canada, for the Second International Conference of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology[1]. This conference was held immediately after the International Congress of Applied Psychology in Montreal, and just prior to the International Sociological Congress in Toronto; since the IACCP conference was deliberately scheduled to fill this time gap, it came as no surprise to find that many of the symposia and individual papers which were offered were concerned with applied social questions. In putting together the programme, one of the editors (J.W.B., who was also the conference coordinator) reinforced this developing emphasis, and in editing this volume both editors have selected and organized the contributions around this theme.

In general, the application of social science knowledge across cultures has been of growing recent concern: national development, education, social change, population and health have all been assisted and influenced by the work of psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists. Special issues of journals have appeared which have been entirely devoted to these concerns.[2] It is intended that this volume contribute further to the goal of questionning, studying and applying social science in cultural areas where cross-cultural psychologists may be of some assistance.

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[1] The First International Conference was held during August 1972 in Hong Kong, and our third will be in Tilburg (The Netherlands) during July 1976. The proceedings of the First International Conference have been edited by J.L.M. Dawson and W.J. Lonner, and were published in 1974 by the University of Hong Kong Press.

[2] For example: International Social Science Journal 1972, 24, Number 1: "Development Studies" and International Review of Applied Psychology, 1973, 22, Number 1: "Applications of Psychology to the Problems of Developing Countries".

Not all papers presented at the Kingston conference are published here; the only criterion for inclusion was the relevance of the paper to the theme of the volume. Many excellent papers could not be included simply because their topics were on theoretical or methodological issues, or on a substantive area not directly related to applications of psychology cross-culturally. For completeness, however, all persons who presented papers are listed in the appendix, along with the title of their paper, and their address so that interested readers may request a copy.

We wish to acknowledge, with thanks, the contributions and assistance of the many institutions and persons who supported the conference. Queen's University at Kingston provided a pleasant and comfortable setting for our discussions, and Mr. J.M. Brownlee, the Conference Officer of the University made sure it all worked efficiently. The Conference Assistant to J.W.B. was Penny Hartwell, who slaved long months (before) and hours (during) the conference to keep track of all the loose ends; she was assisted during the conference by Hugo Georgekish, Jacquie Mansell, Tom Mawhinney and Brenda Toner. The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study has provided editorial facilities and Pilar van Breda-Burgueño has kindly typed and corrected large portions of the manuscript.

We are most grateful to the Canada Council and to the Canadian International Development Agency who each donated substantial funds to enable the participation of twenty six psychologists from developing countries; without this assistance, the conference would have been less international and much less cross-cultural.

J. W. Berry

Wassenaar, The Netherlands

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
APPLYING CROSS CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY TO THE THIRD WORLD

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President IACCP, 1972-1974

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I should like to make use of the brief time at my disposal for sharing with you some thoughts about psychology and the third world, particularly in relation to our Association. Psychology was for a long time a very parochial and, dare I say it, ethnocentric discipline; when it ventured beyond the narrow confines of Western man as represented in the main by college students, it was in the direction of the animal kingdom rather than other members of our own species. Over 20 years ago, when I was the first psychologist to hold a post at a West African university, I discussed my work with a professor at a British university. While displaying a polite interest, real views came out a little later when he advised me that I ought to be doing some proper psychology if I wanted to come back to a job in U.K. I am glad that I did not take this well-meant advice.

In those distant days the role of the psychological researcher was difficult to explain to subjects. The three main categories available to people in remote communities for categorizing an expatriate in West Africa were those of administrator, doctor or teacher in that order of salience. Hence I would be asked first of all to provide things like roads, water supplies or a school, and my protestations of impotence were at first received with pained incredulity. The ascription of a doctor's role had to be similarly resisted, though I did usually carry some medical supplies that could be made available. Eventually I usually managed to persuade them to accept my role as that of a teacher who wanted to learn something about them and their ways in order to be able to tell others about it. Now it seems to me that this role of the "teacher who wants to learn" characterizes most of us quite well, and collectively we have functioned successfully in it. In other words,we are in the main academics dedicated to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. The strategies for gaining new knowledge in the cross cultural sphere has changed radically in a fairly short period.

At the outset the major interest was focused on psychological differences between peoples of contrasting cultures, and we were content to examine and record these. Gradually it came to be realized that this seemingly endless task did not lend itself to the establishment of general principles, which is the scientific objective. Attention then shifted to

the determinants of differences, and it was discovered that as one changes methods and conditions so some of these differences diminish, if not disappear.

One could cite many illustrations of the growing complexity of the task facing us, which is too great for the traditional lone ranger to cope with. There was therefore a great need for the formation of our Association fo further more systematic exchange of ideas and research planning. If, as seems likely now, it is confirmed that most cross cultural differences in behaviour are a function of environments, situations and specific research methods, our job becomes that of exploring these interactions systematically. This will call for more widespread and closely integrated research efforts than have been attempted hitherto. The prospect before us is that of establishing solid evidence for the notion of "the psychic unity of mankind", which at present still remains a working assumption.

Given that this may be our directional ideal - and not everybody would agree that it is or should be - the question can still be asked whether the advancement of theoretical knowledge along these lines is enough. A little story will help to explain what I mean. During one of my visits to West Africa I was asked to give an extra-mural lecture on intelligence testing, and took the opportunity of saying something about the historical background: how the better scores of Europeans were once regarded as proof of intellectual superiority, and how psychologists demonstrated this to be a fallacy for reasons well known to all. My intention had been to show that psychologists are on the side of the angels. Then, during the discussion at the end, a bright young man stood up and asked something like "What do psychologists advise us to do in order that we perform on these tests in the same way as Europeans?" I do not recall exactly my answer, except that it was rather vague and lame.

The point of this story is of course that things are not what they used to be. I believe there was a time when intellectuals in colonial territories appreciated the efforts of psychologists and other social scientists to destroy the cruder racial myths by empirical research. I do not underestimate the importance of this work, which changed the conventional wisdom in the United States by undermining a whole set of ethnocentric ideas so that they could no longer be voiced by self-respecting educated people. However, since then there has been a complete transformation of the intellectual climate in the independant nations of the third world. Their people as well as their leaders now largely take for granted the basic equality of all humans and no longer thank us for, as at least some of them would see it, laboriously explaining away differences. In so far as these differences constitute obstacles to the acquisition of new skills demanded by rapid social and technological change, they are seen as obstacles to be overcome. What they seek is help in solving these problems, and what they invariably turn to for this purpose is almost invariably education. It would be foolish to criticize them on this account, for there is ample evidence that any kind of formal schooling has an enormous and yet incompletely understood impact on intellectual growth. The trouble is that the cry is generally for just more education, with

too little questioning of the kind of education that might be most effective. It practically never occurs to the responsible authorities in developing countries that they could enlist the assistance of psychologists with this or numerous other kinds of problems where some of us feel we might contribute. The reasons are many and complex, one of them being that there are as yet relatively few indigenous third-world psychologists, and some reluctance to call in outsiders. However, this is certainly not a sufficient reason, since many third-world countries do not hesitate to call in outside economic experts at the drop of a hat. The predominant reason, in my opinion, is a lack of awareness that we might have anything to offer; and the cause of that is that we have done precious little in the past compared with other disciplines.

There is no time to speculate on the probable reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs, which in any case I have done elsewhere. (Jahoda, 1973). I should just like to say that some of them probably were beyond our control. Instead, I prefer to look to the future, and especially to the role our Association could play in shaping it. I try to keep up as best I can with the cross cultural literature, which is not as easy as it used to be. In doing so two things strike me: 1. how small a proportion of it is more or less directly concerned with an applied problem; and 2. how substantial a proportion of it appears to have some practical implications.

Most of the writers no doubt realize that there are these implications, and in fact they are sometimes mentioned. Nevertheless, our tacit assumption usually is that we regard it as our job to provide the admittedly extremely important theoretical foundation, and it is up to others to carry on from there. Unfortunately a little reflection will make it evident that there simply are no such "others" with the requisite background and skills; unless we do the job ourselves, it is highly unlikely that anybody else will.

It is of course easy to preach, and in order to convince you that I am not doing so from a remote ivory tower I should mention that I have struggled with applied research and am only too well acquainted with its problems and difficulties. It usually has to be done on a fairly large scale and requires extensive organization and resources; it tends to be complex if not messy, and some conventional journals are apt to be reluctant to publish the outcome, since it rarely fits neatly into their pigeon-hole; it also carries a good deal less academic kudos than "pure" research. I cannot dwell on these points, but will single out for brief comment what I regard as perhaps the key methodological problem of applied research in the cross-cultural field. One of its objectives is often that of producing changes in behaviour, such as overcoming obstacles in the acquisition of a new skill, or reducing antagonistic attitudes and behaviour towards outgroups. In order to be able to do this effectively, we need to know about the causes of behaviour, chiefly in terms of particular environmental circumstances that are susceptible to modification. The experimental or survey approaches commonly used provide clues to this, which have to be tested and verified as far as possible; but one hardly ever arrives at clear-cut decisions in this manner. At present we have no

really effective techniques for coping with this problem; this offers a challenge, and indicates as well a way in which the needs of applied research might yield a fundamental advance in theoretical knowledge. These remarks are necessarily condensed and oversimplified,but the burden of my message is that applied research provides exciting opportunities as well as awkward problems.

Some of us would consider that we have a moral obligation to engage in it, but I would not rest my case on this as I have done enough preaching. Instead, I wish to point to a plain pragmatic justification: there are strong indications that third world countries will not indefinitely welcome or even tolerate the activities of psychological researchers without at least some prospect of tangible returns.To give an example, twenty years ago one could walk into practically any school or other institution in what was then the Gold Coast and be received with open arms, with no question asked and every facility being put at one's disposal. The reason was of course partly the high status accorded any oburoni or "red man"; but I think even more important was the fact that at that time still it was an exceedingly rare occurrence. By contrast, I wanted to work in a school in Ghana earlier this year. After making an appointment with the Headmaster, I was kept kicking my heels for a lengthy period, only to be told that he had unexpectedly been called away for a meeting. When he did eventually manage to see me, I was most rigorously cross-questioned on the nature of my work, which fortunately was directly relevant to education. Permission was then granted on condition that disturbance of the school routine would be minimal, which entailed some last-minute adjustments of the research plan. I am of course not complaining about the Headmaster, who was most courteous and entirely justified in the line he took; I am merely pointing to the new facts of research life.

One more recent example. A student, hopefully inspired by my cross-cultural lectures, wanted to do her honours dissertation in a country I shall call Afrasitania. Here are some extracts from the letter she received in reply to her visa application: "No research permit is issued unless the proposed research is, or is clearly likely to be, of value to Afrasitania. A great deal of harm has been done to Afrisitania's image overseas by researchers whose primary aim has been a higher degree; and in self-defence, Afrasitania has had to check the interminable flow of researchers."

Needless to say, it is not my intention to spread gloom and despondency, but to focus attention on an important problem issue which we might want to consider in the course of our joint discussions. I raised the problem because I feel confident not only that our Association has the capacity and can muster the resources to come to grips with it, but also because we are probably the main group of psychologists able to do so. As I have said, there is already a certain a amount of applied work going on, and there is one sphere in which all active members of the Association are already making a most valuable contribution. This is by helping to reproduce ourselves without the excessive inbreeding prevalent in the past. I am of course referring to the fact that in the training of third-world psychologists, who must play a vital role in future developments, an increasing quantity

of culturally relevant material is becoming available.

Before concluding I venture to suggest that the general theme broached here is in harmony with the ideas and ideals of my distinguished predecessor, the first President of IACCP, Professor Bruner. He has written (1971: p51) : ". . . let it be clear that the decision not to aid the intellectual maturation of those who live in less technologically developed societies can not be premised on the careless claim that it makes no difference."

This surely implies quite clearly that we can and ought to be of assistance, and our Association is probably one of the best vehicles for bringing this about.

It only remains for me to express the confident expectation that our meeting will be both profitable and enjoyable.

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SECTION 1:
PSYCHOLOGY and NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In our fist Section, we approach directly the central theme of this volume: how to apply psychology cross-culturally. More specifically, these papers raise the question: how may psychology be applied to problems of national development?

The papers in this Section were selected from a conference symposium which was organized by D. Sinha and chaired by S. Chandra. The introductory remarks of D.Sinha expand on some of the issues whichwere raised by G. Jahoda in his Presidential Address, and provide further concrete examples of the relevance of psychology to the process of development. A first-hand account of attempting to apply psychology in Zambia is given by A. Heron, who also considers the potential conflict between goals of national development and the desire to retain a distinctive national culture or set of cultures. These potential conflicts are further explored in the analyses of individual modernity by J. Dawson, who critically reviews various approaches to this controversial topic. The two final papers are reports of empirical work on two psychological variables which are now being recognized as important in the process of development: motivation and the relation between malnutrition and cognition. In the first of these two, P.S. Hundal and S. Singh consider the distribution of achievement motivation and other personality variables in large samples in India. And in Sri Lanka, J.P. Das has been conducting a survey of nutritional and cognitive variables; his paper reports on the background of the study,and the difficulties which are encountered in such field research.

All of these papers illustrate the serious attempts being made in psychology to study the human factors in a process which until recently has largely been considered one of economic and institutional change

These psychological approaches, of course, constitute only one avenue of research; but these papers convincingly demonstrate that psychological factors are involved, and that they must be considered in any comprehensive view of the process of national development.